

Reflection on the kata in karate-do

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Abstract:

in karate-do the practice of kata was for a time the only activity allowing the psycho-physical development of the disciple. With the sportivation of this martial art the sporting side begins to predominate other methods and processes thus appearing can we keep the kata as the axis of practice in order to harmonize sporting and self-defense aspects?

key words: karate-do - kata - sporting - self-defense aspects

Introduction:

Karate or empty hand, karate-do or way of the empty hand, a suffix characterizing all Japanese martial arts (japonization of karate by its founder Gichin funakoshi). Karate-do martial art? self-defense? or combat sport? Or all of these elements that characterize a discipline that has undergone metamorphosis across space and time. In the philosophical context of this (martial) practice, is it permissible to ask such questions and what will the answers be? The aim of this study is to determine the interaction between the different aspects of karate-do. We cannot claim affirmative answers or sure suggestions. But to clear the veil on certain aspects of this martial art seems a fair task given the vastness and depth that has built this world which is spread to the four corners of the globe.

1. Research questions and hypotheses:

In disciplines where tactical behavior is decisive in achieving performance (games and combat disciplines). It is essential to ensure that tactical training is integrated from the start¹

In karate-do the technical-tactical thought is forged in the practice of kata, this element seems to have a capital importance not only for the beginner or the competitor but certainly for the life of the practitioner after the years of competition and even for those who will not - for one reason or another - be able to rub shoulders with the world of competitive sports or even the podium. In this context we ask ourselves the following questions:

Is kata in karate-do an obligatory passage which cannot be bypassed? this question leads us to ask two others that can identify the subject with relative precision:

Is the practice of kata (seen by the masters) a necessity to develop the self-defense aspect?

In the same vein, is the practice of kata necessary for the development of kumité?

¹ Jürgen Weineck-Manuel de l'entraînement. Paris : Vigot,2003, p.447

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We are of the opinion that the practice of kata in karate-do is an obligatory passage which cannot be bypassed because this practice seems to be necessary for the development of the self-defense aspect and of kumité.

2. Research method:

for the present research we opted for the bibliographic and documentary research method according to the Whitney 1951 classification ¹

3. Conceptual analysis:

In order to identify the subject and subsequently to have conclusions that can become a platform for fruitful discussions and at the same time a subject encouraging researchers in the field to verify data from an experience of entire lives in the service of this martial art through rigorous and objective scientific research. We will mark the path of the founders and the great masters in their vision of the different aspects of karate-do that we have mentioned above.

3.1. the birth of karate:

History tells us about the name of this Indian monk Bodhidharma, also known as Daruma, the founder of "zen". He arrived in China around 520 AD. He then began a full nine-year period of meditation, completely losing the use of his feet and hands. He thus founded "zen", it is difficult to claim that this monk founded karate as we know it today or even a method of combat, however he developed physical exercises intended for the fortification of his body. based on breathing methods. These exercises became a very effective method of combat which spread throughout China under the name of "shaolin-su-kempo" ²

3.2. The kata in karate-do:

"It is possible to say that karate begins and ends with katas" is the essence of karate. Funakoshi regards kata as: "Exercise books for a student or tactical exercises for a soldier, kata are the most important element of karate. Whatever the kata, each represents the beauty given to others, a proof of humility towards others, the predominance of reason, and the appropriate use of martial arts" ³

Frank Morvan-Denegre⁴: "the katas do not really constitute the basis of karate, they are an element like any other, he defines the kata as being an organized and structured fight against one or more adversaries... they are composed of a series of blockades and attacks in a determined and invariable order "

¹ حسن احمد الشافعي وسوزان مرسي - مبادئ البحث العلمي في التربية البدنية والرياضية. الاسكندرية: منشأة المعارف، 1995، ص، 101

² Roland Habersetzer- Le nouveau guide marabout du karaté. Ed Marabout, 1978, p.13.

³ Gichin Funakoshi- L'essence du karaté. Ed Budo, 2012, p.68

⁴ Frank Morgane Denegre – le karaté techniques et conseils. Ed SOLAR, 1976, p.53

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The literal translation of the word kata is form or mold for Kenji Takitsu: "it is a sequence made up of formalized and codified gestures underpinned by a state of mind oriented towards the realization of the do (do being "the way" or the path). of self-realization) "¹

"Ki-hon is the ABCs of karate, kata is grammar and ju-kumite is writing. The katas are also the beginning and the end of karate"²

Roland Habersetzer sees the kata as a basic exercise that combines techniques in a rational way and with a definite style, he translates the kata into "form" or "mold where the body has to adapt.

"A kata is a set of movements of defense and attacks, in several directions, intended for several adversaries, all strictly codified ... the katas constitute in a way the archives of a martial art, the living testament or the gestural code. you have to know how to penetrate to touch the whole of art"³.

Definition from the encyclopedia of martial arts of the far east:

"A sequence of techniques whose unfolding reproduces a pattern of combat against one or more attacking opponents from different angles, this sequence is performed solo when it comes to bare hand disciplines based on strikes (karate type) ".⁴

"The katas or forms constitute the core of the practice of karate, but differ from the katas of judo, or sumo. In karate the practitioner can regulate the performance of the kata in terms of strength, and can adapt its performance to his individual abilities "⁵

"The kata is a series of pre-determined blocks, attacks, dodges against one or more adversaries, armed or not" ⁶

"Each kata covers a complete combat system, which varies in its content and appearances, according to a unique image set by its inventor"⁷

The kata in karate can be defined as being: "the theoretical expression Budo, strictly codified of karate-do" ⁸

From this last definition we can derive the following keywords:

Theoretical expression Budo: which characterizes the abstract aspect of this art based on the capacities of imagination and creativity, which leads to say that the vision of the kata and its

¹ Emanuel Akerman- Karaté bunkai katas. Paris :3^e Ed @mphora,2007, p.33

² Roland Habersetzer-Découvrir le karaté. Paris : @mphora,1991, p.14

³ Roland Habersetzer-Découvrir le karaté. ibid. p.15

⁴ Roland Habersetzer-Encyclopédie des arts martiaux. Paris: @mphora,2004, p.332

⁵ Iain Morris-Basic Karate- London: w. Foulsham & Co LTD. 1999.p.9

⁶ Vince Morris & Aiden Trimble-Karate katas and applications. London. Ed Butler,1991, p.07

⁷ Burgar B-Five Years One Kata. Martial Arts Publishing Ltd, UK, 2003, P. 29.

⁸ Hamida Khaled-Détermination de modèles technico-tactiques pour les athlètes de haut niveau à travers l'observation simple et appareillée en karaté-do. Thèse de doctorat,1915, p.49

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explanation depends on the predispositions of the lived as well as the personal power of synthesis each practitioner leaves his imprint and thus part of his mind on this expression of the "way of combat" which is none other than Budo.

Strictly codified: the combinations of movements in the kata are "invariable" with a maneuver march which is linked to the development of course it is for this reason that the disqualification is immediate if there is an error in the execution of the movements of the kata.

3.3. Definition of bunkai: Bun: fragment; Kai: analysis

"It is the interpretation of a martial art technique from the kata in its various forms of practical application"¹

"Bunkai is the principle of applying the different techniques and sequences contained in the kata. What seems obvious at first glance: that is to say a succession of blockages and counter-attacks supposed to be applied in real combat, it is less when it comes to decoding the whole to obtain realistic sequences; that is to say satisfactory from the point of view of effectiveness in martial combat "²

Unlike the kata itself, the bunkai is not strictly codified, on the contrary it is influenced in a direct way by the practitioner his experience in the field, these physical technical tactical and psychological skills and especially his sense of creativity which depends on factors cited above.

"The bunkai is the reading grid for a sequence that visibly mimics a fight, but which cannot be fully opened without an access code. How can we think that a kata is only the tedious repetition of techniques in the first degree, banal and outdated? »³

For this author he cites two levels of reading and interpretation of a kata:

1 / "Gengi-bunkai": this is the classic interpretation of a movement clearly declined and without surprise.

2 / "Kaishaku-bunkai": which requires more reflection, ... the need for interpretation of the technique at this level, or obviously links are missing (because this was wanted by the designer of the kata, or forgotten, or poorly transmitted, or even deliberately distorted) ... to read we need a lot of research and personal imagination, patience, and the crossing of knowledge. Akermann reports the following question from Habersetzer: Does a bunkai have an end? which suggests a decryption code, which let's say that the designer does not want to put everything within the direct reach of everyone without effort with the pretension of a knowledge better than in the past ... it is a lesson from the past to shed light on the present and the future ... the bunkai is also a reminder that the essential is never the technique itself, but the spirit of this technique ...

¹ Roland Habersetzer- Encyclopédie des arts martiaux. op. cit, p.332

² Emanuel Akerman-karate bunkai katas.op.cit. p.41.

³ Emanuel Akerman. Ibid; p.11

3.4.the self-defense bunkai:

this form of the bunkai differs from the classic by the fact that the execution is done without taking into account the locations and fundamental positions, to return here to the definition of Emanuel Akerman "that is to say a succession of blockages and counters-attacks supposed to be applied to real combat, it is less when it comes to decoding the whole to obtain realistic sequences; that is to say satisfactory from the point of view of effectiveness in martial combat "

3.5.the kumité bunkai: as its name suggests, it is a form of bunkai intended to take advantage of the technical arsenal of kata in the development of kumité, that is to say the competitive sporting aspect

of karate. This form did not exist but specialists saw it necessary to take advantage of the traditional form of bunkai for kumité.

3.6.rules for understanding bunkai:

A Albernethy¹ cites the following rules for understanding the kata and its bunkai:

- Each kata is its own self-protection system.
- All apps are meant to end the showdown instantly.
- Every detail of movement is significant.
- Each movement is designated for use in combat.
- The angles of execution of the different techniques are important.
- Positions are vital in technical execution.
- The way of applying will reflect the nature of the fight.
- There is a need for skills at every point in the fight.
- We must consider all the probabilities for each attack.
- The strikes must be made on weak points.
- All applications must be actually running

¹ Ain Albernethy- karat's grapelling methods.NETH.Pub.-Beneke R & coll-European Journal of applied physilogy.2004.

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3.7. the kata as a unique training:

Gichin Funakoshi founder of modern karate informs us about the method of training with his teacher Azato he declares: "Every night, in the courtyard behind the house, I repeated a kata under the gaze of Azato. I continued week after week, sometimes month after month, until my teacher was satisfied. This incessant repetition of the same kata was painful, often exasperating, sometimes humiliating, ... he adds that he was not allowed to switch to a new kata before having sufficiently understood the one he was working on ... when he is on the edge. fainting... if he is satisfied; his verdict was one word "good". This was his greatest praise "¹

3.8.various aspects of karate-do:

for Gilbert Cruss²: "karate is a precious stone shining with its thousand faces and whose incomparable beauty results from the purity of its composition, but also from the perfection of each facet. The imperfection of just one of them detracts from the beauty of the whole. " For him three trends are developing in karate:

1 / self-defense (considered the most important)

2 / sports competition.

3 / the mental and spiritual side sought by some using the technique of this art for spiritual purposes.

The first category will find that the most difficult fights are psychological in which we are aggressors assaulted. The second will find that real fights have nothing in common with competitive karate. The third category will discover that spiritual awakening also involves becoming aware of our environment with all its forms of aggression. He will finally quote this comparison of karate to one: "mountain the shortcut saves time but it does not allow not the proper knowledge of it. In addition, each possibility of access is a new experience which, good or bad, is always a source of enrichment and progress ".

3.9. Theory on katas:

"There is no perfect theory on the why and how of combining these movements in the various kata. Because of the secrecy that must have surrounded the practice of karate in the past, and the complete absence of a written tradition, no single, well-documented theory has ever been formulated on the origins and development of kata "³

3.10. Can karate be a competitive sport?

"When the martial arts run out of opponents for a fight to the death, they degenerate into something more like dancing; politics, in place of real force, have come to reign in the training

¹ Gichin Funakoshi-Karaté-do ma voie, ma vie. France : Ed Budo, 2007, p.27

² Gilbert Crus. Le karaté moderne. Ed SEDIREP,1976, p.10

³ Soshine Nagamine- L'essence du karaté-do d'Okinawa. Paris : Vigot,1989, p.55

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hall. Something that lacks life force is defeated, and something that is defeated is destroyed. Martial arts are meant to sponsor victory; however, they need rivalry...”¹

Oyama insists here on the spirit of Budo or the way of the combat which characterizes the Japanese martial arts or the bushido "the way of the warrior" which is the code of the moral principles that the Japanese warriors (samurai and bushi) were held off. observe (Wikipedia). Apparently there is no place for this traditional view to have any form of exhibition combat such as it is. How right can the founder of the Kyokushinkai style be? Didn't the Japanese choose Okinawan karate in Tokyo for its introduction into their education system? as a competitive and sporting practice does it not participate in the reinforcement of educational values?

“While karate is not easy to impart and proves difficult to explain without simultaneously demonstrating it, a distinguishing feature that makes it neither marketable nor suitable for competition. This is where the essence of karate-do lies, when it cannot be performed with protective equipment nor become a competitive combat sport ”²

Funakoshi here is adamant about the sporting aspect or the commercial character that cannot build karate for him. This is where the essence of karate lies. More than this; he will not admit carrying it out with protective gear! is this his way of conceiving this martial art or simply the influence of a culture and a background?

Karate did not experience sporting competition until after the death of its founder.

“Between 1925 and 1945 the new generation of practitioners favored free assaults (fights) which represented for the masters a certain spiritual deviation. However, the tolerance of the phenomenon is explained by the fact that the masters seek to counter the cultural and sporting escape from the West and the USA. But it also represented a way to mitigate the war of styles which was becoming a phenomenon in total contradiction with the philosophy of karate-do. Thus the most effective way was to regulate the meetings by giving them a sporting orientation.

It is Master Oshima who will establish the first rules during the inter-university competitions in 1952 from October 1957 and after the death of Funakoshi (April 1957) the first karate championships of all Japan were held under the aegis of the JKA »³

in summary:

- Karate is a rehabilitation and fitness practice.
- “It’s in the background that the method of combat comes into play.
- "It is possible to say that karate begins and ends with katas" is the essence of karate
- The abstract aspect of this art based on the capacities of imagination and creativity.

¹ Masutatsu Oyama-La voie kyukichin.Ed GUY TRENANIEL.1996,p.72

² Gichin Funakoshi-L'essence du karaté. Ed Budo,2012, p.102

³ Morsli Malek-Pratiques sportives et société. INFS/STS,1990/1991, p.17

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- The bunkai: "It is the interpretation of a martial art technique from the kata in its various forms of practical application"
- The forms of the bunkai must in theory develop and positively influence their objectives as a priority.
- Each kata is its own self-protection system.
- "The foundations of modern karate are based primarily and solely on the practice of kata.
- The three tendencies in karate must be developed harmoniously.
- Mystery and exact understanding have always surrounded the origin of kata.
- The founders of karate are adamant about the non (sportivation) of karate.

Analysis and Conclusion:

karate, a practice of therapy, martial art, and competitive sport, which has become inevitable. This discipline has undergone metamorphoses across space and time. What can funakoshi say if he proved to see karate nowadays? he who has known only the incessant repetition of katas. Why did the Okinawayans embrace karate in their education system if it is intended solely for martial combat? why did the successors of the founder of karate opt to integrate karate into the competition system?

If the kata constitutes a complete and unavoidable system for the preparation of karateka, what interest can there be in the premeditated abandonment of this system? in the same context, is it the principle of deep specialization and saving time that motivates kumite specialists to ignore katas? for those who specialize only in kata in competition haven't they neglected a fundamental element in their journey which is the "Budo" spirit?

Another important element in the graduation system which is a form of competition aimed at valuing perseverance, continuity and dedication to karate. This system includes the tests mainly kata, then khion and kumité, what about those who specialize only in kumité and abandon kata improvement? the life of a competitor is very limited in time compared to the entire life of the practitioner. What will become of this disciple at the end of the years of sports competition?

According to the various opinions that we have seen, the masters have made every effort to ensure that the practice of kata directly and positively influences the martial and sporting side of karate (bunkai, self-defense bunkai, and bunkai kumite)

Finally, all the elements of controversy mentioned above are the result of a development of a metamorphosis, of interactions of different elements of order, scientific, sociological, political, and economic; this reflection could become a platform for discussions and research which will bring more to the infinite field which is karate-do.

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