The Canadian Isshinryu Way
Everything Karate & Kobudo

Isshinryu.ca

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Dedication to Learning

Now that the newsletter has been around for awhile, I am naturally looking to make it better. In that respect, I am requesting feedback.

The focus of this newsletter thus far, and will continue in the future to be, is focused on learning and improving our knowledge of karate, fitness and the martial arts in general. I can personally say that the book review from the last newsletter of Sensei inspired me to check the book out of the library, and while I should have been writing articles for the newsletter, I spent a weekend enthralled by it.

The purpose being established, your input is now desired. I would like everyone that reads this newsletter that has an idea, a suggestion, a desire, or a contribution to come forward. If there is anything that the newsletter could do better or in addition to what it currently does tell us.

The e-mail to contact the newsletter can be found on the last page. I really hope to hear from you.

Senseis

I'm a little light on the news, send in details on all your events and happenings, it's great to give recognition to your students for their accomplishments and share the happenings from your dojo with the rest of the Isshinryu community in Canada.

I may not always be the fastest at updating the website, but those of you who regularly send in your news know that it always makes it up there.

Students and Senseis

One last point I would like to make on learning is of attitude. When reading the newsletter not every article may be something you think you need to work on or could learn from. But in your training try to keep an open mind. Skim all the articles, you may be surprised.

This also applies to your training, if you have the opportunity train with others. Everyone has the opportunity to help you improve regardless of their skill or knowledge level. A master of another style or another Isshinryu club may provide you a deeper insight into something you already do or a beginner who knows very little of karate may force you to think through unjaded eyes about your techniques or application of them.

In all things, try to excel at learning and you will succeed.

Upcoming Events

Seminars:

Isshinryu Tournaments:

7th Annual Lennox Legacy Tournament. Nov 19, Akron, Ohio.

32nd Annual AOKA World Championships. Hosted for the first time in Canada by Shihan Albert Mady. July 8th, 2006, Windsor, ON.

Open Tournaments:

Nov 26th, Lakehead Open—Thunder Bay, ON

March 4th, Kenora Isshinryu Open, Kenora, ON

March 25th, Winnipeg WKA Qualifier.

Apr 8th, MAC Open. Thunder Bay, ON

Knockdown Tournaments:

USA-IFKK 15th Annual American International Karate Championships. Nov 5th, Rochester, NY.

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Fourth Edition of new Canadian Isshinryu Newsletter!

- Valuable training information
- Important historical articles
- Promotion & Tournament Results

Seiuchin - Part 2

By Mike Fenton

Isshinryu Karate Kata Background Part 4

Understanding the history of the **Isshinryu kata** can provide the **Isshinryu Karateka** with a greater knowledge of the **kata** and the techniques it employs. The origins of a **kata** can guide us toward understanding both the application of the technique as a student and a deeper respect for the evolution of the art as an instructor.

The information within this article is a result of research done as part of a book in progress. It is to represent a comprehensive resource of data concerning the art for all **Karateka**. While every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy of the information, any corrections or additional details are welcome from one and all.

Seiuchin Kata 制引戦

"The universal in the technique is the deliberateness of all the attacks"

The Technique

The purpose of Seiuchin in Isshinryu is to introduce alternate methods of fighting. While Seisan is based upon quick sharp techniques primarily, Seiuchin contains many deliberate powerful techniques with precise stepping.

The stepping is a key aspect of fighting against a powerful opponent. The stepping in Seiuchin is designed to teach evasive stepping and careful advancing. The ability to fight at close range can be a key skill against a more powerful opponent while at the same time carefully maintaining a strong base stance.

Relating the technique to grappling applications, upon which the **kata** is based, the deep stance can be clearly seen as a balance drill while the transitional periods between stances represent the moments of action in a grappling situation.

The universal concept in the techniques is the deliberateness of all the attacks. This is intended to be a clear lesson as to the focus required and the patience needed to overcome any situation. Seiuchin is a truly powerful form which educates **karateka** in techniques to control the fighting rather than simply responding.

The Origins

Like many of the Isshinryu **kata** the early origins of Seiuchin remain deeply clouded in mystery. A result of the early martial arts being passed on only by oral traditions coupled with the massive destruction World War II caused on Okinawa make it very difficult to trace the true origins of many **kata**.

By tracing the practice of a **kata** back from present we can give the most probable origins of the **kata**. It is clear that **Miyagi Chojun** both knew the kata and practiced it as he chose to include it within his art of Goju Ryu. It was from **Miyagi** that **Shimabuku Tatsuo** learned the karate and included it into Isshinryu.

Miyagi's primary instructor Higashionna (Higaonna) Kanryo is the primary candidate to have passed this kata onto **Miyagi**. Higashionna received the majority of his martial arts training while living in the Fujian Province in Southern China.

Given that the form is very similar to many of the forms of Whooping Crane Boxing, the kata is most likely to have originated with Ruru Ko (aka Xie Zhongxiang) the founder of Whooping Crane boxing. It is also possible that Higashionna learned the kata from Wu Lin Chin (aka Wai XinXian) as the arts practiced in the region are highly similar.

That **Miyagi** learned the form from Higashionna is the most probable scenario, however, it is possible that **Miyagi** learned it personally while he was studying in China. After many years of training with Higashionna, **Miyagi** spent time in China and had the opportunity to study Pa Kua Ch'ang Kung Fu. Alternatively, it is also possible that rather than having just made slight modifications to the form prior to including it in Goju Ryu he created the current form based upon a form which is no longer in practice.

While most believe that **Miyagi** learned the form from Higashionna the following facts support that conclusion.

1. The form is based upon Southern Chinese

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Seiuchin - Part 2 Cont'd
By Mike Fenton

(Continued from page 2)

Boxing.

When **Miyagi** traveled to China, he was unable to find the dojo that Higashionna studied at and instead trained in Pa Kua Ch'ang Kung Fu.

2. **Miyagi** was teaching the kata prior to 1920.

During a demonstration on Okinawa his students were able to perform the kata. Given this information and the fact that **Miyagi** did not return and begin teaching in Naha until 1917 it is highly unlikely he developed the form himself. Additionally, having spent less than 2 years in China from 1915-1917 when compared with the 13 years he spent as Higashionna's primary disciple it is doubtful that such an important form in Goju Ryu would have been developed and mastered so quickly.

While this article may not have presented clear evidence as to the precise origin of Seiuchin it is hoped that by presenting the information currently available that it will aid Isshinryu Karateka in their understanding of the most fundamental Kata in our art. I very much hope that this article has helped your personal understanding of the techniques and their origins. The next article will be the first article on Naihanchi. Again I will begin with the name, myths surrounding the kata and techniques.

If you have corrections or comments regarding this article or any future article, please feel free to contact me directly.

Mike Fenton

mike@isshinryu.ca

This article represents part of an unfinished work by Trevor Warren and Mike Fenton. Nothing would have been possible without the many resources available both on the internet and via books currently available on Okinawan Karate. Additionally, special thanks must go out to Joe Swift, his research

"Is it possible that Isshinryu is an ineffective art?."

Understanding Conditioning
By Trevor Warren

I have spoken to Isshinryu-ka who are actually taking a different art to learn how to defend themselves. Is Isshinryu karate just a way of keeping the pounds off and the heart rate up? I sincerely hope not.

Is it possible that Isshinryu is an ineffective art? I personally refuse to believe this. I can also name several others, all with real-world experience, that do not think that this is the case. The problem is that some instructors do not emphasize the importance of practical training. If you are in karate solely for the fitness then stop reading, the following does not apply to you.

Still reading? Good! That means you understand that Isshinryu karate can be an invaluable self-defense tool. There are several important aspects of karate that will help keep you safe in a real world situation: technique, endurance, power and conditioning. My next few articles will deal with the latter of these.

There is a school of thought which states that conditioning is unnecessary and dangerous for a martial artist. This is more than likely the same school of thought that thinks of karate as an exercise regime as opposed to a way of fighting (aka martial art). It is important to condition all parts of the body to give and take powerful strikes.

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Understanding Conditioning
By Trevor Warren

(Continued from page 3)

There is a story of a young man who desired to learn martial arts from an old reclusive monk who was purported to be an excellent martial artist. The young man went to the monk and asked to become his student.

The monk asked the young man, "Tell me, are you the patient type?"

The young man thought it would be best to answer honestly. "I try to be patient, but I know that I am not. I sometimes find mundane tasks tedious and annoying." Impressed with the young man's honesty, the monk agreed to take him on as a student.

The next day, the young man awoke early, excited to start his training. When he arrived at the training area, the young man found the monk sitting beside a well. Beside the well was a bucket and a shallow, wide barrel

"Your job for today," said the monk, "is to fill the barrel with water from the well."

This did not take long. Once the barrel was full, the monk said, "Good! Now you must remove the water like this," and the monk slapped at the water, causing a small splash of water to leave the pool.

The young man continued this routine from sun up to sun down for many weeks. The young man understood that this exercise was to teach patience, but his was beginning to run out. At the end of six months, the monk told the young man to go home to his family for a while and return when ready. Disappointed and confused, the young man left for home.

When he arrived, the young man was greeted by his three older brothers. The oldest one saw him and said, "Well, well. Here is the man who is now an expert fighter. Show us what you have learned."

"I have learned nothing," said the young man, "but how to draw water from a well." The brothers laughed and continued to tease the young man.

"Surely you must have learned SOMETHING."

"No, I have learned nothing."

The teasing continued until they were called to dinner. At the table, one of the brothers said to the young man, "Why don't you get us some water from the well? If you have learned nothing but that, we should put your skills to good use."

Finally at his wits end, the young man stood up and yelled, "I HAVE LEARNED NOTHING!" and slammed his hand down onto the table, which easily broke beneath the strike. The family was amazed! The young man finally understood the value of patience.

There are several points to take from this story. You do not have to hurt yourself in order to condition yourself. Also, conditioning takes a lot of patience. You must work your way up, but once you get there you will understand that it was worth the trip.

In the next article I will be discussing safe and effective methods for conditioning, and I'm not talking Pert Plus™.

Book Review:

No Book review for this newsletter. If you've read a good martial arts related book, please send in a review of it.

Black Belt Level Promotions

Each newsletter, we will attempt to recognize all Black Belt level promotions that have occurred since the previous newsletter.

Again like everything else in this newsletter, no guarantee of absolute completeness. If you know of one I missed, please let me know and I will include it for the next one.

Completed Promotions

Don't stop training now! There's always more to learn and improve upon.

"Start thinking about your questions. Ask a Sensei needs your help!"

Ask a Sensei

Some Great questions this time. I look forward to more in the future.

Question: Is it Mizugami or Megami? Rob—Yellow Belt

Answer: The proper name is Megami. Which means protective goddess and is a singular term. Mizugami means Water goddess and refers to a group of deities in Okinawan Culture. The mistake arose out of a confused explanation of the crest and the language barrier. Almost all Isshinryu groups now use the term Megami.

Question: If I want to get better at grappling, how do I do it ? Kyle—Shodan

Answer: Just like in Karate, it is not how many techniques you know, but your understanding of them. Ask a senior black belt for a few basic techniques and practice those A LOT. Additionally, while you are learning to grapple, avoid using your strength, rely on technique and you will gain a much better feel of the situation. Stay relaxed and look for openings and way that you can create openings.

Question: What is the purpose of a Kumae? Timo—Shodan

Answer: The primary function of a Kumae is as a guard. It is a forward ready position which allows you to react quickly when you need to and provides a modicum of control of the opponent. But, the really great aspect of it is that it works at all distances. Out of range, it is a ready position with the hands low to calm an opponent. Fighting range, it could be a check of a arm to aid in side stepping. Grabbing / Kneeing range it could be a arm lock or controlling movement. And really close at grappling range it could be a regripping / grabbing movement.

I'll save your follow-ups for the next newsletter.

Question: If Karate means "Empty Hands" why do we train with weapons? Rachel—Shodan

Answer: I have two answers to that question.

1) Many styles of Karate do not practice weapons, the full and proper name of Isshinryu is Isshinryu Karate and Kobudo denoting an equal importance between empty hand and weapon training.
2) All the weapons we train with were not historically considered combat weapons. An armed warrior carried weapons, the Okinawan's developed their techniques to use their tools, thus while they used weapons they were comparatively unarmed.

Question: How do I ask a question?

Answer: That's really simple, just e-mail your question to the newsletter and I'll find the best person to answer it and get an answer.

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Answer: That's really simple, just e-mail your question to the newsletter and I'll find the best person to answer it and get an answer.

Question: So what's the e-mail?

Answer: It's newsletter(@)isshinryu.ca or mike(@)isshinryu.ca, Hint: It's also on the last page!

Improve your karate– Barai (Sweeping Block)

Most people know that in the Isshinryu Basics the lower sweeping blocks are in Japanese called "**Barai**" and the harder force on force blocks are "**Uke**". While this is correct, the sweeping block can be very useful when employed to other levels and with other types of blocks.

The first part of using a sweeping block is understanding what it is and how it works. Generally speaking the sweeping blocks are also soft blocks, they are not meant to be used to match force, but instead redirect force. A simple application of this is basic 5 the lower body block; As the kick comes in we swing our block into the side of it. As the force from the kick is travelling up and forward we "sweep" the attack to the side.

"sweeping blocks are also soft blocks, they are not meant to be used to match force, but instead redirect force"

The key points to using a Barai

1) It smoothly sweeps through the attack.

2) It does not directly meet the attack but instead redirects it

3) It can be done to any location given an appropriate attack.

Now, how do you develop each point?

1) Sweeping smoothly through the attack. When doing the down block it is important to follow through the movement to the other edge of the body to ensure a full block. This also aids in continuing through the contact point. Our arm will make contact with the kick in the middle of our body and then continue maintaining contact with the kick as it pushes the foot over 6-12 inches depending on your size. While the kick is being pushed, it is under our control. We may have been able to strike it with our block and push it just as far, but it is more likely that we would both hurt ourselves and lose control quicker.

With all sweeping blocks we want the block to be "soft" and move with the attack to gain us position.

2) Don't fight force with force. This will be a good strategy sometimes to power through situations, but I know I'd rather show finesse. That way I'm less likely to get injured or catch a lucky shot. The more control you have the better you are. You can always chose to use force, but if you control the level, you control the fight.

Avoid matching force with force. A good karateka is aided by strength not dependant on it.

3) Use a Barai when appropriate it. Far too often when fighting people fall into the habit of wanting to use a technique. There is nothing wrong with that! Unless you use it at the wrong time. Not every attack can be, or should be, blocked with a Barai. Barai's are especially useful when moving to the outside of an attacker. To practice this just block a straight punch cross armed and you will find yourself with a world of choices for your next attack. Any type of block at any level of the block can be a Barai if the situation is right.

Look for opportunities, don't force yourself into particular patterns and always look for alternatives.

There isn't room to list every case when it would work and when it won't work so you'll have to do a little experimenting. Which is of course the best way to learn and improve your technique.

Improve your Kobudo Bo Grip

Unfortunately, I've run a little long with the other two articles so this one has to be a little smaller than usual. I'm going to quickly explain something that everyone who wields a bo should be aware of.

The purpose of Improve your Kobudo this month, is to remind you of something you both know and is obvious so that everyone thinks about it and monitors their own practice to improve it.

When holding your bo, it is important to hold it tightly but not squeeze it with all your might. While handling the bo we rotate it through our hands, slide it forward and also lock it tight at times.

The key is to know when to be tight and when to be not so tight. The most important lesson you will ever learn when handling a weapon is "Don't lose your weapon" if you don't have a good grip you run

"The key is to know when to be tight and when to be not so tight. "

Improve your Kobudo Bo Grip

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this risk. Too tight and you are unable to do most of the blocks and strikes.

In keeping this article simple and short I will outline three stages of grip. Giving examples of when they are appropriate, it is up to you to practice and get a feel for each level and what will work. As I regularly suggest, get a partner and try it. It's the best way to learn.

Tight—Solid blocks and thrusts. Anytime the bo should be solid in both of your hands.

Not so Tight—Rotating strikes (side, up-down strikes) and anytime the hands need to shift just slightly.

Really Not so Tight—Transition moves, your front hand on a punch/jab. We never let go, but during transitions and punches we must flow with our attack. One hand at a time becomes a guide, use it as such.

When you master all three, you will have learned to attack and defend with fluidity and be comfortable that no one will be disarming you.

Training Tips

A great quote is that every great accomplishment in life is 10% Inspiration and 90% perspiration. That should be every **Karateka's** motto.

Training, and training hard is a prerequisite for all great martial artists. No one has ever become a great fighter sitting on a couch watching TV.

No matter how busy, you are, or think you are, you must make time to train. It's all up to you how good you can be.

This article will be a little different than most of the training articles. Instead of outlining specific workouts you can do, it will focus on two important issues.

1) Why a good martial artist must workout.
2) The difference between putting time in and training to improve.

Why do you need to workout? Well, that's simple, Karate is a very hard physical activity. In order to properly develop your skills you must be able to put all your effort into your kata and fighting during lessons so that your instructors are motivated to share their knowledge with you and so that you are in a position to learn on your own.

During fighting in class, if you are not able to think clearly after fighting for 20 minutes, you stop being able to fight properly. If you can only go two hard rounds before you are looking for a break or just keeping your hands up to defend yourself, you just limited your entire possible instruction time to at most 6 minutes.

On the other hand, if you are training regularly, and can last the entire hour class still able to put forth your best effort, you are able to learn TEN TIMES MORE!

The last point I will make on this is that as Martial Artists, when the time comes that we MUST use our skills, it will not be at a time of our choosing. We train to be ready, both physically and mentally. Both are necessary.

The second point I would like to make is in reference to the way people train. I have full confidence that anyone reading this article could run 5 miles at a pace of 15 minutes per mile (that is walking pace just so everyone knows).

But, having done that so called "run" will you be the better for it? That is unlikely.

On the other hand, a run in which you put all your effort and run a single mile in 7 minutes has the ability to push you both mentally and physically. So instead of working out for 75 minutes, you just worked out 7 and gained more from it.

Please Note: I am not saying that 7 minutes should be your entire workout, but I am saying that during your workout, you must include INTENSITY!

If during every workout you find it within yourself to push yourself to run/jump/lift/kick a little farther/harder/heavier/higher than you could before that is improvement.

For the next two months, keep track of your workouts, whatever you are doing, just make sure that at the end you have accomplished two things.

1) You pushed yourself hard enough you stopped because you needed to.
2) You pushed yourself a little harder than last time.

It's simple and obvious, if you want to get better you have go farther each time, but it is easy to fall into the trap of "at least I did something".

"No matter how busy, you are, or think you are, you must make time to train. It's all up to you how good you can be"

Contributors

Editor & Author—Chitora Dojo

Mike Fenton—Thunder Bay, Ontario

Mike lives with his wife Kyla and has been in Isshinryu karate for almost 20 years, and has been an instructor for the past 15 years. He is currently head instructor of Chitora Dojo in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Author—Chitora Dojo

Trevor Warren—Thunder Bay, Ontario

Trevor lives in Thunder Bay with his wife Maria. He has dedicated a great deal of his time to teaching and his own training with the realization that hard work is the key to success.

Author

Requested—Anywhere in Canada

Someone willing to contribute their time to helping other Isshinryu karateka with their training or understanding.

It is important to familiarize yourself with commonly learned Japanese words. Try to memorize all the words each time and you will soon have a large "karate" vocabulary.

Karate Terms in this Newsletter

Barai—Sweep

Bunkai—Application of Move

Chitora—Essence of the Tiger

Chudan—Middle Body

Dachi—Stance

Dojo—School

Geri—Kick

Gojuryu—Hard / Soft Way

Isshinryu—One Heart Way

Kanji—Japanese Writing

Karate—Empty Hands

Karateka—A person who trains in karate

Kata—Prearranged training techniques

Kobudo—Ancient Martial Way

Jodan—Upper Body

Mandarin—Chinese Language

Miyagi Chojun—Founder of Gojuryu

Okinawa—Japanese Island where all karate began

Shimabuku Tatsuo— Okinawan Master who created Isshinryu. Extra Note: Japanese names are written Family Name, Given Name. We use this format when mentioning Okinawan Master out of respect for their traditions.

Sandan—3rd Level (Black Belt) Sensei Level. This rank denotes instructor level as such the title Sensei becomes the appropriate title for the individual at this rank.

Shodan—1st Level (Black Belt)

Uchi—Strike

Everything in your City

Recent Promotions

None Submitted for your city

Continue training and practicing at home to improve your standings and to help ready yourself for promotion.

News

No news submitted for your city.

Contact us at lsshinryu.ca to contribute for your city.

Upcoming Events

No events available for your city.

Isshinryu.ca

Visit Isshinryu.ca for an archive of our newsletters and must more information about Isshinryu.

Photography by : Kyla Bass

Story Submission

Stories are welcome from anyone and everyone. They can be about anything related to the Martial Arts, a technique you think is just great; A better way to do a technique; History of a Karate Master; a tournament trick that works well; ANYTHING!

All stories are appreciated as e-mail. You can send it to your instructor to proof read and send in, or directly to me. (Mike (at) Isshinryu.ca) or (newsletter (at) Isshinryu.ca)

You can even include pictures if it helps your article!

Dojo Directory:

Any student is welcome at anytime to visit any dojo. Before class, always introduce yourself to the Sensei of the dojo and tell them who your current Sensei is.

For a full dojo list visit www.isshinryu.ca We are getting too many to list here.

Affiliate Cities!

Calgary, AB
Contact: Charles Boyd
Cookstown, ON
Contact: Harri T. Makivirta
Kenora, ON
Contact: Steve Davis
Ottawa, ON
Contact: Tim Leonard
Thunder Bay, ON
Contact: Mike Fenton & Trevor Warren
Windsor, ON
Contact: Albert Mady

Quick Tips

This section is reserved for quick little tips aimed at each belt rank. Adding the skill to your training can only improve your skills as a **Karateka**.

Black Belts:

Variety—Frequently, variety can overwhelm blackbelts, there are so many aspects that could use work many get neglected. It is important to focus on them individually, while balancing time to run through your basics. Make time to stay sharp.

Brown Belts(Ikkyu & Nikyu):

First Bunkai—As simple as it seems if you don't know at least the first bunkai for your kata's you don't know your kata at all. Go through your kata's and be certain that each and every technique has a clear and understood purpose.

Purple Belts(Sankyu):

Responsibility—You are a senior student. Don't wait for responsibility to be forced upon you. Accept the role you have in your dojo and do your best to contribute and aid others.

Green Belts(Yonkyu):

Responsibility—At green belt, you are getting close to being a senior student. Start thinking like a senior student and offer to help with class whenever possible.

Orange Belts(Gokyu):

Eye Contact—Doing kata is about understanding kata. Be aware of where you should be looking as you do your techniques. It is rarely at your hands or feet and usually at your attacker.

Yellow Belts(Rokukyu):

Basics—Now that you are learning the kata, take the extra time while practicing to perfect your basics. Focus on doing the basics as you do your kata.

Beginners & Yellow Stripe:

Snap—When punching and kicking it is important to strike quickly and then withdraw your hand / foot. Focus on speed to avoid pushing your attacks out.

Kobudo

Handle the weapons more. Don't just practice the kata's and basics, you can gain a lot from just "playing" with the weapons. It will help you understand the weapon and be able to recover the weapon / position when things don't go right.

Little Dragons & Samurai's:

Have fun! Karate is about learning and enjoying yourself. Have fun and the skills will develop.