

Standard Applications 4

Turn again.

In previous instalments we have looked at the concepts of mindset and physicality (your build) with respect to the applications of Karate movements in general and kata movements in particular. Here we will reanalyse the turns that we take.

It is our intention to be able to relate any of the movements to persons of any build or gender and be able to use the techniques against attacks that might realistically be expected to occur.

While we do not subscribe to the idea that you must cognitively know that “when he does this, I do that”, it is vital that your training writes your techniques into your hard-drive so that an occurring situation that resembles something you have trained for accesses those commands in your system that enable an accurate response. Let me just say that again... when you get attacked, what you do will be dictated by what you train for.

Shotokan practitioners may be surprised at how few of their kata contain the simple mawatte movement that they make in their basic practice.

The mawatte may be shown to receive an attack from the rear. Yet your awareness would have to be very good to react in this way, and if it was that good then you probably would not react in this way.

Simple mawatte can be shown to do this:



We can see that the attacker is in close and has begun to grapple. We use the “seize the initiative” idea to bring our body into contact and throw our back leg across and our arms manipulate the opponent’s neck to cast them on the floor. Note that in the picture the defender is leaning to help the attacker to the floor instead of just chucking him. Performing basics you don’t lean because you need to exercise less care for the attacker. Working with a training partner and doing neck manipulations should never be done harshly or there will be legal issues around your training and you won’t have a partner any more.

It is important when using turns as throws that certain principles be adhered to.

- * The thrower’s hip should be lower than that of the person they are throwing. The thrower should not leave any gap between themselves and the person they are throwing.
- * The thrower should execute the throw in a vigorous way (be careful in practice).
- * The person being thrown should be put through as many different angles as possible – you can resist a push in one direction, maybe even two, but three directions/dimensions becomes a huge problem to resist.
- * As groundwork is safest in the ring, it is more important to retain your own balance and posture than to follow the attacker to the ground.



Some styles practice a form of mawatte that takes the front leg across instead, indicating that they wish to be “off-line” from someone stood behind them.

This is, of course, fine logic. We retain the use of the moving the back foot across as used for throws, and as a reminder that even an attacker behind will have made some kind of attachment (they grabbed you) before you turn. If they were going to hit you then the chances are that

they just did!

Turns like the first turn in Kihon kata can be shown to do this:



The attacker has grabbed you by the lapels. Fearing that he may head-butt or knee you, you need to turn his attention. By pulling on his elbow in a direction across the body, we alter his balance to prevent kneeling. By raising one hand above his arm and across his face (maybe strike, maybe push, the severity depends on the severity of the attack) we cause him to look away and not be able to nut so easily.

The brain-stem twist buys us enough time to bring our body into direct contact, and taking a large step to the left (in this example, and in the kata) produces a hip that the attacker can be directed over the top of.

Remember that for most people balance is lost as soon as the head is no longer over the hips.

A good strong front leg prevents us from falling, even if the attacker retains their grip on our lapels. If a follow-up strike is necessary then the kata advocates a straight punch, and we can see that the chudan (middle level) punch is actually to the attacker's head or throat.

The first turn in Kihon kata is, of course, the first move.

It's not too much of a leap to use the same mechanics for the second turn in Kihon kata, either.



The difference between this sequence and the straight mawatte is the extra effort created by throwing the front leg behind you. This enables you to use your legs more to generate the power of the throw and relies less on the strength of your arms. You might go so far as to say that the hips and body do the work and all the hands have to do is to stay attached to the attacker.

The third turn in Kihon kata can be used the same way:



We might look at a single grab. It might come from the side. Imagine that we have been having words and you have turned to leave. The attacker doesn't want you to leave and is about to escalate the situation by grabbing you to strike you. Now you must act. Using the elbow to crash into the attached hand doesn't rely on the strength of the arm, but rather on the movement and direction given to the hips. Note that once the hand is attached to you we actually want to keep it there so

that the attacker can't use it to strike you.

Big turns, such as those after the kiai can be shown to do this:



Taking a movement after a kiai, we in the OCI like to think that the opponent/attacker has already been struck, and that the next movement is used to dispose of them. Here you can see that body is used as the fulcrum to throw the attacker over, where the long stance is again used to keep our balance.

And don't think that it relies on gedan barai, either. Have a look at these shuto variations and uchiuke variations that make use of the same hip movement.



We can take the shot to be injurious strikes or manipulations of the opponent's balance. In each case it is a flinch reaction to a realistically expected attack that leads our body to react with a learned technique that has become second nature.



There are, of course, many more variations on turns, and I handle many of them in my books *Peaceful Mind* (the Heian kata), *Fortress Storming* (Bassai Dai kata), and the DVD range on kata application.

It is a fair comment that turns may exist in kata to enforce a geometric shape onto the form, thereby making it easier to remember. You will rarely find a string of more than 7 techniques before there is a turn. This is because you tend to have a problem remembering more than 7 things in a row. In these cases, turns occur as punctuation; turns exist to begin a new mnemonic for the brain.

The point of the above applications is that turns don't have to be just turns.

As I have said, though, as long as people want applications to kata movements I will offer usable solutions to them.

In part 5 we will take some of those strange "ready positions" or "preparatory positions" and show how they can be used practically.

Thanks to Paul Wilson who was coerced into taking part in the photos.

John Burke is available for seminars at your dojo. He will teach kata bunkai or pressure points tailored to your requirements. Books and dvds are available from www.thebunkaiguy.com and seminars can be booked on 01626 360999.