

Views on the development of Front Kick.

High aerobic kicks are impressive, aren't they? But, did you ever try to jump back kick a telephone pole, and limp away after incorrectly cracking the back of your leg? But, you know that in landing a full power kick to the head, the impact damage to the striking weapon is about equal to the strike on a utility pole.

If you have not tried this, do it about 11 times and walk away with the results. Of course, for variety, you might have to try a jump round house or spearing outside ax kick. (Those might give you more "pronounced" results.)

In any event, after all your experimenting, you will probably find that all your fancy kicks are useless if you strike a hard surface. (Hard surfaces are not only telephone poles and head, but elbows, face, shoulder blades, hands, and held objects (books, etc.).)

Now, because this is actually so, should you discard kicks as dangerous to you? Should you go out and purchase iron reinforced shoes or paratroopers jump boots?

Of course not - try developing a front kick!!

The front kick can be fully deployed without disabling injury.

The front kick has several advantages. i.e.:

1. The front kick can be executed without undue damage to the striking surface.
2. The front kick can be executed with major shifts in back movement enabling quick use without preceeding body positioning, interrupting hand strike possibilities.
3. The front kick/arm attack - the lower section drive enables high-low combinations.
4. The back is not turned, exposing vital areas.
5. The back balance is firm and the kick may be utilized on unsteady surfaces.
6. Total body energy may be directed in one line.
7. The movements are natural and do not unduly tax the knees and lower torso.
8. Breathing and hara-gi techniques can be fully utilized while executing the front kick.

Now, if the front kick is so great, and has so many advantages, why isn't it used? When did you last see someone use it successfully? Why don't you use it? Why do you teach (if you do so), a technique that you don't use yourself.

The answer is that you actually have not correctly developed this technique and because of unfamiliarity with it, simply do not know how to include it into your weapons arsenal.

The Nature of Sparring

All cultures since the beginning of man have had fights. Different groups fight with different weapons and in different ways. Western man developed holistic weapons to a higher degree than the Eastern man, but general method remains.

The things about the Oriental Martial Arts is that they are the "art" of fighting. That means you fight in a manner which justifies the designation "art".

That "fighting is natural to man" is a truism which underlines the point that men do not need to learn to fight, they do it intuitively. Some natural fighters can beat almost everyone who has trained.

Man's natural fighting habits, however, do not always bring the best long term results. We all get old, injuries pile up and heroes die young (is an all too true adage).

You must train in the "art of fighting until it becomes more natural than "natural fighting".

Often when we see US Karate, the art disappears and the combatant's natural fighting habit comes out. This must be submerged to the west.

WUKO Karate demands that the "natural habit of man" be replaced with the concepts of traditional karatedo, and that this be manifestly displayed in the match. Otherwise, we do not have karatedo.

US fighters, like the natural method - is it the cost of karatedo? What about TKD? Is it more natural to use the feet? Is it natural to pull in or push away - turn or drive, side step or back - what do you think?

KIAI

The effect of the kiai on someone that has practiced karate for any length of time is questionable. During sparring practice we might hear the kiai twenty times, and it is doubtful that it has any serious effect on one's abilities. Even when surprised, the experienced practitioner does not respond by freezing, but instead will immediately draw his hands and a response posture. We have all experienced this when a spouse or friend may have decided to startle us from a hidden position, and instead ended up almost getting killed. The effect on someone that has practiced for a short time or not at all is completely different from that of a skilled practitioner. The kiai can and does change the polarity of a confrontation. If an inexperienced person is startled, they do not necessarily respond with a fighting reflex. Instead they will tighten their bodies in what they mistakenly assume is a protective posture. This might be described as the difference of the flight or fight reflex.

All this leads to the understanding that the kiai is a useful tool in disarming, deterring, or striking an adversary. If, upon confrontation, you can shock or otherwise interrupt a person's advances it may allow you the time needed to react positively. Therefore, under the proper circumstances, the kiai can be highly beneficial in attack countering.

If the kiai is taught as a gut sound, then it can serve to tighten the abdominal musculature, thereby serving a defensive purpose. Also, this action might serve a second purpose of a more subtle nature: that of defining the hara. Eastern thought places the body's center of balance, not in the chest and heart as Occidental thought, but in the gut. If one accepts this concept, then a properly executed kiai (one originating from the gut, and serving to tighten the abdominal musculature) can indeed provide the practitioner with a center of power and balance without conscious awareness.

The ability to rotate easily and with confidence at the level of the waist, combined with full use of the abdominal musculature and total hip coordination are fundamental to obtaining performance expertise. A guttural kiai will tighten the musculature of the abdomen, buttocks, diaphragm, intercostals and pectorals of the chest, lower and middle back, and to a small extent those of the top front of the leg. These combine into what can truly be said to be a definition of the kiai in the Occidental sense. A tightening of abdominal and related musculature to provide a posture of balance from which to initiate necessary actions.

The need for a closer examination of many traditional karate ideas from a pragmatic point of view is becoming increasingly more essential if we are to ever achieve "American Karate". The American practitioner is becoming increasingly interested in the why's of technique, and not so much in the how's. If we are to develop systems of technique that are kinesiology, psychologically, and physiologically sound, then analysis of the fundamentals of technique are essential. Some aspects of this article are purely personal opinion, and if any reader has a better idea - Say SO -- that is exactly what we are looking for.