

## Form and Formless

The other day my son and I were enjoying some pistachio nuts when it occurred to him that the reward of the edible portion of the nut was less than the effort required to extract it from the shell. He said "wouldn't it be great if you didn't have to mess with the shell and could just eat them by the handful?" He makes a reasonable point. However, I responded, "Its the very time and effort it takes to harvest each nut from its shell that helps to make them taste so good". While my observation was immediately shot down the correlation to the martial arts is obvious... right? If not, a cursory discussion of kata and waza may be helpful.

A kata is a form. A pre-arranged movement that participants have agreed to execute in exactly the same fashion each time it is performed. It is a delivery system or "package" of skill and principle. The goal of kata is to provide a repetitive event that will entrain the subconscious (body-mind) to reproduce an action without conscious intervention. Thus removing the slow-to-react conscious mind from the process allowing us to respond spontaneously and under stress. It also serves as a scaffolding, providing a safe method for one to fully explore the principles inherent to the waza. So what is Waza?

Waza is technique. Technique that is fully understood and capable of operating in a dynamic environment. No structure. No rules. No mind. The strength of the technique fully reliant upon the principles transmitted via the kata. Where kata environment was constant, the waza environment is ever changing and dynamic...form becomes formless.

In Judo for example, a kata is practiced over and over in exactly the same fashion. The body learns the motion while the mind contemplates the principles. When ready, the waza is developed in a controlled sparing event called "randori." This allows the environment to become dynamic and the waza to free itself from the confines of the form. Lastly, the practitioner is put under the stress of contest or "Shiai" to determine if the kata has been fully naturalized. If it has, and the optimal situation presents itself, the waza will take flight even under stress.

Danzan is most certainly a kata-based system. While some have chosen to criticize it for not providing an immediate dynamic platform as perhaps boxing or wrestling might, the age-old tradition of the pre-arranged form remains one of the aspects of DZR that make it extremely effective in the creation martial masters. However, to truly unlock the potential waza one must utilize a dynamic platform in which to experiment with the principles. Only through this platform will the conscious-mind relinquish control to the body-mind and allow for spontaneous adaptation.

In my dojo, we utilize dynamic platforms in three tactical ranges: Boxing range(1), Clinch range (2), and ground range (3). The kata of DZR by in large exist in one or more of these ranges. Creating basic movements that allow for experimentation will serve to transform the kata to waza and help to understand the true principle of the technique. The training continues to be non-

oppositional thereby maintaining adequate safety and kokua.

Jujitsu is, after-all, the "art of non-resistance." And as with any true art, be it music, dance, fine arts or swordsmanship... the secret lays in training the subconscious via exact repetitions and a consistent environment ultimately progressing to dynamic interplay and the experience of creative freedom. While non-repetitive, this interplay is invaluable to the strategy of non-resistance and the critical principles of Danzan Ryu.

Kata and waza, the nut and the shell. Natures way of ensuring the continued success of the plant is DZR's way of ensuring the continued success of the Ryu.

Mahalo,  
Kimo