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## HOW TO PERCEIVE and UNDERSTAND KATA

**Key words:** Karate, Kata, Self-defense, Qi Jiguang 32 verses.

### Abstract

*Kata* forms are Karate training forms. *Kata* can be trained for competing or for self-defense. According to legends, everything started with a Buddhist monk Bodhidharma and later with a 16-year-old girl Fan Qiniang. Only two books remain preserved. The first is *Jixiao Xinshu*, written by a Chinese general Qi Jiguang, and the second is *Bubishi*, written around 1.850.

Nowadays, the old art is lost and substituted with sport named Karate that is even an Olympic discipline. However, the value and understanding *Kata* was lost before Karate spread in the beginning of the twentieth century.

The author decided to do research as proposed by Descartes. He used a qualitative method and opted for probabilistic sampling in the population practicing karate. He started by learning fifteen *Kata*, continued with the method of participant observation, and collected data by attending global seminars. He used content analysis.

Through the research, several conclusions were made. Understanding *Kata* begins with an awareness that *Kata* teaches self-defense, and not attacks. *Kata* forms are based on natural circular moves with the Sun and the Moon Hand as the foundations. *Kata* philosophy has origins in Five Elements philosophy. There is no fist punch, because *Kata* forms use six *Ji* hands. All old and original *Kata* forms are made according to the six rules described in author's book. The author succeeded to find possible explanations for Qi Jiguang's and *Bubishi* posters. The findings are based on Chinese philosophy, kinesiology, psychology, anatomy, pressure points, Kiai jutsu, mathematical and physical science. This article explains one posters from *Bubishi*.

### Background

*Kata* forms are Karate training forms.

When someone start training *Kata* he have to decide if he want to win on kata tournament or survive in street fight. These are two completely different worlds having no much common except *Kata* names. If someone decide for tournaments author have nothing to say about, because each school have made exact rules how to perform *Kata*. These different performance and rules are proving that nowadays nobody knows how to perform *Kata* correctly in original way and how to use in *Kata* hidden knowledge for self-defense for what *Kata* were basically meant.

To understand any science someone must be first familiar with history of this science as W. Goethe said that history of science is science alone.

To understand kata and be able to decode them, it is first necessary to gather knowledge about: Chinese philosophy so that you can understand how the Chinese approach everyday life. Chinese history and mythology so that you can understand their conceptual language and thus their writings. Acupuncture, so you know how to weaken the attacker's body or kill him. Anatomy to know which bones break easily and how to damage internal organs. Kinesiology to know how the human body moves. Psychology to know how people react to external signals. Physics - a chapter on mechanics to understand concepts such as leverage, pressure, force,

power, energy and vector analysis Vector analysis to determine the direction of movement of defenses and strikes. Mathematics to be able to calculate physical values and evaluate vector analysis.

Therefore let's have a look how everything started. The first and oldest legend is connected to Buddhist monk Bodhidharma who leaved a while as legend say in Shaolin monastery. He come to Shaolin from India. Date of his birth and when he died is not known but in Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism<sup>1</sup> the earliest accounts of a person known as Bodhidharma appear in the Luoyang qielan ji (The monasteries of Luoyang) written by Yang Xuanzi in mid sixth century. By legend his art of self-defense was named 唐 *Tang* 手 *shou* where *Tang* means the Tang dynasty (618-907) and shou means hand. Japanese pronounce same characters as 唐 *Kara* 手 *Te*, where *Kara* means "China" and *Te* means "hand," Later on in beginning of twentieth century Gichin Funakoshi<sup>2</sup> famous Japanese sport Karate master renamed it to 空 *Kara* 手 *Te*, where *Kara* means "empty" and *Te* means "hand". This is another prove that everything started most probably with Bodhidharma who by the legend lived just before or at the beginning of Tang dynasty time.

From historical view we have several legends and only one book with known and trustworthy author named Jixiao Xinshu<sup>3</sup> (New Treatise on Military Efficiency) book written by famous Chinese general Qi Jiguang (1528-1588) who gave instructions in chapter 14 in form of 38 posters with symbolic drawing and symbolic text. Qi Jiguang wrote that this art is meant for those who cannot be strong and with this sentence he wrote clearly that this is art of self-defense because weaker person never attack stronger.

Second legend we have on martial art is on 16 years old girl Fan Qiniang creator of white crane style that is according to common believe base for all Kata. Fan lived by a legend in sixteen century in the time and place where was general Qi Jiguang therefore we can say that Kata we know today are not older than about 500 years. There is no document on her existence but the legend say that she had a father who was martial artist for whom author speculate that he was one of Qi Jiguang instructor who taught common people how to defend from Japanese pirates. Besides that this legend describe that she created white crane style by observing fights between white cranes. The Fan may never have lived, but the legend of her arose from the need for ordinary people to be convinced of the effectiveness of these techniques and start training them because if a sixteen-year-old girl can defend herself that way then everyone can defend themselves.

With no doubt all *Kata* forms come from China. Author found information that Hirokazu Kanazawa great *Kata* performer speculate that *Kata Jion* come from Japanese Monastery Jion Ji. This could be truth but even so we cannot say that this *Kata* created some monk in Jion monastery but it was most probably brought there by Chinese Buddhistic monks who established this monastery to spread Buddhism in Japan.

There is one more book preserved to us named Bubishi The author of Bubishi is unknown and the date of emergence author based on "fighters" hair style estimated around 1850. Author have in possession several Bubishi books edited by different editors. There are small but important difference between editions that even make harder to understand what the posters teach.

## Problem

Nowadays old art of self-defense is lost and substituted with sport named Karate that is even Olympic genre. To explain what is what author made drawing Fig. 1.

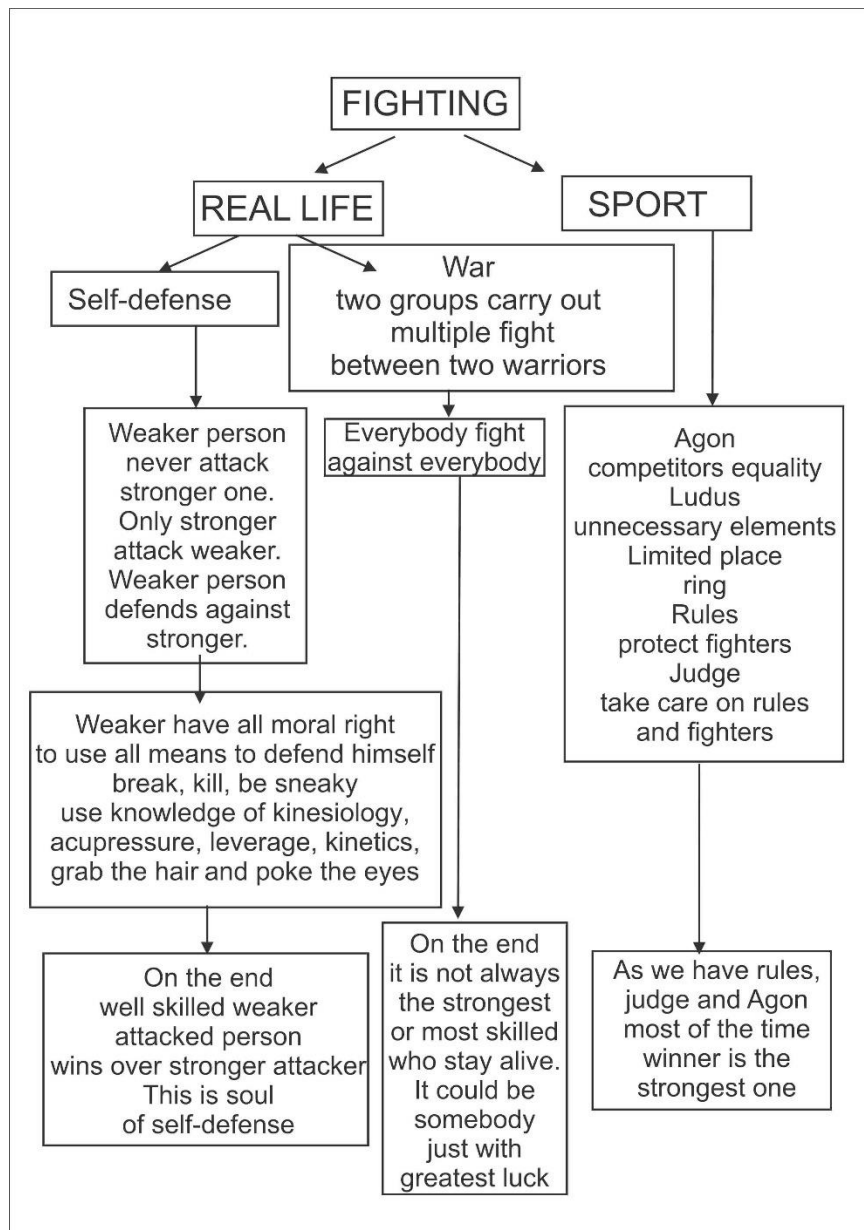


Fig. 1 Types of fights (author)

Problem is that most famous karate beginners who spread karate and *Kata* on mainland Japan and later round the globe already did not know the value of *Kata*. Author found out that already most famous master Gichin Funakoshi did not understand the true value of *Kata*. He wrote in his 20 percepts most important second percept on how to understand *Kata* saying: There is no first strike in karate confirming that karate and *Kata* are meant for self-defense. But there is disappointing eighteen percept saying: Perform *Kata* exactly; actual combat is another matter. These prove to author that he did not know the real value of *Kata*. There are two more evidence on above author's statement. First is as B. D. Clayton<sup>4</sup> who wrote: "Funakoshi and Nakayama did not understand combat applications of *Kata*, yet they felt free to change them to

make Kata contests easier to judge.” This actually means that they did not know *Kata*’s purpose because if they knew their value, they would never do changes. Prove for Claytons statement is in Funakoshi Rentan Goshin Karatejutsu<sup>5</sup>.



Fig. 2 Funakoshi performing *Nai Han Chi Kata* (5)

In *Nai Han Chi Kata* Funakoshi who renamed it to *Tekki* uses *Shiko Dachi* (stance), or *Kiba Dachi* instead of *Nai Han Chi Dachi*. *Shiko Dachi* has toes pointed out, *Kiba Dachi* has toes parallel, and *Nai Han Chi Dachi* has toes pointed in.

As long as one performs *Kata Nai Han Chi* with the feet in *Kiba* or *Shiko Dachi* position, it is impossible to understand what this *Kata* is intended for.

With his eighteenth precept, he opened the door for the belief that nobody knows what the purpose of *Kata* is. This also led to the possibility of making *Kata* “nicer” which most people do nowadays. This fact make searching on what is hidden in *Kata* even harder.

## Method

According to the author, someone grows up when he is aware of three facts:

- Nothing is as it seems at first glance.
- Nothing in life happens the way you anticipate.
- You are responsible for everything that happens to you in your life and no one else.

First two facts are most important in *Kata* research because *Kata* were made in such a hidden way that masters could perform them in open space keeping all secret techniques hidden from non-invited observers. Same is with the rare books about self-defense. Therefore what observer see at first glance is mostly not correct answer.

Because of this facts author decide to do research as proposed by Descartes:

- doubt everything and to consider true only that which is unquestionable;
- divide the problem into several simpler parts;
- start with smaller problems and move to more complex ones;
- check several times to see if you have missed anything.

For the research, the author used a qualitative method.

His goal was to use the research to gain a human understanding of martial arts and consequently an understanding of *Kata*, but not those *Kata* that are practiced today as a sport, only the original *Kata* intended for self-defense.

He opted for probabilistic sampling in the population practicing karate.

The author started collecting data by learning fifteen *Kata*, he continued with the method of participant observation and collecting data by attending seminars around the world. Unfortunately, he was confronted with the Japanese “*Giri*” principle that prevented him to conduct interviews.

In order to devote himself to independent comparative research on a physical level, he founded his own club in 2008, where he was able to test his own findings on his students, and in 2009 he wrote the first edition of his book *In Kata is everything you need*<sup>6</sup>.

Author used content analysis focused on written and visual objects, and the repetitive patterns present in them, relying mainly on indirect information, as *Kata*, texts, and drawings are made in a way that is incomprehensible to “ordinary” observers. By doing so, he devoted himself to conceptual analysis.

In his research work, he encountered a number of problems. All available resources (including some editions of *Bubishi*) except *Jixiao Xhinshu* are contaminated due to sports requirements and habits with changes that allow sports competitions (resulting from sports rules). Because he did not want to take on sport dogmatic explanations, and because no one had done this type of epistemological research yet, he had to use another knowledge. He used philosophy as the basis of his research in order to understand the spirit of the nation; history that he understood, and the spirit of the times; kinesiology, in order to understand the motor abilities of the human body; acupuncture, that he understood – how to weaken or incapacitate his opponent, and physics and mathematics, so that through mechanics and vector analysis he could figure out how the weaker could tame the stronger. Only then was he able to undertake a detailed observation of *Kata*’s own speech.

Leading reasoning for the author’s research was an old Latin proverb: “*Etnia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitate*” or in simplified translated version: “The simple explanation is usually the right one.” That is especially true for self-defense, which must be simple to be feasible at all, because there is simply no time for complicated and time-consuming techniques. Because there are only a few written historical sources, the author also focused on ancient paintings, drawings and the 2,500-year-old Confucian proverb<sup>7</sup>:

*“Writing cannot express all words, words cannot capture all ideas, and imagination is more important than knowledge.”*

The only books the author could rely on and with which he could later compare his insights were the books of *Bubishi* and *Jixiao Xhinshu*. From these books, he learned the important realization that over time, due to a superficial understanding and a purely sporting approach, many very important details have been lost.

*Bubishi* contains 48 drawings with accompanying text in a language full of symbols. This book is based on the notes of Okinawan students who studied in China around 1850, therefore the book exists today in several different editions that differ from each other in small but important details.

A military manual entitled *Jixiao Xhinshu*, however, was written by Chinese general *Qi Jiguang* in 1.561. It contains 32 drawings of a fighter with accompanying text written in verses full of

symbols. The *Jixiao Xinshu* is textual and visual research reference and this book is not a fictional story book but exact manual and without a doubt powerful.

The author continued the method of observing participants and collecting data by attending seminars around the world, and watching live *Kata* performances by famous martial arts masters of today. Unfortunately, he was confronted with the Japanese principle *Giri* which severely limits his research because of its limitations (“serving superiors with sacrificial devotion”), and the because of the reference to loyalty, gratitude, and moral integrity. Because of *Giri*, it is not polite to ask Japanese masters anything. The participant should only be grateful and should not ask anything.

It’s a little better with American and European masters where someone can ask for re-explanations, but it’s impossible to start a discussion. In practice, this means that it is not possible to ask, discuss or doubt what is said in seminars. Due to *Giri*, the author was prevented from conducting interviews.

Stiff understanding and following *Giri* is one of the key reasons for different interpretations of *Kata* and thus the accumulation of errors and inability to understand their content, especially because students believe that the only truth is only what Sensei (teacher; literally: one who was born earlier) teaches.

Following in the footsteps of British historian K. Jenkins, as a “disrespectful researcher” of the past, he largely violated *Giri*’s principle.

## Results

Author trough *Kata* research come to following conclusion that make understanding of *Kata* possible:

Understanding of *Kata* begin with awareness that *Kata* teach self-defense techniques and not attacking techniques.

*Kata* forms are based on natural circular moves where the sun and the moon hand is base for everything. Sun and the moon hand is noted Bubishi books as poster No. 41. As Bubishi have many authors and editors each poster is little different as shown on Fig 3., Fig. 4. And Fig.5.



Fig. 3 Bubishi No. 41 (8)

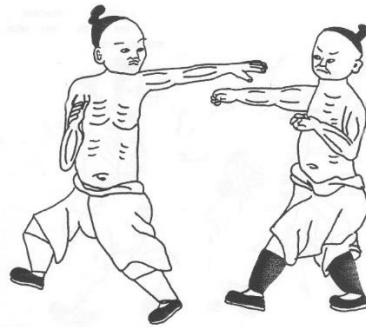


Fig. 4 Bubishi No. 41 (9)

Like the sun and the moon being opposites.

Like the wind cloud fist

technique.

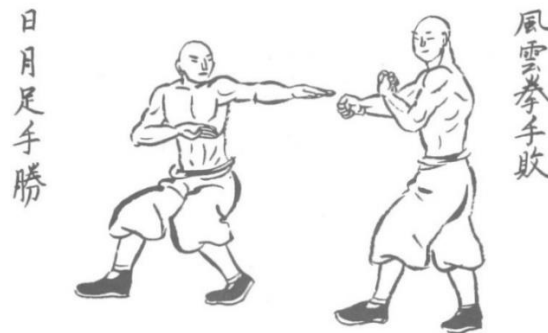


Fig. 5 Bubishi No. 41 (10)

Sun and moon hand. Wind cloud boxing.

The man on the right side is boxing to the wind cloud. This means that he is punching an empty space failing to hit left side man. The man on the left side will catch the right-side man with his left hand and pull him closer, positioning his body behind the right-side man. At the same time, he will exchange his hand positioning as the sun and the moon are rotating (visually) around the Earth. Whatever he does later is his choice. This is most important and most basic move taught in any *Kata*. This is how attacked person make attacker energy to flow and pass by and this is how Master Wong say: When you are attacked from the front, make sure you always change to the side. Detailed and practical explanation how to use Ji hand forms can be done only in form of a one day seminar.

*Kata* philosophy have base in five element philosophy (*Wu Xing*) and subordinated five animals. Five Elements philosophy describes interactions and relationships between phenomena. It is believed that it was developed by a physician Hua Tuo during Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), and was applied to many fields, such as the traditional Chinese medicine, Feng Shui, astrology, military strategy, and martial arts. In martial arts the five elements are connected to animals as Earth-Snake, Wood-Crane, Fire-Dragon, Metal-Tiger, and Water-Leopard. Snake style teach how to be fast; Crane style teach how to be stable; Dragoon style how to be invisible; Tiger style how to catch and break the neck; Leopard style teach how to catch and choke.

In original forms of *Kata* are mostly used Six *Ji* hand forms. Besides them researcher can find *Empi* and *Nukite* form but there is no boxing fist form. The name *Empi* is incorrectly translated as elbow and this makes it impossible to properly understand *Kata* forms. *Empi* in fact comes out of a word *Enpitsu* and means pencil and when this form is used as a pencil this makes it

possible to understand *Kata* actions. The translation of the spear is used for the word *Nukite* and the fingers of the hand are supposed to be used as the spear. Every Sensei teaches that it is necessary to strengthen the fingers in extreme way not to break them in action. This is total madness. In fact, *Nukite* in *Kata* is designed to break the neck and no hardening of the palms or fingers is required for this. Author found drawing with drawn shapes of six *Ji* hands in *Bubishi*. Accompanying explanations in the book were completely wrong and editor removed his explanation in later editions.

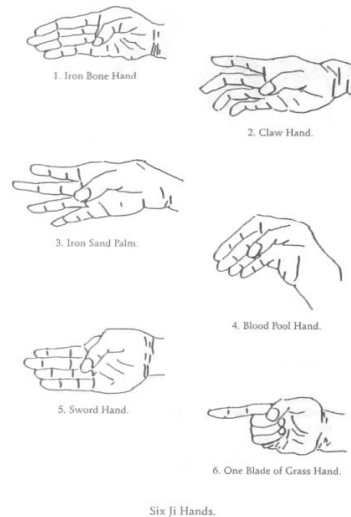


Fig. 6 Six Ji Hands (11)

To understand *Ji* hands it is important to understand meaning of word *Ji*. *Ji* 即 Chinese character is translated wrong (same as *Uke* to block or *Empi* to Elbow) as striking hand. But this character describe reaching and approaching hand, and that is more appropriate because besides punching, a defender must at first reach in to the attacker's space. Nevertheless, the best explanation in the author's opinion comes from the Chinese word *Yuji* 妾 pronounced very similar as *Ji*. *Yuji* means concubine, female, and entertainer. Thus, *Ji* hand means woman hand, and not striking hand. This alternative explanation is confirmed through the fact that not all six forms are used for striking but in fact four hand forms are used for striking and two for holding. Striking hand forms are: Iron bone, Iron sand palm, Blood pool and One blade of grass and holding hand forms are : Sword and Claw hand. Detailed and practical explanation how to use *Ji* hand forms can be done only in form of half a day seminar.

All old and original *Kata* are made according to six *Kata* rules described in authors book<sup>6</sup>. Six *Kata* creation rules are:

**The first rule the Shogun rule.** Author named this rule based on a book *Shogun* written by J. Clavell where *Shogun* was waiting opponents to their moves at first. In chines philosophy 2.000 years ago Cao Cao wrote: "If an enemy attacks, he becomes vulnerable." And about hundred years ago Gichin Funakoshi wrote his second percept: "There is no first strike in karate."

**The second rule** the six-step rule. This rule teach how to defend in six step.

1. Redirecting the attacker's energy to pass
2. Step-in
3. Positioning the body to a safe place.
4. Punching or pressing pressure points.



5. Breaking the attacker's legs, or hands.
6. Breaking the attacker's neck, or using pressure point fighting methods to kill the attacker.

**The third rule** is to use attacker force. Purpose and how to execute this rule can be found in Physic and mathematical science mostly using lever and vector analyses.

**The fourth rule** is use of kineozology i.e. human body characteristics.

**The fifth rule** is to stay out and use correct timing. Defender must not never ever tie up his extremities with attacker extremities as sports man do. Sun Tzu said, "In war, the object is victory not prolonged warfare." It is also necessary to remember that he said that "haste is madness, but there's never been a smart delay."

**The sixth rule is emotional rule.** Defender must not be afraid but always fake his fear to attacker .

*Kiai* as applied nowadays have no sense because it is not in accordance with *Kiai Jitsu* what proved resent research done on Faculty of Physical Education, Federal University of Para, Pa (Brazil) <sup>12</sup>

Based on previously described findings author succeeded to decode or at least gave possible explanations based on Chinese philosophy, kinesiology, psychology, anatomy, pressure points *kiai jitsu*, mathematical and physical science and his more than 20 years intensive research for *Qi Jiguangs* 32 posters with one fighter and 48 *Bubishi* posters between two fighters. These posters are important because they are describing actions included in old and original *Kata*. Based on understanding of those posters author succeeded to explain what is the value, purpose and what *Kata* are meant for. (Author is practicing 15 *kata* on daily basis and even made for beginners in his school *Kata* that content basic moves that he named it *Uke Kata*.)

In *Bubishi* there are besides 48 posters two more posters showing "fight" between woman and man where woman defend herself from a man. This is another prove that original art was meant for woman (weaker person) self-defense what is quite a lot logical when keeping in mind that creator of white crane style by the legend was sixteen years old girl and not a strong man.

Author will give one poster as example how to observe posters and explain *Kata* based on knowledge of Chinese symbols and myths, and knowing how to observe old texts and drawings.

Article 27: Zheng's Twenty-Four Iron Hand Applications and White Monkey Style



There is no explanation to accompany this illustration. However, it does say "Aunt and Uncle Zheng." I assume that they are in some way related to Zheng Lishu (see Article 1, p. 97). In the Chinese ranking system, terms like big brother and uncle are used to denote seniority. (TR)

Fig. 7 Old Chinese drawing on aunt and uncle Zheng (10)

Zheng's twenty-four iron hand applications and white monkey style. In fig. 7 Aunt and Uncle Zheng are fighting.

If one wants to understand ancient Chinese drawings, one has to be attentive to every detail. One must keep in mind that all ancient texts are written in symbolic words, and are not straightforward like our Western minds are accustomed to.

To understand what each drawing is supposed to remind us of, we have to focus on the text first. The texts especially were written in code like a riddle. They used symbols that had completely different meanings, but one can discover their real meaning by pronouncing them with different accents.

In plain language, *Zheng* can be understood as a family name but for the symbolic explanation it means a "journey, trip, expedition, to go on long campaign, to attack." The most suitable translation for martial arts is likely "to attack," even if this is perhaps not the best possible translation for someone who speaks Chinese. However, this is most likely the best translation from the perspective of martial arts. Thus someone is attacking someone, or someone is being attacked by someone else. It makes no sense for an aunt to attack an uncle. Therefore, the attacker is the uncle and the aunt is defending herself.

Here, the terms *iron hand* and *Aunt and Uncle Zheng* are written. Terms like "big brother" and "uncle" are used to denote seniority. So it says that this self-defense is suitable for senior people, too. Since "iron hand" is written, this means that someone is using an iron hand (metal), and

metal energy is always used against wood pressure points. Now we have the beginning information we need to look at the drawing. What can we see?

There is the aunt. In the drawing, Aunt *Zheng* is in a position closer to the observer. This means that we have to focus on Aunt *Zheng*, and not on the uncle. Aunt *Zheng* has stripes on her forehead (scars) and her lips are turned down (she is angry). Her whole face shows loathing and queasiness towards uncle *Zheng*, and she is getting ready to show him what she can do, and most likely knock him out and get rid of him. Uncle *Zheng* does not expect what is going to happen next, and is still smiling. Aunt *Zheng* is dressed well, showing that she is from a noble, wealthy family, so she is educated and has the knowledge of martial arts.

Uncle *Zheng* is dressed only in trousers with a sailor's hat, showing that he is just someone poor, probably a drunk creature with no education or knowledge. The uncle is pushing his hands forward and his intentions are clear he wants to sexually harass Aunt *Zheng*.

We have to study how the aunt will defend herself. We have to look at their hands and feet. The Uncle is stepping close to the aunt. She is diverting his kinetic energy to pass by, using the first defense from *San Chin Kata*. She is stepping in contact space with her left foot, and at the same time using her left hand to roll on the uncle's right hand, diverting him away. You may see that the uncle's right foot is in the air and when he steps down he will be close enough for the aunt to place her right-hand palm in the form of the *Iron bone hand* on the side of the uncle's head, pressing GB20 pressure point to knock him out in a similar way as the final action of *Shin Pa Kata*.

This drawing aptly confirms that:

- Aunt *Zheng* is following Sun Tzu's 2.500-year-old philosophy.
- Women can successfully defend from men.
- Aunt *Zheng* is using a six *Ji* hand form named *Iron bone* and sun and the moon hand action.
- Aunt *Zheng* is using acupressure to knock down Uncle *Zheng*.
- Aunt *Zheng* is using Five animals' technique, applying the dragon technique to become invisible.
- Aunt *Zheng* uses techniques incorporated in *San Chin* and *Shin Pa Kata*.

Everything she does is according to the six rules for *Kata* creation.

Author made practical explanation of what the drawing in fig. 3 is teaching is in fig. 20-23.



Fig. 8 modern aunt and uncle Zheng No.1



Fig. 9 modern aunt and uncle Zheng No.2



Fig. 10 modern aunt and uncle Zheng No.3



Fig. 11 modern aunt and uncle Zheng No.4

## Conclusion

Main conclusion are:

Value and understanding *Kata* was lost at least about hundred and fifty years ago but for sure before sport named Karate in the beginning of twentieth century start to spread from Japan. *Kata* are made for weaker person (woman) self-defense training. *Kata* have base in natural circular moves, Chinese philosophy and six *Kata* rules. *Kata* do not use boxing fist but six *Ji* hands.

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