

FUNAKOSHI GICHIN

Master Funakoshi was the head of the Shotokan, and the style was named after him. The life of Shoto is reasonably well documented, for instance in his autobiography "Karate-do My Way of Life". Although our art can be enjoyed for what it is, a brief study of the founder's work and life can be beneficial.

FUNAKOSHI THE REBEL

Born in 1868 (the beginning of the Meiji Restoration), the young man tampered with official records, changing his date of birth to 1870, so as to be allowed to sit examinations to a Tokyo medical school. Funakoshi was not allowed to enter the school, despite passing the exams, because of his topknot hair style which was illegal.

Gichin was the son of Gisu, born prematurely and expected not to live long he received special treatment from his family. At primary school he befriended the son of Yasutsune Azato.

In 1888 Funakoshi became the assistant instructor at a Primary School. To qualify as a teacher, Funakoshi had to lose his topknot, earning the disapproval of his parents.

Because karate practice was secret, Funakoshi would train in Azato's back garden, and when neighbours saw him sneaking home they would assume he had been to a brothel.

Although promoted to teach at a school in Naha, Funakoshi turned down a further promotion because it would mean being away from his karate teachers.

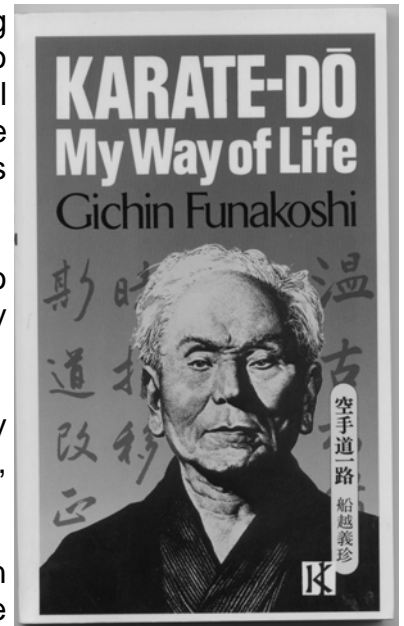
As well as Azato and Itosu, Funakoshi is known to have trained under Master Kiyuna, Master Toonno of Naha, Master Niigaki, and Master Matsumura.

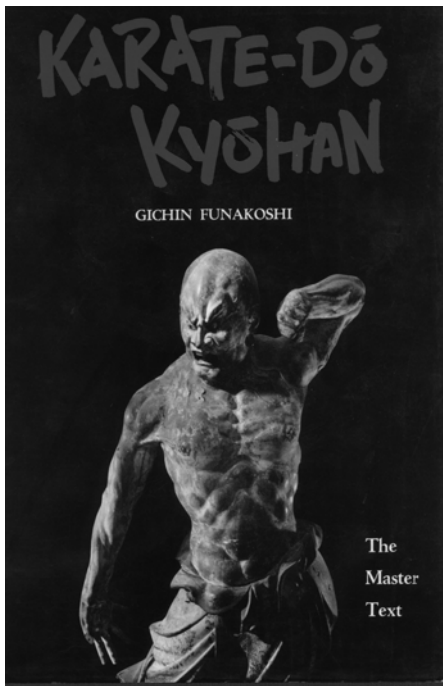
Funakoshi's father was a stick fighter, but also a drinker, and the house Funakoshi lived in was always a rented one, much of the family's inheritance dissipating in alcohol.

Funakoshi's wife held down a weaving job as well as tending the family's vegetables, and practicing kata for relaxation. She developed a reputation for being good at settling disputes.

In 1921 Funakoshi was asked by the Department of Education to introduce the "local art of karate" to the Japanese at the Women's Higher Normal School in a demonstration. Jigoro Kano, founder of Judo, had Funakoshi postpone his return home in order to present a lecture in karate at the Kodo Kan. Funakoshi remained in Japan to teach Kano some "basic moves". Teaching members of the "Tabata Poplar Club", Funakoshi decided to introduce the art to "all the people of Japan" and took on jobs as watchman, caretaker, gardener and room sweeper in his dormitory.

Students began to cluster around the master, white-collar workers were followed by students from Keio university, and then students from Takushoku university. Funakoshi instructed at the military and naval academies.





FUNAKOSHI THE AUTHOR

In 1922 Bukyosha published “Ryukyu Kempo: Karate”, Funakoshi’s first book.

In 1926 Kobundo revised the edition as Renten Goshin Karate-jitsu.

In 1935 Karate-do Kyohan was released. This book is the seminal work and is still referred to as “The Master Text”.

FUNAKOSHI THE CREATOR

In 1936 the construction of the first Karate Dojo in Japan was finished, funded by a Japan-wide committee of supporters. The building was in Zoshiqaya in the Toshima ward, and the committee called it the Shoto-Kan. Funakoshi was 68 years old. It was only once the Shoto-Kan was completed that Funakoshi adopted the Dan and Kyu system of Jigoro Kano and formalised the syllabus. Advanced in years, the master delegated his dojo to his third son Gigo, and the university clubs to his advanced students.

Many of Funakoshi’s students volunteered or were drafted to fight in the second World War. Many died. Gigo was hospitalised and the master moved in with his eldest son, Koishikawa. The Shoto-Kan was destroyed by an air raid.

After the war, Funakoshi fled to Oita in Kyushu, and was re-united with his wife rather than live in the ruined metropolis.

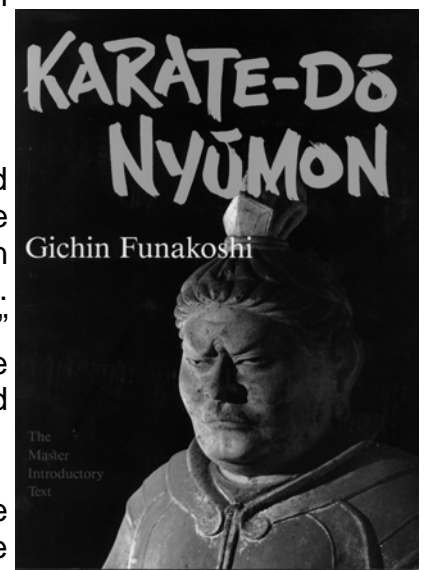
In 1947 the master’s wife died in Oita, and so he returned to Tokyo.

Funakoshi attributed his longevity to simply moderation. He favoured vegetables, though he ate fish and meat, and ate hot meals in the summer and cold in the winter. O-Sensei was an old-fashioned man who believed in supporting his family and the importance of courtesy. He would not demean himself by using the Japanese word for “socks” and he would not be seen working beside his wife in the fields, but he would support his family and in return he expected and received support from them.

Funakoshi Gichin was dedicated to his karate, and did what he thought was best for it. Although he had jobs to bring in money he was really a full-time karate instructor. The master did not request the dedication of his dojo and style to himself, but neither did he object or ask for it to be called the Azato-Kan or other such tribute.

It was Funakoshi’s intention to create a world-wide martial art.

The master died in Tokyo in 1957, aged 89.



THE KEIKO SHOTOKAN BADGE

Our group's badge is important to us as it is an identifying mark of those studying with us. All of those possessing the badge have shown that they are willing to *study* Karate, and are committed to supporting the group.

Some karate schools have badges bearing fists or flags or people performing high kicks. When our badge was designed in 1999, a lot of thought went into the elements which would come to represent our group.

The largest part of the badge is the gate symbol; a Japanese gate for a Japanese art. The gate represents a threshold into a world unlike the cluttered western lifestyle. Typically, one must be invited to cross this threshold, as beyond it is another's domain. Once within we are treated like family: made welcome and expected to behave appropriately. Once we are accepted, the domain beyond the gate becomes as much ours as it is the previous master's.

The Japanese gate is our entry into the world of Karate.

There is an old saying regarding martial arts knowledge "CHOOSE A SMALL DOOR BUT ENTER DEEPLY".

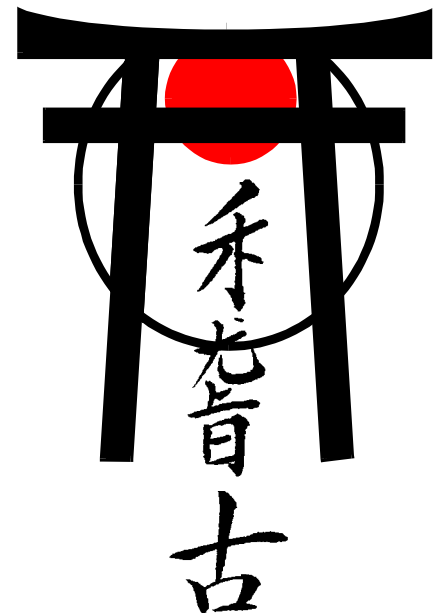
The door, and the saying, refer to everything to do with karate. Philosophically, we must study the depths of our art. A superficial look at karate only reveals people in funny costumes making strange movements and learning how to fight. Deeper than this lies the introspection which karate causes, and the character development which we aspire to.

The longer we study karate, the deeper we find it becomes. Whatever brings us to the door, we find that, within, it becomes more interesting; always with more to discover.

Technically, our techniques also seek a "small door". If one strikes a large area with another large area there is invariably noise, but usually little damage. When one takes a small pointed or bladed item and projects it into a precise point on a large area then usually damage is caused (dependent upon the force of the strike). This "small door" should also be penetrated "deeply". By projecting a weapon beyond the surface it becomes more damaging and literally less superficial.

Deep within our Karate World, but blatantly visible, we have two other elements. The first is the IN-YO symbol, often mistakenly linked to the Japanese flag, is actually the Japanese equivalent to the Chinese YIN-YANG symbol. In-Yo, and Yin-Yang contain male and female, good and bad, light and dark, creation and destruction. In each element of life and karate is the rising, growing circle which reaches its zenith and bursts; and also the greater circle which is opposite to the rising circle and also contains it. This means that everything is balanced, that there are equal and opposite parts to all forces and that within one element the opposite has its roots. The In-Yo symbol also carries the notion that everything is cyclical, that after every rise comes a fall, and after every destruction comes a creation. This is a holistic view of the universe which also shapes our Karate techniques - meeting strength by yielding, using circular movements to disrupt an opponent's attack.

The other element of our badge is the Japanese calligraphy for the term KEIKO, or "practice".



The calligraphy is more expressive than merely writing the word, as the elements for *waza*, *ki*, and *shin* are evident and, as explained elsewhere, this tells others much more about us than simply how to pronounce our name.

ENTER into Karate, and study deeply
OPPOSITES because they are in everything, and
PRACTICE to become better.



On the badges that adorn our uniforms the words KEIKO, SHOTOKAN and KARATE are also present, stating who we are, our style, and what we do. The shape of the badge is representative of a diamond; our potential. (And it's less boring than a square.) Forged over time and under immense pressure, diamonds are relatively rare, and incredibly valuable.

STRETCH YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Approaching each lesson with that little bit of nervousness and the enthusiasm and willingness to push yourself further than your comfort zone, just like you did in your first lesson, will keep you fresh. **Beginner's mind**, or *emptying your cup*, is an important philosophy for us to take with us throughout our martial arts life.

There is a term regarding your experiences; the comfort zone. When you have done something repeatedly and you know how to do it then it is comfortable. All the while you only do those same old things to that same old standard you remain your same old self inside your well-established comfort zone.

In order to be any more than you are at this moment (however good that may be), you have to stretch your comfort zone.

This is accomplished by going that little bit further than you did last time – and then repeating the process when a new comfort zone becomes established.

When you attend a training session, it is usually because you want to. Whatever trepidation you may feel is a part of that.

When the session gets going it does not feel like a long time if you throw yourself into it. It is **your** training session, and the instructor can ask you to perform techniques but only you can perform them. When you perform those techniques it is up to you to push yourself to go that little bit further, faster, harder, than you did last session.

The instructor can *yell* at you to do more, but only you can *make* yourself do it. Only you can **want** it.

Stretching your comfort zone requires bravery. Staying safely within your zone requires nothing. The bravery required to attempt any activity uncommon to you is at the heart of our martial arts;- it is what carries you through a grading examination with everyone watching you; it is what gives you the courage to spar with an unknown quantity; and, ultimately, it is what will enable you to fight back when you most need to.

The little stretches of your (self-imposed) boundaries are the hard ones, but they establish in your head and heart a habit of non-complacency and fortitude and a habit of trying harder. This is a success-habit.

There is an old saying: "The difference between winners and losers is not how many times they get knocked down, but how many times they get up".

Red Belt (8th Kyu)

The same basic movements are practiced at orange belt when attempting to become a red belt. There are also some notable additions. This grade sees the introduction of kiba dachi and ko-kutsu dachi, and the techniques yoko kekomi and yoko keage, and shuto uke.

Red Belt 8th Kyu - Fundamentals

GYAKUZUKI

The reverse punch is executed opposite the lead leg. If the right foot is in front then the left arm punches; if the left foot is in front then the right arm punches. There should be a strong feeling of thrusting with the hips for this technique.

MAE REN GERI

Stepping in front stance. This is actually two kicks and two steps. You may kick to the face and then step forward and kick to the body and step forward, or, you may kick to the body first.

Students must listen to whether they are asked for Jodan-chudan or Chudan-jodan. Between the kicks there must appear to be a fraction of a second of a rigid front stance before the second kick begins. The hips and shoulders remain square to the front throughout the performance and the supporting foot should not twist.



YOKO GERI KekomI - Side Thrust Kick

Performed from a Kiba dachi, the feet cross, stepping like a crab, before the leading knee is lifted in front of the body, heel hanging below. The edge of the foot (sokuto) is thrust out directly sideways by the piston action of the leg and the effort of the hips. The supporting foot will turn slightly due to the body's momentum. Having connected, with kime, (aided by pulling the big toe back fractionally before impact) the leg withdraws. The toes and body should be aimed to the side throughout the movement, with only the face, Kamae, and edge of the foot toward the opponent.

At no time does the heel of the kicking foot traverse below or behind the body. Performed correctly the kick will be no higher than the knee is first raised as the foot is thrust on a line between hip and heel.

YOKO GERI KEAGE - Side Rising/Snap Kick

Similar to Kekomi. The step is the same, but the leg is allowed to rise to a 45° angle between the front and side of the body. The higher the knee, the higher the kick will rise. The angle of the foot and body, face and kamae are the same as for kekomi. The difference is that this kick rises, using the knee as a hinge and the impact area is the outside edge of the instep. This is a very fast, light kick.



SHUTO UKE

Stepping in back stance. The preparatory position has the feet together, knees bent, elbows together with the hand about to strike positioned open, fingers together, by the ear; and the other hand extended, palm downwards. The stance is made very quickly by flicking the hips, the elbows pass with a customary tearing motion and the striking hand whips forward and rotates to a palm-down position. The little-finger edge of the hand is the striking area. Instead of withdrawing to the hip, the hikite returns open and palm-upwards to the solar plexus.

The striking arm should be bent to 90°, at a 45° angle from the body; and the hip should be two fists distant from the elbow. The fingers of the striking hand must be tense, together, no higher than the shoulder and no further out than the edge of the body.

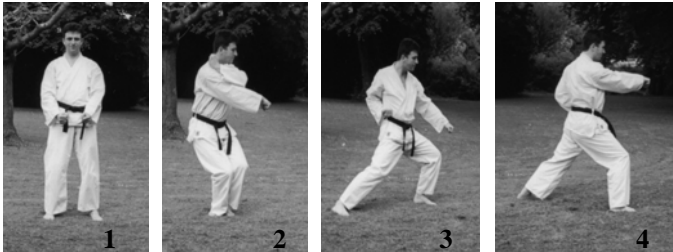


Red Belt (8th Kyu) - Kata

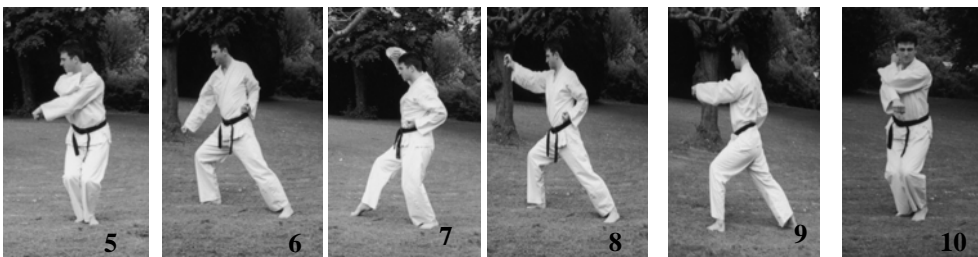
HEIAN SHODAN

Peaceful Mind Level One.

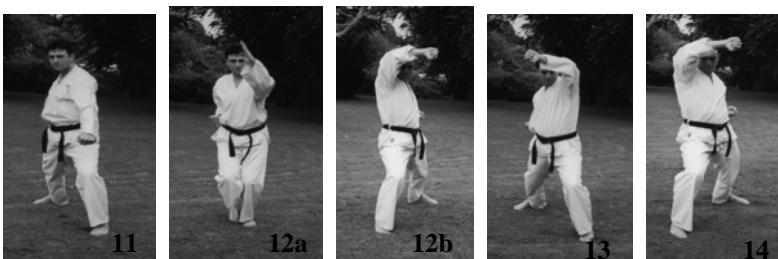
This used to be the second of the 5 heian kata until Master Funakoshi changed the order. This kata is similar to Kihon Kata, with the addition of Tettsui uchi - hammer fist, age uke, and shuto uke performed both on-line and at 45° to the line.



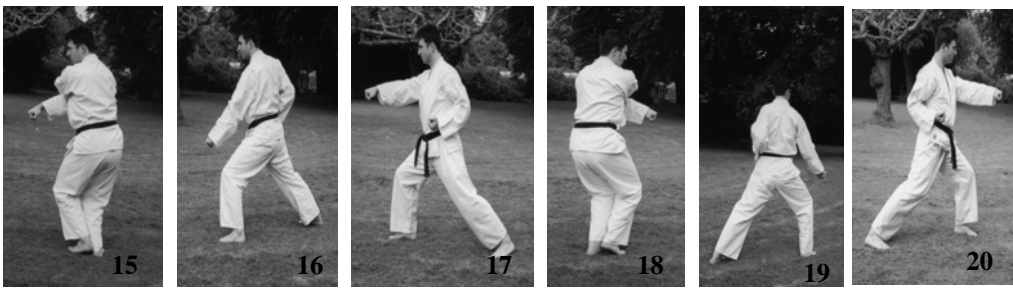
- 1) From a “ready” position:
- 2) Sink the weight by bending the knees and prepare the arms as one does in Kihon Kata
- 3) Step put into zenkutsu dachi and make gedan barai as in Kihon
- 4) Step forward and make oi zuki chudan as in Kihon Kata. Look behind.



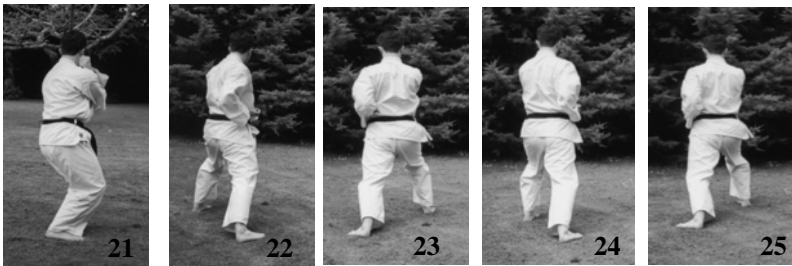
- 5) Turn 180° clockwise on the left foot by moving the right foot, as in Kihon Kata.
- 6) Make gedan barai as in Kihon.
- 7) Ensuring the tension of the right knee muscles, the right hip is pulled back, as is the right arm. Any foot movement is separate and secondary to the hip movement. This is not a “step”. The arm pulls across the body and raises in a move similar to age uke before
- 8) ...descending to make tettsui uchi (hammer fist) to the same height as the bridge of the nose. The arm remains bent and the bottom of the fist is parallel to the ground. The hip is pushed back in to resume zenkutsu dachi.
- 9) Step forward into zenkutsu dachi making oi zuki chudan.
- 10) Look to the right. Turn 90° anticlockwise to the left and prepare the arms as in Kihon.



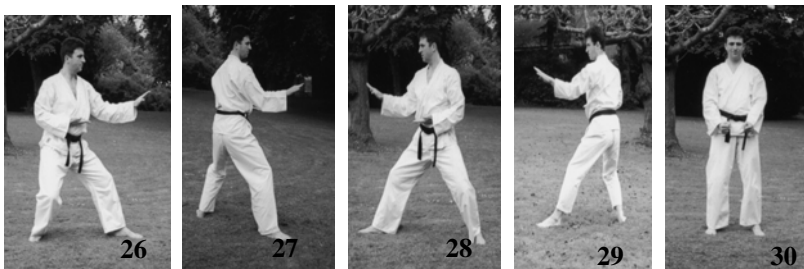
- 11) Step onto the main embusen and make gedan barai as in Kihon Kata.
- 12) Step forward and make age uke.
- 13) Step forward and make age uke.
- 14) Step forward and make age uke. **Kiai**. Look to the right



- 15) Pull the left hip sharply around anticlockwise and prepare the arms
- 16) ...to make gedan barai in zenkutsudachi to the right, just as in Kihon Kata.
- 17) Step forward and make oi zuki chudan, as in Kihon Kata. Look over the right shoulder.
- 18) Pivot 180° clockwise on the left foot, bringing the feet together and preparing the arms
- 19) ...to step out and make gedan barai, as in Kihon Kata.
- 20) Step forward into zenkutsudachi and make oi zuki chudan, as in Kihon Kata. Look to the left.



- 21) Pull the left hip sharply back and prepare the arms, as in Kihon kata.
- 22) Step into the main embusen with the left leg and make gedan barai, as in Kihon Kata.
- 23) Step forward and make oi zuki chudan, as in Kihon Kata.
- 24) Step forward and make oi zuki chudan, as in Kihon Kata.
- 25) Step forward and make oi zuki chudan, as in Kihon Kata. **Kiai.** Look to the right.



- 26) Pull the left hip sharply up and turn 90° anticlockwise to the right, stepping out into kokutsudachi whilst making shuto uke. Look 45° to the right.
- 27) Step out at 45° to the previous line and make kokutsudachi and (right) shuto uke. Look to the right.
- 28) Pull the right hip back, pivot 135° clockwise on the left foot and step out into right leg kokutsudachi and shuto uke.
- 29) Look 45° to the left. Step out at 45° to the previous line and make kokutsudachi and (left) shuto uke.
- 30) Yamae.
Naore.

Red Belt (8th Kyu) - Kumite

The Red belt syllabus repeats Gohon Kumite, as per the Orange belt. Practitioners are now expected to not move until their opponent does, not lean, and set their distance correctly.

Red Belt (8th Kyu) - Oyo Jutsu

The Evasion techniques are repeated with the addition of a deflecting/brushing hand across the body and a simple retaliation (eg. gyakuzuki). Only chudan retaliations are expected at this stage.

The retaliation should be appropriate to the distance of the opponent. Is the opponent at kicking distance? or punching distance? or elbow distance?

Practitioners are encouraged to use applications from kata.

Although only allowed to move one foot to step in for evasion nothing prevents a further movement of the same foot or another in order to facilitate your response (eg. take front foot back in to make kiba dachi for empi strike).

Grading Summary for 8th Kyu

FUNDAMENTALS (Kihon)

Oi-Zuki, Jodan & Chudan

Gyakuzuki

Age Uke

Soto Uke

Uchi Uke

Mae Ren Geri

Yoko kekomi

Yoko keage

Shuto uke

KATA

Heian Shodan

KUMITE

Gohon Kumite

Jodan Oi-Zuki

Chudan Oi-Zuki

OYO

Straight: Avoidance Steps,
Chudan retaliation

Hook: Avoidance Steps,
Chudan retaliation

YIN/YANG THEORY

We choose to use the Chinese term Yin and Yang because it is more readily accepted and recognisable than the Japanese term In-Yo. Yin and Yang are opposites, and represent everything that is an opposite or has an opposite. Yin and Yang are Male & Female; Black & White; Hot & Cold; Dead & Alive; Left & Right; Front & Back. They are equal. One cannot exist without the other. They define each other.

Yin and Yang reveal a universe in balance, where the cycle never ends and the root of one thing is in its' opposite.

Yin and Yang Theory is not just a philosophy, but applies directly to our techniques.



When we view the body of our attacker we must perceive them as having equal and opposite parts.

The body has a front and a back, a left and a right side, an inside and an outside.

An arm has a front and a back, a left and a right side, an inside and an outside.

A leg has a front and a back, a left and a right side, an inside and an outside.

As a principle of combat, we must understand that, as in physics, positive attracts negative and repels positive; or, to use Russell Stutely's term, positive is *allergic* to positive.

The theory is evident in the discomfort felt when the back of an arm is pushed towards the back of the body or the front of the arm against the front of the body. People are less comfortable when they are bent over double (front of body against front of legs).

The principle is important defensively because we learn to redirect an opponent's aggression by what side or height-level it comes from, and to take it to the opposite;- or an area that the attacking weapon is "allergic" to.

The principle is important in retaliation because if we strike with a low counter immediately followed by a high counter then the effect is magnified.

When we unite the defensive and retaliatory techniques we amplify the results even further; receiving a high attack and redirecting it low whilst striking high and then low leads to successful techniques.

Of course, when in a combat situation, we do not spend time looking for opposites, but instead react instinctively with whatever techniques we have trained most in. The point of being aware of the theory is to that we can analyse our karate while we practice it and evaluate its effectiveness. Yin-Yang theory is one way of qualifying a technique. In this way we are sure that our applications for techniques are valid.

VISUALISATION

We can perform our techniques slowly with a fellow student, checking that we are performing them correctly. We must perform our techniques against the air until they are locked in our heads, and (where applicable) against bags or pads to get a feel for impact. We hope to never have to use our techniques at full speed and power against a real opponent, but should the occasion arise it is our preparation of our *mindset* which will save us. When practising our karate, in basics, forms, or even sparring; it is the real application and the real enemy that you must see - in your mind's eye. This is mental preparation for the potential violence of this modern world.

Visualisation is the element in a technique which prevents arms and legs from flailing wildly - it provides us with the location of our target blocks and strikes, and a focus for our effort.

Distance to an opponent with full power can only be achieved with visualisation as correctly-made strikes have been proved to work *through* protective pads.

When observing practitioners, those who visualise an opponent during kata are obvious as they have tension in their movements and their eyes focus on something an observer cannot see. A visualiser's timing is more alive and critical in their own mind. One who does not "see" an opponent merely performs moves. They may push themselves to be better physically, but more often they only move their arms and legs.

Using visualisation brings about a mental state which can deal with confrontation.

Without visualisation the other elements of the technique cannot come together. How do you know when to breathe if you do not know where in it's route your technique actually connects with an opponent? Why is it so important to end your technique at that precise point, when it can go further? Five element theory, Yin-Yang theory, and pressure point theory cannot work at full power except through visualisation. Only visualisation can keep the answers in front of you. Only by listening to instruction and asking questions will you visualise the right scenario.

