

CARRYING ON

Nearly a year. Time was flying; it was hard to pinpoint what had been done in that year, but Joe had gained an orange belt, and then a red belt, and a yellow belt. Very soon Joe would be a green belt - half way to Black Belt.

There had been times during the year when Joe had wondered if there would ever be any new techniques to learn - all that seemed to happen with each new grade was an additional punch, or being told to make it faster. It had not seemed like progress. Joe was lucky though. Just when giving up had seemed like an option, Joe had noticed the new white belts.

How wooden they looked in comparison to Joe's ability. An appreciation of how much progress had actually been made developed. Although not anywhere near as proficient as the Black Belts, it was still a responsibility of Joe's to show beginners parts of their kata, and correct etiquette.

The Black Belts still seemed much more ferocious than Joe, but now they were more approachable and offered friendly advice. Joe has trained hard and attended classes regularly, and now that Black Belt seemed achievable, a little more time, continued dedication, and with the support of Joe's sempai, Shodan would be achieved.

All of the physical exercise; the aching muscles and weariness, all of the emotional exhaustion began to seem worth it. Just a little more time.

Joe was amazed when one of the white belts wondered aloud as to whether they would ever be as good as Joe. Maybe there had been progress since Joe had been a white belt.

Sensei was still stern. Over the months, though, Joe had observed the odd smile creep across Sensei's face. The fierce instructor had expressed his pride at the graduations from belt to belt, and he even cracked a grin at the odd mistake - what a strange sense of humour. Sensei was still formidable. In the months since Joe began the instructor had shown painful applications to techniques - all the while reminding students of their promise not to use these techniques except in defense of life and family. Sensei had trained alongside the class on several occasions, notably when there was a visiting instructor. Joe noted how the teacher was ahead of the class all the time, leading by example.

Some time had passed, techniques had been learned. A start had been made. Joe now told other students that everyone had to start somewhere; that everyone had to go through a "day one". Beginners were now stunned at how much Japanese language Joe knew, when learning another language had never been the intention.

There was still a lot to learn, still some tests of stamina and concentration to pass, but Joe was finding a place in the group. There was a friendly rivalry and a willingness to help - contradictory, but encouraging.

Nearly a year. Nearly half-way to Black Belt. Carrying on.

OTHER STYLES

Shotokan is only one of many “styles” of karate, and karate is one of many martial arts. The genealogy and “pedigree” of Shotokan is a long and noble one, and there are links to a few other ryu-ha.

Wado Ryu was founded by Ohtsuka Hinori, who was a student of Funakoshi's. The name of the style means “Way of Peace/Harmony” and there are many similarities to Aikido in the thinking. Wado ka use shorter stances than Shotokan karate ka, and many of the kata retain older names (Pinan instead of Heian, Wansu instead of Empi).

Goju Ryu is a major lineage parallel to Shotokan. The name means Hard/Soft School or Half-Hard, Half-Soft, and focuses upon the principles of yielding and standing firm at the correct junctures . Goju kata include Sanchin (Three Battles) and Tensho. The founder of Goju Ryu was Miyagi Chojun whose teacher was Higaonna Kanryo whose lineage can be traced back to Naha and China.

Kyokushinkai was created by Oyama Mas, who practised Shotokan and Goju Ryu. Oyama was a larger-than-life character who decided that the route modern karate was taking was not effective. Oyama went to live in the mountains for some time, perfecting his system. When he returned Oyama was noted for killing a bull with his bare hands. The “Universal Truth” style of karate is note-worthy for its “knockdown kumite” and the legendary 100 men kumite test. Oyama was regarded as a “hard man” of karate, outspoken and uncompromising; yet even he admitted that “kata is the heart of karate”. This should confer the importance of kata.

Ju Jitsu, meaning “soft skills”, evolved as a martial art in Japan alongside the weapon arts. This was the system of apprehending, locks, throws, and strikes, as used by the samurai. Ju Jitsu utilises nerve strikes and ground work, and is the ancestor of the sport Judo and the more spiritual Aikido.

Judo is “the way of gentleness”, a sporting system of throws and pinning devised by Kano Jigoro by removing the more dangerous parts of Ju Jitsu. It is unknown to most Judo players that there exist a series of kata preserving the “secrets” of Ju Jitsu for them. It was from Judo that Karate gained its belt system and Kano was a well known supporter of Funakoshi's efforts.

Aikido, “the way of bringing energy together”, is a harmonised, pacifist version of Ju Jitsu. Ueshiba Morihei was a mystical character who was rumoured to perform super-human feats; interestingly his students do not seem to have the same abilities.

Tae Kwon Do is the Korean name for Karate. Translated as “foot and fist way”, the emphasis appears to be on kicking and the sporting arena. Founded in 1955 by General Choi Hong Hi, a Shotokan 2nd Dan. Taekwondo was thought to be an improvement on the karate which the General thought he had mastered. The art is superbly organised and is recognised by the Olympics. There are, of course, older fighting methods in Korea, namely *hwarang do*, but Taekwondo is not based on them.



Hapkido is another Korean art using a wide range of kicking techniques, but including more locks and take-downs. Hapkido was created by Yung Shul Choi who was a student of Daito Ryu aikijitsu, training in Japan from 1919 until circa 1930. Hapkido was created in the late 1950's.

Kung Fu is the generic name for a host of Chinese fighting arts. A misnomer, Kung Fu actually means "workout" and can apply to any activity which induces sweat. More appropriate would be Quan Fa or "Fist Way". Kung Fu is even more diffused than karate, there being infinite "family styles". The government promoted Wu Shu Kwan (Martial Art Fist) is a sanitised version of the ancestral styles. The ancient legends of oriental martial arts tend to begin with Bodhidharma teaching the weak monks of Shaolin a series of exercises which became Kung Fu, got exported to Okinawa to come Kempo/toudi jutsu, and eventually arrived in Japan as Karate. These stories mainly ignore the fact that the monk was a buddhist who travelled from India, where he was taught. Indeed, in Egypt there are tomb paintings which bear an uncanny resemblance to the Tekki series of kata dating back several thousand years before the Christian calendar.

It seems most likely that there have always been indigenous fighting traditions in each country for as long as there have been indigenous populations. That the traditions of one nation have had an effect on other nations is indisputable; people have always taken anything good and added it to their own ways. What is in contention is the myth that there is a linear progression of Kung Fu becoming modern karate. The lineage of teachers shows Indians teaching Chinese teaching Okinawans teaching Japanese teaching English, but it would be arrogant and foolish to believe that the Okinawans could not fight until the Chinese taught them. Wiser would be a "transference-of- influence" history.

An old proverb has it

"There are many paths up a mountain, but there is only one view of the moon from the top".

This illustrates perfectly that there are many styles and schools, but in the end there are only martial arts. Some schools may begin by teaching techniques which would be ridiculed by others, but the root of all these is a working martial art.

You just have to look deep enough.

BUSHI MATSUMURA

The further into the past we delve the less records are available to confirm stories. Matsumura Sokon, nicknamed Bushi (warrior) was born around 1809 and lived until 1901. His family was well-known in Yamagawa village near Shuri, and he was a scholar, calligrapher and staff fighter as well as studying Te.

Matsumura earned his nickname as the bodyguard to three successive Ryukyuan kings, and may well have taught the royal court martial arts. Among his students were Itosu Ankoh, Yabu Kentsu, Hanashiro Chomo, Funakoshi Gichin, Kyan Chotoku, Azato Yasutsune, Kuwae Ryosei, Kiyuna Pechin and Sakihara Pechin.



The Bushi also taught Matsumura Nabe, his grandson, who taught his nephew, Soken Hohan. Remember, it is Hohan's notes which have recently opened many avenues of research in the martial arts.

Matsumura himself was taught by Ason, Iwah, and Satunushi Sakugawa, as well as being known for studying Te.

Some reports have Matsumura living between 1796 and 1896, which would certainly fit the time-line for training with "Tode" Sakugawa (1733-1815) and a Chinese military attache Kong Su Kung (Kusanku).

Kusanku is the old name for Kanku-Dai kata (upon which the Heian kata are based), and Matsumura is said to have created the kata Chinto after having trained with a shipwrecked Chinese sailor who was a quan fa expert. Chinto is the root of Funakoshi's Gankaku kata, and meant "fighting to the east" whereas Gankaku means "crane on a rock".

With modern karate being traced back (through the lineage of teachers) to Matsumura, we can lay to rest the legend of karate being a peasant art form created due to the restriction on weapons. Matsumura Sokon and the two generations that follow him were far from being peasants. Farmers and other labourers were far too busy going about their chores for such luxuries as self-defence, and only the aristocrats were worth robbing.

SEMPAI & KOHAI

These terms are Japanese for senior and junior, and reflect the hierarchy of any given group. The senior need not be older than the junior, but is usually more experienced and of higher ability.

In the normal course of events, anyone who joined the group before you is your sempai, and anyone who joined after you is your kohai. You are kohai to your sempai, and sempai to your kohai.



The traditional Japanese relationship may appear to our eyes to be one of domination and subservience - kohai are respectful and attentive around their sempai - but the relationship is actually very complicated. The seniors are duty-bound to help those less experienced than themselves, they are responsible for the attitude and performance of their protégés. The sempai always lead by example, for if they do not then they show themselves up in front of their juniors and they fail the group in the communal aim of martial arts - the search for perfection of character. Seniors also protect the juniors, sometimes from the juniors themselves. Although the kohai may serve a meal at a gathering, it is the sempai who *provide* the food and drink. The kohai are also bound by duty - not to dishonour their seniors or the school, to seek the ability levels of their seniors, and in some ways serve them. In the militaristic Japanese schools and clubs this is expected and par for the course. Even western trades and educational bodies have “apprentice” systems; young squires would seek knighthood in medieval times by serving until they were worthy of their ambition.

Within our karate classes the roles of sempai and kohai become very important during practice. Although you yourself are still learning there are those who know less than you. As a sempai it is your duty to help your kohai. Help must be given in the right way - criticism must be constructive and lead to correction. When helping you must re-inforce what the teacher has said, not contradict. Remember that there will be more layers of meaning behind a technique than you know, no matter how experienced you are. The example you set, by listening when you should and answering questions politely will be copied by juniors.

As a kohai, it is important to listen to what you are told, and to ask questions if you don't understand. Kohai must appreciate the help they are given, or perhaps they will not get any more.

Sempai and kohai feed off one another. Illustrating points to a kohai can clarify the thinking of a senior. Juniors benefit from the experience of their sempai.

We adopt this system in our group not out of some bizarre wish to be more Japanese, but because it helps us in our studies. We can tone down arrogance with this system; we can pacify the ego. The sempai/kohai relationship is ultimately one of inspiration and learning. Growth and responsibility. Martial Arts.



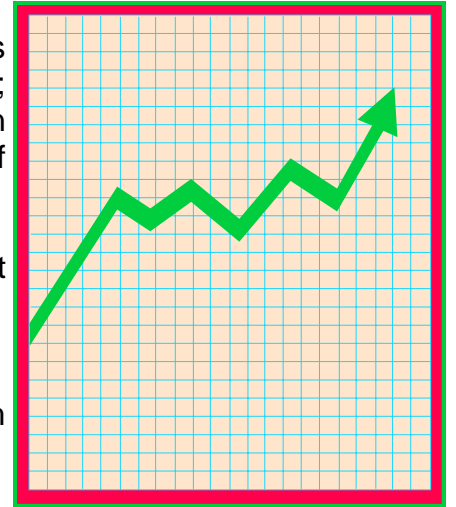
THE PLATEAU

When we begin our study in martial arts we are interested and motivated to hold on to everything we are taught. This is the start of our learning curve, and on a graph plotting “knowledge gained” against “time spent” we will see a steep increase from our blank-state beginnings.

As time goes on we find our art is perhaps not as glamorous as we thought; or we are not “getting it” with particular techniques; we can’t keep up with the pace of others, we find the repetition boring; the instructor keeps finding fault. These are symptoms of a plateau - a leveling off - in our learning curve.

The plateau is different for each person. It can arrive quickly or it can appear after ten years of training, but there are certain immutable factors.

- The plateau is temporary. You can move on from it upwards or downwards.
- The plateau is a symptom, not the cause.
- The plateau is caused by your state of mind. Repetition of a technique can be seen as good or bad - how do you choose to see it? If you are having trouble keeping up ask yourself whether you have mentioned it to the instructor, and is it so important that you kick faster than your classmate? Isn't all that criticism actually ironing out the problems in your training?



When we examine the plateau we see that there are really only two ways off of it. We can go downhill (quit, lose interest, etc) or we can rise above it (correct our thinking).

An old adage has it that we must allow learning to lock itself into our brains, into our neural pathways/muscle memory. This is usually accomplished by taking your attention off of the thing you really want. For example; if you were to find that no matter how much practice you put in you were unable to make mawashigeri properly you might train harder with your arms for a short time. When you re-examine your mawashigeri it will usually come together better. This is helped by proper visualisation and a realistic expectation of the kick, as well.

The plateau is one of the most common reasons for people to give up their training. Once you have beaten the plateau you have conquered one of the facets of your personality, and thus taken another step towards our ideal: the perfection of character.

Green Belt (6th Kyu) - Fundamentals

SANBON ZUKI

Step forward into zenkutsu dachi and punch oi zuki jodan followed by gyakuzuki chudan and chudan zuki. This is a three punch combination. The first punch takes an entire breath and the next two share a breath.

It is important to keep the body in shomen, to keep the front knee from bowing inwards or wobbling and not to abbreviate the second punch. Each punch is full, although the shoulder is not allowed to extend and the second and third punch create a rhythm.

AGE UKE, GYAKUZUKI

SOTO UKE, EMPI UCHI

Step forward into zenkutsudachi and make soto uke; then pull back the front foot and reach with the previous hikite hand whilst the blocking hand tucks below, ready to step out into kiba dachi and thrust the elbow horizontally forwards.

Note that when changing stance only the front foot covers any distance though the back foot must, of course, pivot. Also note that your attention (and your nose) remain focused to the front. The elbow does not travel in an arc, but is thrust.

To step forward again turn the front foot to face the front, push the front arm out and prepare the rear arm (as you step through) to make soto uke again.

UCHI UKE, KIZAMIZUKI, GYAKUZUKI

Step forward into zenkutsudachi and make uchi uke; then snap the leading hand forwards, making a jabbing punch to the face, quickly followed by a reverse punch. The jabbing hand pulls directly back to the hip.

Push the front knee a little further when jabbing, ensure that the body is shomen with the reverse punch. When making the reverse punch after any hanmi situation, one must be careful to push the gyaku hip forwards to shomen, not pull back the forward hip.

To step forward again one must change hands just as in the last grading.

MAEGERI OIZUKI

With guard raised (kamae), the practitioner kicks, and, as their foot lands on the floor, they execute a front punch to the face.

YOKOGERI KEKOMI

YOKOGERI KEAGE

SHUTO UKE, KIZAMIGERI, NUKITE

Step forward in kokutsudachi and make shuto uke. Keeping the weight over the back leg and the spine vertical and not moving the hands make a snapping kick with the front leg. As the foot touches back down change the stance to zenkutsudachi and make nukite.

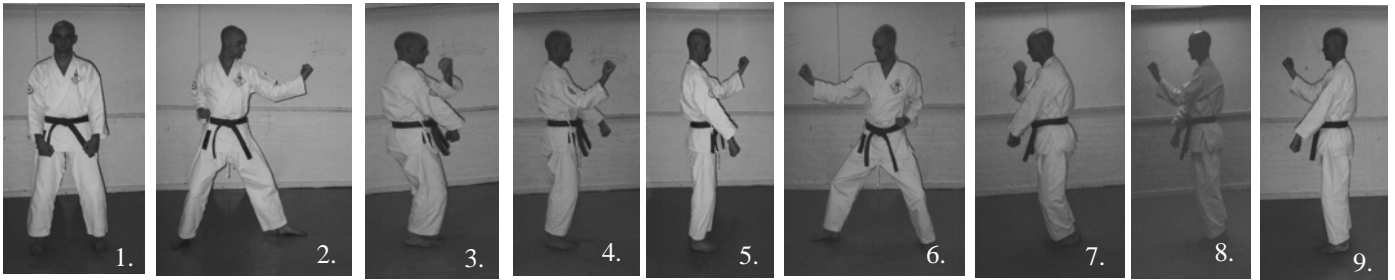
Green Belt (6th Kyu) - Kata

HEIAN SANDAN

Peaceful mind level three.

This kata is the first to feature a move performed slowly. Slow moves must be executed with balance and precision. They allow the practitioner a moment of recovery during kata practice and a return to the focusing of attention.

One should not become confused into thinking that the application to the technique is performed



slowly.

1. From a ready position.

2. Look to the left and prepare the arms to step out to the left into back stance and make uchi uke.

3-4. Pull the right foot to the left foot and adopt a shomen body position to the side without raising your height. Push your right arm out to a gedan barai position, then make uchi uke and gedan barai at the same time. Ensure that the elbows meet and that the characteristic tearing motion is made.

5. Make uchi uke and gedan barai with the opposite arms. Look over your right shoulder. Pivot 180° clockwise on your left heel and prepare the arms to make uchi uke.

6. Step out into back stance and make uchi uke.

7. Pull your left foot up to your right without raising your height and push your left fist to a gedan barai position. The body should be shomen facing to the right.

8. Make uchi uke and gedan barai at the same time. Ensure that the elbows meet and that the characteristic tearing motion is made.

9. Make gedan barai and uchi uke with the opposite arms. Look to the centre line. Roll the wrists together back to the right hip. The right wrist is on top.

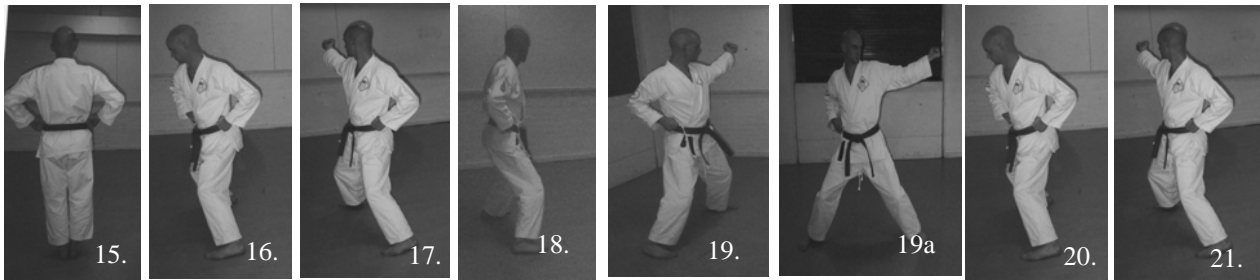


10. Step out with the left leg into back stance and make morote uke along the embusen.

11. Drop the left hand down into osae uke and step forward into front stance making nukite. The fingers of the left hand rest just behind the underside of the elbow. The hand is flat with the fingers pointed to the right.

12-13. Turn the right hand 180° counter-clockwise on a horizontal axis, then pivot 180° counter-clockwise on the right foot to land in kiba dachi. Pull the right fist back to hikite and make a horizontal hammerfist with the left hand. The attention is still to the front/the end of the main line.

14. Pivot the left heel to change the direction of the body and step forwards into front stance and make oi-zuki. **KIAI**.



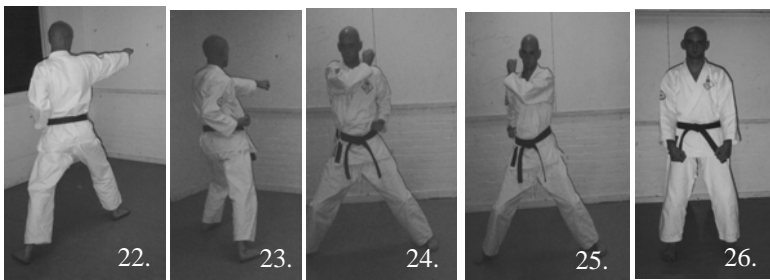
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Slowly, pull the left foot up to the right, simultaneously pivoting on the right heel to bring the feet together facing back down the embusen. The arms come to rest with the elbows out and the two fore-knuckles of each hand resting on the hips. A slow “winding-up” should be felt, with the pulling motion of the hips being similar to the turn at the end of the embusen of all previous kata.

16-17. Raise the right knee up high, pivot on the left foot to bring the right foot down fumikomi forwards into kiba dachi. The right elbow swings across past the body, and then arcs to make uraken uchi descending to the bridge of the nose. The hand then returns to the hip.

18-19. Pull the left knee up to the front, making the body shomen as you do so, then make fumikomi forwards into kiba dachi. The left elbow swings across past the body, and then arcs to make uraken uchi descending to the bridge of the nose. The hand then returns to the hip.

20-21. Pull the right knee up to the front, making the body shomen as you do so, then make fumikomi forwards into kiba dachi. The right elbow swings across past the body, and then arcs to make uraken uchi descending to the bridge of the nose. The hand then returns to the hip.



22. Change the body’s direction by pivoting on the heels towards the end of the embusen, making tate shuto as you do...

23. ...then step forwards into zenkutsudachi and make oi-zuki chudan.

24. Pull the right foot up parallel to the left, look right then pivot 180° counter-clockwise on the right foot to make kiba dachi. The right fist crosses the body and ends up over the left shoulder while the left hand pulls back into a tight hikite position, as though attacking with empi behind you.

The right elbow must not be higher than the bottom lip.

25. A subtle shift is created by throwing the bodyweight into the next move. There is no jump in this kata. Drive the left fist across the body and over the right shoulder, and make the right arm return to a tight hikite position, as though attacking with empi behind you. **KIAI**. The left elbow must not be higher than the bottom lip.

26. Yame.

Green Belt (6th Kyu) - Kumite

When attempting green belt, one is introduced to one-step kumite. The attacker steps back and announces their attack, then steps forward with that attack. The defender may take one step in any direction, may make any block, and any retaliation (with control). Both participants then return to a ready position.

At this grade, the attack sequence is:

Right side: Jodan oi-zuki, jodan oi-zuki, chudan oi-zuki, chudan oi-zuki.

Left side: Jodan oi-zuki, jodan oi-zuki, chudan oi-zuki, chudan oi-zuki.

The defences to these attacks have considerably more leeway than the evasion techniques. The emphasis of this drill is on timing and safe distancing. The evasion techniques deal more with body mechanics and effective response.

Green Belt (6th Kyu) - Oyo Jutsu

The evasion techniques of previous grades are now expanded upon.

For straight punch oyo:

One must competently shift past the attacker on the outside by simultaneously moving **both** feet. Both feet should be aimed towards the attacker for effective response. **Both** hands must be used in the parry of the attacking limb.

This is moving towards the brush-grab-strike scenario which is ideal. At this stage you are not judged on whether your “grab” hand actually latches onto your opponent, but rather that you do actually employ both hands.

The retaliation itself may still be very simple. Effectiveness is not judged by how complicated a move is. A wider variety of retaliations are expected, but sweeping/dropping of opponents is not mandatory.

For hook punch oyo:

The hook punch variety of Oyo must now use a shift forwards to stop the attacker. This requires immense spirit, as any faltering of attitude or error in judgement will lead to the attacker breaking through the defence.

The use of our “soft block” becomes mandatory at this stage. Any chudan or jodan retaliation is allowed. The examiner is well aware that as this practice is new to the practitioner there may be some awkwardness in the timing of the retaliation, but the emphasis is always upon the safety of the defender and the decisiveness of their block. No-one should question at this stage whether the attacker might still be able to strike with any other weapon, as the heart of the matter is whether the initial attack is stopped. Study of B.A.R. will reveal that the initial defence performed correctly will substantially reduce the chance of any second attack being launched.

Both arms may be used to tackle the attacker’s arm if the defender feels it necessary.

Grading Summary for 6th Kyu

FUNDAMENTALS (Kihon)

Sanbon Zuki
Age Uke, Gyakuzuki
Soto Uke, Empi uchi
Uchi Uke, Kizamizuki, Gyakuzuki
Maegeri, oizuki
Yoko kekomi
Yoko keage
Shuto uke, Kizamigeri, nukite

KATA

Heian Sandan

KUMITE

Kihon Ippon Kumite
Jodan Oi-Zuki
Chudan Oi-Zuki

OYO

Straight: Avoidance Shift,
Chudan or Jodan retaliation
Hook: Intercepting Steps,
Chudan or Jodan retaliation

5 ELEMENT THEORY

Oriental medicine is really just another way of looking at the world, and contains many symbolic references to form pictures in the mind. Accordingly, when we analyse techniques from an oriental perspective we must put aside incredulity at the science of it (from a western perspective) and instead accept it - because it works. The fighting arts from the orient appear mystical from a western viewpoint, but they were formulated using a different medicine to our own, and so many of the principles rely upon an eastern understanding.

Five element theory does not literally mean that the body is composed of the elements listed, but rather that the pathways described as **meridians** possess qualities similar to those elements. The logic system of these elements lays out a clear route for causing better health and an alternate route for causing harm. Whilst we would not wish harm on anyone, it is useful to know that the techniques we practice fit into the system which reduces the effectiveness of an attacker.

Meridians are pathways within the body which do not follow the exact route of nerves or ligaments as we know them. Most meridians are associated with a major organ or bowel of the body. Beyond the scope of western medicine, harming particular parts of a meridian in, for instance, the arm can have a detrimental effect on, say, the intestines.

The meridians are:

Heart, Pericardium, Triple Warmer, Lung, Liver, Spleen, Stomach, Small Intestine, Large Intestine, Gallbladder, Kidney, Bladder.

The **Conception Vessel**, and the **Governor Vessel** do not correspond to organs or bowels.

Each of these meridians is associated with one of the five elements. The elements are: **Fire, Water, Earth, Metal, and Wood.**

The elements are brought together by a cycle of construction and a cycle of regulation (sometimes known as the cycle of destruction). The regulatory cycle is an apt name as it allows the manipulation of the body's internal energy and thus the power available to any particular part of it. The constructive cycle is used by acupuncturists, shiatsu practitioners, and reiki healers to enhance or correct the energy flow of the body. Experiments in the USA have shown energy manipulation to allow an organ to be shut down and turned back on again without harmful side-effects.

Constructive cycle:

Water feeds *Wood*. *Wood* fuels *Fire*. *Fire's* ash becomes more *Earth*. *Earth* produces *Metal*. *Metal* can become liquid (like *Water*).

Regulatory cycle:

Water extinguishes *Fire*. *Fire* melts *Metal*. *Metal* cuts *Wood*. *Wood* feeds from the *Earth*. *Earth* contains/smothers *Water*.

Both the constructive and regulatory cycles can be used during fighting. If an element has energy added to it then it can create an imbalance in another element. If an element is dammed or blocked then it fails to feed the next element in the cycle and creates an imbalance there. As with the other theories which we use, you do not have to know this, but it helps when analysing a technique for effectiveness. If you hit a wood point, then the pain is worse if you have just latched onto or joined a fire and a metal point. *Fire melts Metal. Metal cuts Wood.*

Energy is directional, and travels healthily along meridians in particular directions. Bowel

meridians have their energy running down, while organ meridians have their energy running up. This knowledge helps when you decide that you would like to accelerate energy along a particular meridian or short-circuit it by sending it back the way it came. Thus, if you wish to overload the amount of energy in an attacking fist, you could add energy by striking Large Intestine meridian towards the fist, then pull the Heart points at the wrist in the direction of travel to unbalance the attacker and disable the fist.

The theory is highly complicated and will be visited frequently in the section on technique analysis.

The following is a summary:

NAME	POSITIVE/ NEGATIVE	ELEMENT	DIRECTION	PRODUCER/ PROCESSOR
Stomach	Yang	Earth	Down	Bowel
Spleen	Yin	Earth	Up	Organ
Heart	Yin	Fire	Up	Organ
Small Intestine	Yang	Fire	Down	Bowel
Bladder	Yang	Water	Down	Bowel
Kidney	Yin	Water	Up	Organ
Pericardium	Yin	Fire	Up	Organ
Triple Heater	Yang	Fire	Down	Bowel
Gallbladder	Yang	Wood	Down	Bowel
Liver	Yin	Wood	Up	Organ
Lung	Yin	Metal	Up	Organ
Large Intestine	Yang	Metal	Down	Bowel

