



Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyohan

The History and Fundamentals of Goju-Ryu Karate

by Yamaguchi Gogen "The Cat"

Yamaguchi was the legendary and colorful early 20th century karate master who founded Japanese Goju-Ryu -- one of Japan's largest and most successful karate organizations. Among the many famous martial artists who were influenced by his teachings was Mas Oyama, who went on to form his own organization, Kyokuyushin karate. Such organizations as Seido Juku karate, founded by Tadashi Nakamura, one of Oyama's top students, still practice many goju-ryu kata. One of Yamaguchi's American students, Peter Urban, helped introduce goju-ryu into the United States, but later broke away to found his own American Goju-Ryu Association.

Editor's Note: This and two following excerpts from the book by Yamaguchi were to appear as one article in the seventh and final edition of Bugeisha Magazine that did not go to press. They appear on FightingArts.com with permission of Bugeisha's editor, Angel Lemus, and Mastersline/Rising Sun Video Productions. Lemus is now a Site Advisor to FightingArts.com. Part two in this series is "**The Significance of Kata**", and part three is "**Practice Fighting**" will be posted soon.

Karate-Do

Karate-do was born combining kakutojutsu [fighting martial arts], which had been studied in Okinawa 500 years ago, and kempo, which was introduced from China. As you can see in many countries, fighting martial arts have been handed down in each country. Some remain a national sport and others remain just a sport among others.

In Okinawa, for a long time, using any kinds of weapons was prohibited because of a policy of prohibiting weapons. For that reason, they had to invent toshukuken, the way to fight without a weapon. This was especially true in the beginning of the 17th century since it was thought that fighting martial arts, referring to Chinese kempo, was invented among Ryukyu [Okinawa] samurai because their weapons were banned. In Okinawa, before it was called karate, it had two names, one was Naha-te and the other was Shuri-te.

These are the names of regions. The source of present day styles are these two te. Naha-te was invented by Tono [Higaonna] Kanryo Shihan, who went to Fuku-ken-sho [also Fukien-sho, Fujian Province] in China and learned Chinese kempo, which was combined with Naha-te and named Shorei-ryu.

Shuri-te was represented by Matsumura Soken Shihan. It has been separated as Matsu-Toukan-ryu, Shito-ryu, and Wado-ryu. The history of Goju-ryu begins with Miyagi Chojun Shihan who is an unparalleled saint [fuseishutsu no kensei].

Miyagi Shihan was born in Meiji era 20 [1888] to a famous house in Naha, Okinawa. He had practiced karate since he was 14-years old with Tono Kanryo Shihan. In Meiji 36 [1904], when he was 16 years old, he was ordered to go to Fuku-ken-sho, China, and practiced Chinese kempo.

In China, Miyagi received rough and strict training. At the same time he studied theory from old books. After he came back from China, he compared Chinese kempo and Okinawa-te. Miyagi adopted his unique and effective way of breathing, which he called ikibuki [also ibuki],

a way of preliminary exercise that is necessary for mastering karate-do. Ikibuki is also a supportive scientific exercise that is related to the structure of the body and its movement.

After that, Miyagi continued studying and reorganized both Chinese kempo and Okinawa-te's merits and added his own ideas. This is how Goju-ryu was born. Goju-ryu's name was extracted from the Bubishi, a Chinese documentary record.

One of eight Kyo phrases (precepts of Chinese martial arts) in the Bubishi (the once secret White Crane and Monk Fist Boxing text owned by many Okinawan karate masters) is called "Hogoju." Because it means "the method of absorbing and releasing hard [go] and soft [ju]," the style was named Goju-ryu. Miyagi taught karate at an Okinawan police training school, a Naha public business school, an Okinawan teachers' school, and an Okinawan health centre. In Showa 4 [1929], Miyagi was invited by a karate club at Kyoto University and by Kansai University, with honor, to become an advising teacher. He was then invited to teach permanently by Ritsumeikan University. Over time, Miyagi spread his methods throughout Japan and took the initiative of Goju-ryu.

By that time, the author of this book was recognized by Miyagi Shihan and was left the responsibility of spreading Miyagi's method of guidance, creating a family of Goju-ryu, and organizing the All-Japan Karate-do Goju Association. Moreover, Miyagi Shihan was invited to Hawaii by a newspaper company, where he taught karate for one year and contributed to Goju-ryu karate-do in and outside of Japan. After World War II, Miyagi went back to Okinawa and quietly worked for the civil administration as a physical education coach. In October of Showa 28 [1953], he passed away.

Fundamental Idea of Goju-Ryu Karate-Do

Goju-ryu karate-do is composed of Yo [Yang], which is positive; and In [Yin], which is negative, as the ideographs [kanji] "Go" and "Ju" indicate. This is why the fundamental idea is so unique and has beauty. The eternal life of the universe develops with positive and negative working together. This is the same for the lives of humans. Life has Yo and In, or Go and Ju, both sides for all our lives, sometimes connected by becoming the will and harmony. The ancients who chose karate as a means of fighting endured their strict and rough practice to protect themselves and to win.

You can see that Goju-ryu is still keeping a primitive form for actual fighting when you practice the Sanchin and Tensho kata, which represent Go and Ju. In Sanchin, you make the whole body, all the nerves, etc. extremely tense and do not let your guard down even for a moment. On the other hand, in Tensho, you do not show a gush of fighting spirit, you keep it inside your body and wait for a chance to use it. As a result, Tensho draws a gentle curve and flows. The techniques of Goju-ryu use its own unique method of breathing, which is called ikibuki. The technique can be changed from Go to Ju or Ju to Go; and while you move without distraction, you still go along with the movements of the opponent. If the opponent comes by Go, you respond with Ju and restrain him. If the opponent comes by Ju, you use Go and temper him. Ikibuki is the way of breathing that controls conscious breathing from ordinary unconscious breathing. You go with the movement and breathing of the opponent and lead your physical condition to most advantageous situation. It is useful for concentrating your muscles and mind.

Goju-ryu has many postures that use the names of animals, like the cat, dog, crane, tiger, and dragon. In ikibuki, you imagine that a lion is roaring. When animals stand ready to fight, they are on their guard and all their power is concentrated for fighting. That form does not have anxiety or fear. They are just thinking about defeating the enemy. There is no desire of self-gratification and no dishonesty. You can say that they are desperate. The reason that the color of the old budo is very strong in modern budo is that we see the importance in the forms and the ikibuki of these animals. These aspects are the original aspects of Go, however, it is not perfect to emphasize the aspect of Go, in other words, the height of the form. If a strife of

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Go is one side, there has to be Ju on the other that avoids strife. That is how character building can be accomplished by Goju-ryu.

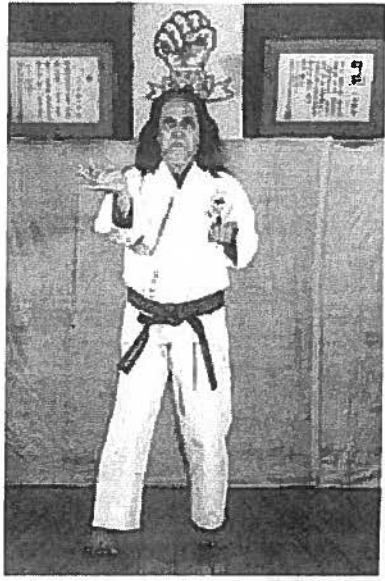
In the future, karate-do should not be a technique to defeat humans. When it gives an edge to others and yourself, then initially, it becomes a precept as Do and practice becomes valuable. In modern times, there is a method of instruction and a way of studying karate-do as a sport, but I do not know how the readers interpret karate-do, as a budo or just a sport in common with the West. Certainly, you can think that there is no difference from other sports when you refer to the rules of the game. Also, the main purpose of sports is to train the mind and body at the same time. It applies to budo as well. Yet, it is difficult to say that the many events that have been invented in the West are simply sport and that only Japanese ancient grappling games are called budo. Presently, there are Olympic games and many kinds of events. Judo, kendo, and karate-do have been introduced as sports. Their sporting elements are emphasized and introduced by many people and have also been reformed to become a sport. Still, there will be a big difference in the mental attitudes between people who practice karate as a sport and as a budo. This is because our society is formed into many organizations, sometimes in a family, school, or workshop. In these societies, the purpose of sports is to make healthy minds and bodies, to bring together a sense of cooperation to make a member of society adapt to this human society. Moreover, it promotes the improvement of a member of society. By having characteristics common to all by sports, the events are used to encourage making peace in the world.

What about budo? Budo did not originate in a peaceful atmosphere. It was necessary to protect one's life at the time, and to learn how to use budo as a weapon and achieve one's responsibility as a warrior. It was the warrior's duty to develop spirit. This rule was established in the hierarchy. It was the theory of a warrior to desire winning a war.

Modern budo is not the extension of ancient budo. Right now, there is no hierarchy like in samurai society. Society does not force you to destroy human life; however, one of the conceptions of ancient budo is skill inherited in modern budo. Before, warriors practiced budo and respected it as Do, suffering, and facing death. In spite of the fact that death is the destiny of all human beings, the idea of death is dreadful. I do not doubt that the ancient budo philosophy was resisted by human beings facing death and yet also the way of character building to learn to overcome death. For a living thing, instead of knowing that life is the most precious thing, death was the naught. As a result of putting oneself in the naught, they could ignore their fear of death.

In the ancient budo book, Hagakure, it is written that budo is death. In these words, you can find the spirit of budo, which is superior to death. In other words, an object of the fear of death is neither others, nor weapons -- it is oneself. As a result, it was necessary to obtain a technique to protect oneself and one had to have a strong spirit to correspond to that. When one could overcome a conception of death, there was an improvement of a human being as a samurai. When it was developed, karate-do was used in place of weapons and studied that way so that the spirit of the samurai was needed at the beginning of its conception to learn karate. Now there are rules, but the techniques and elements have not changed.

The goal of many sports is competition; however, there is a sense of entertainment or hobby. On the other hand, karate is the fight against one's self without having an object. In sports, records are saved and defeating these records becomes the success. They are introduced to many people as a means of character building and harmonizing mankind, and they are kept. In karate-do, there is nothing to be recorded. The more superior is judged by the technique used. Now, karate is the battle against one's self and a means of the way of one's life not to defeat others or to die. This solitary fight is to know one's own spirit and the desire to the naught that is superior to the limitation of the body. If one's aspiration is a formal victory or defeat, that is just a stage of learning techniques, not a faith of kyo or mu. As an author, I also studied Yoga and Shinto to seek this faith. I also trained myself to get closer to the strictness and mystery of Do.



WHEN YOU
perform kata,
the most
important
thing is your
mental
attitude."

In conclusion, it is not necessary to be strong even though you practice karate-do. You want to be stronger than others because you compare your strength with others. The object of karate-do is Do, not comparing with someone else, and this Do will continue forever and ever.

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The Significance of Kata

by Yamaguchi Gogen "The Cat"

Editor's note: This article is the second in a three part series excerpted from Yamaguchi's classic karate text, "Goju Ryu Karate Do Kyohan: The History and Fundamentals of Goju-Ryu Karate," now in reprint. The first article was "The History and Fundamentals of Goju-Ryu Karate," and the third article is "Practice Fighting."

Before You Start Kata

Today, karate-do has become widespread not only in Japan but also all over the world and competitions are held in many places. Most of them are title matches by a game of kumite. For that reason, the purpose of practice is to win the competition; therefore, most of the players emphasize practicing kumite. They do not practice kata as much as is needed. I think this is because karate has spread internationally by turning to competition, like other sports, instead of the unification of each karate ryu-ha. I feel that this is very unfortunate.

While learning karate from the late Miyagi Chojun Shihan when I was a student, it was Okinawan karate itself. Therefore, all the practices were basics and kata training; the practice of kata was very strict. I had to express the fruit of effort by basics training in kata. After that, I reformed many techniques that are used in kata for kumite and when I started to practice jiyu kumite, I could confirm that the Goju-ryu kata are very theoretical for the actual fight.

Kata is the attitude of self-defense that you perform with a presumed attack in mind as well as your defense on a fixed embu-line (the line of movement of the kata), to protect yourself from a hypothetical enemy with your body that is trained well by strict practice. Which means you structure the attack from the hypothetical enemy with a meaningful and effective counterattack systematically. You perform individually with the interpretation based defense and on that theory. Moreover, the purpose of Goju-ryu kata is not only the practice of techniques but also the training of the body (or gathering your internal thoughts), as a result, you can say that kata is the "expression of yourself when you learn karate-do."

You can learn kata wherever and whenever you want. Anyone, old or young, men or women can learn at their own pace. Especially girls and boys. Not only can children learn the real meaning of self-defense, which is the original purpose of kata, but it can also be one of the methods to train their body. Still, the structure of the acts of kata has the elements of symmetry and balance so that the value of it (aesthetic expression of body form) can be obtained.

1. Kata is composed of these elements:
2. The manner of Rei (bow)
3. The direction of embu-line (pattern of movement)
4. The combinations of techniques
5. The uses of attack, defense and postures
6. The strength and the speed of techniques
7. Kiai (shout) and Kihaku (projecting the spirit)

There is no
end to the
practice of
kata."

8. Gathering one's thoughts
9. The strength and speed as whole kata
10. Introduction, development, turn and conclusion
11. How to breathe (Ikibuki)
12. The time of embu (kata performance)

The Origin Of Kata

When karate-do was called te (meaning "hand") in Okinawa, there was neither an organization nor a ryu-ha (an organized style passed down over time) at that time. The practice of te had been accomplished secretly in Naha and Shuri (districts which divide Okinawa in two). The practice was very strict. It was not like the practice you do in a team at the dojo, which most people do now. The practice was done headed by a teacher with a few students, or one-on-one training. The place was sometimes in a room floored with tatami mats (traditional rectangular Japanese straw floor mats), sometimes in a field or on the beach. Training was always done in a natural environment while hiding from others and in secret. For that reason, there were no textbooks to hand down dealing with kata. It was instructed by the ancients, body to body so that the origins of many kata are unknown.

Currently, there are 60 types of kata from Naha and Shuri; however, because the origins of Naha-te and Shuri-te are different, the names and the way they are done show a big difference. The person who systematically structured kata for Naha-te is Higaonna Kanryo Shihan (master teacher), who was the shihan of Mr. Miyagi Chojun. For Shuri-te, it was Matsumura Soshu Shihan. As I explained in, "The History of Karate-do," Higaonna Kanryo Shihan went to Fukuken-sho in China and learned Chinese kempo. He put Naha-te and Chinese kempo together and created the basic form of Sanchin and Tensho. Ikibuki was invented by Miyagi Chojun Shihan, who inherited the style from Higaonna Kanryo Shihan. When the breathing method was taken into kata, the kata were improved. After that, the kata Gekisai numbers 1 and 2 were created to spread the kata of Goju-ryu.

Chinese names are used for Goju-ryu kata because both Higaonna and Miyagi Chojun Shihan learned Chinese kempo in China. Presently, the names of kata are written in katakana (one of three Japanese syllabaries), however, in this book, Sanchin and Tensho are written in kanji (characters).

About Embu-Line

An embu-line is the fixed direction and angles of the body when you perform kata or when you attack, defend, and turn the body. There are eight basic directions: front and back, left and right, oblique of front, back, left, and right. For performing kata, embu-line has to be structured in these eight directions in a fixed order and you have to perform the prescribed technique from a prescribed standing position on this line. Each kata has a different embu-line.

The Method Of Practice And Points To Pay Attention

When you perform kata, the most important thing is your mental attitude. Kata is not a play. You have to perform it seriously. It is easy to remember the order of kata, but the essence is not only to have performed the kata, but how you acted. For that reason, you have to practice the basics, such as the standing position, how to defend, how to thrust, and how to kick every day.

When you remember the order of kata, you have to practice the used techniques in kata individually and repeatedly, then you can connect the techniques you practice. When you are able to do this basic practice, you have to think of the technique as kata and not the individual



It is not the number of kata you know, but the substance of the kata you have acquired"

techniques. You have to pay attention to how long it takes, strength, and speed, so that you can move and turn the body without waste.

The embu-line is fixed. You start from the starting point and come back to the starting point. One way to practice is to put a mark on the starting point when you act. When dan [black-belt level] grades perform, individuality appears in kata, but it is better not to develop an extreme habit.

There is no end to the practice of kata. Even though a person who has a high dan performs, the acts are never perfect. The practice is unlimited because kata is for improving yourself mentally and physically. Yet the performance has to be improved in different ways with each step as a beginner, whether you have kyu [colored belt level] or dan (black belt level), although you are performing the same kata. Knowing a difficult kata does not mean you have a high dan. In some foreign countries, sometimes they evaluate a person by the number of kata they know. I believe that it is not the number of kata you know, but the substance of the kata you have acquired.

The important things are:

1. How to bow
2. The posture
3. The placement of the eyes
4. Kiai (shout), kihaku (projection of spirit)

When you perform kata without an opponent, you feel like there is no meaning in the technique so that the fist of seiken-tsuki (basic straight punch) or the tightness of the standing position can be loosened. You should not think that you are doing the attack or the defense by yourself; you always have to think that you are defending against an attacker.

And of course last, the secret of improving kata is to repeat the practice since just the theory will not help.

Gorei of Kata -- From Rei to Hajime

Usually you do kata by the gorei [commands] of a person who has a higher kyu or dan than you. There are two ways to gorei: One is to gorei in the beginning and the end. The other is to gorei each technique, by numbers. Especially, the latter is used for practice of Fukyu-gata (it will be explained later). It is used when you practice with many people, such as beginners. However, in principle, the practices of techniques are done without gorei. All the practice of kata is done by starting the gorei of "rei" (bow), "mokuso" (close your eyes to clear your mind), the name of the kata, "yoi," (prepare commend) and "hajime" (begin the kata) by a leader. If there is no leader, you try to gorei in your mind by yourself.

Rei, Standing at Attention

Stand in musubi-dachi (heels together, open toe stance) and put your hands down with the fingers straight. The thumbs have to be bent from the second joints inside. This is the posture of kiotsuke (attention). You have to release the power of the body. You bend the upper part of the body by the gorei (command) of "rei" (bow) by a leader. The eyes have to be staring at the floor two meters in front of you .

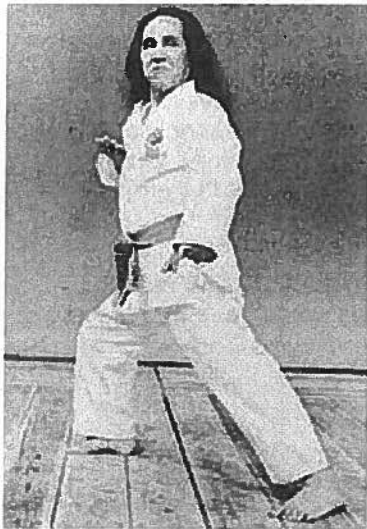
"Mokuso" is for calming your mind and gathering your thoughts before you perform. You stand straight and close your eyes lightly. Mokuso is different each time. The leader will call gorei and the name of the kata when he judges the performer's mind is calm. (Usually it takes three breaths, or about ten seconds, to be calm.)

When the leader calls "yoi," (prepare) you have to cross both hands in front of your body while you breathe in; and then, while you are breathing out, bring both fists to your sides as if you are tightening your belt, then tighten both armpits like you are pushing at the floor with your fists and put power in your whole body. You open both heels to the outside and when you breath out, bring them to heiko-dachi (parallel stance). This posture has another name, jinno-dachi. It is the posture before you get in ready posture (kamae). All the muscles of your body have to be tensed. The placement of your eyes is a little bit higher than the height of the eyes.

The reason you cross both hands in front of your body is to cover the groin area from a sudden attack; at the same time, you show the opponent that you will not attack suddenly. As in the etiquette of the samurai in which they take off a katana (sword) from the waist and change it to the right hand showing that no cowardly act, such as slashing the opponent without notice, will occur. From that meaning, the inside of the hand that is crossed has to be your dominant arm.

The points to pay attention to when you are in yoi posture:

1. Do not put the power on the shoulders.
2. Pull in your chin and put power in the abdominal muscles; however, do not be stooped.
3. Straighten your back but do not stick out the abdomen.



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Before Starting Kumite (Practice Fighting)

In kumite, you use all the basic techniques, movements, and kata for actual attacks and defenses. There is yakusoku kumite, in which the movements are performed by the book; and jiyu-kumite, in which the movements are performed freely.

In either instance, the practice will be changed from a single practice to a practice with more than one person so that there are many things you have to pay attention to.

First of all, you have to choose the right opponent. The first condition is, you should choose someone who is the same level as you are, or preferably better than you are. You can see that when you practice the basics or movements of kata it is helpful if you have more than one person to practice

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with because you can defend against many types of opponents.

The techniques and standing positions used in the practice of kumite are the same as the practice of basic techniques; however, in jiyu kumite, different techniques or standing positions can be used. Yet, the foundation has to be the extension of the basics.

Although you did very well in individual practices and you have very good basics, having an opponent in actual kumite is very difficult and you cannot perform as you want. When you practice kumite, you have to pay attention to the next points:

First, there has to be a certain distance. Even though you have a strong attacking technique, if the distance is too far, the attack can fail. Kumite is the combination of attack and defense, therefore, a one-sided performance is useless. The timing has to match the opponent's movements. When you use techniques in attacks and defenses in an actual fight, you have to have kime-waza [timing] when you attack consciously. In the game, this is the technique to gain the point. For the technique to be effective, your mind will have to be enriched and it appears outwardly in your kiai (shout).

When you proceed with your techniques, speed is needed; however, if you attack or change position continuously and recklessly, you cannot make use of timing. For that reason, after you perform kime-waza (timing) as zanshin (continuing spirit), you have to leave some place in your mind to enrich your power.

Furthermore, to catch the opponent's movement in advance and read his mind and therefore know which technique he will use, you have to gaze into his eyes, which is called "me-tsuke."

(1) Yakusoku-kumite

Yakusoku-kumite is the performing of movements against an opponent structured by the basics with an opponent by having the kind of techniques and the directions arranged in advance. It is decided by how many techniques the attacking side uses. It can be ippon-kumite [one-point kumite], nihon-kumite [two-point kumite], or more. The most basic techniques, which are standing, thrusting, and catching techniques, are used. It follows the basics, and both have the same standing position -- if the opponent has the right leg out in front, the other has the right leg out in front as well, or if the opponent thrusts with the right hand, the other catches his hand with his right hand. In yakusoku-kumite, the person who performs defense will use attacking techniques at the end. On the other hand, there is applied yakusoku kumite, in which the basic and applied techniques are structured promisingly for use in an actual fight. The number of techniques used are not limited in applied yakusoku-kumite; therefore, the number of structures are uncountable. Still, this is promised kumite and is usually performed by two people; however, there are practices in which three, four, or even more people perform what is called applied kumite. When applied kumite is practiced by many people depending on how many are involved.

"You cannot improve if you always think about victory."

the person on the opposite side will be indicated.

(2) Jiyu-Kumite

Jiyu-kumite refers to the practice of using all the techniques you have learned until now against an opponent. You cannot be off your guard even a second. This is a very serious training method. If you do it for enjoyment, you can get injured. Jiyu-kumite is not designed for deciding victory or defeat. It is the practice of offense and defense with the development of the techniques. You can not improve if you always think about victory. As a matter of fact, you should not excite (or stimulate) your opponent more than needed when you practice kumite. You have to respect any opponent you have when you practice.

In kumite, it is forbidden to attack your opponent with direct contact. As a principle, any technique you use will have to be stopped before it connects. However, when you are in defense, you have to practice as if you are actually being attacked. Any injuries in kumite are usually because of carelessness. Especially common is the injury of fingers when the fist is opened. The fist needs to be firmly closed. Practicing using an open hand should be restricted until you improve enough.

There are eight kyo (opportunities) to take advantage of when you attack:

1. Instantaneous kyo. Right before the opponent changes to the next movement.
2. Right after the opponent has made a movement that was not effective.
3. When the opponent lacks harmony between the techniques used and his mind, during both attack and defense.
4. When the opponent's mind is dispersed and is not really ready.
5. When the opponent loses his balance when he makes a movement.
6. Right before the opponent breathes in deeply.
7. When the opponent is confused because of your movement.
8. When the opponent is daunted by your tactics or ability.

The five unguarded moments you have to prevent when you are in defense:

1. The unguarded moment in the mind.
2. The unguarded moment in the spirit.
3. The unguarded moment in the technique.
4. The unguarded moment in the appearance.
5. The unguarded moment in the act. (The same as in normal life, if you behave badly, you have to take responsibility for your actions.) If you use techniques that do not follow the rule, that is faulty.

(3) Yakusoku-Kumite by More Than Two People

Usually, yakusoku-kumite is done by two people. One does the attack and the other the defense. Practice by repeating the attacks and defenses as the preceding stage of jiyu-kumite and shiai-kumite. I especially recommend to students who have a black belt, or who are more than third-dan, to practice yakusoku-kumite against two or three opponents, besides the one-on-one practices. Jiyu-kumite and shiai-kumite (contest fighting) are both practiced by two people. For that reason, some people interpret that the practice

"It is how you judge to defend yourself when the danger comes suddenly that is important."

against three or four people is the art of self-defense, which is unreasonably emphasized in karate.

However, the purpose of practicing is to build up your strength in kumite, and when you have many opponents, extreme reflexes are needed; therefore, you will improve changing your positions and the continuous techniques of uke (block) and tsuki (punch), technically and mentally.

Practicing is not done to win against many opponents, it is to grasp the opponents' movements quickly and precisely and for yourself to gain the advantage. Moreover, even though most of these techniques are simple ones, you have to try hard to learn that these techniques can be useful and will eventually be performed unconsciously by repeating them over and over. To learn that when you have many opponents around you, that these opponents will take the most advantageous place and that you will be in the middle, a disadvantageous situation, will allow you to think and move with all your strength.

(4) Kumite of Self-Defense for Women

Editor's note: While Yamaguchi's portrayal of women in karate is not consistent with modern thinking in the west, his statements are interesting from a historical point perspective and show that he progressive in his thinking in a country once dominated by the male point of view.

Karate-do is spreading rapidly among men. As yet, there are not many women who want to learn karate-do. However, recently, some women who are interested in karate-do can be found here and there practicing in dojo. Few women are practicing karate with men, especially in foreign countries. There are classes just for women and more women are becoming interested in karate-do.

Since ancient times, the practice of karate-do was very strict and designed for fighting. For that reason, karate had unrelated techniques for women. However, as the eras went by, karate-do modernized and now, it is thought that through practicing kata many people start learning karate as a self-defense. When women want to learn karate-do, the purpose is for self-defense as explained above. The discipline acquired during the practice, character building through courtesy, and the increased body strength are all beneficial. From ancient times on, the techniques that are used for karate are adopted to the dance of the East and the dance of Okinawa. In dance, the meaning of the dance and the movements of the hands and legs of karate are taken in an aesthetic sense. Especially, the harmony of the systematic movements in a kata is worth performing without question, by both men and women. Compared to the powerful performances by men, the elegant performances by women can be equated to a dance. It is no exaggeration if I say there are elements of the stillness you can see in Noh (Japanese ancient dance) in the movements of karate, as well as the rhythm you can see in modern dance and the delicate balance of Thai dance.

How To Practice for Women

Primarily, it was said that the women were weak and the violent movements that men do was moderate among women. Now, as you can see in the