

THE INFLUENCE OF SENSEI KASE ON MODERN SHOTOKAN KARATE SINCE 1964.

When Sensei Funakoshi came to Japan, in 1923, he brought with him a large background of Okinawan karate. The mysterious reasons for which this man emigrated from Okinawa to Japan certainly had nothing to do with the noble task of propagating karate in Japan.

He lived in poverty and sustained himself by doing cleaning and other odd jobs. This period of soberness gave Funakoshi the opportunity to observe the rich budo-experience of Japan and to draw his conclusions from this.

By profession he was a pedagogue (teacher) in Okinawa and in the period from 1923 to 1940, he brought about strong changes in Okinawan karate.

His son Yoshitaka took these changes further and practiced them intensively, during the Second World War. In contrary to his father, Yoshitaka put karate at the service of the military government (since 1943). During that period, karate knew an enormous evolution, aimed at reality and efficiency.

In 1944 a young Taiji Kase came into contact with this fundamental change in karate and he was so enthusiastic that even to today he keeps on speaking about the influence this period had on him.

Yoshitaka sensei died young, in 1945; his father resumed the coaching of the instructions. In early fifties, Kase, a Sandan at that time, joined the newly founded JKA (1949). >From 1957 onwards, Kase sensei was strongly involved with the JKA instructor courses and he was of quite an importance in the training of, among others, Enoeda and Shirai sensei.

When, in 1964, Kase sensei decided to go abroad to support instruction there, he as well decided to further study the evolution of Shotokan karate and to help its development.

He studied different pedagogic systems and also did a thorough study of existing budo information. Kendo, shintoism, judo, taoism and even astrology were studied by him in solitude, in order to find points of comparison with karate instruction.

On Wednesday 26 July 2000, in the five-day course in Andorra and in the presence of about 70 experienced karate teachers, Kase sensei gave a survey of his ideas concerning his evolution and instruction since 1964.

First phase of evolution Funakoshi came to Japan and compared the Okinawan karate system with the Kendo system of Japan. Following the Tokugawa period, there was approximately 300 years of peace in Japan. The war was over and there was more time to improve techniques.

Large techniques (O-WAZA) were designed in order to develop power and speed. O-WAZA stood for: amplitude, power, speed; KO-WAZA (short techniques) are too difficult at first and will lead to cramped techniques.

The aim is to evolve from O-WAZA to KO-WAZA.

Second phase of evolution Some basic techniques were often used and in the correct way; others got less developed, such as the open hand techniques.

Kase sensei decided to change this and he brought about a development in the use of the open hand; in defence as well as in attack. Defence was turned into attack in order to harm the opponent. Originally leg techniques were quite simple but Kase sensei gave them another dimension; e.g. ushiro geri-formerly only practiced backwards and now rotating.

Third phase of evolution SEI-TEI waza developing into HEN-TE waza.

SEI-TE: technique with arm or leg; HEN-TE: several techniques with an arm or leg

We have 2 arms and 2 legs. Principle: 1 for defence, 1 for counter-attack. These techniques are done with 2 arms.

New evolution: 1 arm works as 2 arms. 2 techniques (nidan waza) or 3 techniques (sandan waza) with one arm/leg. Instead of using 2 techniques, this add up to 4 or 6 techniques.

Kase sensei got his principle from Miyamoto Mushashi's thinking (Gorin no sho); he always used his 2 swords as well and not 1 sword with two hands, as tradition prescribed. e.g.: defence jodan-chudan; counter-attack jodan-chudan

Fourth phase of evolution Timing of defence traditionally a defence movement comes at the end of the attack. When Okuyama asked Kase sensei to observe the rain, he did not know what to think of it. Young Kase sat for a long time, watching and not really knowing what he should observe. When he was about to stop, Okuyama asked him to hold on a bit longer. Kase gradually began to discern the raindrops and next he could also follow the trajectory of an individual drop. His eyes got used to seeing certain subparts, facets of movement.

We should view an attack much in the same way: not watch the movement from start to end, but from the initiation moment in the spirit to the start; from the start throughout its trajectory and from its arrival to its penetration.

One must learn to observe the attack in different phases:

- the start, coupled to the initiative
- the 1st $\frac{1}{4}$ of the trajectory
- the 2nd $\frac{1}{4}$ of the trajectory
- the 3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ of the trajectory (= ideal defence moment)
- the arrival of the technique

Defence has to come at the $\frac{3}{4}$ timing moment and not at the end, where the power is 100% and in full force.

In the end the eyes have to do the work and finally the feeling.

TIMING EYES FEELING

This brings one to dimensions such as "TO-ATE" and "DE-AI". The DE-AI principle is usually trained as counter-attack with Kisame tsuki, but it had better be used as defence.

Fifth phase of evolution Breathing is a vital and energetic part of technique and action. The use of abdominal breathing of vertical breathing is very important. The diaphragm and hence the hara-region are used more and more by the movement. By techniques such as 'sandan and nidan waza' the hara region and ultimately the Ki-flow get enormously stimulated. This enables one to level up and to surpass techniques.

Conclusion

Shotokan karate knew a strong evolution from 1923 to 1946. Funakoshi Gishin and his son Yoshitaka developed karate in an enormous way.

The foundation of JKA in 1949 gave karate a fundamental structure in which basic techniques and a methodology were laid down. Between 1950 and 1964 all was standardised and thus retained conservatively.

In 1964 Kase sensei left Japan. Kase sensei wanted to work with the ideas of 1946 without denying the set values of Nakayama sensei.

The training principles of the JKA-system are very good up to a certain level. But one should not come to a standstill.

The act of searching, creativity and experimenting as challenge will lead to new discoveries and finally to valuable experiences.

The essence of KARATE is in "the empty hand".