

# Sensei's Corner

## The Magnitude of Kata

If we were to consider the myriad of self-defense-related phenomena to which a single Kata applies, it would become readily apparent why kata is, in itself, an entire tradition. This is why the old masters of orthodox karate-do once advocated the mastery of one or two kata as opposed to the accumulation of many.

**In addition to the seizing, holding, grappling, throwing, joint locking, dislocating, strangling, and traumatizing techniques that are present within the kata, let us also consider some of the other principles with which the kata is concerned:**

- **Yoi no kishin** (mental preparation)
- **Inyo** (yin/yang-understanding the magnitude of cause and effect)
- **Go no sen, sen no sen, and sen** (the three aspects of defensive initiative)
- **Maai** (understanding engagement distance and how to utilize ma—the space or interval established through body-change).
- **tai sabaki** ( the principles of balance and leading control).
- **Tai no shinshuku** (expansion and contraction, gyration, and body mechanics).
- **Chikara no kyojaku** (the proper amount of power for each technique).
- **Kiai-jutsu** ( the gathering and releasing of ki or qi).
- **Waza no kankyu** (the speed and rhythm of technique).
- **Ju no ri** (the principle of resiliency, and the willingness to bend in the wind of adversity).
- **Kokyu** (synchronizing the breath as it pertains to the expansion and contraction of muscular activity).
- **Bunkai** (understanding the defensive themes and application of technique).
- **Zanshin** (mental alertness and continued domination before and after the fact).
- **Seishi o choetsu** (transcending the thoughts of life and death).

Through understanding the magnitude of kata, especially when it is combined with spiritual doctrines, it becomes perfectly clear how a single paradigm (kata) can represent an entire fighting tradition. Once a student comes to grips with the gravity that each kata represents, their personal training will take on new direction and more meaningful dimension. Moreover, by genuinely embracing the precepts upon which karate-do rest, one is assured that its social ramifications will permeate the character of its user—hence, the value and direction of one's life in general is profoundly enhanced