

UNDERSTANDING THE KATA



Kata are an attempt to preserve, in their purest forms, the knowledge of techniques. One man acts as the performer; he is called "Tori". The other has the techniques applied to him; he is called "Uke". Uke gives Tori the perfect opportunity to apply the techniques. Tori's application, therefore, must be absolutely accurate in regards to timing, form and complete control of his partner. They work together in harmony, striving between them to give a perfect demonstration of movements done under the most favorable circumstances. Thus, by this ritual performance, they preserve the knowledge of the purest form, the proper techniques, and the precise moment at which to apply it. When performing kata, there is only one rule to achieve. It must look real and possible, especially in Jujitsu. An important part of performing which can never be overstressed is the Kiai. The Kiai is an important, dynamic part of the kata in which you wish to show intensity. The goal is to flow through the kata from beginning to end with poise and control over the self.

WINNING AT KATA IS WINNING AT LIFE

The student comes to me after having gone through all of these steps and says, "Something is still missing. What am I leaving out?" I try to



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make them understand that a thorough understanding of a kata is more than just being familiar with the pattern and performing the movements in sequence. Kata is a way of self expression. As in other forms of "art", it is an outward attempt to express the inner feelings and emotions within each of us. It's what makes the difference between a good story teller, and somebody just reading aloud. The good story is told with emotion and feeling, and the other is generic. Kata is the same, only you are trying to take control of these emotions and applying them to your focus throughout the kata. This is the part that is missing. If you can attain this, you should come out a winner, for you have reached a goal. If you can control your emotions in a kata, then you can control your emotions outside of Karate (if you show your temper, don't show your weapon, and if you show your weapon, don't show your temper). So you see, kata teaches fighting skills and living skills at the same time.

THE GOAL OF KATA

The goal of kata is the overcoming of the self. In kata, there are only imagined opponents, and thus the performer is playing against the self in search of perfection. If, after many years of hard work, the performer finds



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that he or she is able to perform the kata without thinking about it at all, a goal has been reached, and the kata performs itself without any interference from the performer's self. Bodily control is achieved without feeling or thought. This must immediately affect the performer's control of any situation, pertaining to Martial Arts or otherwise. Going through the motions of kata is like the wave of the ocean. When executed, the display will be one of gracefulness and of harmony. Sufficient effort must be put forth to obtain perfection. Forceful energy must be abundant and formidable at any given time. Strength must flow unimpeded and directly. Thus by performing kata, you preserve the knowledge, technique, and precise moment at which to apply it.

All of the kata are based on techniques derived from Professor Chow-Hoon. While developing these kata, or forms, I want to emphasize certain aspects of what I have learned that I felt important.

MOVEMENT: Advancing, retreating, and lateral movement are your first line of defense - to create distance between the oncoming blow and yourself.



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BALANCE: Making precise movement at an accelerated pace, and being able to maintain proper balance is essential in order to set yourself for either an offensive or defensive action.

SPEED: To be able to deliver multiple blows to a specific target or targets to enrich and enhance your power.

STRENGTH & STAMINA: By practicing these kata vigorously, you will be able to increase the overall strength of your body, increase your lung volume capacity, and thereby improve your general health.

CONDITIONING: Mind and body together. Subconsciously, involuntary execution of the technique will incorporate itself into the kata. This is your final goal ... the kata will perform itself without feeling or thought.

James Muro

