

SHU HA RI

Imitate - Diverge - Separate *Completing the Circle*

Most often, the term Shuhari is used to define stages of physical development. As one begins their path in the martial arts one is certain to be imitating the styles and prowess of others. These role models are those who have gone before us on our path, literally our **sensei**. As time goes by we begin to find that as we are not the same person as the role model we aspire to be we cannot do what they do in the same way. We diverge and find our own way of doing the same things our role models do. Eventually we become our own person, not defined by what our role model can or cannot do, we separate ourselves from them.

It is the learning, innovation, and transcending of a tradition or practice.

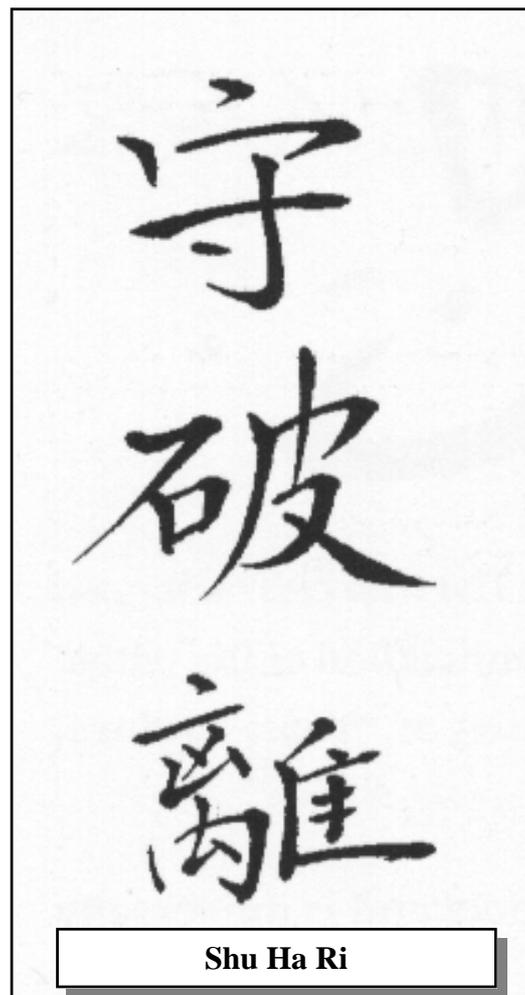
The representation of Shuhari is normally an Open Circle. This shows us that we complete our path, and having completed it we find ourselves back at the beginning again. This occurs in various places, naturally, with each new grade, but also with each revelation about a technique; with each layer of understanding. It is entirely possible to be extremely skilled but not *understand*, just as it is possible to understand but not be able to *do*!

Shuhari is not a singular event, but rather a process. We have many small moments of separation, while still imitating. We diverge on one point while separating from our stylistic ancestors on another.

Particular to the Japanese mindset, Shuhari is shrouded in Confucian mystique. What really makes this term so important is the idea that the outcome of the process may not be what was envisioned at the beginning of the process. This has nothing to do with "grades" or levels of learning, but is a cyclical, circular path which seeks moments of Satori (enlightenment).

When the process is one of perfecting physique or physical movements then forcing applications upon those movements is unnecessary and ill-conceived. In other words, if a technique was created to build big biceps do not think that it is for self-defence. Here in the West we have had martial arts portrayed as an unstoppable form of fighting, yet if the term **DO** is attached to the name of the art then in the Orient it is considered to be a process of *exercising* the mind and the body - a Way forward, not a Method.

There are many highly graded martial artists who are taking part in the Shuhari process of understanding their movements and their bodies without the burden of self-defence applications being relevant to what they are doing. In our karate we have a quandary because our once valid self defence method has been systematised to create a system of exercise. The two do not really go together. Both Way and Method may be used for Shuhari and Satori, but with different routes and desired practices. Like comparing bricklaying and computer programming, both build, but only one is made of bricks.



The mis-use of Shuhari is seen most frequently as an excuse to go one's own way. Often it is little more than covering of bad manners and disloyalty. The term is often bandied around by those who set up their own styles or associations without having the backing of their teachers. Of course there are many people who have entirely valid reasons for such actions, but in their hearts there are many who know that their reasons for Ri (separation) are petty and ego related. The claim is that they have "grown beyond their teachers". Shuhari is a journey through a tradition. The establishing a new tradition through lack of understanding of one's original tradition is not transcending anything - it is a step backwards, a failure to transcend. More technical knowledge does not denote more *Understanding*. In oriental circles, understanding is not given, but obtained/sought/discovered.

It would seem reasonable to say that there is no need for Ri as long as there is something that can be learned from our seniors, as long as there is something that we require.

What is often overlooked is the use of Shuhari as a cognitive process or a sign of spiritual growth. The idea of copying others or following exactly what is handed down by our teachers is quite correct for a time - this is how people are taught facts. It then becomes necessary to expand upon facts, to hypothesise and theorise - this how people's comprehension can be witnessed. In the end one must create something new - this is innovation. If we only pass on exactly what we are taught, by rote, then why would people wish to learn from us when we can just refer them to our teacher. We bring our own colour to everything in our life, sharing it is not disrespectful to the other colours, it merely adds to the spectrum.

In karate, we might look at *Shu* as being the learning of techniques - and their uses, the practice of those techniques and their encryption within kata. *Ha* might be considered to be an understanding of the commonalities between the techniques and the outcomes which they yield as well as the ability to apply the same principles to the vast variety of spontaneous situations which one might encounter. *Ri* may be the ability to pass on the information discovered in new ways, new systematisation of old information. Perhaps new two-person training drills for technique application or new exercises specifically designed to define particular muscle groups to aid a technique.

One man's Ri is another man's Shu. The surpassing of a senior in one area of expertise makes one a beginner in another area, and less than the same senior in yet another area.

The day will not arrive when we have completely "mastered" our art (- achieved Ri in every facet of martial arts -), yet here we are striving for it. Is this foolishness? To seek the unattainable? Or does the act of "seeking" define our determined and relentless attitude, forging our will beyond what other people are willing to undertake?

Perhaps Shuhari is best epitomised by a part of Master Funakoshi's teachings "**To Know the Old is to Understand the New**", or "Consider the Old Ways"(**Keiko**).

Black Belt (Shodan) Grading Examination

The Black Belt grading is what most people aim for in Karate training. It is the culmination of more than 3 three years of hard work, constant study and hardship. The Dan grade signifies that one is competent with their skills learned so far. The test itself may take any form that the examiner requires to demonstrate the competency of the candidate. In most cases, the examiner will be a senior Dan grade or a panel of high-ranking black belts. The examiner will probably not be the same examiner as has graded you up to 1st kyu. This means that they will not have the same knowledge of your regular training, but will be more impartial (not biased).

It would be easy to list the techniques and technical expectations, but this would not prepare the candidate mentally for the fact that “anything can happen”. Throughout the kyu grades the examination has followed a set pattern - do not expect the Dan grade examination to follow suit. It is entirely possible that kumite will be the first thing you are required to do. You may be asked to escape from a “pinned” position, or correct another student, or learn a new combination that you have never seen before.

In this way the candidate must be “ready for anything”.

Black (Shodan) - Fundamentals

Any techniques may be requested, a higher degree of competency is expected. The following are the expected basic combinations:

MAEGERI, YOKOGERI KEKOMI, USHIROGERI (balancing on one leg)



KIZAMIZUKI, MAEGERI,
OIZUKI, GYAKUZUKI, Step back, GEDAN
BARAI, GYAKUZUKI, MAWASHIGERI,
URAKEN, OIZUKI



Black (Shodan) - Kata

The kata for Shodan can be chosen by the examinee. Most choose Bassai Dai. It should be performed crisply and cleanly, as befits someone attempting the black belt. A degree of proficiency is required.

One should take the opportunity, whilst perfecting Bassai Dai, to gain some insight into the other kata which are options for those attempting Shodan, any of which may be chosen by the examinee. In this way one is not overcome at the thought of having to learn four new kata as a new black belt, but can instead work on polishing them.

Presented here are two more of the five Shodan kata. The five are Jion, Kanku Dai, Empi, Hangetsu, and Bassai Dai. Attempting Shodan one has the option of using any of these kata as their demonstration, but attempting Nidan one must know *all* of them.

EMPI

Flight of the Swallow

Previously known as Wanshu, this is an old kata with its origins in the distant days of Shaolin monks. The re-naming of the kata by Master Funakoshi is a phononym for “elbow”.

The movements in this form are performed quickly, similar to the graceful flight of a swallow.



- 1) From a ready position.
- 2) Bring the feet together, place the hands by the sides. Bow. Name the kata. Place the right arm across the front of the body, the fist against the open left hand.
- 3) Focusing the eyes directly ahead, twist the body and step out to the left with the left foot. The right arm drops down to the front, making gedan barai with one hand. The left hand closes and tightens up to the solar plexus. The left knee bends, dropping the body. The right knee must not be allowed to touch the floor.
- 4) Twist the body back up to a Shizen-tai position, the hands return to the left hip, the right fist vertical above the left hikite.
- 5) Look to the right. Step out into a right zenkutsudachi to the right, performing gedan barai with only the right arm.



6-7) Look to the front. Pull the left foot back, and twist the right foot to make kiba dachi. The right hand is thrown across the body, drawing back to the right hip as the left arm makes kage zuki.

8) Step forward into left zenkutsudachi and make full gedan barai.

9) Raise the right fist as gyaku Agezuki.

10-11) Open the right hand so that the palm is downwards. Raise the right knee high and step down into a low kosadachi. The right hand is changed to a fist and brought to the left ear as the left fists makes a gedan-zuki. The elbows are together.

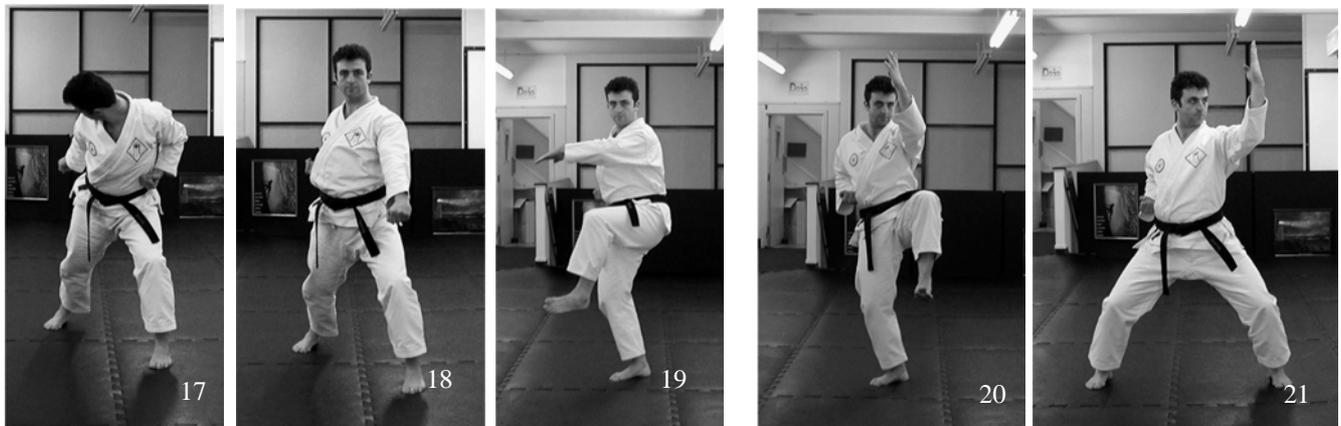


12) Face the rear and step with the left foot into a long zenkutsudachi. The arms separate to make a right gedan barai over the right leg (ushiro gedanbarai). Leaning slightly forwards, look along the right arm.

13) Look to the rear of the embusen, draw the torso upright and make a left gedan barai over the left leg.

14) Raise the right fist as gyaku Agezuki.

15-16) Open the right hand so that the palm is downwards. Raise the right knee high and step down into a low kosadachi. The right hand is changed to a fist and brought to the left ear as the left fists makes a gedan-zuki. The elbows are together.



17) Face the front and step with the left foot into a long zenkutsudachi. The arms separate to make a right gedan barai over the right leg (ushiro gedanbarai). Leaning slightly forwards, look along the right arm.

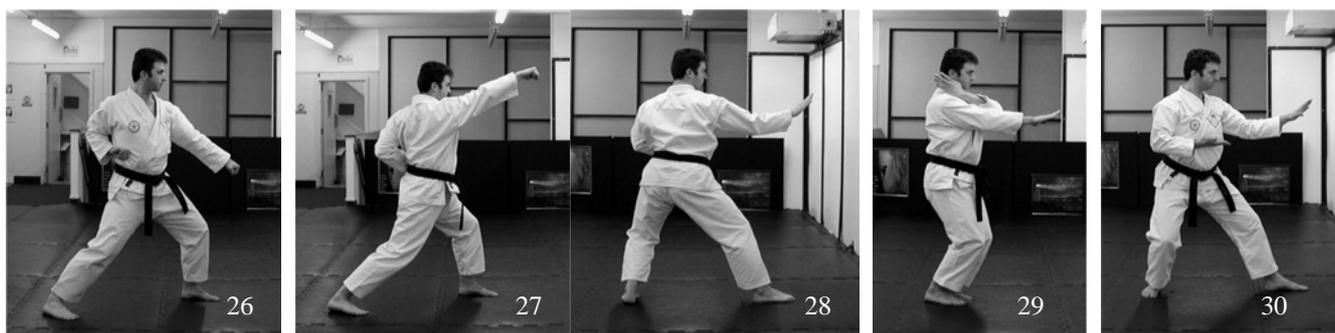
18) Look to the front of the embusen, draw the torso upright and make a left gedan barai over the left leg.

19-21) Pull the left hand, opened, in a wide arc past the face and out to the left, allowing the arm out at 45 degrees and the forearm vertical. At the same time the left foot is raised in an arc and placed down into a kidadachi. The foot and hand finish their movements at the same time.



22) The right foot is tucked up behind the left knee as the right forearm is smashed into the left (immobile) hand. KIAI.

23-25) Stepping back out into kidadachi, tuck the left hand in under the right arm and make tateshutouchi, then double chudanzuki.

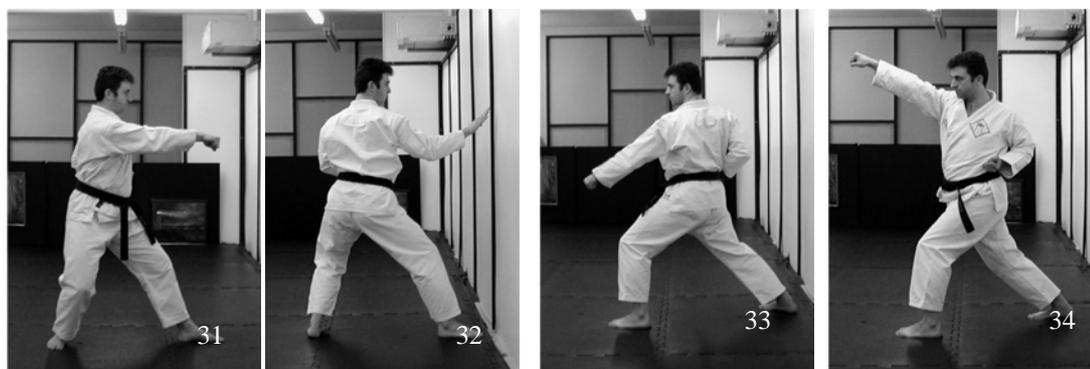


26) Look to the left and make gedanbarai while changing to a left zenkutsudachi.

27) Punch Agezuki. Note: this is the only time in the kata where this punch is performed and it does not lead into the “signature technique”.

28) Step forwards into right kokutsudachi and make shutouke.

29-30) Pull the front foot back, step forward into left kokutsudachi and make shutouke.



31) Punch gyakuzuki.

32) Step forwards into right kokutsudachi and make shutouke.

33) Look over the left shoulder, turn and make gedan barai in left zenkutsudachi immediately behind you.

34) Raise the right fist as Agezuki.



35-36) Open the right hand so that the palm is downwards.

Raise the right knee high and step down into a low kosadachi. The right hand is changed to a fist and brought to the left ear as the left fists makes a gedan-zuki. The elbows are together.

37) Face the left and step with the left foot into a long zenkutsudachi. The arms separate to make a right gedan barai over the right leg (ushiro gedanbarai). Leaning slightly forwards, look along the right arm.

38) Look to the left of the embusen, draw the torso upright and make a left gedan barai over the left leg.



39-40) Look to the front, pull the left fist back to the hip whilst opening the right hand into a “teisho” shape and circling clockwise past the shoulder and back to the front embusen position.

41) Bring the right leg to the left, the hands are chambered as teisho, left fingers uppermost and right fingers aimed downwards.

42) Step forwards into zenkutsudachi with the right leg while making a descending left teisho and a rising right teisho.

43) Bring the left leg to the right, the hands are chambered as teisho, right fingers uppermost and left fingers aimed downwards. Step forwards into zenkutsudachi with the left leg while making a descending right teisho and a rising left teisho.

44) Bring the right leg to the left, the hands are chambered as teisho, left fingers uppermost and right fingers aimed downwards. Step forwards into zenkutsudachi with the right leg while making a descending left teisho and a rising right teisho.



45) Slide forwards into right kokutsudachi making gedan barai.

46) Slide forwards into kibadachi and reach forwards with a low right hand and a high left hand.

The thumbs are lowermost on both hands.

47) Jump up and turn 360 degrees.

48) Land in a right kokutsudachi making shutouke.

49) Step backwards into a left kokutsudachi making shutouke.

50) Pull the left foot back to the right. Place the right arm across the front of the body, the fist against the open left hand.

Place the hands by the sides. Bow.

Make yoi.

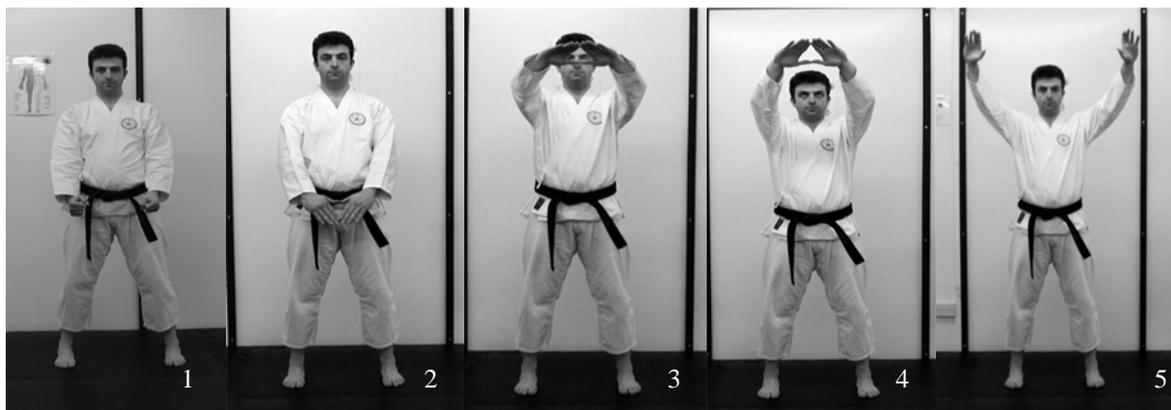
KANKU DAI

To View The Sky

Previously known as Kusanku, Kwanku, and Kosokun, this kata takes its name from the Chinese envoy who is alleged to have created it, and the opening movements - which appear to look skyward.

Kanku Dai has been called the quintessential Shotokan kata - for many it is the heart of Shotokan.

This kata is the source of much of the Heian material, and should be performed in small sequences, with sharp, strong movements.



1) From a ready position. Bring the feet together, place the hands by the sides. Bow. Name the kata.

2) Make Yoi.

3-4) Raise the arms slowly, keeping the elbows fractionally bent. As the triangular view hole passes the eyes the gaze follows the hands.

5) At the peak or periphery of vision the hands reach their zenith, come apart quickly.



6) The hands trace a wide arc down to the point just below and in front of the navel. The right hand strikes the left hand with the shuto edge of the hand.

- 7) Look to the left. Step out to the left into a left kokutsudachi and make a high haiwanuke, placing the right hand in front of the solar plexus.
- 8) Look to the right. Shift the bodyweight onto the left leg and reverse the position to make haiwanuke with the right arm in a right kokutsudachi.
- 9) Pull the left foot up to a natural stance, the left and right hands come to the right hip. Push the left hand slowly forwards, tateshuto.
- 10) Punch chudanzuki with the right hand.



- 11) Withdraw the right hand back to the left pectoral muscle and produce a one-handed uchiuke while twisting the body to face the left in a short zenkutsudachi.
- 12) Punch chudanzuki with the left hand.
- 13) Withdraw the left hand back to the right pectoral muscle and produce a one-handed uchiuke while twisting the body to face the right in a short zenkutsudachi.
- 14) Pull the left foot underneath the body, left and right fist coming to the left hip.
- 15) Look to the rear of the embusen, kick right yokogerikeage and make right urakenuchi at the same time.



- 16) As the foot comes back down make shutouke in left kokutsudachi to the front.
- 17) Step forward into right kokutsudachi and make shutouke.
- 18) Step forward into left kokutsudachi and make shutouke.
- 19) Step forward into zenkutsudachi and make nukite over the left hand. **Kiai.**



20/21) Look behind and reverse the stance to make zenkutsudachi facing the rear of the embusen. Place the left hand in front of the forehead and make a palm-up shutouke.

22) Kick maegeri.

23/24) Turn behind and make manjigamae in a left kokutsudachi.



25) Reach forward into a left zenkutsudachi, place the left hand by the ear and the right hand out at gedan level, palm-up.

26) Pull up to renoujidachi and make gedanbarai.

27) Step out to make left zenkutsudachi facing the front of the embusen. Place the left hand in front of the forehead and make a palm-up shutouke.

28) Kick maegeri.

29) Turn behind and make manjigamae in a left kokutsudachi.

30) Reach forward into a left zenkutsudachi, place the left hand by the ear and the right hand out at gedan level, palm-up.



31) Pull up to renoujidachi and make gedanbarai.

32) Make urakenuchi and yokogerikeage to the left.

33) Land in left zenkutsudachi making right mawashiempi.

34) Look behind and bring the left leg back underneath your body. Bring both hands to the left hip.

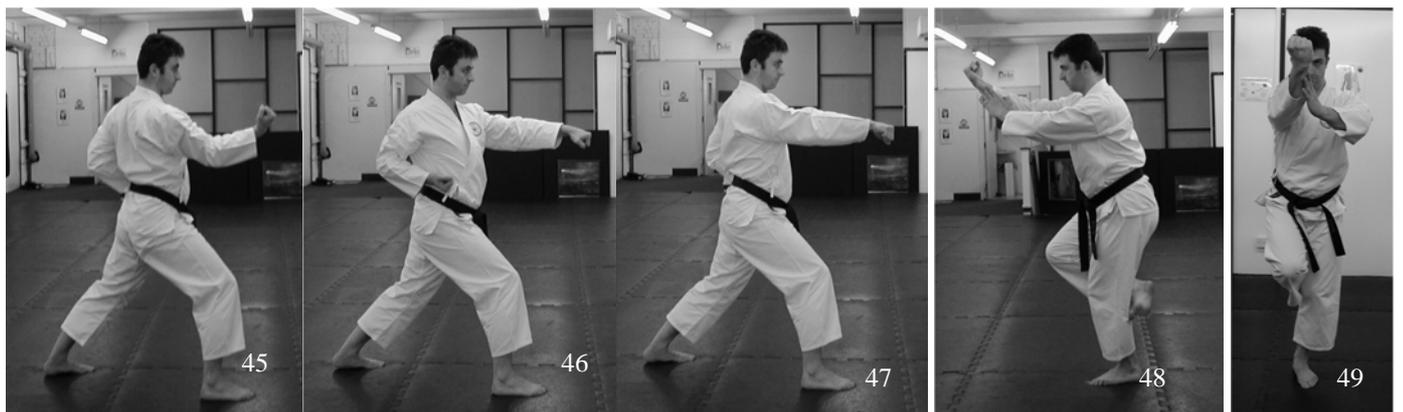
35) Make yokogerikeage and urakenuchi to the right.



- 36) Land in right zenkutsudachi making left mawashiempi.
- 37) Look over the left shoulder and make shutouke in left kokutsudachi behind.
- 38) Step out to 45 degrees and make right kokutsudachi and shutouke.
- 39) Look over the right shoulder and make right kokutsudachi and shutouke behind.
- 40) Step out to 45 degrees and make left kokutsudachi and shutouke.



- 41/42) Move the left foot to make left zenkutsudachi facing the rear of the embusen. Place the left hand in front of the forehead and make a right shutouchi with the palm up.
- 43) Kick maegeri.
- 44) Storm forwards, palming downwards with the right hand and then the left, landing in right kosadachi making uchikomi.



- 45) Move the left leg backwards into a right zenkutsudachi and make right uchiuke.
- 46) Punch gyakuzuki.
- 47) Punch chudanzuki.
- 48/49) Turn anticlockwise on the left foot, raise the right knee and make a right assisted jodan urazuki.



- 50) Land forwards with the fingers aimed towards the centre, elbows outwards, and the right knee still high beneath the body.

51/52) Push up to face the rear of the embusen and make low shutouke in left kokutsudachi.
 53) Step forwards into right kokutsudachi make shutouke.



54) Look over the right shoulder and turn anticlockwise to make left zenkutsudachi and uchiuke.
 55) Punch gyakuzuki.
 56) Look over the right shoulder and pivot to make a right zenkutsudachi and uchiuke.
 57) Punch gyakuzuki.
 58) Punch chudanzuki.



59-60) Look over the right shoulder. Bring the left foot underneath the body, kick yokogerikeage and make urakenuchi at the same time.
 61) Land in a left kokutsudachi making shutouke.
 62) Palm down with the left hand and step forward making nukite in a right zenkutsudachi.
 63) Move the right hand behind the head, twist around anti-clockwise, pivoting on the right foot.
 64) End in a left kidadachi making descending uraken.

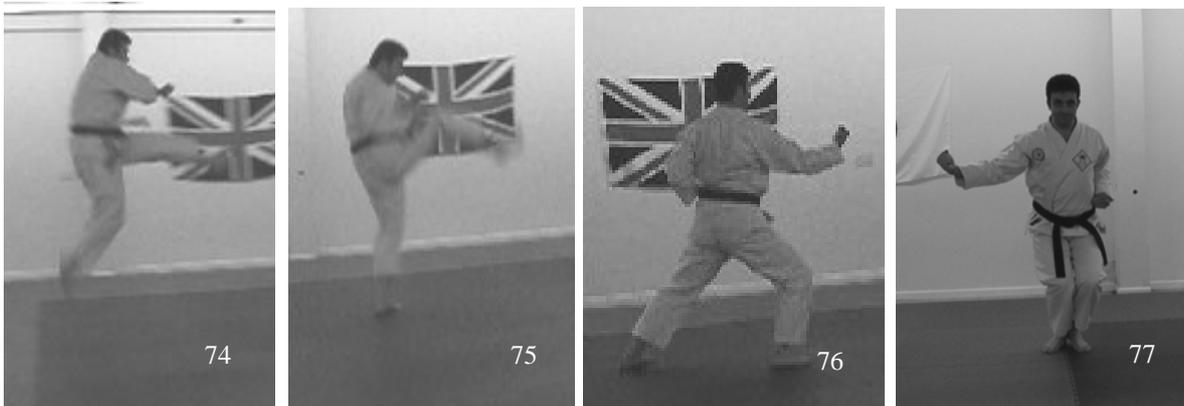


65) Shift in and make horizontal tetsui.
 66) Make a right mawashiempi.
 67) Look to the rear of the embusen, the hands coming to the left hip.
 68) Make a one-handed right gedan barai.
 69) As soon as the hand reaches a point of kime, pivot clockwise on the right foot into kidadachi

making the right hand rise above the head (similar to age uke) and the left arm making a gedan tetsui shape.



- 70) Move the right arm to make jujigedan barai.
- 71) Pull the wrist sharply back to the solar plexus, rising slightly in the stance. Throw the hands upwards to make an open-handed jujiageuke.
- 72) Pivot clockwise on the right foot in a long, slow arc to face the rear of the embusen.
- 73) Ending in right zenkutsudachi, the hands pull down to once again make fists at the solar plexus.



- 74-75) Leap forwards making two maegeri whilst in the air. Kiai.
- 76) Land in right zenkutsudachi, making uchikomi.
- 77) Slowly make sukuiukewith the right arm, pivoting on the right foot to make uchihachjidachi facing the front of the embusen.



- 78-79) The arms halt momentarily in the "Yama" position before finishing by making the customary Yame position. Bring the feet together. Bow. Finish.

It is almost a certainty, at Black Belt, that a previous kata will be demanded. This can act to confirm an examiner's decision that the candidate has passed, or, it can swing a decision from "fail" to "pass" if there is any doubt in the examiner's mind.

The general trend tends towards a request for a Heian kata, but any previous kata may be requested. It is vital that those attempting Shodan do not forget their previous grading kata.

Black (Shodan) - Kumite

Kihon Ippon Kumite. The attacks are Jodan, and Chudan Oi-zuki; Maegeri; Yokogeri; Mawashigeri; and Ushirogeri. The responses should include one step in any direction, a parrying/warding hand and any retaliation.

As kumite is a display of technique, the distance required should be only sufficient to “touch” an opponent - as opposed to the close/damaging range of oyo. Kumite is a display of control, distance, timing, and targeting, as well as training the spirit of the defender towards becoming indomitable.

Black belt kihon ippon kumite is performed moving around, and one must be aware of feints and “dummy” movements.

Jyu Kumite. This is “free sparring”. Bowing to the opponent, the examiner(s) and the referee, and waiting in a yoi position are the pre-kumite formalities. Once the referee announces “hajime” (action) then there is no set course of events. Both opponents seek to demonstrate their control of distance, timing, technique, and spirit. This may mean that both people attack at the same time, using good clean techniques at kumite distance. Attacks may not be open-handed, below the belt, or contact excessively. Defences include shifting, blocking, and parrying.

The activity continues until the referee calls “yame” (stop). There may be repetitions of this activity until a satisfactory display is observed by the examiner.

Black Belt (Shodan) - Oyo Jutsu

With an attacker attempting to punch your head, parry, move out of the way, grip the attacking weapon, and retaliate. The retaliation may be Jodan or Chudan, may include take-downs or (controlled) attacks against the legs, and although one step is all that is required to initialise your response, a further step in order to “finish” the technique is permissible.

Oyo, of course, means that the defender has to *pull* their retaliations as the distance is such that a full technique will damage an opponent.

It will be considered beneficent to include responses from kata in retaliations, even though kata bunkai must be demonstrated separately.

Black belt oyo should leave the examiner in no doubt that the examinee is in a position of superiority at the end of the technique.

Black Belt (Shodan) - Bunkai

Applicants are now invited to demonstrate their understanding of a move from their kata, ensuring their effectiveness and suitability to be promoted.

Black Belts are able to use any move from their repertoire. It is imperative that new Shodan is immediately able to show previous kata and be able to explain not only how to do the moves, but also to offer an insight into their potential applications.

Grading Summary for Shodan

When attempting the black belt, the following technique sequences must be fluid, focused, and natural.

The grading examiner can ask for techniques or combinations not listed on the syllabus. Students must be prepared to perform the techniques/kata as requested without question.

FUNDAMENTALS (Kihon)

Kizamizuki, Oizuki, Gyakuzuki, Kamae

Age Uke, Gyakuzuki, Gedan Barai, Kamae

Soto Uke, Empi uchi, Uraken uchi, Gyakuzuki,
Gedan Barai, Kamae

Uchi Uke, Kizamizuki, Gyakuzuki, Gedan
Barai, Kamae

Maegeri, Oizuki, Gyakuzuki, Kamae

Yoko kekomi, Uraken, Gyakuzuki, Kamae

Mawashigeri, Uraken, Gyakuzuki, Kamae

Ushirogeri

Shuto uke, Kizami mawashigeri, nukite

KATA

Bassai Dai

KUMITE

Kihon Ippon Kumite from Kamae

Jodan Oi-Zuki, Chudan Oi-Zuki, Mae geri,
Yoko kekomi,
Mawshigeri, Ushirogeri

OYO

Straight: Avoidance Shift, no count

Hook: Intercepting Steps, no count

INVISIBLE POWER

The mysteries of the martial arts may be what first draws us to their practice. There is an appeal and aura surrounding the legends of warrior monks and ancient samurai which may make us believe that these fighters of old possessed something magical.

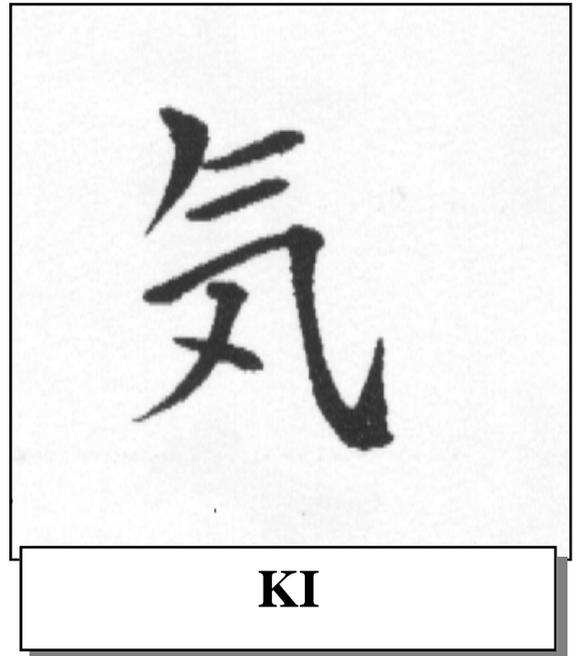
Chi, Ki, Qi - all names for a universal energy which does not seem to translate into a term that western people can easily understand. The problem with translation just adds to the mystique!

Ki is often referred to as "internal power". It is supposed to be an invisible energy which keeps us alive, can be used to hurt or heal, and can produce results beyond the scope of the normal physical body. Stories are bandied about of women tearing apart car doors to reach their children stuck in a flaming car. These could be attributable to adrenaline - if the muscle was physically able to produce that kind of strength. The other factor with the adrenaline is that the body produces adrenaline in fear and excitement equally, yet the brain decides which of these is fear and which is excitement. If amazing strength were produced from adrenaline then excited people would be stronger than most. *Some* are.

The existence of ki is not proven through western medicine. There are no physical channels for it to flow through. The reasoning *for* it usually holds that electricity cannot be seen, either. This is true, but harnessed electricity travels through wires which can be seen. Perhaps there is more to this analogy - perhaps unharnessed electricity cannot be seen as unharnessed ki cannot be seen. Perhaps harnessed ki is visible as movement of the human vessel as harnessed electricity is visible in television, working fridges etc.

Western medicine decides whether things are real by studying dead things. Eastern medicine works by studying live things and recording what appears commonly. All things that live exhibit "life" therefore they possess something of the same power within them, called ki.

When a pressure point is struck it has been theorised that, as they tend to lie over junctions in nerves or divergences in nerves, that it is the nerves which are the cause of the pain. Striking the body of a nerve, however, does not cause the change in polarity within a nerve which triggers the chemical signal to the brain registered as "pain". The idea of "pain" is a symptom of the receptors at the ends of nerves being stimulated. Some points do not lie over nerve endings, junctions, or convergences. The neural theory does not take into account the effect on the organs of the body caused by striking points associated with them in oriental medicine but not actually possessing a neural connection in western medicine.



Proven before western scientists at Chicago university hospital was that by striking a particular acupuncture point governing the Liver it could be made to stop functioning. In this particular case the Liver was allowed to lie inactive for a few minutes before it was "awoken" with a subsequent strike. The spot which was struck had no neural link (other than the brain - which links all nerves) to the organ in question. The only link would seem to be the observed one which oriental scientists of old dubbed "ki".

The idea that this invisible power can be projected outside of the body is not uncommon. “No touch knockouts” and reiki healing both rely upon the movement of ki outside of the body. Whilst remaining sceptical, having witnessed reiki one can only wonder about the offensive possibilities from the reverse side of the healing process (i.e. causing damage).

The manifestation of “unbendable arm” or “iron shirt” exercises is usually attributed to ki. These are spectacular results from correct alignment of the body and correct use of tension, yet sometimes the easiest way to explain them is to talk about the feeling generated by “channelling ki”. The visualisation of a beam of power projecting from the hand is a great tool to produce the right result, but is it Ki?

The ki is manifested in “**kime**” by focusing a technique at the level /depth appropriate to that technique. Kime literally translates as “Decision”, implying that the moment of using the technique in that way will be decisive. One must deliberately make a technique with kime, it is very rare to accidentally have a focused technique.

Kime is strongly linked to the use of a “**Kiai**”. Breathing is considered to be a vital part of this process. An exhalation fractionally before the end of a technique is proven to provide a stronger technique. The shout which is expelled from the body *fractionally prior* to impact makes the body tense in the abdomen area. The lower portion of this area is the hara, or dantien/**tanden**. In oriental medicine this is supposed to be the centre of the body and home to the soul. It would seem to indicate that the centre/soul is brought into play for the culmination of the technique, hence Kiai, which actually translates as “Everything Together”.

When it comes down to the use of this invisible power within the martial arts, it does not matter whether you believe in it’s physical existence or not, all that matters is the results you get when you believe that you are using it!

Our use of 5 Element Theory relies upon movement of Ki and the “orientation”, or type, of Ki in question. Wood, Fire, Water, Earth, and Metal are the particular types of Ki which interest us. By augmenting or fracturing the normal flow of energy we cause disruption to the vessel (the human body) which is usually perceived as weakness or pain. On top of this, each type may be positively or negatively “charged”, being Yin or Yang energy. Striking the crossing of the Yin Wood Liver meridian and the Yang wood Gallbladder meridian quickly reveals that affecting two opposites results in disturbance of the body - just like shorting out an electrical circuit.

Linking into this idea of a pattern of power flowing within the body is the idea of “biorhythms”. This, much more “acceptable”, theory of the body having a *good* time of day and a *low* time of day doesn’t seem to bother scientists as much, yet it seems to follow the same idea as the diurnal cycle of Ki flow.

If it is the result of some kind of self-hypnotism then that only makes the benefit of using “Ki” even greater. Visualising the use of ki only produces good results. No-one has yet fooled themselves into being less effective by using ki.

TARGETS: THE HEAD

By far the most controversial of targets are on the head.

Questions arise as to whether the head should be struck and what situations require it. The severity of striking the head should not be underestimated.

Even light blows to the head may have severe complications.

As always, we present information for education and explanation; the decision to use that information or not is one for the individual. If nothing else, use this information to realise the severity of striking the head and resolve not to do it except where you have NO other option.

Utilising five element theory, secondary (or even initial) attacks to the head can effect the opponent's whole body. Whilst striking anywhere on the head will provide a result, some results are more effective than others.

Of particular note is the effect that striking a "set-up" point on a limb, for example, has on strikes to the head. Points which are relatively harmless can be accentuated or "lit up" by hitting a related point first, thereby needing less physical strength to cause a greater effect.

Yang Fire

SI18 Ki rush to head causes knock out. Just below the outer canthus.

SI19 Anterior to the tragus and the posterior margin of the mandible. Headache, tinnitus, rumoured to shut down the whole body, but may be confused with GB2.

TW23 At the end of the eyebrow. Pain, sinking feeling, knees kick out, then KO, potential for blindness.

TW 18 & 19 Combine to produce a deadly recipe. Brain shock.

TW17 In the depression between mandible and mastoid process. Use for controlling by nudging, gouging. Striking may dislocate jaw or kill.

Yang Metal

LI20 At the top of the nasolabial groove. KO

LI18 In conjunction with S9 immediate death with no chance of revival. Emotional backlash, grief.

Yang Earth

S1 Connected to LI20, affects Yang Ming and the liver/eyes. Sensitive and easily damaged.

S4 Needs accuracy to affect KO.

S5 On the anterior border of the masseter muscle. Connected to S9 via S1 & S8. This "Great Meeting" affects the heart through S9, the brain receives excess ki.

S6 Concussion, memory loss, KO. Extent of injury may not be apparent for up to 72 hours. However, complete recovery is possible.

S9 Directly over the carotid sinus. The baroreceptor causes the brain to register high blood pressure which affects a feint to preserve the brain (vasodilation). This is especially dangerous to older people, as any fragment of the valve which detaches will flow directly to the brain, possibly creating a blockage. The right side of the recipient has a much greater affect than the left side. Striking PC6 on the left side just prior will create a greater affect (Yin fire to yang earth feedback).

Yang Wood

GB1 near the corner of the eye. Nausea, loss of memory, possible death. Very dangerous.

GB2 Anterior to the intertragic notch. Dizziness and nausea. GB CLUSTER adverse cyclic ki

distruption. Brain dysfunction, agitation, reverses creative energy cycle.

GB20 Below the occipital bone, between the sternocleidomastoideus and trapezius muscles. Electrical distruption, physiological damage, KO or hard strikes kill.

Yang Water

B1 Outside corner of the eye. Nausea, rapid energy loss, possible sight loss, link to other meridians may cause associated damage. It is believed that the body's immune system can be damaged from here.

B2 medial end of the eyebrow. Extreme ki drainage. Headaches for months. KO or death.

B10 Deep within the semispinalis capitis muscle, just below the Medulla Oblongata. Knock out, a feeling of disconnectedness from the body. Use with CV17 and ST9 is very dangerous. Lethal.

Not aligned to one particular element, and both running upwards in terms of energy flow, the following meridian points are extremely dangerous. Both meridians are vital and delicate, and any point is good, but those listed here are very dangerous. Conception vessel must not be struck on females, for fear of permanent damage.

Conceptor Vessel

CV24 knocks their teeth out.

Governor Vessel

GV17 Gate of the Brain. Aphonia, dizziness, KO, death

GV20 Hundred Meetings. Shock. Above a set of "extra points".

GV22 Fontanel Meeting. Shock wave to front of chest. Pain occurs slightly after the strike.

GV24 Spirit's Hall. Brain damage.

GV26 Revival point for shock, also causes it.

GV28 Inside the mouth, but nearly under GV26, so double whammy.

SHUTO UKE

Sword hand receiver technique.

A difficult technique. Many people perform shuto in a lazy or flowery way. It becomes apparent to people watching just who knows what they are doing with this technique. Anyone who does know what they are doing will not be flicking their wrist over in a “pretty” fashion, but rather smartly and sharply taking their arms from an elbows together to a separate position.

Once again we find that the key is the “elbows together” position, and that the translation is both a description of how you apply the technique and the feeling of the action.

Often seen as a parry to an incoming straight punch we are left with questions as to why the attacker does not hit with the other arm as well.



Why do we use two arms to make the shape whilst only needing one to deflect the blow?

Wouldn't pushing the opponent's arm outwards actually assist them in swinging the other hand towards us?

Isn't the “shuto” edge of the hand a little soft for striking?

The answers are already known to us as the principles applied to the previous techniques.

As always, the problems only arise through mis-translation and acceptance of the instructions of those who do not know better.

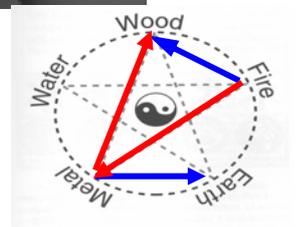
Consider the following:

a) An opponent strikes with a right fist. We slide to the side and parry across the body. This activates the fire meridians along the arm. The other hand strikes into the ribs at the gallbladder/liver cross. This lights up the yin and yang wood meridians. The returning hand drags along the heart meridian, choking it at H3 (Yin Fire).

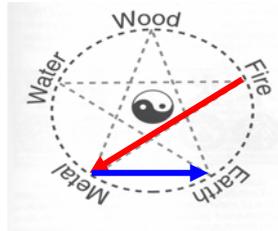
The parrying arm comes over the top of the striking arm comes down onto the lung meridian, activating metal, then strikes across the body at Stomach 9 (activating earth).



Controlled pliability. Quadrants. Yin-Yang. Five elements. Breath. Pressure points. Tongue. Balance points. Power zones. Vibration. Cross-body motor reaction. Wave form. Reverse constructive cycle.

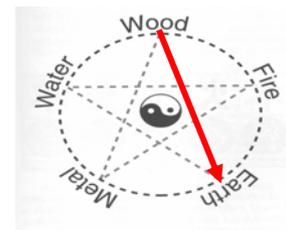


b) The opponent grabs you around the lapel area, preparing to strike with their other hand. Sliding the nearest arm over the opponent's wrist, making a tight bridge with your own wrist, we activate the fire and metal points of the wrists. The rolling action of the wrist pins the opponent to us. The other arm strikes out across to the Stomach 9 point, activating earth. Their own bodyweight slams their neck on to your shuto, doubling it's effectiveness.



Controlled pliability. Quadrants. Yin-Yang. Five elements. Breath. Pressure points. Tongue. Balance points. Power zones. Vibration. Cross-body motor reaction. Wave form. Reverse constructive cycle

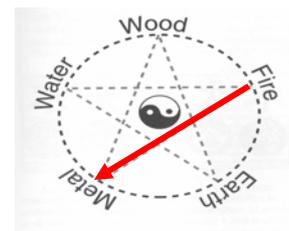
c) An opponent seizes you by the shoulders. Bump your body against him, turning to minimise the targets available to him. Feed the hands, one behind the head (ideally GB20 Yang wood) and one in front of the head (maybe to S4, yang earth or the gallbladder cluster of the opposite side of the head). Twist.



Controlled pliability. Quadrants. Yin-Yang. Five elements. Breath. Pressure points. Tongue. Balance points. Power zones. Vibration. Cross-body motor reaction. Wave form.

d) An opponent seizes from the rear. Our initial action must be to shrink and bring our arms across us. This means that we maintain our airways. In half-hearted attempts at a bear hug we may find that this action alone removes the opponent. The opponent has the fire and metal meridians of the arms activated.

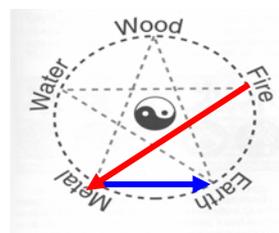
By grabbing the arms ourselves and then separating them our opponent is pulled over our hip and usually falls to the floor. The arm held high position is different to the gedan barai application in that the arm is more severely twisted.



Controlled pliability. Quadrants. Yin-Yang. Five elements. Breath. Pressure points. Tongue. Balance points. Power zones. Vibration. Cross-body motor reaction. Wave form

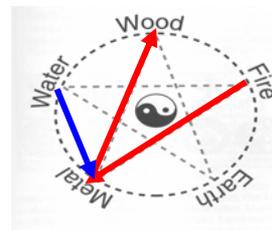
e) An opponent grabs from the rear, but, being alert we prevent the closing of his grip. Our weight is thrown backwards to off-balance him while our leading hand pulls him on to the strike we make with our rear elbow (anywhere on the conception vessel).

At the same time as pushing backwards we raise our stepping foot and scrape it down our attacker's shin, finally stamping hard upon their instep. The stomach meridian is affected by a massive feedback. S41 (fire jing point on an earth Yang meridian) is particularly nasty, though it appears harmless enough. S42 is a source point, S43 is painful, and S44 may cause the brain to feel a knockout on the jaw!



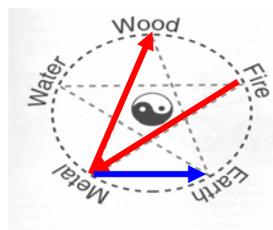
Controlled pliability. Quadrants. Yin-Yang. Five elements. Breath. Pressure points. Tongue. Balance points. Power zones. Vibration. Cross-body motor reaction. Wave form. Reverse Constructive Cycle

f) As above, an opponent has grabbed us from the rear. Seizing his fingers (and if compliance is required the little finger may be pulled across the back of the hand), we slide beneath his grasp and pull him over the forward hip, maintaining our grasp. Activating the fire and metal meridians of the hands, we also access water and/or wood depending on where we strike down onto the leg with our stamp.



Controlled pliability. Quadrants. Yin-Yang. Five elements. Breath. Pressure points. Tongue. Balance points. Power zones. Vibration. Cross-body motor reaction. Wave form. Reverse Constructive Cycle

g) In a variation on the above (C), an opponent strikes out at us with his fist. By sliding to the side quickly we parry across our body to prevent impact. It is important that we do not shift too far away from the attacker to inadvertently reduce the number of responses available to us. In shifting we find that we are within range to affect his head, and seize the stomach (Yang earth) points of the jaw and the gallbladder (Yang wood) points of the occipital basin. Spinning the points out, we find that we have made a shuto uke shape.



Controlled pliability. Quadrants. Yin-Yang. Five elements. Breath. Pressure points. Tongue. Balance points. Power zones. Vibration. Cross-body motor reaction. Wave form. Reverse Constructive Cycle

Shuto uke, to receive with a sword hand. Taking the translation we might reason that a sword may be used to parry, stab, slice, or even slap. Couldn't shuto be equally used in any of these ways?

One of our prime concerns should be with what part of the shuto we are receiving our opponent's attack. The soft, fleshy edge of the palm is good for striking hard targets, but not so good for soft targets (like airways and blood gates). Just below the edge of the palm is an oft neglected weapon, though. The small protuberance at the top edge of the wrist is an ideal small bony weapon for soft targets, eg the throat or temple. Neither should we forget that the whole of the arm may be brought into play, but again we must consider that it is the small bone (ulna), and as such it will not be suitable for smashing, but rather for "cutting" (more of that sword analogy, huh?).

Another factor worthy of consideration is the usual applications show the activity occurring at the end of the movement. We rationalise that the actual use of the technique is in the middle of the action, and that it has an element of "follow through".

Let's face it, if you wanted to parry a punch you just wouldn't cross your arms first, would you?

The End

It had taken a few years now. During that time Joe had realised that there were no short cuts. Indeed, it now seemed a folly to wish for quick progress when it was the journey that was so exquisite. Joe realised that the path, the route - that is the *learning* and *process* were more important than the destination.

For so long it had seemed that Black Belt was the End, a reason for all the hard training. Certainly the Dan grading test had been a gruelling event, there had been times when Joe had feared for survival. All of that time spent practising techniques had been necessary, for when the adrenaline rush of the test had hit it had been difficult enough just remembering a name, let alone how to move or fight. It had all been necessary. All of the time shouting and training until sweat had poured from every pore, all of the conditioning was really all *mental* preparation for that one test. That one test, of course, was just preparation for *life*.

Having achieved the Dan grade, Joe realised that there was still so much more to learn. Not only the new techniques associated with grade and the consolidation of existing ability, but the furthering of attitudes and experience; the spiritual growth. There was no need to become a monk, just to question one's own motivations and experiences; to probe for the reasons behind events. In the end it seemed that nothing was left to chance, that in one way or another everything had been a valuable experience, both for life inside and outside the dojo.

Time had passed, things had been learned, and in learning personal discoveries had been made. The limits of physical toughness had been probed, the limits of mental endurance had been pushed, and Joe had been assured of one's own power to overcome obstacles. Perhaps that was what karate was really all about. There no longer seemed to be one, perfect answer to life's questions, nor one perfect definition for the art which had been studied for so long. Joe realised that in times past the definition of the art would have relied upon words like *punch* and *kick*, and would probably not, unlike now, have included *modesty*, *humility*, *confidence*, or *esteem*.

For a short time, lower grades had been annoying; their constant competitiveness, their questioning of things which should be discovered, their inability to grasp some of the simple things. Then had come the realisation that Joe too had been one of those students. They too would grow beyond their current thinking. These things just take time.

Joe no longer compared the beginner's ability to the higher grades - it was a moot point, it had no meaning. Sensei was still Sensei, had still gone before. It did not matter how much progress was made or how high one could kick, those who were senior had endured that part of their own journey, and were not competing with those who came after.

These things had all been spoken about in class: early on, at the beginning of the journey. It was only now, after some great enduring that it seemed those words were true. It was only after undertaking the journey that one can actually know what road one is on. Largely, this particular road is constructed by those taking the journey, the route is made by those travelling. We are all mapping new paths.

It only ends when you get there.

Black belt then, was not an end, but a beginning.