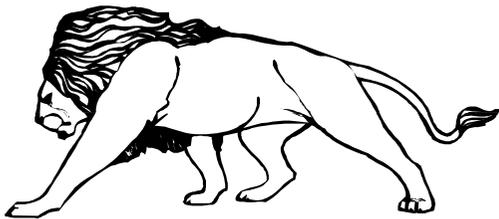


The

Lion



*The official newsletter of the Chiltern Karate
March 2010*



Master Funakoshi – the father of modern Karate

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Cover picture:

Gichin Funakoshi, originator of the Shotokan system of
Karate.

Notices:

**Sunday 21st March Special Qigong course
Chesham Dojo. 10.00 start.**

CKA Kumite and Partner Work DVD

**All our CKA kumite sets on DVD.
An essential learning aid!**

£15.00

See your club instructor

Fore Word.....

You will probably be reading this on grading day without me; I am most likely to be on a flight back from Dubai unless there is a BA strike – in which case I will be by a pool somewhere! So regardless of this I am sure everyone will manage without me and, in my customary way, I am not going to wish good luck to those grading because this infers that some mysterious outside force will have an influence on the result. I would much rather say do the best you can – do well and enjoy the day.

We have some very interesting and in-depth articles for you in the Lion this time, please take time to read them – Karate is as much a mental exercise as a physical one so any extra information can help.

Robin Thwaites
Lion Editor
4th Dan

Sensei Croft Sixth Dan

Sometimes putting the Lion together can be a painful tedious task but then every so often something happens that makes it a great privilege. The latter is definitely the case in this instance.

It really is coincidence that we have an interview with Sensei Croft and also his article about training Qigong in Boston in this issue but it is also a real privilege that I am able to announce that Sensei Croft was awarded his Sixth Dan at the December grading.



Grade awards at this level are few and far between and are really a reflection of the amount of personal dedication to the art. Sensei Crofts achievements are many, of course the formation and growth of the CKA with its various dojos, multiple books, trips to China for original research and the pursuit of Qigong study to name a few. I believe I speak for all CKA students in offering our congratulation and making this record of the event.

Robin Thwaites
4th Dan

An Interview with Sensei Croft.

This is a reprint of an interview with Sensei Croft originally made for the website some time ago by a former CKA member and now updated to include some more recent history. It is a fascinating and very modest insight into many of our chief instructors opinions, achievements and ambitions within martial arts.

Can you tell me what age you were when you first went into a Dojo to start training?

For different reasons I have started and stopped training a couple of times. I first walked into a Dojo to start training when I was about 14 years old.

What inspired you to start training?

I first started training about the time the Bruce Lee films 'Enter the Dragon' and 'Fist of Fury' hit the big screen, and these fascinated me. Coincidentally about the same time I attended a Karate demonstration, which took place in Grantham Town Hall. While my recollection is sketchy I remember that the demonstration was by a group of Japanese Black Belts and was extremely impressive. I don't

know who the Japanese were but this was at the time when Karate was fairly new to the UK. Following the demonstration there was an enrolment for a new club that was opening up in the Town and my name was one of the first on the list.

Who was your Instructor when you first started to train?

When I started in Grantham the club was being run by a Brown Belt. I can picture him but not recall his name. I trained in Grantham for a while but had to stop when I broke my arm. I never went back at that time although my fondness never died. A few years later I went to live in the Sultanate of Oman in the Arabian Gulf and ended up working for the Omani Government. It was whilst working there that I met and started training under Sensei Paul Evans who was then a Sandan in Shotokan Karate and Shodan in Judo. I left Oman in 1980.

Perhaps the most significant time for me in the early years of my training was when I joined the Dojo in Leighton Buzzard with Sensei John Van Weenan's organisation, the Traditional Association of Shotokan Karate (TASK). The Leighton Buzzard Instructors were Sensei John Caves and Sensei Robin Reid.

Who did you take your Dan grades under?

I graded for Shodan under Sensei John Van Weenan and Nidan under Sensei Harvey Barker who was the Chief Instructor of the English All Styles Karate Association (EASKA). I was graded to Sandan, Yondan and Godan by Sensei John Flavell and more recently Rokudan through Sensei Rick Jackson.

Do you ever relate things that happened to you in the early days, back to your students?

I will on occasion anecdotally refer to some of my past experiences if I feel it adds value to a point I am trying to make or if it will add some humour to the lesson.

You formed the CKA back in the early 1990's what was your reason behind forming this association?

Was it really that long ago? It seems hard to believe that we have been going that long but you are right of course. Prior to setting up the CKA we had the Amersham Dojo which was affiliated to Sensei Robin Reid and at this time we were part of the EASKA umbrella. I was teaching at Amersham with had a friend and fellow karate-ka Pat McAuliffe. Pat unfortunately had to give up some years later for personal reasons.

Pat and I made, what at the time was a bold decision to split away

from Sensei Reid and EASKA. We made this decision after consulting with our senior students at the time, which included Craig Jones (now Sensei Jones).

One of the main reasons for establishing the CKA was to provide independence in training without the politics that unfortunately tends to prevail in many karate organisations.

The CKA has gone from strength to strength over the years, what has been your most memorable moment over those years?

I have many fond memories but what I always find particularly rewarding is seeing students who started off on one of our beginners courses reach black belt. The first group included Sensei Jones who has himself gone from strength to strength and in turn has now seen his own students reach that coveted level.

What are your long-term objectives for the CKA in the years ahead?

This is not an easy question to answer in a few words and no one really knows what the future holds for sure. One thing I am very clear about is where I am going with my own personal training and this will undoubtedly impact to some degree on the direction of the CKA. The CKA however is not all about me and will be influenced by the

other Dan grades such as Mr. Jones, Mrs and Mr. Thwaites, Mr Davenport and the other Dan grades that are coming through.

I think it is fair to say that collectively we will seek to maintain an organisation, which is open, minded and which allows and encourages individuals to develop all round martial arts skills. The challenge for us is to achieve this while retaining a focus on developing and keeping good strong fundamental techniques.

I am committed to developing the internal aspects of my own training and it is for this reason I sought out Master Zhang in China whose lineage goes back to the Shaolin Temple. Over the past 6 years have had the honour of training with him and receiving some excellent instruction and guidance in martial Qigong. In China there is a saying that any martial art that does not include the internal aspects is merely a physical exercise and will never be a real martial art. The more I focus on the internal side the more complete I feel my own karate becomes. Hard and soft must come together in harmony.

Who or what over the years has inspired you?

I have always been self-motivated and have a clear vision as to what road I am taking as far as my own training is concerned. For this reason I no longer tend to look

elsewhere for inspiration but focus attention firmly on what I am seeking to achieve, as selfish as this may seem. That said I owe a lot to a number of people that I have a great deal of respect for such as Sensei's Flavell, Fieldhouse, Clark & Jackson. I have often turned to them for advice and guidance and each of them over the years has provided me with inspiration and helped me navigate a route through somewhat murky waters. I am also indebted to Master Zhang in China.

Have you ever gone through a major confidence crisis?

Everyone training in karate will have ups and downs at some stage, some more than others. While I don't recall ever going through a confidence crisis as such I have certainly had my low points. I was once given some advice by Sensei Archie Fieldhouse about this very subject. In short what he said was at these times the best remedy is to put your Gi on and have a really hard training session, preferably at a Dojo where you are not known and have no perceived pressures. This is really good advice.

I think it is important not to be too hard on yourself. It is important to continually analyse your own technique in order to improve and not get complacent but this does not mean you have to constantly bash yourself up. Sensei Flavell

once came up with a good suggestion and that was to video yourself doing basics, kata and kumite and use this as a base from which to measure your improvement in future months/years.

Would you recommend students learning lots of different forms of martial Arts?

In the early years I would recommend that students stick at just one discipline which I shall call their 'core' style. They need to make sure their core style is really strong before diversifying too much. There is a Japanese saying I heard from somewhere, which I think is quite apt. It goes along the lines of *'the hunter that chases two rabbits catches neither'*. My view is students should concentrate on their core style up to Nidan. This does not mean I think people should close their minds just not flit around too much from style to style too early. There is also a limit to how much you can do and if not careful you will end up being a poor standard in many arts rather than a high standard in one.

The CKA regularly host courses from visiting Sensei's. How did this first start?

I explained earlier how the CKA came to be established. Almost immediately, with our new-found

freedom, myself and Pat McAuliffe started to visit and train with different Instructors. It wasn't long before we build up good relationships and started to invite the Instructors into the CKA. The first was Sensei Bob Etheridge from Edmonton who on one such occasion graded Sensei Jones to Shodan (and a number of other 1st kyu students who have since retired).

There is one particular occasion that sticks in my mind. That is the first time we went to Birmingham and trained with Sensei Flavell. It was one Sunday morning that we travelled up to Tipton having first spoken with Sensei Flavell on the phone. When we entered the Dojo we were overwhelmed by the warm welcome we received. We trained for four hours (the training sessions then were 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. with a 2 hour break for lunch). We left thoroughly impressed with the MBK hospitality and high standard of training and an immediate bond was formed. Sensei Flavell and Sensei Filedhouse were the second guest Instructors to visit the CKA and have been back every year since.

From that time on I have always been keen to invite guest Instructors because of the enormous benefit we all derive from it. I just wish more students would see the advantages and support the events.

It was through training at MBK that I met Chris Solomou (from Barnet) who later introduced me to Sensei Rick Clark. Sensei Flavell also introduced me to Sensei Rick Jackson. It was through Ao Denkou Kai that I first had contact with Sensei McCarthy. The martial art world is quite small really.

You encourage all your students from white belt through to Dan grades to train with different instructors, why is this?

I have known of instances in the past where students found training outside of their chosen association were subsequently expelled. I don't agree with this approach. There are many good instructors around who have a wealth of knowledge and experience. It is important that people are permitted and actively encouraged to tap into that knowledge and if I was to stand in the way of that I would be failing the individual and the CKA generally. It is important however that we have consistency within the CKA on how techniques are taught and there is a fine balance to be made here. What I do not want is Kyu grades coming back into the association and deviating from our syllabus and teachings. By all means learn and develop but remember the core has to be solidly developed.

What is your most memorable achievement?

While it may seem a strange thing to say I think the most memorable achievement for me was obtaining my first belt, which then was red belt. When I started the first grade was 9th Kyu.

In your opinion what differences are there between a man and a woman in the Dojo?

I think within the CKA we have some excellent female students with a lot of potential and I am proud of this. It is something that is often commented on by Sensei Flavell.

Generally there are of course anatomical differences and the natural differences in levels of strength. In addition to this I have on occasion found that some women have an unfounded lack of self-belief and are lower in confidence. It may be of course that women are more inclined to reveal this than men! This is mainly in the mind and goes back to what I said about not 'bashing' yourself up.

From a basic training perspective I do not think there is any difference and the training regime does not need to change in any way. In time people learn to find their own strengths and weaknesses and will adapt accordingly. Women can often make up for any muscular weakness with speed of movement and agility.

At what grade should Bunkai be taught to students?

We should and often do start introducing bunkai at an early stage to give an understanding of the purpose of a particular movement. While we do often demonstrate applications for basic moves such as age uke or gedan barai or include these in kumite sequences people don't tend to automatically associate these with moves from kata. I think we need to do more to help people make this link and spend more time on more obscure bunkai. If you remember that basics, kata and bunkai training in the dojo are all linked you will start to make some obvious connections on your own.

Do you feel kata is a good thing?

I believe that kata is a very important part of training if practiced correctly. It is however only one element and should not be practiced to the detriment of kumite or basics.

I have often heard kata referred to as a dance and this infuriates me. It is not a dance but a battle and each kata must be performed with commitment and focus. The link with dance is historic with moves found within Okinawan dance sometimes resembling karate moves but that in my view is where the association ends.

I also think that competition has had an adverse impact of the way kata practice is approached. At times too much emphasis is placed on making the kata look pretty consequentially neglecting the power and kime.

A lot of students still struggle with Ki; can you explain the meaning of Ki?

This is a complex subject, which I can only provide a brief and simplistic overview here. I have covered some of the technical aspects of *Qi* flow in my book 'Secret Karate' which provides a good background

Ki is a Japanese word derived from the Chinese word *Qi*, pronounced *Chi* which is the bodies vital energy that circulates around the body in channels called meridians. There are twelve main meridians, six of which run through the arms and six through the legs. The twelve meridians also all variously run through the torso and head/neck area. In addition there are eight extraordinary meridians, which act as *Qi* reservoirs two of which are the most important, the Conception vessel and the Governor vessel. The conception vessel runs down the centre of the front of the body to a point at the centre of the perineum (CO-1) where it connects with the Governor vessel

that runs up the back, over the head and again joins with the Conception vessel in the mouth to complete a circular circuit. Think of the body as one big electrical circuit and the *Qi* as bioelectricity running through the circuit. To charge the circuit you need an energy source and this is located in the Dan Tian (Hara in Japanese) that feeds into the circuit through the Conception vessel. The energy levels can be enhanced through more effective breathing, good diet and effective mental focus.

How is one able to achieve Ki?

The body has three energy centres called Dan Tian's. The lower Dan Tian is located just below the navel. Through abdominal breathing it is possible to build up *Qi* in the lower Dan Tian and then circulate it through the body via the Conception and Governor vessels. This may seem difficult to comprehend and is really something that needs to be felt and experienced. Through training it is possible to direct the *Qi* at will from the Dan Tian to the hands and feet to energise the muscles adding to the power of karate techniques.

What advice could you give a new beginner to gain most out of training?

I think the most important thing is to take time on basic techniques and kata and not get caught in the

race to accumulate grades. Time taken in the early months and years will pay dividends later on.

Would that be the same advice that you give to a senior grade?

My advice to senior grades would also be to never neglect or turn your back on the basics. Whatever level you are you need strong basics. I would also advise senior grades to train with as many senior instructors as possible to tap into their knowledge and experience. I also urge all Dan grades to start to consider and work on the internal aspects of the martial arts.

What in your opinion if anything would make the martial arts in the whole better?

More openness and honesty in the sharing of knowledge, and more accessibility to accurate information.

You have achieved a lot over the years but what would you like to achieve now in your own training?

You never know what's around the corner so I am reluctant to plan too far ahead. I will therefore take each day as it comes and seek to use my time most effectively in improving my own technique and knowledge of karate.

That said I do have some plans for the longer term, which include spending more time training and undertaking research in China. The main focus to my training will be developing the internal aspects of karate. I wish to return to Shaolin but also spend more time in the Wudang region. Time is the main barrier.



Kata Application

The Four Elements

For my second article in the series "What The Hell Is He On About Now?", I want to expand on our understanding of kata application.

Most of the time we refer to kata application as BUNKAI but unfortunately this is only one quarter of the puzzle.

Let me introduce three new words for you:-

OYO

HENKA

KAKUSHI

Only understanding the relationship between the four together will make up your collective knowledge of true kata application.

The following analogy will start the explanation process but you really need to work with your Sensei to get a full explanation.

Imagine you open your eyes and you see a snow covered meadow in front of you. In the middle of the meadow you can see your Sensei's footsteps going off into the distance.....

*If you follow the steps exactly, with no deviation.....this is **BUNKAI***

*If you follow the steps, and keep to the same path & direction, but make subtle variations to where you place your feet.....this is **OYO***

*If you follow the same path but then make a turn to the left or the right, but then rejoin the path at a later point.....this is **HENKA***

*If whilst following the path you suddenly realise the snow is actually soft, white sand.....this is **KAKUSHI***

Let's try to apply this to a kata, for example Heian Nidan, first 2 x moves from the start:-

BUNKAI – as you assume yoi, let your opponent grab both your wrists, and then perform exactly the first two moves (move the fists down to the right as you go into back stance, and then raise both fists up to the left), you will find you have performed a release from a

double grab. This BUNKAI works if you perform the technique exactly.

OYO – taking the same move, let someone take a swing at you with their right fist, you block with your right arm (grabbing the opponents wrist) and attack his elbow joint with your left fist, still making an attempt to get into a recognisable back stance. This is OYO as the kata shows the arms rising with closed fists, but this application has the right hand open as it blocks & catches/grabs/pulls the arm. This is a subtle difference but enough to take it away from the kata.

HENKA – take the application to a more street environment. Let someone swing a right hook at you. The flinch response is to raise both arms to block and cover. Once connection is made with the arm, grab and finish with another technique of your choice. Stance in this instance is anything that works. HENKA has the same flavour, the same design cues as the original kata but that's about it (in this case, both arms rising).

KAKUSHI – literally means “secret techniques” but not like 007! KAKUSHI are taught from Sensei to Sempei. Some are well known, some are not. Some form a very personnel transfer of knowledge, some are actually HENKA. A quick example – part way through Heian Nidan you perform a right side kick to the rear and then left knife-hand

block to the front, landing in back stance. A common application is to ignore the left-hand going forward but instead think of utilising the *right-arm* as an elbow strike to the rear. This is KAKUSHI, a hidden technique because the technique is taught as hidari shuto uke **not** migi empi uchi.

I cannot stress how important it is to work with your Sensei....following the path that they have trodden before.

The hardest thing for you to grasp will be how the four work together. Most beginners to this four-step ideal will need to distinguish between each element i.e. this is BUNKAI, this is HENKA etc. True understanding only starts to occur when you realise that all four are interwoven and can move seamlessly from one state to another.

Which starts to make sense of:-

“...kata wa tadashiku, jisen wa betsumono...”

Go do your homework.....go figure.

Dave Davenport
4th Dan



Boston Qigong Workshop with Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming

On 20th and 21st February I took part in a two day Qigong course in Boston (US) taken by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming.

I flew out on Thursday 18th arriving in Boston about 5.15 in the evening (10.15 UK time). I had an interesting experience at the US immigration desk. All people were being asked quite a few questions and it took longer than usual to get through the checks. When it came to my time I was asked why I was visiting the US to which I explained I was attending a martial arts seminar. The immigration officer then produced a business card of his martial arts instructor and it transpired that he was a keen martial artist and showed a real interest in what I was doing. I then had the experience of the US Customs Official addressing me as a Sensei when continuing with his official business. Quite surreal.

The course began on the Saturday at 9. a.m. I left the hotel at 8 a.m. and caught the underground into the suburbs of Boston to the Jamaica Plains where Dr. Yang had his headquarters. He is head of the Yang Martial Arts

Association (YMAA) that is now world-renowned.

Dr. Yang is now 63 years old. He commenced his martial arts training in Taiwan at the age of 15 under Shaolin White Crane Master Cheng, Gin-Gsao (1911-1976). When Master Cheng originally learned Taiquan from his grandfather when he was a child. When Master Cheng was 15 years old he started learning White Crane from Master Jin, Shao-Feng and followed him for twenty-three years until his death.

The next two days was to be fascinating and an excellent experience. Dr Yang is a very easy-going teacher and very good at explaining the principles of Qigong and how it relates to both the martial arts, health generally and medicine. The course ran from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on both the Saturday and Sunday and combine theory with practice. The morning sessions were devoted to the theory and principles of Qigong while the afternoon included solo practice and practice with a partner.

The topics covered over the two days were:

What is Qi ?

Bio electricity and bio energy.

History of Qigong

What is Qigong?

- Six sources of EMF
- Physical and mental
- Yin and Yang, Kan and LI
- Wai Dan and Nei Dan

Two polarities in the human body (Qi centre and Spiritual Centre)

Twelve primary channels, secondary Qi channels, 8 vessels and the upper and lower body

Qi Residence (real Dantien and False Dantien)

Spiritual residence (Centre) to raise up the spirit so the quality of Qi manifestation can be improved

Upper Dantien

Muscle/tendon changing and marrow/brain washing Qigong

Regulating the breathing

- Normal abdominal breathing
- Reversed abdominal breathing
- Embryonic breathing (Skin breathing – Yang and Marrow breathing – Yin)

Regulating the mind

- Xin (Monkey), Yi (Horse), and Nian

Regulating the Qi

- Use the Yi to lead the Qi

Regulating the spirit

- Shen and Xi harmonized with each other

Three treasures (Jing, Qi and Shen)

Four training procedures

- Refine the essence and convert it into Qi
- Refine the Qi and convert it into Shen
- Refine the Shen and return it to emptiness
- Crushing the emptiness

Build up the energy system and secret of Huiyin.

This is a complex subject and I came away even more convinced that if we are to really master the martial arts we have to include Qigong and master that in a way that makes it integral to what we do. Karate is both moving and still Qigong which complement one another.

I aim to give a basic understanding of Qigong and its relationship with Karate at the Qigong course on Sunday 21st March.

Sensei Croft

CKA Christmas Dinner and Awards Ceremony



CKA Calendar 2010

Thursday	11-Mar	Black Belt Training	Amersham Dojo	Time TBA
Sunday	21-Mar	Special Qigong Course	Chesham Dojo	10.00 start
Sunday	18-Apr	Grading Training	Chesham Dojo	10.00 - 12.00
Week Commencing	19-Apr	Beginners Courses	All Dojos	
Sunday	16-May	Grading Training	Chesham Dojo	10.00 - 12.00
Sunday	06-Jun	Grading	Chesham Dojo	10.00 start
Sunday	27-Jun	Grading Training	Chesham Dojo	10.00 - 12.00
Sunday	18-Jul	Grading Training	Chesham Dojo	10.00 - 12.00
Sunday	05-Sep	Grading	Chesham Dojo	10.00 start
Week Commencing	13-Sep	Beginners Courses	All Dojos	
Sunday	26-Sep	Grading Training	Chesham Dojo	10.00 - 12.00
Sunday	17-Oct	Grading Training	Chesham Dojo	10.00 - 12.00
Sunday	14-Nov	CKA Competition	Chesham Dojo	10.00 start
Sunday	05-Dec	Grading	Chesham Dojo	10.00 start

If you have any material that you would like to be considered for publication in The Lion please contact Robin Thwaites at robin_thwaites@yahoo.com.

Material published may not necessarily represent the views of either the editor, the club instructors or CKA committee.