



**Kissaki-Kai
Karate-Do**

Newsletter

December 2016



Why BAD BUNKAI is really BAD!

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Happy Xmas & a Healthy New Year!

Just about all karate-ka these days make use of the plethora of videos to be found on the Internet; experts demonstrating various techniques and Kata, and this can, indeed, be very helpful.

But! In some cases the material can be at best, misleading, and at worse extremely dangerous - not to potential enemies, but to the student who blindly accepts what is presented as correct in terms of self- defense and who tries to apply both the waza and the tactics shown.

More than 30 years ago, in my regular training with Asano sensei and other Japanese teachers, I realized there was an obvious disjunct between what we were practicing in Kata and what we were actually doing in Kumite. I couldn't understand why - if the Kata were to represent actual combat; the fighting looked nothing at all like the Kata, neither in movement nor in the variety

and type of techniques, and, finally I came to understand that effectiveness was just not a concern for them.

Japanese culture has, for many centuries, been based upon the concept of Kata. That is, the outward manifestation of perfection of technique; the 'How' something should be done, not the 'Why.'

Just about every level and aspect of Japanese life is based upon and governed by these intangible concepts. Not just the Martial Arts, but - for example - Cha-no-yu, the Tea Ceremony and Ikebana, Flower Arranging, are governed by Kata, as are a myriad aspects of daily life, levels of politeness, interpersonal private and business relationships - even Toyota has its own Kata.

The Tea Ceremony is not at all judged by the taste of the tea, but by the dignity and manner in which it is carried out.

In exactly the same way, Karate Kata, toolboxes of actual defensive combat techniques once in Japan, fell under the spell of this national guiding ethos and, compounded by the fact that Master Funakoshi, for example among others, did not place any emphasis at all upon teaching the 'meanings' of the Kata moves, but almost entirely upon the look and movement of the performance. Thus helping this new art to be accepted and assimilated into the Japanese system.



What makes Kissaki-Kai different is the constant application of the **'Rules of Combat'** to all methods of defending against an attack. Developed over many years of research and Police Training, these 'Rules' can make the difference in surviving an attack!

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Special Xmas Offer!

None of this was explained to us students of Japanese sensei, and, in fact, in my research over many years I came to understand that there was no way in which they could, as they were for the most part entirely ignorant of any but the most perfunctory Bunkai.

This eventually led to a deep-seated discontent in the minds of a few of us, who were actually much more concerned with what the Kata actually taught and why they were so prized by the original masters in Okinawa. So, with my published work over the years, in articles, books and videos, together with that of the few others in the field, there was a great pressure placed upon the Japanese sensei to show exactly why the students were forced to learn and practice Kata.

To demonstrate their concepts of Kata Bunkai, they began to show simplified, reverse-engineered moves in a stylized format of one defender surrounded by 4 attackers. The waza they almost invariably showed were simple basic punches, strikes and kicks drawn from the practice of Kihon - unfortunately, this was very often just wrong. For just one example, Age-uke was shown as 'Rising Block' instead of an upwards forearm strike to the head, which it normally actually is, with the other hand drawn back empty to the hip instead of grabbing and controlling the attacker. (Figs. 1 and 2)



Fig.1



Fig.2

In the face of demand for greater reality in their teaching, the sensei - who for the most part were champions in Kumite and competition - began to show even more absurd explanations of waza, in the face of even basic and obvious illogicalities!

If we take a look at a much misunderstood technique: "Manj-Gamae" for example.



You will invariably see this explained and demonstrated as a down block to defend against a punch or a kick attack. The problem is - and it is obvious to even a rank beginner - it is completely un-necessary to lift the rear arm into the air, to do absolutely nothing in order to block a kick, and, moreover, it is **never** done that way in basic training! The fact is the teachers usually have no idea why the move occurs, and they were never taught any application for it.



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Here we see an example of Kanazawa sensei doing just this. The rear arm is simply out there to replicate the Kata move and serves no purpose whatsoever!

Other sensei of note have stated that this two-handed move is not defensive at all, but merely a preparatory stance before combat!

Really? Which fight would that have been in then?

Then it got even sillier with Tori being given precognition that a second attacker is behind him and going to hit him with a punch at exactly the same time as an assailant in front tries to deliver a kick. **Come on! Do you believe this?**



Well, I certainly didn't, and my research eventually led me into discovering much more acceptable reasons and applications which were of real defensive merit instead of these flights of fancy.

So what is the Bunkai for Manji-Gamae? Well, you can see my interpretation of what is a very effective breaking of a double grip to the lapels, shirt, jacket, wrist or throat, followed by a very simple but effective throw in a number of my DVDs - (Bassai-Sho, Rules of Combat to name but two.) But there are others too, including a

very strong rear choke hold (Kata-Ha-Jime).



Unfortunately, many students, even long-term and of excellent prowess, are so invested in the perpetuation of the superior skills of their particular teachers that they are unable to apply critical thinking to what they are taught, and become almost aggressively defensive in the face of logical, unbiased, recognition of these unworkable and obviously defective attempts to interpret Kata Bunkai.

Waza such as Nihon Nukite in Kata cannot be used in Kumite, only in Defensive Karate!

“You don't rise to the levels of your expectation - rather you sink to the level of your training!” A quote from author and acclaimed writer on the reality of fighting in his new book: “On Combat.”

This is a restatement of one of the Kissaki-Kai fundamental ‘Rules of Combat’ which underlie all physical confrontation: **“How you will act under stress is exactly how you train to act!”**

This is a significant reason for claiming that it is impossible to overstate the importance of correctly and honestly analyzing what is taught as legitimate Bunkai (Yes, even what I teach!) To ensure that it really does fulfill a useful function and help in the execution of effective defensive waza! It doesn't matter **who** teaches the applied Bunkai, it has to pass the test of actually working! Or it becomes as Master Motobu claimed of the newly emergent sport karate in Japan, that it **“Only looks like the real thing!”**

Of course, if you are not interested in the self-defense aspect of karate, only in the sports side (and that too can confer benefits to the skills of all practitioners) then by all means continue to train in the same way and continue to accept that understanding the Kata is not as important as making the execution of them beautiful.

One thing I discovered was that very many karate-ka, especially in the beginning, attacked me as being somehow disrespectful to my teachers and theirs too! Naturally, the blatant misinformation put out by some of these same teachers in order to enhance their own status was not considered to be disrespectful of their students, never mind their art!



Happily, things are different now....or are they?

I came across this magazine comment a few years ago, which really summed up much of the initial responses I received to my questioning of the status quo.

My inclusion of realistic Kyusho (not dependent upon mysterious invisible flows of *Ki* or *Chi*) My development of the Rules of Combat and my many years of working with Law Enforcement and Special Forces plus the many books articles and DVDs I authored have had the result of spreading the concept of ‘Realistic not Ritualistic’ karate, and now much of what I held to be true is now accepted.

Having said this, the problem remains that many of the senior karate teachers do not have any understanding of what is required to analyze the Kata Waza and any perfunctory look at the hundreds of You Tube videos on Bunkai will reveal this. I don't condemn them for their lack of knowledge, it has taken me some 30 years to get to this point, and in their training the status of Bunkai was not important, only the ‘How’ and Kihon plus sport Kumite was emphasized.

So - Beware! If you see a sensei demonstrating applications whilst surrounded by 4 attackers who wait their turn, attack by rote, don't pursue their attack if blocked but just step back to give room for the next assailant (thus ignoring the Rule of Combat: **“It is only over when the attacker is on the ground!”**) it would be better to just move on; however dramatic, balletic powerful and circus-like the demonstrations might be. They are not real! Such demonstrations are - as Master Motobu stated: **“Simply implausible...this kind of person (here alluding to Funakoshi sensei) is a good-for-nothing scallywag...his tricky behavior and eloquent explanation easily deceives people.”**

Naihanchi forms. Kenwa Mabuni
openly stated in his books on karate that
bunkai was not something fixed but fluid,
with the student working out the moves.
In England, 6th dan Shotokan Instructor
Vince Morris pioneered the combined
bunkai/strike point theory in a number of
books and applied these concepts to
Shotokan kata, something previously
unheard of before. Although thousands
of copies of his books were absorbed by
British Shotokan students, the basic
concepts Morris employed were rejected
by the larger Shotokan groups though his
seminars became increasingly popular.
Morris was actually teaching fundamental
principles that many instructors like
Mabuni followed yet the rejection of this
came more from the Japanese styles who
were extremely entrenched in their
structure and rigidity and did not embrace
change easily. The Okinawan stylists,
however, embraced the bunkai/points
theory more rapidly as it was an
expansion on what many were taught at a
rudimentary level.



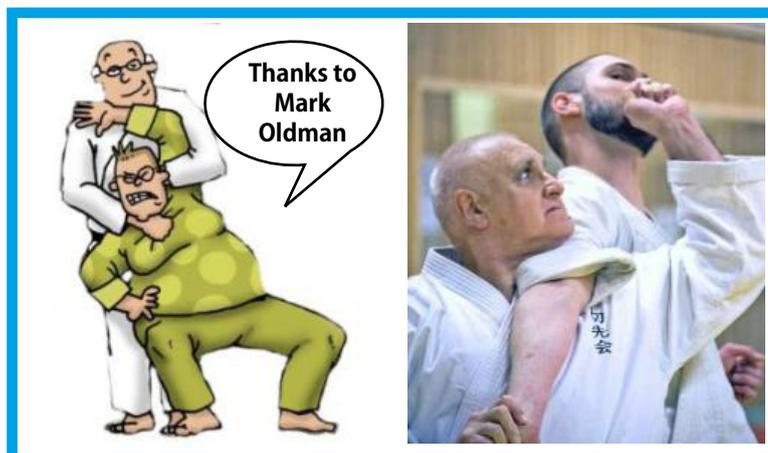
Kubi Nage Neck Throw - also cannot be used in competition Karate

Now, the truth is Master Funakoshi, as I mentioned earlier, was not interested in introducing the older combat defensive art into Japan, but rather, with the encouragement of Master Jigaro Kano, a modified art, based upon the older, but with much more emphasis on the the art, rather than the function. This didn't sit well with Master Motobu, for whom combat effectiveness was everything.

And here lies the problem today. There are two distinct methods of training, superficially alike but with very different underlying principles.

Each can aid the other, but students deserve to be told the truth and not encouraged to believe and practice what my teacher Asano sensei used to call: "Circus" demonstrations.

If you want to learn to swim, you need water; if your choice is football, you need a ball, if you want to learn pragmatic self-defense you need real effective techniques. You also need to apply the techniques in a realistic manner. How much would you bet on the success of a boxer who, each time he threw a punch pulled his other fist back to his hip? Not much, I imagine, but remember, if you train to do that automatically, under the stress of combat you will continue to do it! ("**Sink to the level of your training.**")



Further examples of the use of the two hands in Manji-Gamae - you won't see them in competition karate!

So, my advice is, look carefully at what you see and continually question what appear to be dubious techniques. Try them for your self and see if they really work! Don't listen to those who perpetuate '**Circus**' methods; these, which only '**appear to be the real thing**' will get you hurt or even killed! Lastly, one more observation. I have seen well-thought-of 'Masters' teaching convoluted and

intricate techniques which - on the face of it - seem to work, and they are interesting. BUT - remember not to be attracted by bright shiny things! The more complex a technique, the more likely it is to fail under real attack conditions. Are the defenses being shown in a realistic manner or a Dojo-compliant one, in long stances, with little or no movement, unreal distances..? And so on.

There is yet another 'Rule of Combat' to fit this situation, and it should be engraved upon your heart: "**KISS**" - "**Keep it simple, stupid!**"

Or, to put it another way: If you train incorrectly for a long time, you will become very good at doing things badly!

Remember, none of what I say is an attack on anyone, I simply put the choices before you as honestly as I can; then it is up to you!

Have a great Xmas, and I wish you all a very healthy New Year! I hope to see you on one of the upcoming seminars, and encourage you to perhaps host one in your own Dojo. Also - do check us out and follow us on Facebook. We are happy to answer your questions and hope you check out all the free video training clips (One Minute Dojo) on the website www.kissakiusa.com. Also take a look at the main website and shop: www.kissakikarate.com and, finally, the Distance Learning website: www.kissakikai.com

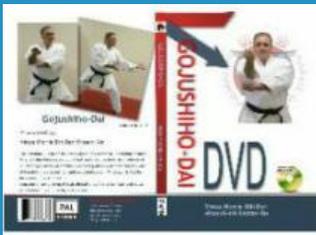
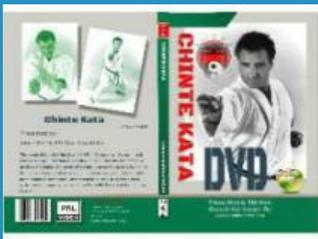
There are also many videos on Youtube - just search for 'Kissakikai'

My last remarks are really aimed at sensei who teach 'Bad Bunkai.'

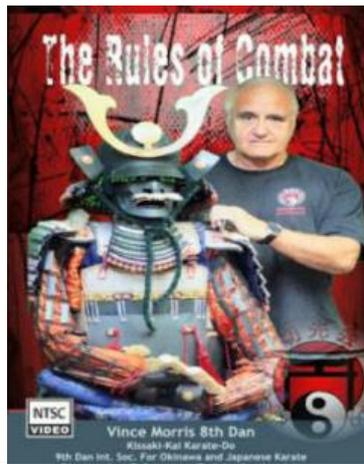
Please don't. You, as sensei, have a responsibility to tell your students the truth, and to teach them the truth; Not to do so only devalues you but the art which you espouse.

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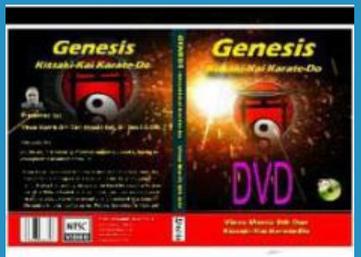
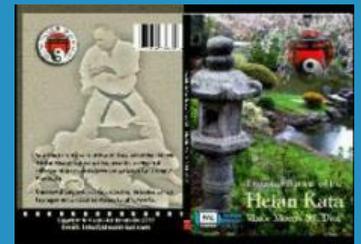
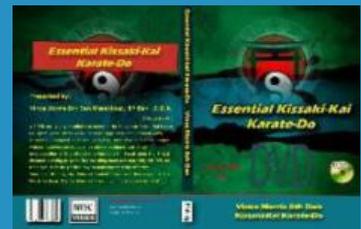
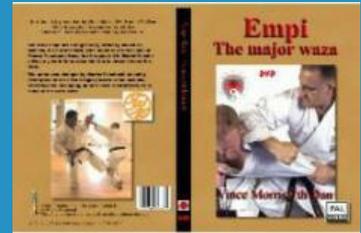
This is invaluable to all who want to master Kissaki-Kai, but who do not live near a Kissaki Dojo!

Why not take a look and see if it could help you?

www.kissakikai.com



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