



Aikenkai Shotokan Karatedo Federation

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Bunkai

In Japanese, “bunkai suru” means “to take apart; disassemble”. In “budō”, “bunkai” would therefore be analyzing and applying the principles, techniques and skills “kata” were designed to teach. “Oyo” in Japanese means “application”. When “budōka” use the term “bunkai oyo”, it means applying “bunkai” to situations not strictly present in the “kata”.

When we say that all self-defense can be found within the “kata”, what we mean is that through careful analysis of each “kata” at “shoden”, “chuden” and “hiden” levels, all principles, techniques and skills of self-defense/for self-protection may be learned. If a specific “kata,” say “Jitte”, is under consideration, and a countering drill to the “bunkai” is set up so that the “bunkai” is effectively blocked, then the “karateka” must counter the counter with “bunkai oyo” to defend/protect himself. This “oyo” sequence, however, might be the “bunkai” of another “kata”, for example “Heian Yondan”. Therefore, all “bunkai oyo” are in fact the “bunkai” of other “kata”.

Combat tactics and self defense courses teach “oyo”, techniques abstracted from “kata”. There is a randomness to this and the training has no traditional philosophy, psychology, physiology or kinesiology to ground and inform it. The objective of the “budōka” must be to perceive “kata” as the martial curriculum in which all “kihon”, “kumite”, “bunkai” and “bunkai oyo” are rooted.

There are four (4) major categories of application or “bunkai” principles:

1. Techniques of restraint.
2. Neurological shutdowns.
3. Attacks to the respiratory system.
4. Methods of stunning/shocking.

Within the four (4) major categories are 12 defensive themes. These are intertwined within the “kata”. They are:

1. Seizing nerves.
2. Attacking blood passages.
3. Twisting bones and locking joints.
4. Attacking connective tissues (tendons/ligaments/cartilage).

5. Take downs.
6. Throws.
7. Grappling.
8. Chokes.
9. Ground work.
10. Counter attacks.
11. Impacting anatomically vulnerable zones.
12. Digging into the body cavities unprotected by the skeletal structure.

Each individual movement should have as its objective “ikken hisatsu”, meaning literally “one fist, certain death”. This term is derived from a similar expression in “kendo”, and means that each technique must have finishing/knock down power. This is what distinguishes hard styles such as traditional karate from soft styles. The overall mentality of the “budōka” must be “shin ken shobu”, or “taking it to the end, to the death”.

We train to calm the mind; this is the spiritual, emotional and mental component of karatedo. And we train for application; this is the mental and physical component. Traditional karate is a physical practice within a much larger spiritual context; however, these are in practice inseparable and their relationship synthetic and imperceptible.

Continue training. Train more.