

## Book Excerpt

### *Developmental editing and ghostwriting for private client*

#### Introduction

Typically, when we think of progression, or progressiveness, we think of moving forward, for these words that have come to connote a departure—usually a more advanced or enlightened departure—from the old, from the standard, from the traditional. The interesting thing about the philosophies and techniques underlying the Harmony By Karate approach to tradition, and the primary theme of this book, is that our style is progressive in its movement *toward* ancient tradition, not away from it. Some might be inclined, then, to call this *regression*. Doing so, however, would imply that the style was losing something by this moving backward in time; but the essential point here is that we believe the style is enriched by a return to its true roots—ironically, roots that many self-acclaimed “traditional” schools have left in the metaphorical dust. So this then brings us to the notion of “backwards progression.” Not regression, but backwards progression—that is, moving forward in substance, breadth, depth, and efficacy by moving backward in time, by returning to the style’s ancient roots.

I should mention that this was, in fact, never my intention. My goal was to establish a progressive school and a progressive style, and it was only after years of thinking that our progressiveness was taking us further away from tradition that I realized it was, on the contrary, bringing us closer to it. You might wonder how this ironic change occurred. The answer is simple: simplicity. That is, in all my striving to progress the Harmony By Karate style, my deepest intention, my one steadfast goal, was to reach greater and greater levels of simplicity and fluidity—of movement and of form. I eventually felt I had succeeded in achieving this goal, and it was only then that I learned it was in fact simplicity, if anything, that was the foundation of many ancient masters’ practices. In the pages that follow, you will learn the philosophical and kinesthetic principles of *Chowakai Karatedo*, a style that moved so far away from tradition, that, given the cyclical nature of most things, it eventually reached its own beginning.

#### Chapter 1: The Transformation

The Harmony By Karate martial arts system emerged directly from traditional Shorinjiryu Karatedo, a system comprised of both hard and soft movements, and known as the Shaolin Temple Style. The soul child of karate master Kori Hisataka, this system was designed to move away from the rigidity and homogeneousness of many of its Okinawan predecessors, and to focus on fluidity and individuality. Advocating a motto

of “Individuality in body, mind, and spirit,” Hisataka aimed to identify the strong connection and freedom of the physical and the metaphysical as the pinnacle of strong martial arts training; in many ways it accomplished this progressive goal and thus forged a great new path for the practice of karatedo. My twenty-six years of Shorinjiryu training were both challenging and rewarding, and allowed me to discover many positive and negative aspects of the style. One thing is certain, however; being part of a style whose traditional emphasis was on empowering and freeing the karateka (student) to adapt standard movements and philosophies to his or her own body, mind, and spirit, contributed in a vast way to the eventual creation of my own martial arts system.

The initial development of the Harmony By Karate style occurred over an intensive four-year period, during which time I extracted all of the positive elements of traditional Shorinjiryu Karatedo, while modifying those aspects which I felt were in great need of change. This process of transformation entailed simplifying longstanding movements and techniques that—in the contemporary world, at least—I knew were just not practical. I also conducted a meticulous re-shaping of the entire system to maximize practitioners’ physical longevity, so that we will all still have the potential to train when we are eighty years old. Harmony By Karate is a soft-style system whose progressive techniques and philosophies deeply distinguish it from other karatedo styles; it is undoubtedly eclectic, and yet still retains a classical approach and an apparent appreciation for tradition. In fact, after doing some research, I incidentally discovered that some of the changes I had made, rather than comprising an entirely new evolution, were actually a return to the root of basic karate. The following small sections detail some of the specific alterations that Harmony By Karate has brought to traditional Shorinjiryu, as well a few of the style’s defining elements.

### *Movement*

It is common across various karate styles for practitioners to employ short, rigid movements when executing techniques, and very common to complete hand and foot techniques with a snapping or thrusting motion. However, after experiencing the deterioration of my own body, and witnessing the same degeneration in many of my fellow karateka, it became clear that snapping and thrusting one’s joints leads quickly to the destruction of cartilage and ligaments, eventually disabling the practitioner and ending his or her training career very prematurely. Furthermore, it is a false yet commonly held notion that adding a final snap to a technique enhances the power or speed of that technique; contrarily, snapping only gives the illusion of heightened power and speed, and in fact detracts from the agility of the practitioner. Harmony By Karate teaches fluid techniques that eliminate superfluous and harmful body movements; left then only with solid core of each technique, the practitioner’s movement reaches a maximum of power and speed, which he or she will then be able to practice for decades longer than those who train with a disregard for their bodies.

### *Punching*

In most karate systems, traditional punches are executed with either a vertical or horizontal fist. The original Shorinjiryu punch was unique in its use of angles, with two outstretched fists forming a “V”. This positioning, sometimes referred to as “valley fist,” allowed the fist to “fit” more precisely against certain areas of the body such as the side of the face and the solar plexus. Because many parts of the skeletal body are anatomically angled, the vertical and horizontal punches lack in versatility. However, although the traditional Shorinjiryu valley fist was an advancement, it still shared an important flaw with the vertical and horizontal fists—that is, none of them allowed the arm to remain in its natural position. Harmony By Karate employs what is sometimes called the “reverse valley fist,” which allows the practitioner to retain the same angle his hands and arms have naturally when they are at his sides. If you would like to experiment with this, simply stand in a relaxed position with your hands down by your sides; then, without changing the position of your hands or arms, raise your arms up and out in front of you, and form fists. You will notice that your hands are positioned at an angle between the horizontal and vertical positions, such that your two outstretched fists form an upside-down “V”. This is the most natural way to execute a punch, and also still tailors to the many angles of a human target.

### *Kicking*

#### \*Rear-Leg Kicks

In general, traditional karate styles tend to favor the rear leg for kicking. That is, if the practitioner is in *migi dach* (right stance), he will use the left leg to execute a roundhouse or a twist kick; if the practitioner is in *hidari dach* (left stance), he will use the right leg to do so. Granted, it is the case that a rear leg roundhouse kick is one of the most forceful foot techniques to employ during *shiai*; the distance between the weapon—the foot—and the target is wide, thus allowing the practitioner ample space to wind up by twisting the torso in the opposite direction of the lower body, and then to release the kick using the momentum of the entire body as the hips pivot to bring the rear leg around to the front.

However, although the rear leg roundhouse effects powerful impact, it is both impractical and risky for the practitioner. The vast amount of setup and chambering required makes it one of the most highly telegraphed techniques. Even the untrained opponent will easily see it coming. This means that, in the best case, your opponent will either successfully block or escape the kick or, in the worst case, he will be fast enough to grab the foot, rendering you extremely vulnerable to attack. Furthermore, because the rear-leg roundhouse entails pivoting mid-kick on the grounded leg, over time one can slowly degrade or even tear the meniscus—a severe, if not irreparable, injury.

Therefore, Harmony By Karate has come to focus on the practical, and very real, power of lead-leg techniques. Using the lead leg for the roundhouse, for example, as well as

favoring the front kick over the twist kick, greatly reduces any potential of telegraphing the technique—in fact, it virtually eliminates it. This is because the lead leg is simply much closer to the opponent. It seems obvious, then, that one would use the lead leg to attack, since the closer the weapon is to the target, the greater the chance of rapid, unforeseen contact. This extreme speed contributes to the overall power and effectiveness of the technique, thereby compensating for the slightly lesser impact compared to the full-body impact of the rear-leg roundhouse.

Those who maintain that the rear-leg roundhouse is a more powerful kick, must keep in mind that *striking force is but one component of a technique's overall power*. A lead-leg roundhouse, when executed properly, is lightning-fast—nearly impossible for the opponent to foresee—and still achieves more-than-effective impact; the combination of these qualities actually makes the lead-leg roundhouse the more powerful technique; it is more effective from an offensive standpoint, and also eradicates the threat of defeat or serious injury to the practitioner.

#### \*Jump Kicks and Spinning Kicks

Furthermore, Harmony By Karate discourages the use of such impractical foot techniques as jump kicks and spinning kicks, which were originally used to kick someone off of a horse, and today are used to score points for sport. Practically speaking, these aesthetically impressive but risky techniques leave the practitioner extremely vulnerable and easy to defeat. The air time gained during a jump kick, for example, provides your opponent the opportunity to strike you either while—with both feet off the ground—you possess little to no stability, or the instant you land, when your stance is weak and your center of balance is extremely lacking.

Similarly unwise are turning kicks that expose the back. Even the fastest and most skilled practitioner cannot necessarily complete this type of kick without being attacked mid-technique or directly following. An attack to the back can be debilitating if not fatal. Harmony By Karate certainly encourages creativity and experimentation with such techniques within the safe, controlled environment of the dojo, but teaches that they are impractical and dangerous in real situations.

#### *Kata and Kumite*

In the original, complete Shorinjiryu system, there were twenty to thirty different *kata* and five to fifteen *kumite*, choreographed fighting forms to be practiced and memorized. While I deeply appreciate the history and artistry in all of these forms, and emphasize this to my students, I believe that it is better to come close to perfecting a few techniques/forms, than to be mediocre at many. Elite military such as the Navy Seals focus on gross motor skills *only*. This is because in a fight-or-flight situation, when adrenaline is high, the human brain and body resort to what they remember; the mind, seizing the basics, will recall very little complex information in a real situation at the

height of anxiety. The simpler the techniques that are practiced, the better the chance of escape or survival. If one has trained in many forms, he is likely not to remember any of them in the midst of his fear, whereas if he has trained in only a few yet powerful and effective forms, his mind will call instantly upon his body memory to perform these techniques. Therefore, Harmony By Karate has only seven *kata*: four basic to intermediate *kata* and three advanced forms. Each of the seven *kata* possesses a philosophical name—taught in both Japanese and English—where each one represents a different state of being, an element of nature, and/or an element of meditation (The *Kata* section of this book explains these metaphysical states in detail.) Each Harmony By Karate *kata* comprises an average of four techniques, designed to replicate real situations and to maximize practical application of the techniques.

Also, the Harmony By Karate *kumite* are not separate from the *kata*. Rather, the *kumite* are the *kata*—performed with an opponent. I have found this teaching and training technique to be most effective since it allows the practitioner to employ with a human target what he could before only visualize in his mind. This method renders the *kumite* more meaningful, and the *kata* more real.

### *Fighting Stance*

Traditional Shorinjiryu, like many other styles of karatedo, employs a fighting stance in which the practitioner's torso is either facing forward, or slightly turned to one side. Harmony By Karate's fighting stance, contrarily, is a side stance, with the torso facing to one side, and the head slightly angled toward the shoulder so that the practitioner's line of vision is forward-facing. This offers the practitioner a great defensive advantage, as it drastically reduces the amount of torso surface area vulnerable to the opponent.

In the traditional stance, the torso is fully exposed, and if one uses his hands and arms to protect the torso, he leaves his head dangerously exposed to attack. In the Harmony By Karate stance, the torso is barely accessible to the opponent, leaving the hands and arms free to fully protect the head.

Moreover, the traditional fighting stance entails keeping one's fists tightly closed in an on-guard position. However, clenching the fists causes a chain reaction throughout the entire body, tightening muscles and thereby depleting the practitioner's energy, as well as cutting his response time. Instead, Harmony By Karate teaches the practitioner to clench the muscles only at the instant of contact with the opponent. Our fighting stance entails either an open-hand or loose-fist guard, with elbows resting on the body and hands near the chin or on both sides of the face. This calls the rest of the body into a relaxed state; this is the most effective way to enter into a confrontation, as it allows for rapid physical and mental response.

### *Blocking*

As with the fighting stance, Harmony By Karate blocking is performed with open hands and loose arms. The goal is to divert the opponent's attack while exerting as little energy as possible. Our motto for blocking is "touch and move." The harder and more rigid the block, the more energy is depleted and the higher the risk of the practitioner himself getting injured or even breaking a bone; the softer and more fluid the block, the more energy is conserved and the lower the risk of injury. Furthermore, the difference in speed between the two types of blocks is clear: the soft, fluid, open-handed blocking form is infinitely faster and more agile than the traditional one. In fact, in an experiment, practitioners blocked about half as many attacks using rigid movement (tight arm muscles) and clenched fists than they did using fluid movement (loose arm muscles) and open hands.

## **Chapter 2: Elements Unique to Harmony By Karate**

### *The Sensei-Student Relationship*

Congruous to traditional martial arts philosophy, all Harmony By Karate practitioners value the *dojo*—meaning *place of the way* or *place of enlightenment*—as a harmonious and serene sanctuary whose holy environment is grounded in the relationship between the sensei and the karateka. Our style, however, fosters this relationship on the basis of trust and equality, with all Harmony By Karate sensei exuding and inviting love rather than fear. It is in this way that instructors command respect and instill discipline—with a genuine love and concern for each student, rather than through toxic usurpation of control and false augmentation of ego.

At Harmony By Karate, we believe that the teacher-student relationship should mirror family values rather than militaristic values. This means that students should feel fully accepted at all times, and should feel free to ask questions at the teacher's permission. It is through questioning, after all, that one truly internalizes and learns to apply his or her knowledge. Student questions can often drive the sensei to greater levels of knowledge and awareness by challenging his standard mode of thought. Such challenging, of course, must be done appropriately, respectfully, and with the sincere intention to better the self and the school.

Furthermore, Harmony By Karate practitioners are free to terminate their training at any time without concern of guilt from peers and/or sensei. A true sensei must never make a student feel indebted to him or the school on account of hierarchy or obligatory loyalty. The only thing a student owes his sensei, peers, and school, is to help others. The sensei supports and guides the student, but does not expect anything in return should the student decide to leave the school. If the relationship, based on the aforementioned principles, is genuine, the sensei will have no doubt or fear regarding the love and loyalty the student feels for him and for the school; the decision will not be

taken as an offense, but will be recognized and supported as a life choice. The sensei should always be the student's greatest advocate and support system.

### *Deep Breathing*

Deep breathing is an ancient healing and meditative technique that is an integral part of Harmony By Karate training. While there is no right or wrong way to breath, the important thing is that the practitioner integrates breathing directly into the training regimen, and learns how it increases internal power. That is, by focusing on the breath and engaging in comfortable, deep, rhythmic inhalation and exhalation, one's oxygen supply greatly increases. This helps deepen the body's state of relaxation, which prepares muscles for action and maximizes power at the execution of each technique. At HBK we practice interval training—each time we stop movement, we breathe deeply and resume. Proper breathing accelerates cell repair and cell rebuilding.

### *Moving Like Water*

Our teachers are constantly telling students to “move like water”. Contrary to many traditional styles of karatedo that employ hard, rigid movements via consistently tensed muscles (both in offense techniques and defensive blocking) to effect an aura of strength, Harmony By Karate believes that soft motion and fluidity—achieved by loosening the muscles except at the point of contact—allows for the greatest levels of speed, power, and effectiveness. Our method derives in large part from the natural world. We take the comparison of water and stone, for example. When, in nature, stone hits stone, both are likely to break apart. Water, however, is elusive and unbreakable, and its agility allows it to bypass virtually any obstacle in its path; in fact, water erodes stone.

As water is arguably the most powerful resource in nature—and comprises the largest percentage of matter in our bodies—moving like water allows us most effectively to tap into our deepest energy source, called *Ki*. *Ki* represents the electromagnetic field in our bodies, and is also sometimes referred to as our *aura* or *spiritual energy*. When we move like water, we achieve greater speed and force because we harness more electromagnetic energy, maximizing the *ki* force in each of our movements. It is similar to how falling or rushing water creates electricity.

### *How Can I Move Like Water?*

To move like water, I understand, is an abstract concept that materializes only through observation and constant meditative practice of this style of movement. Eventually your body will move that way naturally. There are, however, certain things you can practice that will facilitate the journey to soft, fluid, forceful movement. As mentioned

above, one of the most necessary aspects of fluid movement is the loosening of the muscles involved in a given technique. When executing a punch, for example, one should completely relax all the muscles in his arm, hand, and fingers until his fist reaches his target. The energy that is saved by unclenching the muscles during the process of execution makes for an explosive and blindingly fast moment of contact. Another practice that guides the body toward fluid movement is the deep breathing method. As aforementioned, increasing the body's oxygen supply effects relaxation and deepens *ki* energy.

### *Healing Through Training*

I believe that one can, and should, choose to train around injury—for several reasons. First of all, in real situations, attackers have no concern for the victim's pain; they simply attack. In fact, if they sense that the victim is weak, injured, or scared, their attack will likely be even more aggressive. Therefore, if you are injured, and adapt your training by using the parts of your body that *are* fully functional, you will increase your chances of survival in a real confrontation; the ability to adapt quickly is perhaps the most useful self-defense tool available to the karateka in training. Secondly, on a biological level, exercising the healthy parts of your body increases your oxygen supply in general, which is vital to proper cell repair where damage as been inflicted.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, pain is arguably our greatest teacher. The physical and emotional challenges we face test our feelings of self-worth and our ability/desire to persevere. Both physical pain and emotional pain are critical to the evolution of the self—conquering internal obstacles teaches the mind and body of their own innate healing mechanisms, which facilitates rapid recovery.

Furthermore, pain and struggle often draw us closer to our respective belief systems—regardless of faith. Integrating deep belief and healthy movement creates a powerful means of self-healing.

### **Chapter 3: Kata**

The Japanese word *kata* means “shape” or “form”. It is comprised of three characters from the Japanese Kanji alphabet: *katashi*, which means “shape”; *kai*, which means “cut”; and *tsuchi*, which means “soil” or “earth”. Literally translated, then, *kata* means “shape which cuts the ground”.



In both traditional and modern karatedo, *kata* is a pivotal component of training. Each *kata* is defined by a particular series of techniques, performed from various stances, in different directions, and typically with alternating offensive and defensive movements. It is the combination of these elements—as well as the variable rhythm and flow chosen and manifested by the practitioner—that gives each *kata* unique character.

The mastery of *kata*, however, is not solely an artistic endeavor—nor has it been throughout martial arts history. Research shows that the first karate masters used *kata* as kind of mnemonic device to instill techniques into their mental and muscle memories. They used the repetitive nature of *kata* training to practice, remember, and record their various techniques in lieu of the written documentation and recording devices that were either limited or did not exist in that early era. These masters also considered *kata* a teaching tool; since they could now document their techniques, they could better convey this knowledge to their students. The pitfall, however, lay in the necessary loss of *kata*'s characteristic personalization when students began training in their masters' *kata* rather than their own.

Shorinjiryu Karatedo made a concerted effort to bring back individuality to the practice, as delineated by Master Hisataka's motto, "Individuality in Body, Mind, and Spirit". And the mentality certainly did change in its allowance of diverse *kata* interpretation, with even the slightest variation able to define a practitioner's unique personal style.

No matter how strongly individuality is encouraged, however, it can be a challenge to find one's Self in a *kata* that is performed by perhaps thousands of others. I have therefore taken a more progressive approach. Each of the five Harmony By Karate *kata* possesses a Japanese name that correlates to a philosophical or spiritual notion. Furthermore, each is assigned a particular element of nature (earth, air, water, fire, or spirit) that relates to its respective name. By relating each *kata* to metaphysical notions, the gateway to personal interpretation is re-opened—perhaps wider than ever before; because each *kata*'s physical manifestation is informed by its metaphysical assignment, and because it is the whole of each of our respective individual lives and spirits that informs our interpretations of metaphysical notions, this approach to *kata* renders it nearly impossible for the practitioner *not* to individualize forms according to his or her personal experience, belief, and inner spirit.

The Harmony By Karate *kata* are as follows:

1. Kata Sonzai: presence; earth
2. Kata Hiraku: openness; air
3. Kata Ageru: giving; water
4. Kata Yuki: courage; fire
5. Kata Chowa: harmony; spirit (affirm, visualize believe)

Note that this is fewer *kata* than most traditional styles teach, and this method more nearly emulates the early masters, who are known to have trained in only a couple of *kata*. It is my personal belief that approaching mastery of only a few forms is more useful than bombarding the mind and body with an overwhelming amount of information, such that neither mind nor body might remember it in dire moments.

Each of the following chapters is devoted to exploring one of the five *kata*. In each chapter, I will engage in a detailed explanation of the philosophical and spiritual notions stated above, and how they come to life through each particular series of movements. Keep in mind that these are my personal interpretations, and that you may—and should—develop your own; in fact, it is the goal of the Harmony By Karate method that you do.

### **Kata Sonzai: Presence**

Being present is one of the most fundamentally overlooked keys to leading a joyous and fulfilling life. Unbeknownst to some, the power of living in the moment has been explored and preached for decades, and nowadays it is making a strong resurgence in the books, seminars, and teachings of spiritual thinkers and leaders around the world; it is a notion often discussed and encouraged, yet one that is rarely understood for the true catalyst of change it really is. By projecting your focus entirely on the physical and metaphysical happenings of the present, you grant yourself access to the true depth and sanctity that characterizes every moment we live.

Without this awareness, everyday life may often begin to fade to the commonplace. This potentially recurring feeling of meaninglessness, however, is but a spiritual and emotional illusion caused by lack of presence. It is an affliction resolved only by a commitment to unveil the inherent depth of every moment—every moment is worth your full attention. A child playing with building blocks, for example. In our least present state, we may do ourselves the unfortunate injustice of completely dismissing this instance as nothing meaningful or worth our attention—it is, after all, a fairly common scene.

If we are somewhat more aware, we may pause quickly to watch the child and to smile at the feeling of warmth that arises within us. However, if we were truly present in this moment, we would recognize and perhaps even marvel at the depth, complexity, and vitality of this seemingly simple occurrence.

Thoughts of the incredible way a child's mind functions and develops, of how he or she can process notions such as shapes and colors and use them in the early stages of creative expression, of the beauty of childlike wonderment and fascination with the simplest of activities, and perhaps even a recapturing of our own memories of childhood may all likely enter into our experience of the moment, rendering it indispensable.

If we extend such awareness and understanding, therefore, to all moments of life—or to as many as possible—we allow ourselves to experience life as the fulfilling, meaningful, and deeply intricate phenomenon that it is.

There is another aspect to the notion of presence that is discussed less often. That is, presence is not only about focusing on the present and letting concerns about the past and future fall away—it is the recognition, also, that all three of these constructs of linear time actually exist concurrently. The past is simply a present that has already occurred, and the future, a present that is not yet. In this case, all there *is* is the present.

While doing kata sonzai, focus on the notion of presence—try your best to be grounded, strong, and aware of both the internal and external processes that are occurring. Summons the natural element *earth*, which represents stability, and inner connection.

Kata Sonzai:

1. Open the kata.
2. Lead front kick to NE
3. Right front punch
4. Left front punch
5. Right front punch
6. Repeat kata in mirror image.

### **Kata Hiraku: Openness**

Openness is the foundation on which all other positive and productive states of being rest. To be open is to stand even in the face of challenge or uncertainty, and to be ready and willing to evolve. It is to say *I don't know* but also *I wish to learn*; it is to say *I think I do know* but also *there may be more to learn*; it is to say *I am absolutely certain of what I know* but also *it will still benefit me to hear and to contemplate what others have learned*. Most importantly, to be open is to never stop learning. To never be done, and never to feel like you have acquired all the knowledge there is to enrich your life. For this is never the case; there is always something new to discover about your environment and about yourself. *Something* to help you expand your horizons, transcend your boundaries, deconstruct your walls, and explode your limitations. Some small bit of knowledge or vast realization waiting to be gathered.

While performing Kata Hiraku, focus on the notion of openness. Keep in mind that there are always new ways of doing the same thing, and that you are constantly *on the road* to perfection. And although perfection is an unreachable destination, the great road is actually where we are meant to be. Summons the natural element *wind*, which,

unconfined, travels everywhere. Even when it comes up against an obstacle, it simply changes direction. Focus also on deep breathing, noting the abundance of air that is available to sustain you.

1. Open the kata.
2. Right back punch to the NE
3. Left front punch
4. Right front punch
5. Right back kick
6. Repeat kata in mirror image.

### **Kata Ageru: Giving**

Giving is a way of being that drives change, and without which, the world would simply not progress. It is far too often in this life that we are presented with and become entrapped by a fear of lack. Lack of money, lack of power, lack of products, lack of love. It is this false notion of lack that causes us to say, *I don't have enough* or *you cannot have what is mine*—what we often do not realize is that we have the power to create abundance for ourselves. And, perhaps ironically, one powerful way to create that abundance is to give to others, to say, *there is plenty*. Whatever it is that you want most, give it away—in heart, mind, and spirit. It will come back to you. *How*, you may ask? Through the process of giving—the great chain in which you are an indispensable link.

While performing Kata Ageru, focus on giving and its meaning for your life and for the lives of others. Focus also on abundance—abundance of space, of strength, of oxygen, of inner power. Practice releasing some of those things, then regaining them and releasing others, and so on—feel the dynamics of the cycle and pay attention to how it affects your kata. Summons the natural element *water*, which represents giving, movement and change, and which heals the body and soul. Water is constantly giving its old form in return for new ones; it also constantly gives life and revitalization to nearly everything on the planet without ever asking for anything in return. We ourselves are ninety percent water, and we must move as who we are.

1. Open the kata.
2. Roundhouse kick to the NE
3. Right palm strike
4. Left palm strike
5. Right round palm strike
6. Repeat kata in mirror image.

## **Kata Yuki: Courage**

Courage results from being present, open, and giving. It is to do—with full commitment and appreciation, readiness for the unknown, and desire to drive change and self evolution—that which we may fear. Courage, essentially, is a profound form of self love and self-respect. Despite what some may say, having courage does not mean to be fearless, or literally, without fear. Rather, it means to act *through* and *around* fear, to persevere for the ultimate betterment either of someone else, of yourself, or of society at large. Although fear does sometimes serve as an important instinct to protect us from real potential danger, the goal is to gain enough awareness to be able to distinguish between fear that is justified and fear that is unjustified—to know when to follow your instinct, and when to call on a deep courage to help you navigate your way to greater strength.

While performing Kata Yuki, focus on the feeling of courage. Try new things. Free yourself from old patterns, and let go of any negative thoughts that may be clouding your mind and your movement. Try demonstrating it in front of a group of peers or teachers; love yourself in that moment, and be proud of every aspect of your movement—even accept the mistakes as important tools for learning, and congratulate yourself for stepping into a challenging situation that opened you to such knowledge. Also, when you find courage within yourself, you will come from compassion and calmness, not anger. Summons the natural element *fire*, which represents strength, love, intensity, and endurance.

1. Open the kata.
2. Right back chop to the NE
3. Left round front chop
4. Left roundhouse kick to the NW
5. Left back kick to the NW
6. Repeat kata in mirror image.

## **Kata Chowa—Harmony**

The notion of “harmony” is multi-faceted, and refers both to harmony within oneself, and harmony between oneself and others. To be at harmony with oneself is to feel at peace. If any decidedly unpleasurably emotion arises—such as anger, fear, or pain—or if the body becomes afflicted by physical disease, it is always due to a disharmony, or imbalance, within the individual. Eastern philosophy suggests a specific definition for personal harmony; that is, when one’s actions reflect one’s inner self. There is one thing that is essential to achieving such unification: knowledge of the self. If you do not know who you truly are, you cannot act accordingly. Once you understand yourself on a

deeper level, you can then manifest to the world who you are. Often, we think we know ourselves deeply, but there may still be some parts yet undiscovered. In order to unveil those parts of ourselves unknown even to us, a transformation of some kind must often occur, and usually entails finding, acknowledging, and releasing deeply-rooted pain from our past that has—unbeknownst to us—been affecting all of our relationships in the present. The courage to transform, to understand and then shed our pain, is ultimately what leads to inner harmony. And once harmony with oneself is found, harmony with others is nearly automatic.

Kata Chowa is slightly different from the other four in its meaning, since it represents a fifth natural element, *spirit*, which is more abstract. Therefore, we associate with this kata the meditative concepts, *affirm*, *visualize*, and *believe*. To affirm is to make a positive statement about the present, to visualize is to see oneself reaching his or her goal via mental imagery, and to believe is to have faith that the goal will be reached. This process can be used for any life goal, large or small. When doing this kata, for example, you can affirm by saying to yourself, “I am very strong”; visualize yourself performing the kata powerfully; and believe in your ability to do so. Practice this meditation and note how it transforms your state of mind and, thereby, your performance.