

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's* Corner
Written by Ron Rogers *Hanshi Meiyokyoju*

Meditation and Massage

Although never taught as part of a class, or as a class, Wilson *Kanchō* taught both meditation and massage. He never referred to any particular type of massage (*amma*, *shiatsu*, etc), but taught muscle relaxation by massaging the acupuncture points. He especially emphasized massage of the points on the legs, and could tell the tension in different parts of the body from the tension in the legs.

As far as the meditation, Ruth Wilson, *Kyoshi*, wrote: “Yes, Leo did teach meditation. [He taught it] only to the people in his class at our gym on the mountain. He never taught it at any clinic and it was always held at the end of the class as sort of a way to have everyone feel relaxed. He would always have us sitting cross-legged in a relaxed position and would have us concentrate on a word that we would pick out ourselves. We would think of this word while he was talking to us. His voice had sort of a droning quality to it and each session was very short, maybe five to ten minutes. It was mainly getting each part of your body relaxed and deep breathing exercises. He always called it TM. Sometimes after the class was over I was in such a relaxed state when we went into the house he would have to take me through a routine to get me more alert. I think that I got relaxed too much and was like hypnotized.”

Your *hanshi meiyokyoju* worked with Wilson *Kanchō* with this meditation process. Wilson *Kanchō* actually gave me, not a word, but a complete mantra. This mantra was a great influence in my personal life in later years.

Years earlier, I learned a different type of meditation (actually, more than one, though I didn't realize it at the time) from my first instructor, Franklin T. Booth, *Sensei*, who also taught massage. Both meditation and massage were very important in becoming a “black belt” – at least as the martial arts were originally taught to me by both Booth *Sensei* and Wilson *Kanchō*.

“Black Belt”

When your *hanshi meiyokyoju* first began training in the martial arts, a “black belt” meant much more than is usually meant today. One could be skilled in the physical aspects of any given art, but if emotional maturity and morality were lacking, promotions were not forthcoming. The intellectual side of the individual was also encouraged. Both Booth *Sensei* and Wilson *Kanchō* stressed development in these four areas. Both also stressed that to be a good martial artist, one should play chess, as both believed that not only competition but also life consisted of doing the next right thing (or move, if you will). I touched on these in one of *Hanshi's* Corners.

To be a “true” martial artist, one needed to learn more than just the areas of his or her expertise. This carried over socially in being able to converse with someone about his or her art, hobby or profession. In addition, one could draw on other disciplines to explain movements or strategy in *budō*. Emotionally, one learned “the mountain did not look down on the river for not being large and stately, and the river did not look down on the mountain (figuratively, of course) for not being able to move.” In other words, emotional maturity was the acceptance of a person as they were, not as one would like them to be. Perhaps ethics would be a more politically correct term for morality, but the fact remains

that you learned that some things were wrong and some were right. The problem came in that “wrong and right” in this case did not necessarily imply legal or religious morality, but an internal knowing. This did not give license to act simply due to one’s beliefs, but enforced the correctness of those beliefs in relation to others.

Physical skills included not only percussive techniques of all types, but joint manipulation, immobilizations, strangulations and projections. These may be done separately or in combination. Weapons could be used to augment any of them. As one learned any, or all, of the above, s/he also learned what constituted a “good” technique, how to teach that technique, and, objectively, how to judge that technique in a competitive setting.

As mentioned above, massage was a part of training, as were resuscitation techniques (before the advent of First Aid and CPR). Massage included what today is variously known as *do-in*, *anma*, *shiatsu* and *acupressure*. Mentally, the aspects of meditation, in one form or another, were taught. As a corollary to these, breathing techniques were taught.

In the old method of teaching, one was expected to be a Renaissance wo/man and to be a model for the lesser ranks to emulate in both the *dojo* and in your personal life.

This was what “black belt” meant to us.

Promotions

As with Wilson *Kancho*, I prefer the method of promoting when I believe the student is ready rather than having him/her prepare for a test. This, of course, is dependent upon the student being interested in being promoted. Wilson *Kancho* believed that if he had worked with a student for a number of months or years he knew that student’s capabilities and did not need to formally test him or her.

I promote this way for a number of reasons. The foremost being the student must continually work out, as s/he does not know when the promotion is going to take place. With a set date, the student sets a goal, attains it, and then may stop or work out infrequently until time for the next rank. I will also find out if, as mentioned above, the student is even interested in promotion. Preparing for his/her rank test is similar to preparing for a standardized test in academia. One may do well on the answers, but has not truly learned – more to the point, one has not learned how to learn, which should be the criterion.

I believe also that the *sensei* should be able to observe the student over a period of time and learn if the student is dedicated and sincere about the art, rather than obsessed about the rank.

The old saying, “Rank follows the person,” is true.

If one simply prepares for rank testing, then the student follows the rank. If one trains for the sake of learning, then the rank follows the student.

To have the student go through a formal test may be indicative of knowledge and stamina, but his or her sincerity for the art/s is not tested.

A compromise would have the student train and the instructor tell them “this Saturday (or designated day of the week), you will be tested for your next rank.” If one element of the test is stress under pressure, this should do it. Obviously, you would need to know, surreptitiously, if the student were available on that date.

Muay Thai aka Thai Kickboxing

Muay Thai is a sport, martial skill, king of science and an art form. It has been taught and handed down for over 2000 years. Today, Muay Thai is a form of fighting (boxing) that includes the use of the hands, feet, knees and elbows. In its earliest form, it also included the use of the head. The boxer used his entire body to bite, kick, punch, grasp and headbutt. It was an all-in fighting with the weapons with which human beings were naturally endowed.

Originally the hands were wrapped with raw cotton string. The hand was then dipped in glue and sprinkled with finely ground glass or grit. The rounds were eleven in number and each lasted three minutes. There was one referee and no judges. Gloves were used, beginning in 1929, and rules replaced sporting spirit and untempered raw courage of the real man. Boxers of the past were skillful and too proud to take unfair advantage over an opponent. They fought for a clean victory, which could be doubted by no one. When Thai boxing reached India, anyone aspiring to be king had to learn 4 boxing disciplines out of 15 subjects. These four disciplines were Kanika, or the art of body movement, Atihasa, or the history of heroic ancestors, Maya, or the art of boxing and Munta, or magic spells. One could tell the regional origin of the boxer's style by the Wai Kruu dance done before each match. This is a Ceremony of Paying Homage to the Teacher, and was formerly known as Khuen Khruu. This was a ceremony of submitting one's self as an obedient student who could be taught easily and possessed the courage to make himself a soldier of the king. Lack of interest on the part of the Thai government led to the loss of secret master tricks due to the death of the masters who practiced them so that very little is known about the six fatal secret tricks, using bare hands, which can kill the opponent.

A unique aspect of Thai boxing is fighting across classes and categories. Small, light boxers have been known to win against larger, heavier opponents. A boxer who has truly absorbed the art is always respectful and courteous, humble and self-disciplined. He is in constant control of his emotions, "as gentle as a lamb, as fierce as a lion."

Massage plays an important part in Muay Thai and is divided into two main categories. The first is therapeutic and consists of *effeurage*, or stroking the muscles with the flat or heel of the hand. The second type of therapeutic massage is *friction*, which involves pressing with the thumbs or making circular motions to increase the flow of blood through the muscles. This prepares the boxer for combat. The second category is that of stimulating massage and is divided into three sub-categories. First is *tapotement*, or striking with the heel of the hand. This energizes the muscles. Second is *petrissage*, which involves circular manipulation of the muscles with the thumbs and forefingers. This is good for resting periods between rounds. Third is *vibration* massage, which transmit movements directly into the muscles. It is used for stimulating and arousing the muscles and is done today with electrical massage devices. Massage is beneficial in the following ways. The physical benefits include mechanical responses through which lymph and blood cells remove impurities and waste products from the body. The second of the physical benefits is used to improve reflex action by improving and accelerating the performance of the nervous system. The psychological benefits of massage include a positive affect on the boxer's mind, helping him to relax, reduce worry and anxiety. It also helps him keep alert and filled with energy.

There are ten key exercises for getting into condition:

- Yaang Saam Khum or stealthy Thai boxer's walk. This is the basis of all footwork. It is similar to *tsugi ashi* in a diagonal direction (either to the front or rear).
- Salakkhaang or basic Thai boxer's stance. This refers to the position of the lead hand. The position is similar to the end position (*kime*) of *karate's tate hiji ate*. The right hand is at the right side of the head.
- Saang Thaang Sawan is a defensive position for the arms. It is the opposite of salakkhang. The hand and arm are in a similar position for the *tsukuri* portion of *karate's uraken yokomawashi uchi*. The right hand is at the left side of the head. The major difference is the palm faces out rather than toward the head.
- Magkawn Rawn Haang is an exercise for the legs. The boxer kicks rapidly toward the buttocks with the foot, actually attempting to strike the buttock. This is used in a clench, with the boxer kicking the opponent's calf muscle with the heel.
- Aew Naang Phikhaat is the Thai boxer's hook punch, aiming at the floating ribs or kidneys. This is used to move in on the opponent.
- Maad Phayak Hak Daan is an arm swinging method. The arms are circled backward and downward. This is used defensively, to block the opponent's blows. It may also be used offensively to strike the solar plexus or heart when the arms swing upward at the end of the cycle.
- Thawaan Yio is the Thai boxer's hip rotation exercise. This is designed to help strengthen the abdomen and avoid blows to it.
- Kio Khao Khalao Chan is the exercise beginning with touching the toes, then arching the body backwards to toughen the stomach muscles.
- Prachan Suk Haan has the knee raised as though to kick oneself in the chest. The boxer raises himself on his toes, and then raises one knee, alternating right and left. This is designed to protect the boxer against kicks while simultaneously freeing the hands to protect the upper body.
- Khwaan Ok Insee is a kicking exercise. From an open-leg stance, the boxer extends his arms, palms down. He then kicks the right palm with the right foot, followed by the left foot to the left palm. This prepares the boxer for kicking the opponent's chin, which can be a crippling or killing blow.

The Thai boxer uses twenty-two basic lethal points on the human body:

1. The bridge of the nose. Straight punch or jab; downward elbow.
2. Above the ear. Elbow; swing punch.
3. The jaw. High kick; backward elbow; hook, swing or straight punch.
4. The philtrum (upper lip). Same as the bridge of the nose.
5. The point of the chin. High kick; jumping knee kick; "floating" knee kick, in which the left foot is raised from the ground, followed by the right knee, which contacts the chin; rising elbow; "uppercut."
6. Adam's Apple. Same as the philtrum. An added advantage is that the body has a reflexive mechanism for protecting this area by lowering the chin. When this is done, a knockout punch to the chin can be made.
7. The clavicle. If the clavicle is broken, the shoulder and arm become useless.
8. The armpit. A strong upward kick may tear the shoulder tendons and ligaments, badly dislocating the shoulder.

9. The solar plexus. “Floating” knee kick; straight punch; forward kick. As this point lies near the heart, it is especially dangerous. Ribs may be broken and driven into the heart, resulting in death.
10. The floating ribs; kick with the foot or knee. A broken rib may puncture the lung.
11. The abdomen. Weapons as for the solar plexus.
12. The groin. The boxers believe that anyone who is not prepared to protect this area should not be a Thai boxer.
13. The inner wrist can be dislocated by a kick or a strong block.
14. The shins may be easily fractured due to brittleness.
15. The instep. If the tendon is hit hard and damaged the sole of the foot and the ankle may be injured.
16. The base of the cerebellum. Repeated blows can lead to nervous disorders, sight loss or complete blindness.
17. The upper back (vertebrae).
18. The kidneys.
19. The coccyx. Repeated blows to this area can cause temporary paralysis.
20. The hollow of the knee. Repeated blows can collapse the leg, so the boxer cannot stand on it.
21. The calf. Repeated blows can cause the calf to cramp, rendering the leg useless.
22. The Achilles’ heel. A hard blow can cause a crippling affect, and even if not damaged, a strong blow is painful.

One instructor states that Thai boxing is not simply having a few punches and kicks; it is essential to know how to survive in the ring.

As in *capoeira*, musical instruments are played during a bout. These include the *pi java*, or Javanese clarinet, *klong kack*, a set of two drums (the high pitched drum is known as the male drum and the low pitched drum is known as the female drum), *shing*, or cymbals, and *kong* another drum originating from the south of Thailand.

The best book your *hanshi meiyō kyōju* has found on Muay Thai is *Muay Thai, the Most Distinguished Art of Fighting* by Panya Kraittus and Dr. Pitisuk Kraittus.

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