

THE TRADITIONAL KARATE TRAINING AND SPORTS FIGHT SYSTEMS OF KUMITE

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Introduction

Karate training fully involves all motor skills. Closer analysis of karate techniques which our ancestors created and perfected through constant practice indicates that techniques are in conformity with the findings of modern science¹. Karate fits perfectly into contemporary martial arts. It meets three factors of identification and identity of martial arts:

- pragmatic – the rivalry involving the direct clash of two competing athletes,
- utilitarian – the self-defense as an inherent feature of martial arts,
- mental - the philosophy of confrontation².

In karate there are three elements of training: kihon, kata, kumite. These are sets of exercises adequate to the type of training. Properly selected exercises fill the better part of every workout. Their skillful selection while maintaining the right balance between the elements of training influences the effect of technical training. The initial training is based solely on kihon exercises. Later kata and kumite exercises are gradually introduced. Over time, the proportion between kihon, kata and kumite is determined depending on the established training purposes.

Kihon means fundamental techniques of karate. Depending on the extension of a style of karate, kihon ranges from 70 to nearly 300 individual techniques³. Each of them should be repeated dozens of times during classes. Naturally, it is impossible – new elements are assimilated gradually, after 1-2 for each class. On the other hand, kihon must be included in the fullest extent as it is possible, even in very advanced training groups. Many years of practice and repetition of the same techniques for several years, leads to correct control and automation of them. That is purpose of the kihon. To learn how to fight, you must first learn the basics of combat. The kihon consists of: posture, hand positions, pushes, hits, blocks, hats, kicks, rotational techniques, jumping techniques, undercuts, throws, techniques of ground fighting and crouch fighting, the ability of falling down and techniques of pressure on vital points. The method which changes fists and feet in the instrument of the fight – this is precisely the kihon⁴.

Kata is a predetermined systems consisting of parts of fight without enemies. They include all types of blocks, punches and kicks. Formerly, when not practiced fighting (kumite), kata constituted the main part of the workout. H. Nishiyama stated that 'kata is the essence of karate'⁵. All techniques of karate are derived from kata. Former masters arranged

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¹ M. Nakayama, *Dynamic karate*, USA: Kodansha (reprint edition May 1, 2012).

² R. M., Kalina, *Teoria sportów walki*, Centralny Ośrodek Sportu, Warszawa 2000.

³ R. Habersetzer, *Karate pratique: du débutant à la ceinture noire*, Encyclopedie des arts martiaux. Amphora Paris 2003.

⁴ G. Beghetto, *The new encyclopedia of karate-do*, Columbus, Szczecin t. 1/2011.

⁵ H. Nishiyama, *Understanding budo – definition and fundamental ideas*, ITKF, California Los Angeles, (USA) No. 3-4/2005

individual kata, based on their own experience acquired in the fight. It is a reason why an authentic kata has such great value. Masters, leading the search for value systems, got to the essence of body movement. They tried to get to know the rules that are hidden behind the facade of specific movements. They wanted to learn how these rules affect the body. They then used their knowledge by practicing in the techniques of karate.

In old times, kata was perceived differently than nowadays. The term kata did not mean a form only a symbol. Training kata has both the physical and spiritual aspect. During the execution of kata the karate player should be, on the one hand confident, even bold, and on the other hand, he should express humility and gentleness, combining mind and body into a single, indivisible entirety.

The first movement of each kata is always a block. It is followed by a defined sequence of movements performed with a set of predetermined sequence. Practice of kata leads to understanding, the opponent, and generally all human beings. True kata training teaches proper mind focus which not only translates into the anticipation of movements and aims of the enemy. These relations also carry on everyday life. It requires a long and hard training. The presentation of impeccable technique in a complex, dynamic kata demonstrates the highest degree of mastery in technical skills. Depending on the arrangements accepted for a style of karate, kata is performed alone or in pairs, eg. in the tsu shin gene, with or without weapons. Each kata has its own rhythm, pace and a certain degree of difficulty.

Kumite is a method of training where offensive and defensive techniques that were learned in kata are applied in practice. Meaning of kata for kumite can not be overestimated. If the technique is used in a unnatural way or forced, the attitude will collapse. If the techniques taken from kata are mistakenly performed, it is difficult to expect progress in kumite. In other words, progress in kumite depends on progress in kata. The two elements go hand in hand here. Mistake is to distinguish one at the expense of another⁶. Before karate will be ready to run as a realistic and effective fight, there must take many months of introductory exercises. Their aim is to achieve the efficiency in both defensive and offensive actions and learn the perfect control of punches. There are three forms of kumite, the fight for:

- training – perfecting established techniques in the contractual fight,
- sports – fight according to the certain rules,
- free – non sports fight where everything is permitted⁷.

Long years of study and practice led the karate techniques to the perfection but their effective use requires respect for the spiritual aspects of this art of self-defense and to grant them a dominant role in the training process⁸.

Methodological summary

The aim of the study is to determine the reason of the formation of following systems of sports fight of kumite and their impact on traditional karate training. We analyzed the data and results in the form of source texts – rules of four systems of sports fight of kumite: the semi contact, the knockdown, the full-contact, the mixed fighting.

⁶ H. Kanazawa, *Karate: techniques de combat*, Noisy-sur-Ecole: Budo Editions 2011.

⁷ A. O. Seba, F. T., Baena, J. N. Mouchet, *Combate supremo*, Tarragona (Espada): Angel Delgado Pozo. 2002.

⁸ M. Nakayama, *Best Karate Series*, USA: Kodansha (reprint edition November 9, 2012).

Report of analysis

Sports kumite is the fight according to the certain rules. All styles of karate are characterized by separate rules of kumite. The reason for this is different philosophy of masters of different styles concerning the fight and sporting duels settlement. A common feature of all the existing rules of kumite is the opportunity to win the fight by repeated exits of the opponent outside the contest area, surrender contestant by a referee or disqualification for fouls, ie. the head-impact, all throws after which the opponent lands on his head, pinching, biting, attacking the eyes, genitals, back of the head, larynx, spine, levers on the spine, etc. Regarding on the rules of kumite developed by the different karate styles or their organizations, there are distinguished four systems of kumite: semi-contact, knockdown, full-contact, mixed fighting. Since the system of rules at least close to non sports fight, until the formula that is most similar to non sports fight.

The semi-contact is a fight for points. The system was developed first in the fifties of the last century. It is distinguished by the speed and technical correctness. Poorly executed technique is always punished. Attacks are allowed only by upper and lower limbs to the torso and head, sweeps and throws. Depending on the style or martial arts organizations specified contact is allowed, ie. the strength of the punch or kick. The winner is the contestant who has the most points at the end of regular time, or one of the contestants that during the fight has reached a point advantage not to catch up. The contestants fight in the fenders on the hands, legs, feet, groin, jaw, and (only for children and young people in some organizations) on the head and torso⁹.

The knockdown formula was developed in the sixties of the twentieth century. It is assumed that the disposition of the fight should be decided by the knockout. All techniques are at full strength. Prohibited are attacks by hands and knees on the head, throws, levers and the ground fighting. The winner is the contestant who knocks out (minimum three seconds inability to fight) the opponent. In case of a draw (depending on the organization) decisive is the difference in weight between the warring contestants, referees indicate for a better contestant or a tameshiwari test, called the test of breaking, smashing of various objects (mostly wooden planks) using the adequate technique. Contestants fight in the fenders on the groin and jaw¹⁰.

The full contact system was created in the eighties of the last century as a hybrid semi-contact and knockdown. Just like in boxing, the fight can be won by knocking out an opponent before time or after regular time – by a point advantage over the opponent. This system, in contrast to the knockdown, also permits attacks by hands and knees on the head. Throws, levers, and the ground fighting are prohibited. Contestants fight in boxing gloves, pads on the groin, shins and jaw (obligatory, by some organizations there is allowed the fight in safety helmets)¹¹.

The mixed fighting formula is as close as possible to the non sports fight. It was developed at the beginning of the twenty-first century on a wave of popularity of all-styles

⁹ K., Funakoshi, P., Piepiora, M. Adamowski, *Przepisy rozgrywania zawodów karate shotokan*. Funakoshi Shotokan Karate, Kowary 2009.

¹⁰ S. Arneil, *Knockdown rules*, London: International Federation of Karate (Kyokushin), 2014.

¹¹ S. & Y. Oyama, *General rules of full-contact karate competiton*, Alabama: World Oyama Karate Organisation (retrieved 2012-03-24).

fighters. It is a response of the karate's environment to the popularity of MMA. The fight may take place on the feet (the stand-up fighting) or on the ground (the ground fighting). Contestants compete in special gloves with open fingers allowing capture. Kicks are allowed on all zones, all punches and elbows on the body, all punches to the head, steals of limbs, undercuts, throws and levers on limbs. It is prohibited to attack the head by the elbow, attack the sensitive points of the body, ie. genitals, back of the head, spine, etc. The fight can be won ahead of time by knocking out an opponent or surrender (the contestant gives up to or the referee stops the fight, if he sees that the ending lever is precisely established and the contestant does not want to give up and it threatens his health). At the end of regular time, the point advantage over the enemy decides who wins¹².

Discussion

When a sports event is ruled by the media, advertising and entertainment industry, and sponsors – nobody really cares about the purity of the sport, but on the contrary – even bigger records need to be hit. They need more and more excitement, because it must sell well. It implies a tolerance for doping. The brutality and aggression in sports appeal to fans¹³. There is a social need for aggression and violence, on which modern sport reacts strongly favor by creating and popularizing increasingly violent forms of competition¹⁴. Nowadays, the media strongly promote the MMA fights. Karate wants to be not overshadowed and it adapts to the demands of changing times. Everything indicates that karate is constantly looking for new identity. It perfectly works in a variety of fight's formulas. Sport gives karate the new image by the evolution of the old and the formation of new styles. But the threat of losing basic ideas and values of the art of karate is nowadays more real than ever before.

The key to solving this problem is to find a balance between all aspects of karate, between training for health, sports training, recreation and exercising in the spirit of the Budo: Karate – the self-defense in case of an emergency. Practicing for health, prepares the body to face the disease. The life of adept is not only longer, but it has a better quality. Training karate do conducted 'in the spirit of Budo' is a very good method of the self-defense. Sports training, to a degree unattainable before, can develop physically without the threat of serious injury. The most important is the mental approach to training. The sport is not the cause of the collapse of the culture of karate. People are responsible and their approach to training. It does not matter what style of karate is trained. The aim should be always own improvement, becoming a better person. To understand own strengths and weaknesses, to be responsible and worthy of human being, to improve own character – that's the meaning of karate. One should remember that karate was founded as an art of self-defense. Karate uses sport competition just as a training method and as an opportunity to test own skills. Meanwhile, some masters, athletes, coaches, activists are looking at karate only from the perspective of sports competition. This approach is the most destructive in consequences for the culture of karate.

¹² Takashi A., *Kudo / Karate Daidojuku rules book*, Tokio: Kudo International Federation, 2011.

¹³ P., Piepiora A., Szmajke J., Migasiewicz K. Witkowski *The Karate culture and aggressiveness in kumite competitors*, [w:] W. Cynarski (ed.) *Ido Movement for Culture*. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology, Rzeszow: Idokan Poland Association, Vol. 16, No. 2/2016, s. 41-47.

¹⁴ J. Kerr, *Rethinking aggression and violence in sport*, London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group 2005.

Solely focusing on sports score is not an extension but a negation of the culture of karate whose purpose should always be elimination of the negative lifestyle habits.

Conclusion

The traditional karate, like other martial arts, regarding on the contemporary condition of surviving art by sport, unifies and moves toward in the direction of simpler forms in which, equivalently mix the ingredients that have fundamental importance for different styles, but which do not stand the test of time. The synthesis of technique is done in a natural way, as the number of trainees of karate in the world increase and by their confrontation at the championship. It is accompanied by impoverishment of the spiritual side, so essential in the traditional training karate. Considering karate as a sport has its disadvantages and advantages.

The advantage is that karate's athlete always fights with an opponent trained at a similar level. Therefore, the karate's athlete has the highest requirements. Emotions of rivalry in the sports fight are almost the same as in the non sports fight. Sports competitions serve for the exchange of experience and are a measure of progress. Sports organizations facilitate training in terms of persons, finances and hardware.

The disadvantage is that in the professional sport the main goal are points at the competition, and the purpose often justifies the means. The sports karate develops features particularly useful in the fight against one opponent and that according to the rules far different than the conditions of the non sports fight. Objectives of sports karate and traditional karate are disproportionate in the scale of values. Self-overcoming is perhaps less spectacular but infinitely more internally perfecting than defeating the enemy.

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Summary

In traditional karate, there are three elements of training – kihon, kata, kumite. Under these names are hidden sets of exercises relevant to the type of workout. As kihon (school of fundamental techniques) is defined as fundamental techniques of karate. Kata (formal training) are systems consisting of fragments without fighting enemies according to a predetermined pattern. Kumite (contact of hands) is a fight that is practiced in three forms - training, sports, out of sports. At the karate competition two competitors are played: kata and kumite. All styles of karate are characterized by separate rules of kumite. The reason for this is the different philosophy of masters of different styles concerning the fight and sporting duels outcome. Nowadays, there are four systems of kumite: semi-contact, knockdown, full-contact, mixed fighting. Karate, like other martial arts, compared to the contemporary condition of art's survival through sport unifies and moves toward simpler forms. It is accompanied by impoverishment of the spiritual side. The solution to this problem is to find a balance between all aspects of karate: training for health, sports training, recreation and self-defense. The sport is not the cause of collapsing the culture of karate. People are responsible and their approach to training.

Keywords: karate, training, sports fight, systems of kumite.

TRADYCYJNY TRENING KARATE A SYSTEMY WALKI SPORTOWEJ KUMITE

Streszczenie

W tradycyjnym karate występują trzy elementy treningu – kihon, kata, kumite. Pod tymi nazwami kryją się zestawy ćwiczeń adekwatnych do rodzaju treningu. Mianem kihon (szkoła podstaw) określa się fundamentalne techniki karate. Kata (ćwiczenia formalne) są to układy składające się z fragmentów walki bez przeciwników, według z góry określonego schematu. Kumite (spotkanie rąk) to walka, która jest praktykowana w trzech formach – treningowej, sportowej, pozasportowej. Na zawodach karate rozgrywa się dwie konkurencji: kata i kumite. Wszystkie style karate charakteryzują się odrębnymi przepisami kumite. Powodem takiego stanu rzeczy jest odmienna filozofia mistrzów różnych stylów na temat walki i sportowego rozstrzygnięcia pojedynków. Obecnie funkcjonują cztery systemy kumite: semi-contact, knockdown, full-contact, mix fighting. Karate tak jak inne sztuki walki wobec współczesnego warunku przetrwania sztuki przez sport, unifikuje się i zmierza w kierunku form prostszych. Towarzyszy temu zubożenie strony duchowej. Rozwiązaniem tego problemu jest znalezienie równowagi między wszystkimi aspektami karate: treningiem dla zdrowia, treningiem sportowym, rekreacją i samoobroną. To nie sport jest przyczyną upadku kultury karate. Odpowiadają za to ludzie i ich podejście do treningu.

Słowa kluczowe: karate, trening, walka sportowa, systemy kumite