



# The Way of Kata: A Comprehensive Guide for Deciphering Martial Applications

By Lawrence A. Kane, Kris Wilder



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The Principles for Understanding Kata are Largely Unknown – Until Now

The ancient masters developed kata, or "formal exercises," as fault-tolerant methods to preserve their unique, combat-proven fighting systems. Unfortunately, they deployed a two-track system of instruction where an 'outer circle' of students unknowingly received modified forms with critical details or important principles omitted. Only the select 'inner circle' that had gained a master's trust and respect would be taught okuden waza, the powerful hidden applications of kata.

The theory of deciphering kata applications (kaisai no genri) was once a great mystery revealed only to trusted disciples of the ancient masters in order to protect the secrets of their systems. Even today, while the basic movements of kata are widely known, advanced practical applications and sophisticated techniques frequently remain hidden from the casual observer. The principles and rules for understanding kata are largely unknown.

This groundbreaking book unveils these methods, not only teaching you how to analyze your kata to understand what it is trying to tell you, but also helping you to utilize your fighting techniques more effectively?both in self-defense and in tournament applications.

Fifteen general principles to identify effective techniques:

- Twelve discrete rules for deciphering martial applications
- Comprehensive insights into kata history, strategy and tactics
- Vital physiological considerations
- Well organized materials for easy reference

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"..absolute must for any serious practitioner..." (Philip Starr, Inside Kung Fu Hall of Fame Member, founder of Yiliquan)

"...bridges the gap between form and application..." (Loren W. Christensen)

"...brings meaningful information to today's martial artists." (Martina Sprague, martial arts instructor, author)

"This book is a pioneering step..." (Sgt. Rory Miller)

"This superb book is essential reading..." (Ian Abernathy, author)

#### From the Publisher

Preface "I only expected to be in this country for three months; however, when I came to Spokane (Washington) and saw the deplorable level of Goju Ryu there, I took time and great pains to correct it. After six months—twice the length of time I had planned to stay—I realized that it would be easier to start from scratch than to fix the problems. It's usually better to rebuild a house than to remodel it! "The Goju Ryu that I saw when I finally visited dojos across the country was very poor, but I knew it wasn't anybody's fault. I understood there had been many teachers before, many bridges, and the messages often got crossed. There was such a gap between those practitioners and me! I didn't want to make any instructor uncomfortable. "My job first was to encourage people, not discourage them. I started correcting the basics and built the kata on them. Once we had some common ground, I could build on it. It was harder working with the instructors than with the beginners, because they had high rank and their pride prevented them from training with me in front of their students. And sometimes their students were better than they! But I understood the situation. So I gave them private instruction whenever I could, usually during breaks." – Teruo Chinen When new martial artists begin their training, they find they have to relearn basic concepts like breathing, standing, and walking. They are taught how to breathe through their diaphragm rather than solely with their lungs, introduced to a variety of uncomfortable stances and foreign postures, and shown how to move in unusual new ways. Balance and coordination take on a new meaning. And that's just the beginning. Soon they are introduced to kata, the dancelike movements in which the ancient masters hid the secrets of their unique fighting systems. Almost all Asian martial systems have kata of one type or another, from arnis to kung fu, karate to judo, and tae kwon do to tai chi. A kata is simply a pattern of movements containing a logical series of offensive and defensive techniques that are performed in a particular order. Its origins can be found in the nature of fighting, more than a thousand years of trial and error based on practical experience as well as keen observations about combat between animal and animal, between animal and man, and man-to-man.

According to Morio Higaonna, "The true meaning and spirit of karate are imbedded in kata and only by the practice of kata can we come to understand them." Individuals who learn an art's strategy and diligently practice its kata can learn real-world fighting applications that they may use to defend themselves. While each kata is supposed to be performed the same way every time, there are a plethora of applications, or bunkai, from every kata, movements that can be applied in a real fight. Some applications, especially simple, straightforward ones, are easier to decipher than others. Unfortunately, such applications are not always the best interpretation of a given movement, nor are they the most likely to succeed in actual combat. Anything less than the best is simply not good enough if your life is on the line. Kata is not dance practice nor is it aerobic training. It is the fundamental basis of a fighting art. Like a textbook, it contains all the applications

you need to defend yourself in mortal combat. To get the most out of your martial art, you simply need to know how to "read" your kata like a book. Ah, but that's the rub isn't it? How does one learn how to read the kata textbook? The answer to that question is, of course, contained herein. We wrote these materials to help you do just that. The theory of deciphering applications from kata is called kaisai. Since it offers guidelines for unlocking the true meaning of each kata movement, kaisai no genri (the theory of kaisai) was once a great mystery revealed only to trusted disciples of the ancient masters in order to protect the secrets of their systems. Using the rules of kaisai no genri, practitioners can decipher the original intent of kata movements by logically analyzing each specific movement to find its okuden waza (hidden technique). This book helps practitioners understand the strategy behind whatever martial art they have chosen to study so that they can utilize its tactics wisely. Our efforts will show you how to analyze your kata to determine the best applications for a given situation. The heart of these materials covers fifteen general principles for identifying effective techniques as well as twelve discrete rules for deciphering applications from kata.

From the Author

Praise for *The Way of Kata*:

*"This book is an absolute must for any serious practitioner of traditional karate, taekwondo, or kung fu."* -- **Philip Starr**, Founder of Yiliquan

*"For years karateka have needed a manual to bridge the gap between their training and real violence. This book is a pioneering step in fulfilling that need."* -- **Rory Miller**

*"This superb book is essential reading for all those who wish to understand the highly effective techniques, concepts, and strategies that the kata were created to record."* -- **Iain Abernethy**, British Combat Association Hall of Fame Member

*"This comprehensive book bridges the gap between form and application in a realistic, easy-to-read and easy-to-apply manner."* -- **Loren W. Christensen**, 7th degree black belt

*"Demonstrates the practical uses of kata, relates the traditional and modern aspects of fighting, and brings meaningful information to today's martial artists."* -- **Martina Sprague**

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