

KARATE DISCUSSION ON KATA: BUNKAI VERSUS OYO

This is an interesting discussion that we had in a FB group this morning – 30 January 2017. I copied all the panels for continuity – the last comment appears at the top of each new page. I find it amazing that so few people know this stuff. Gary Simpson.

In your opinion how important is bunkai in kata training?

Like Comment

Seen by 9

Benjamin Smith Very
Like · Reply · 9 hrs

Gary Simpson You need to make a distinction between bunkai and oyo.
Like · Reply · 1 · 8 hrs

Donnie Meadows Elaborate please
Unlike · Reply · 1 · 8 hrs

Gary Simpson OK, bunkai means to break down or break apart. You can think of kata as a continuous bunkai. Take specific parts, such as the first three movements of Heain Nidan (or any kata) and practice them in isolation - that is bunkai.

To make it 'work' you need a partner interacting with you. That is oyo.

It is generally believed that bunkai is to practice with a partner. That is just a common misconception. The specific term is oyo.

Therefore, I was wondering whether you meant with or without a partner.

To elaborate further, you can perform bunkai by yourself. To perform oyo you need a partner.
Like · Reply · 1 · 8 hrs

Benjamin Smith So bunkai is kinda like theory something that is thought of but cant be proven and oyo is hypothesis something that can be proven through practical means
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

Write a reply...

Donnie Meadows I see like prearranged sparring?
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

Gary Simpson Yes, that is more correctly oyo.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

Write a reply...

Donnie Meadows I just mean the core of practical application of the kata
Unlike · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

Gary Simpson Correct.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


 **Gary Simpson** Correct.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs



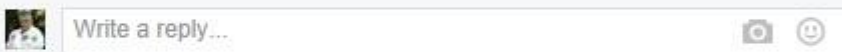
 **Gary Simpson** Most karateka use the term bunkai when it is not strictly the correct term. That is why I sought your meaning.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

 **Donnie Meadows** Yeah I guess I am just looking for a break down or the practical application
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

 **Gary Simpson** OK, to answer your original question... any karateka who practices kata without a knowledge of bunkai/oyo is deluding themselves.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

 **Kevin Hughes** If you only know the pattern of a kata you do not know the kata.
Unlike · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs


 **Gary Simpson** Correct.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs



 **Donnie Meadows** I agree just curious about the opinion of the subject
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

 **Gary Simpson** There are a few who 'know the intent' of the kata. Then, the masses just copy what they see like a parrot repeating "Polly want a cracker." The parrot has NO IDEA what it is saying, it just copies the sound.
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs


 **Kevin Hughes** If you do not want to do karatejutsu and only want to do Karatedo, then application is not needed. But it is critical to karatejutsu
Unlike · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs




 **Gary Simpson** Yes.
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs







 **Donnie Meadows** I agree I don't think anyone can fully understand unless they understand and know the bunkai. I have learned kata in the past from someone and never got a chance to learn the bunkai for whatever reason and it just felt incomplete
Like · Reply · 7 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** Just a little finesse there - you KNOW the bunkai. The bunkai is IN the kata. What you may not know is the oyo. That is a subtle difference that has a HUGE distinction.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** Just a little finesse there - you KNOW the bunkai. The bunkai is IN the kata. What you may not know is the oyo. That is a subtle difference that has a HUGE distinction.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs




 Write a reply...  


 **Kevin Hughes** Let me add a correct to the term bunkai.
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs


 **Kevin Hughes** Bunkai means to analyze, to study, to diagnosis.
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs


 **Kevin Hughes** Oyo means application and is what most people should be saying when they say bunkai. Oyo (application) is the result of bunkai.
Unlike · Reply ·  2 · 7 hrs




 **Gary Simpson** CORRECT!
Like · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs


 Write a reply...  



 **Benjamin Smith** So bunkai is kinda like theory something that is thought of but cant be proven and oyo is hypothesis something that can be proven through practical means?
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

 **Gary Simpson** Well, I have seen some of the most ridiculous 'proof' that bunkai works. But it doesn't necessarily work in stressful conditions. Oyo must work under stress.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


 **Benjamin Smith** But then it really truely cant be done unless in a real world scenario an actual attacker
Like · Reply · 7 hrs · Edited


 Write a reply...  


 **Gary Simpson** Maybe I didn't make myself clear enough. You can do bunkai by yourself. You CANNOT do oyo by yourself. Does that make it more clear?
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


 **Kevin Hughes** Close. Bunkai is like analysis that results in hypothesis. Oyo is then the theory.
Like · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs




 **Donnie Meadows** I see thanks for the distinction between the two
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


 **Benjamin Smith** I have allows just said application for bunkia and practical application for oyo
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


 **Benjamin Smith** I have allows just said application for bunkia and practical application for oyo
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


 **Kevin Hughes** No. Bunkai does not mean application in any sense.
All application should be practical.
Unlike · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

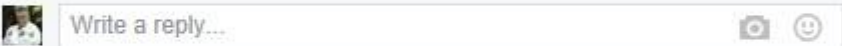


 **Kevin Hughes** A non practical application can result from bunkai. If this happens it is modified to work or discarded.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


 Write a reply...  


 **Kevin Hughes** There is another term you should know. Henka
Unlike · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs


 **Gary Simpson** True. As I said above, there are false 'techniques' and there are true techniques.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


 **Gary Simpson** Research the terms honne and tatemae..
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs · Edited




 Write a reply...  


 **Kevin Hughes** Henka means alternate applications.
Bunkai can result in multiple oyo.
Each oyo can have multiple henka.
Unlike · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs


 **Gary Simpson** Henka can be honne or tatemae..
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs · Edited

 **Benjamin Smith** Don't get this oyo is person on person. Can there be multiple henka for bunkia
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

 **Benjamin Smith** And multiple henka for oyo
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

 Write a reply...  

 **Benjamin Smith** And always said alternate version for henka never heard of bunkia oyo or henka til like last year been doing them just been calling them different things
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

 **Donnie Meadows** That means variation correct?
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook comment thread. The thread starts with a comment from Donnie Meadows asking a question. It then continues with several replies from Kevin Hughes Sí, Gary Simpson, Benjamin Smith, and Donnie Meadows. Gary Simpson's replies are particularly detailed, discussing karate techniques and the mindset of practitioners. The thread ends with a reply from Gary Simpson to Donnie Meadows.

Donnie Meadows That means variation correct?
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

Kevin Hughes Sí
See Translation
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

Write a reply...

Gary Simpson LOL! Bet you wish you never opened this big old can of worms!
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

Benjamin Smith Glad person did
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

Gary Simpson Seriously, I could do an entire seminar on this subject alone.
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

Gary Simpson And most karateka would walk away very angry with me.
Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

Donnie Meadows No I enjoy learning from any source my cup is never full lol
Unlike · Reply · 2 · 7 hrs

Gary Simpson That is good. That means you will grow.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


Gary Simpson FAR too many karateka reach 1st Dan and then go on to 2nd, 3rd, 4th dan and their ONLY progress has been time.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


Gary Simpson Those karateka, in my opinion, are the very WORST to try to educate. They have completely closed minds. They get angry because you challenge their nonsense.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs

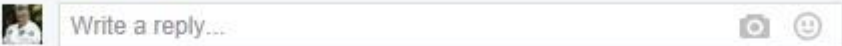


Donnie Meadows That's why I constantly look for the wisdom of those that may know more than I do I want to not only learn the proper way but to be able to teach and pass the knowledge on as well
Unlike · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs



Gary Simpson Donnie Meadows Let me give you an example... the technique of yonhan nukite where the 'spear hand' runs over the top of the opposite arm that runs across the body. That is a universal technique. MOST karateka falsely believe that is a finger-tip strike to the stomach or solar plexus.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


Gary Simpson Cont'd... I see that nonsense almost everywhere. When I challenge those who blindly believe this to do it to me with full force (or whatever force they want) most decline. Those who do are invited to do so PROVIDING I can return the technique with the SAME force using my oyo.


 **Gary Simpson** Cont'd... I see that nonsense almost everywhere. When I challenge those who blindly believe this to do it to me with full force (or whatever force they want) most decline. Those who do are invited to do so PROVIDING I can return the technique with the SAME force using my oyo.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs


 **Gary Simpson** Most karateka don't even have a bloody clue about the salutations. eg in Jion, Jutte, Ji'in. Or even the opening to the most basic of kata.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs



 Write a reply...  



 **Kevin Hughes** This is a subject that needs to be spread. To many ignorant karateka out there. The true ways die if we do nothing.
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs


 **Benjamin Smith** Isn't it just another language though I mean I have been doing those things for years just calling them American words
Like · Reply · 7 hrs




 **Benjamin Smith** Still like to learn it sounds cool
Like · Reply · 7 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** Ben, the BIG difference is this - if you learn the correct terms then you can participate in ANY dojo and understand. If you only know techniques by the English terms then you are all-at-sea in an Asian or other non-English speaking dojo.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs



 **Benjamin Smith** But arent there multiple dialects in chima alone then you have veitnam korea japan Okinawa thialand wouldnt all of them have dofferent terms
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs


 **Benjamin Smith** Sorry for bad typing touchscreen
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** Yes, but you can fathom it out. You cannot do that if you merely call a fist a fist rather than tsuki or zuki.
Like · Reply · 7 hrs




 Write a reply...  



 **Benjamin Smith** What language is oyo bunkia and henka
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** Japanese.
Like · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** But there are also variations in the Okinawan dialects. Put it this way, you will be FAR better understood if you know these terms.



 **Gary Simpson** But there are also variations in the Okinawan dialects. Put it this way, you will be FAR better understood if you know these terms.
Like · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs


 Write a reply...  


 **Gary Simpson** Seriously, this entire thread can be studied and an entire lesson could be given based on what Kevin Hughes and I have disclosed.
Like · Reply ·  2 · 7 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** But it probably wouldn't be all that 'well received.' Most karateka only want to FIGHT!
Like · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs · Edited



 **Gary Simpson** What they are missing out on with their superficial knowledge is all the REAL techniques that are contained in kata but not immediately understood or, for that matter, even seen!
Like · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs


 **Kevin Hughes** I often say the kata allow me to teach you with out teaching you.
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs




 **Benjamin Smith** For me I have been doing it a long enough time a punch is a punch a block is a block I want to learn some of the history and things like this now
Like · Reply · 6 hrs



 **Benjamin Smith** I have learned to fight already lets move on to the mental aspects
Like · Reply · 6 hrs



 **Kevin Hughes** For example. The stances in Karate are generally transitory. Although they are held in the kata, in actually application they are temporary. The stances and turns allow me to teach grappling without the student knowing they are learning grappling.
Unlike · Reply ·  2 · 6 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** Kevin Hughes Yes, that is why Shotokan stances are rather useless and why I have modified them to be shorter. Plus, I am old! LOL!
Like · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs



 **Benjamin Smith** Tracy's Kenpo stamces are def short for fighting
Like · Reply · 6 hrs




 Write a reply...  



 **Gary Simpson** I need to shut up. I could go on forever with this and totally overload people. LOL!
Like · Reply ·  2 · 7 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** I need to shut up. I could go on forever with this and totally overload people. LOL!
Like · Reply ·  2 · 7 hrs



 **Kevin Hughes** Overload permission granted.
Unlike · Reply ·  2 · 7 hrs




 **Gary Simpson** LOL!
Like · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs


 Write a reply...  

 **Donnie Meadows** No I enjoy the information that's the reason I started this group
Like · Reply ·  1 · 7 hrs

 **Donnie Meadows** I started this in hopes that people would share any and all information and knowledge
Unlike · Reply ·  2 · 7 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** Just take what you want and dismiss what you do not like or believe. It's simple.
Like · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs



 Write a reply...  



 **Gary Simpson** In my experience, there are several types of 'instructors':



- 1 - the open-minded and grateful types (not too many) who will thank you for enlightening them with NEW knowledge,
- 2 - the ones who think everyone else is full of bullshit because THEIR style is the greatest of them all and their long-dead O'Sensei was the only one who knew anything (I feel sad for them),
- 3 - Those who will listen yet reject everything coz it challenges their knowledge and it's all just TOO HARD! They would prefer to teach stuff that doesn't work because - unbeknown to them - it has NEVER worked. But they believe it anyway,
- 4 - Those who listen, suck every morsel of knowledge, then turn around and say crap like: "I knew all that anyway." (Gotta laugh at these guys because they are so obvious with their LACK of knowledge)




I am of the type 1. That is why I know what I do. These are the ones I REALLY like to teach.
Like · Reply · 6 hrs · Edited



 **Donnie Meadows** I would like to think of myself as a number 1 as well
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs



 **Gary Simpson** I believe you are. I tested you above and you passed. Had you not I would not have spent any further time here.
Like · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs


 **Gary Simpson** I believe you are. I tested you above and you passed. Had you not I would not have spent any further time here.
Like · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs




 **Donnie Meadows** In my experience one can never learn to much
Like · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs



 Write a reply...  


 **Kevin Hughes** Type 1 are the only that will be recognised by future generations as the Masters of this age.
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs




 **Gary Simpson** That is generally true. But, sadly, there are so many charlatans out there who only want to fool people. How does the wide-eyed beginner know who is who? It's just pot-luck!
Like · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs



 **Kevin Hughes** This is why all the McDojos are bad. The McDojo has become the metric for the ignorant
Like · Reply · 6 hrs

 Write a reply...  

 **Benjamin Smith** I am type 1 I have a super low opinion of myself I knowb I know how to fight and hurt people and I know I am 100 times better then mcdojos but I still feel like I know very very little
Unlike · Reply ·  1 · 6 hrs

 **Gary Simpson** That is how you stay humble and centred. NOBODY (me included) knows everything. You can learn so much just by seeking, observing, training HARD, testing, adjusting and keeping an OPEN MIND.
Like · Reply · 6 hrs

 Write a reply...  

 **Gary Simpson** Now, I really must leave. Sayonara! Hope what I imparted was helpful.
Like · Reply ·  2 · 6 hrs