

Ma-ai and Ri-ai on close distance

"How will we practice at close distance"

Close distance can be described as being *short-work*. It has to do with ma-ai and ri-ai. For convenience, we also speak of timing, which to a certain extent detracts from the concept of ri-ai.

What do we mean by the term *short-work*? It tells us something about how we can control our opponent at short distance. You have virtually control over the structure of your opponent, ie you unbalance him both mentally and physically, which means that you subsequently have to use less physical strength to be able to perform your technique.

The question is: how does this control come about, what do you ultimately need for it?

In modern Budo you often see that the focus is on the form, characterised by movements in which a lot of energy is lost. We also speak of form against form and it becomes more of a dance. You will then have the tendency to perform the form faster than it actually is possible to do, so that the movements are no longer organised and you lose the feeling of the movement. We have to give up the idea of „the faster the more spectacular and better.“ The faster the movement, the more the chance that it will not be completed. You go so fast that you are no longer able to finish the movement, so it look likes the movement are locked together. Speed is important, do not misunderstand me, but you can also go too fast - food for thought, maybe?

Up to the level of Ran-ai, the above does not yet play an important role. I think that when you start with Kagewaza the above is of essential importance. Within Kage the ma-ai changes, it becomes shorter than we are used to, opposed to the frontside - omote, chuden and ran- ai. Beginning with Kage, we also speak about the backside. That brings me again to the concept of control that I spoke about earlier.

In kage we have to use the concept of "sen no sen₁". The ma-ai within kage forces us to do that. The timing is very important during the action, which means that you have to switch quickly. Uchidachi has such an intention that shidachi is emotionally provoked, moreover shidachi must put pressure on uchidachi as a response and not release it during the entire action. If you want to keep control there has to be mental pressure. Because the ma-ai is smaller there should not be too much space. You have to hold mental dominance over the other so that he loses track of the situation. He must not feel comfortable. This mental state (for both uchidachi and shidachi) is very important during the execution of kagewaza. You do not have time to think about what else you could do during the kata. When these thoughts come, you create problems.

The brain saying: why, how.. is not very helpful. *Short-work* is very precise, the ma-ai in kage is smaller than normal and therefore the technique must be accurate. There is no room for mistakes. That is why the structure of uchidachi must be disturbed. As a result, you need less power for the next movement.

Do not give your opponent any space or resistance which he is looking for, in order to do his action. Do not be part of his structure. When your opponent has the predominance in the situation and you go along with it, your opponent actually controls your actions without you noticing yourself. We often see this happening in modern budo "form against form". Another problem revealing itself here is that if your movements are too limited, you are going to compensate with force. You will be good in the wrong movements. More power evokes physical tension. Too much tension (shisei is also an important aspect here, the more bent the more tension) leads to you being less able to move with ease. In kage the mental part is important. You are looking for the the decisive moment, tension vs relaxation. The concept of kokyū will be discussed later. When your body is relaxed you are more receptive to signals from outside - touch or movement in this case. You must therefore feel the contact to be able to respond. For how can you feel the movements of the other when you do not feel your own body?

The above are my thoughts about how kage should be seen and done, which is not the way we see it done nowadays - a "chudan way".

I have not yet discussed the concept of "kokyu" (Fukumi kiai), but it definitely plays an important role in the execution of Kagewaza.

I hope that above gives everyone who is introduced in kagewaza a bit of an idea of what kagewaza is. It's not an intellectual way of doing it, feel with the body!

Kees Bruggink December 2018 Menkyo Kaiden SMRJO

- 1) Sen, initiative or willpower which is included in the action you perform within a combat situation. This can also be a more restrained action that depends on the interval, (ma) of a ma=ai, of space and time. This moment is the dividing line between shidachi and uchidachi.