

# AZATO & ITOSU

Azato Yasutsune belonged to the Tonochi class in Okinawa. These were the village chiefs by right of birth. The family village was known as Azato, and was between Shuri and Naha. Azato was considered a friend by the former Governor of Okinawa. The master was apparently taught by "BUSHI" Sokon Matsumura.

He was a scholar, a horseman, and a fencer, as well as "unsurpassed" at karate. He was Funakoshi's first teacher. Azato was politically adept, predicting the Russo-Japanese war long before it occurred. He also knew the name, addresses, and specialties of the karate teachers on the island, including their weaknesses.

Azato was tall, broad shouldered, and sharp eyed. Itosu was of average height, barrel chested; had a long moustache and the look of "a well behaved child".

Azato could not best Itosu at arm wrestling.

Itosu Ankoh was born in Shuri in 1832 and died in 1916, another remarkably long-lived individual. Itosu learned karate from Matsumura Sokon and Matsumora Kosaku. Itosu was a friend of Higaonna Kanryo. Higaonna had many notable students including the founders of the Goju Ryu, Shito Ryu, and Toon Ryu.

It was Itosu who created the Peaceful mind series of kata (Pinan in Okinawa, Heian in Japanese). Itosu taught Chibana Chosin, Gusukuma Shinpan, Yabu Kentsu, Mabuni Kenwa, and Toyama Kanken. It is worth noting that these great karateka learned from each other, and from other instructors too.

Regarded highly, Master Itosu was a scribe to the Okinawan King until 1879.

At the Shuri Jinjo Elementary School in April 1901 Itosu made karate part of the physical training curriculum. By October 1908 the master had lobbied the Prefecture Education Department into adopting the art for all students.

It seems that whereas Matsumura taught, and Azato continued, with theories of evasion, Itosu was of the opinion that one could be physically strong, afford to be slightly less mobile, and should have a physique developed enough to withstand blows. Itosu is thought to have simplified earlier kata and removed many open-handed techniques in his formulation of the Heian series, primarily because they were for teaching school children. This one act could be responsible for the current state of karate training. This mis-understanding of application stems back to the manner and content of the tuition of the Okinawan school children and their teaching of others in their later lives.



**Itosu**

# MOKUSO

## Seated Meditation

Mokuso is usually performed at the end of a training session, but could be used at any time, and may be beneficial before a session.

Kneeling in seiza, with the largest toes crossed and the spine vertical, the hands are placed palm-down at the top of the legs. The eyes are closed for mokuso. Breathing is with the belly - in through the nose, out through the mouth. One should be relaxed.

Physically, mokuso is easily accomplished.

Mentally, there is much more to mokuso.

Calming the mind, recovering the body. The inward breath can be imagined to cycle up through the nose, over the inside of the head and down the spine coiling in the belly in an ever tighter spiral until the breath is full. Outwards the spiral undoes and flows up the centre of the chest to exit through the mouth.

The inward path is along the governor meridian, down to the dan-tien or hara (seat of the soul) and out through the conception meridian. At all times the breath flows *with* the meridian. This is a cleansing and restorative process, opening the channels and allowing for easier future use. As in all things practice makes it easier.

The mind during mokuso can be allowed to wander. Some would have you believe that you must think of nothing, but it is healthy to allow unbidden thoughts into your consciousness. You do not have to dwell on these thoughts, merely acknowledge that they exist. This process is part of allowing your subconscious to do its job.

Where you require an image to calm you, when your mind is racing and confused, then an imagined candle flame is helpful. Beyond the flame is darkness and the flame is the only image you have. The flame dances and flickers, changing shape and colour, but remains a flame. Whatever else happens the flame is not distressed, it continues through whatever is thrown at it or it is extinguished. In your mind you see the flame, and it does not worry; it is a flame or it is not there.

When you wish to focus, particularly on improving a technique you must visualise a *perfect you*. With darkness all around a “you” viewed from outside of yourself, watch the image demonstrating the move or the kata perfectly. Make the visualised figure of yourself perform with the grace and strength and precision which you would like to have, and make sure that you view yourself from outside your body. See yourself but also hear the noise of your uniform, even the quiet sound of your ideal breathing. You must be able to view yourself from all angles.

This visualisation will help you to train your mind for success. Never see the miniature you



messing up a move - the figure is your ideal version and the repetition of ideal techniques will form mental pathways to aid your actual performance of techniques.

Through mokuso, and most difficult, is the retention of awareness. Without interfering with your visualisation or distracting you, there must remain an awareness of any potential threat close by. This is zanshin. Rather than being paranoid, it merely allows the subconscious to begin "watching you back", even with eyes closed. This subtle awareness will add levels of sensitivity to the ears, nose, and skin (sensation).

Mokuso can be brief or can last for hours.

Mokuso should be practiced.

# THE OPEN CIRCLE INSTITUTE

Over the years there have been many karate and martial arts organisations and associations. Within the Shotokan style politics are rife, with various factions claiming to represent Funakoshi's legacy. The Open Circle Institute is not one of these.

The OCI is a multi-style association with an outlook representing old-style martial arts in the modern situation.

Martial artists have to have insurance, which is provided by the associations, and it is always good to have a link to our art's Oriental roots; so associations are a necessity. The OCI was chosen as the association for Keiko Shotokan because of the attitude and research of its founders. They are interested in "Good Martial Arts", and not politics.

The OCI is proud to verify and stand by all the grades issued by its examiners. We are proud to wear the OCI badge, sure that none will doubt our abilities.

The OCI is behind pioneering research into karate techniques, revealing added benefits and factors of our existing combinations and the true power in our oldest kata.

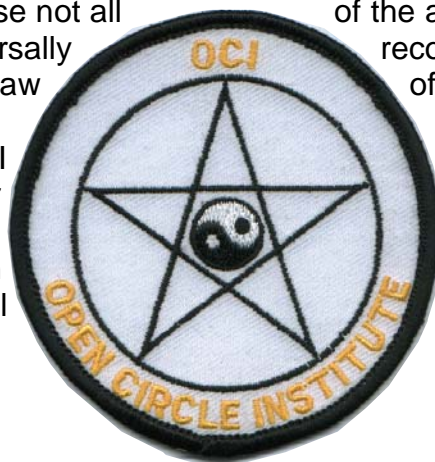
Within the OCI badge we find many of the factors which represent our art.

The badge is a circle, without beginning or end, representing the martial arts. The circle does not have sides and does not take sides (except inside and outside - you're either in or you're out).

The circle is also symbolic of the Five Element Theory - Cycle of Creation. The badge acts as a key, revealing the Traditional Chinese Medicine route for creating/ enhancing energy; Fire feeds Earth feeds Metal feeds Water feeds Wood feeds Fire. This is a daily cycle along the meridians and is explained elsewhere. Far from being an occult symbol, the star in the centre of the circle merely represents the cycle of destruction of those same five elements; Fire destroys Metal destroys Wood destroys Earth destroys Water destroys Fire. Of course, the destructive cycle star has points:- pressure points which are an intrinsic part of our art.

In the centre of the Chinese Medicine 5 Element Cycle diagram we find the Yin-Yang symbol. The OCI do not use In-Yo because not all of the arts they represent are Japanese, whereas Yin-Yang is a universally recognised symbol. At the heart of the association's badge is the law of opposites.

The very name of the OCI are not an "association" or academic institute. The circle is to anyone, with the emphasis on the top of this association are still teach us already.



reflects their intentions. They "union" or "federation", but an open to all, and they will listen "show me it works". Those at learning, but they have a lot to

# Yellow Belt (7th Kyu)

Red belts who are attempting their yellow belt promotion will find that many of the techniques are the same as were required for their last examination. The differences are mainly in attitude and finesse.

At this stage a practitioner has been training for nine months, and are expected to be accomplished in their techniques. Real effort is now expected in order for students to progress. Relaxation and tension must be at the correct time, and throughout the course red belts set a good example to the new beginners.

Moving on from the simple actions of the orange belt syllabus to the red belt syllabus is quite a leap, so we must not be too harsh on ourselves if we now feel awkward.

Hand-eye co-ordination begins to become important at this stage, as does the definition in all stances. Stances must become "locked" by controlling the muscles - not by forcing the joints until they can go no further.

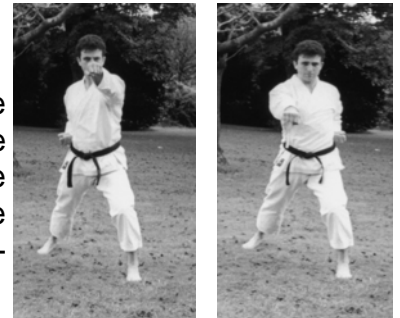
Hand techniques must have both hands finishing at the same time (eg. hikite does not tighten on the hip until the other hand completes its moves).

Where gyaku techniques end a combination the next combination begins with the opposite hand being thrown forward so that the gyaku hand can return to the hip, ready to start the next combination. The hand thrust forward is without kime if it is outside of the technique.

## Yellow Belt (7th Kyu) - Fundamentals

### OI ZUKI, GYAKUZUKI

Stepping in front stance, punch directly to the face, ensuring that the tail-bone is tucked in and that the foot lands as the fist does. The spine remains vertical and the body is square to the front. With the second half of your outward breath punch with the other hand to the centre of the body. The meaning of the gyakusuki - reverse punch - is that it is not over the front leg, but opposite it.



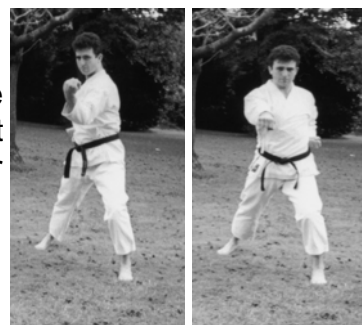
### AGE UKE, GYAKUZUKI

Stepping in front stance, make age uke above the front leg, and with the second half of your outward breath, punch gyakuzuki. The hips are at a 45° angle for age uke, but return to shomen (square on) for gyakuzuki.

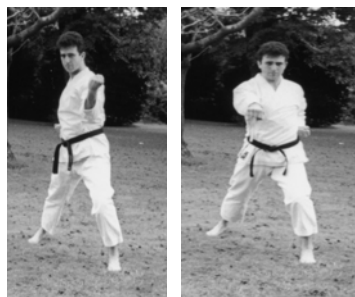


## **SOTO UKE, GYAKUZUKI**

Stepping in front stance, make soto uke over the front leg, and with the second half of your outward breath, punch gyakuzuki. The hips are at a 45° angle for soto uke, but return to shomen (square on) for gyakuzuki.



## **UCHI UKE, GYAKUZUKI**



Stepping in front stance, make uchi uke over the front leg, and with the second half of your outward breath, punch gyakuzuki. The hips are at a 45° angle for uchi uke, but return to shomen (square on) for gyakuzuki.

The use of the hips in the above techniques should be apparent, and the step from one combination to the next should be smooth and fast with no change in height.

## **MAE REN GERI**

Particular attention is now paid to the height of the knee when the foot begins to thrust forward. When performed correctly, maegeri cannot push any higher than the knee ascends. Any other result is due to the arc of the foot and not a straight thrust.

The height difference between the two kicks should be clearly distinguishable.

## **YOKOGERI KEKOMI**

A considerable thrust is more important than speed with this kick at this stage.

## **YOKOGERI KEAGE**

The route, speed, and impact area of the foot should be absolutely different to kekomi.

## **SHUTO UKE, NUKITE**

This is the only additional technique for this grade. Please note that the nukite is gyaku, though not listed as such.

Stepping forward in kokutsudachi, make shuto uke. Then, quickly move the front foot across and thrust the hand which has been in hikite to the front to make a spear-hand strike (nukite). The body is made square to the front by the effort of the rear hip as the body-weight is transferred forwards and a strong zenkutsudachi is made.



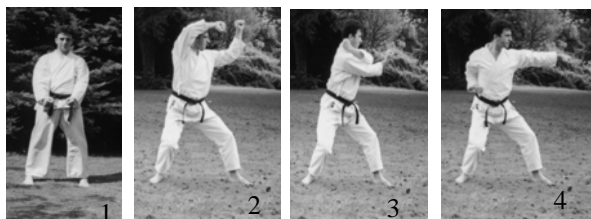
# Yellow Belt (7th Kyu) - Kata

## HEIAN NIDAN

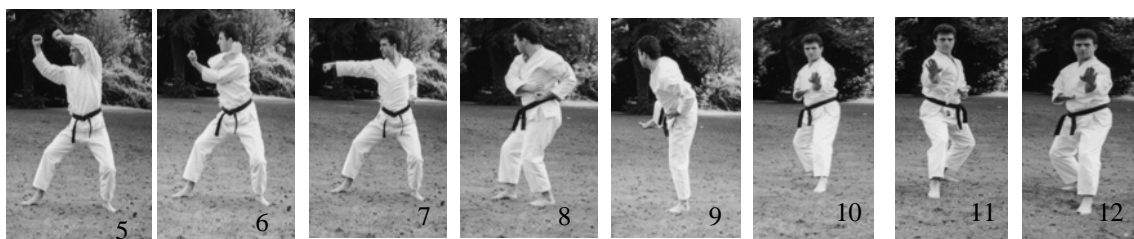
### Peaceful Mind Level Two

This used to be the first Heian kata, but Master Funakoshi considered it too difficult for raw beginners.

Of note in this kata are the introduction of gyaku techniques and morote uke, and that the second kiai does not occur on the embusen, but rather on the final technique.

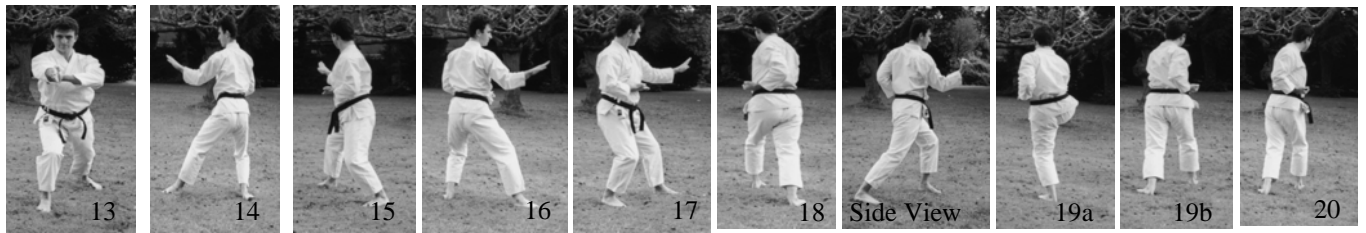


- 1) From a ready position.
- 2) Sink the weight and look to the left. Step out into back stance whilst throwing the arms up so that the left forearm is vertical with the palm of the fist forwards and 90° to the upper arm. The right arm should make a position similar to a horizontal age uke. The right middle knuckle is on the same horizontal plane as the left wrist.
- 3) Corkscrew the right fist to throat height whilst withdrawing the left fist back to the right ear. The elbows are tucked in and the stance does not change, though the body angle is to the left and the body is contracted.
- 4) Expand the chest and left arm to make a horizontal hammerfist whilst the right fist makes hikite.

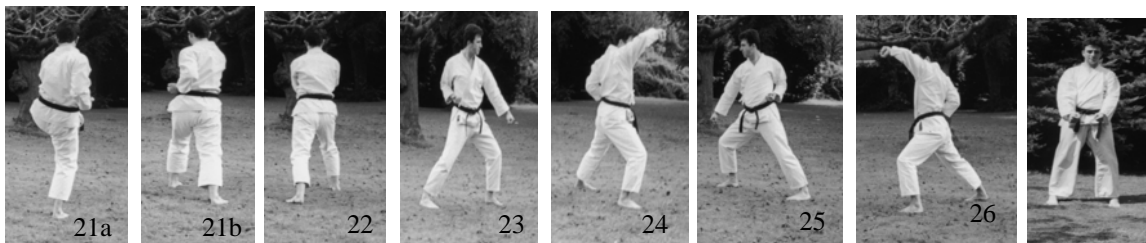


- 5) Look to the right, lower the arms, and pivot on the heels to face the right in backstance. Throw the arms up so that they mirror the position for the first technique.
- 6) Corkscrew the left fist to the throat whilst withdrawing the right fist back to the left ear. The elbows are tucked in and the stance does not change. Contract the body and angle to the right.
- 7) Expand the chest and right arm to make a horizontal hammerfist whilst the left fist makes hikite.
- 8) Look directly behind, over the right shoulder. Pull the left foot half-way towards the right and change the direction to face the right whilst pulling the right vertical fist to the left horizontal fist. Momentarily right sits on top of left.
- 9) Pull the right foot back and kick yokogeri keage to the rear, simultaneously making right vertical fist uraken. The intention is to place the foot and fist at the same place. As the foot and fist snap back, turn to the front and cross the arms in preparation for making shuto uke along the main embusen.
- 10) Step down into left kokutsudachi and make shuto uke.

- 11) Step forward into right kokutsudachi and make shuto uke.
- 12) Step forward into left kokutsu dachi and make shuto uke.



- 13) Drop the left hand to the horizontal position, step forward into zenkutsudachi and thrust the right hand forwards, nukite. The fingers of the left hand should rest fractionally behind the right elbow, palm down. **Kiai.**
- 14) Look to the right. Pull the left hip sharply up and turn 90° anti-clockwise to make left kokutsudachi and shuto uke to the right.
- 15) Look to the right. Step out at 45° into right kokutsudachi and make shuto uke.
- 16) Look over the right shoulder. Pull the right hip sharply back and turn 135° clockwise, then step out to the left, making right kokutsudachi and shuto uke,
- 17) Step out at 45° into left kokutsudachi and make shuto uke.
- 18) Push the left foot onto the main embusen and make zenkutsudachi. As the body pushes past shomen the right hand slides under the left arm and then out to make gyaku uchi uke. The left hand makes hikite. The chest is aimed at contra 45° or reverse hanmi, coiling the hip.
- 19a & b) Kick maegeri with the right leg, and punch gyakuzuki as the foot steps forward into right zenkutsudachi.
- 20) Without changing the stance, make left gyaku uchi uke, coiling the left hip into reverse hanmi. As this happens, right foot may well move as the hip is pulled back. This is *not* a step, but an indicator of correct hip rotation.



- 21a & b) Kick maegeri with the left leg, and punch gyakuzuki as the foot steps forward into left zenkutsudachi.
- 22) Step forward into right zenkutsudachi. As the body catches up with the forwards fist, cross the wrists and roll them first backwards, and then forwards to make morote uke. The knuckle of the left little finger should touch the inside of the right forearm.
- 23) Look to the right. Pull the left hip sharply up and turn 90° anticlockwise, preparing the arms for gedan barai. Step out to the right into left zenkutsudachi and make gedan barai.
- 24) Look to the right. Step out at 45° into right zenkutsudachi and make age uke.
- 25) Look to the right. Pull the right hip sharply back, turning 135° clockwise and step out into right zenkutsu dachi, making gedan barai.
- 26) Look to the left. Step out at 45° into left zenkutsudachi and make age uke. **Kiai.**  
Yamae.  
Naore.



# Yellow Belt (7th Kyu) - Kumite

When attempting yellow belt, the basic five-step kumite is repeated, practitioners are now adept at this exercise. Correct form, focus, and timing are required.

# Yellow Belt (7th Kyu) - Oyo Jutsu

The progression of the evasion techniques takes another small step towards free-fighting with the introduction of a Jodan retaliation option.

Some small variety of retaliations is desirable, but the emphasis remains on

- i) not getting hit
- ii) moving to a position of strength
- iii) timing, and
- iv) distance.

These factors are more important than performing hundreds of techniques.

Hook Oyo now also allows Jodan retaliations.

# Grading Summary for 7th Kyu

## **FUNDAMENTALS (Kihon)**

Oi-Zuki Jodan, Gyakuzuki Chudan

Age Uke, Gyakuzuki

Soto Uke, Gyakuzuki

Uchi Uke, Gyakuzuki

Mae Ren Geri

Yoko kekomi

Yoko keage

Shuto uke, nukite

## **KATA**

Heian Nidan

## **KUMITE**

*Gohon Kumite*

Jodan Oi-Zuki

Chudan Oi-Zuki

## **OYO**

Straight: Avoidance Steps,  
Chudan or Jodan retaliation

Hook: Avoidance Steps,  
Chudan or Jodan retaliation

# QUADRANT THEORY

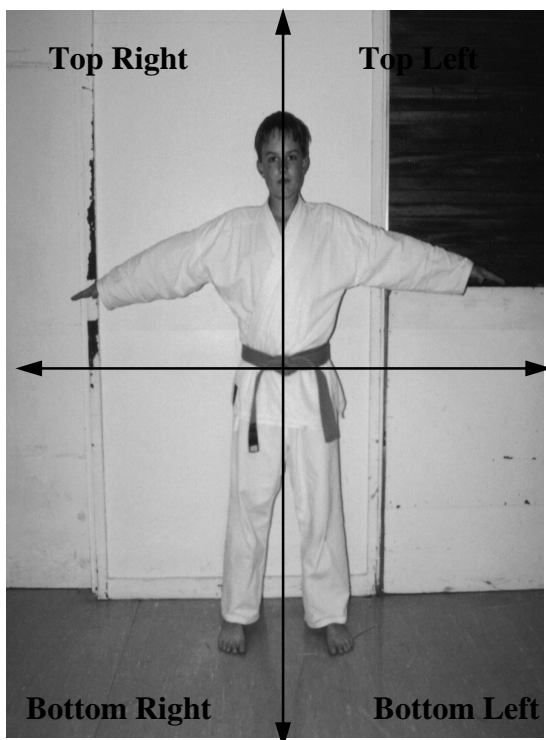
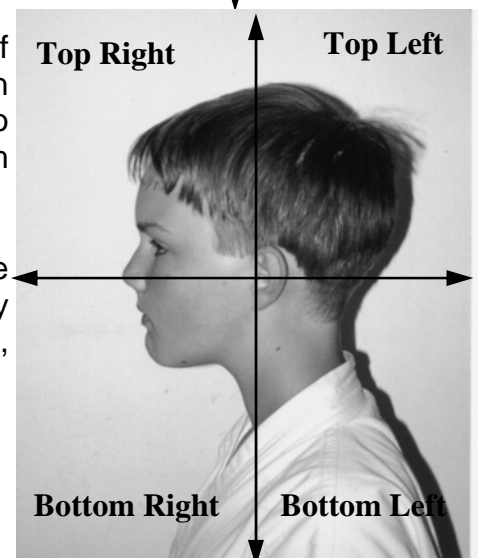
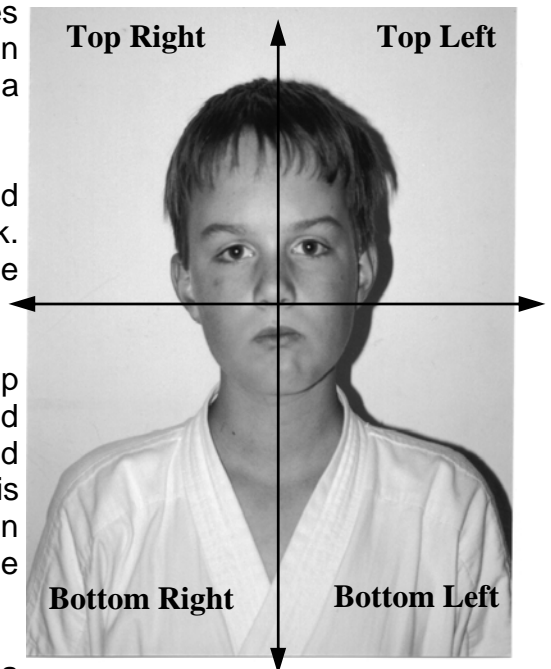
Heavily linked to Yin-Yang Theory, Quadrant Theory divides things once more. If the body is divided into quadrants, then we can observe increasing levels of discomfort in taking a weapon from a quadrant and moving it to another.

The body is divided into top left, top right, bottom left, and bottom right. Each quadrant is either the front or the back. Each area of the body (head, toes, arms, legs) can also be divided into quadrants.

A thrown right fist is neutralised by taking it across to the top quadrant. Take the same fist to the lower right quadrant and we get more of a result; across to the lower left quadrant and there are less options available for the attacker. Add to this mix the quadrants to the rear and the result is magnified, in this example rear lower left quadrant would produce the optimum results.

Moving an attacker's weapon through the quadrants brings a progression in the levels of pain and maintains disruption of their intent. *They hurt more and don't fight back.* Progression should be from a weapon's 'home' quadrant through a route to the one furthest away. Top rightVTop leftVBottom RightVBottom Left, etc.

Once again, it is worth noting that in combat we do not have time for analysis of how to best use quadrant theory. The theory is useful for analysing our techniques while we practice them, assuring us of the application's validity.



# BREATHING

In karate, breath is used as part of a technique, not by having bad breath but by exhaling at critical moments. There is an old saying that all techniques are “Mind, Breath, and Body”.

Awareness, intention, conditioned responses, and conquering fear are part of the Mind, and next in the sequence is Breath (before the physical action of Body).

Breathing is of course, vital - you can't live without it. In our practice we must consciously resist holding our breath and instead train ourselves to breath in the right way at the right time.

Most exhalation is by a short sharp contraction of the diaphragm, issued through the mouth just before a technique makes contact. (Hence, before Body)

Breathing with the diaphragm is actually the most natural way to breathe, accomplished with expansion and contraction of the belly. Notably this is not the heaving of the chest - as breathing by expanding the rib cage only pulls the ribs from their housing in the sternum. True, the body has evolved to allow this, but it is an emergency use of the lungs, not the natural one. Watch someone sleeping to see “belly-breathing” in action.

The timing of inhalation should not be forced, especially as taking a lung full of air would indicate your intention at act energetically (signalling an imminent technique).

Inhalation see the belly expand as the diaphragm is pulled low in the chest cavity, filling the lungs with air by suction. For hygiene, inhalation should be through the nose. Nasal inhalation has an effect on the flow of internal energy aiding circulation through the Governor meridian when included with correct posture.

Exhalation sees the belly contract as the diaphragm rises in the chest cavity, pushing the respiratory waste out of the lungs. For hygiene and the internal energy of the Conception meridian, exhalation should be through the mouth. The tightening of the stomach and the belly muscles when exhaling is also a safety mechanism in case of an attack landing simultaneously with your own, so that you are not “winded”.

## **IBUKI BREATHING**

This is a forced and dramatised method of breathing used in some formal exercises (kata). Ibuki breathing involves the use of “dynamic tension” in the body's muscles whilst performing the technique. When blocking, breathing in should be slow and out should be slow, but when striking breathing should be fast and out slow. This is what happens during Hangetsu kata.

Breathing correctly during a technique produces better results. Whether this is because of extra tension or better timing or increased internal energy is unproven, but the results can be seen.