

## TECHNICAL & TACTICAL FACTORS

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# The influence of karateka Gichin Funakoshi on Jigoro Kano and taekwondo leaders

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**Key words:** *Seiryoku zen'yō kokumin taiiku*, Won Kuk Lee, Byung Jick Ro

### Abstract

**Problem.** The purpose of this study is to examine the direct influence of *karateka* (karate practitioner) Gichin Funakoshi on Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, and the founders of Korea's national sport, taekwondo, especially Won Kuk Lee and Byung Jick Ro. Kano founded *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku* (National Physical Education According to the Principle of Best Use of Energy) in 1924, but the movements seemed to have been greatly influenced by Karate. This study takes up two questions: First, how did Gichin Funakoshi influence Jigoro Kano. And second, how did Gichin Funakoshi influence taekwondo leaders.

**Method.** This study is historical research based on relevant data analysis. In the question 1, the solo moves of Shotokan karate-do with the *seiryoku zen'yō kokumin taiiku* style were compared. In the question 2, literature and newspaper articles about karate and taekwondo from Korea and Japan are analyzed to investigate the motivations, objectives, and beliefs of Funakoshi and early Korean taekwondo leaders for their martial arts practice.

**Results.** As a result, this study has found: (1) Funakoshi's karate style and Kano's *seiryoku zen'yō kokumin taiiku* style shared some similarities, especially in terms of punching, kicking. Differences were found in the direction of punches, standing postures and simultaneity of upper-body defense in kicking attacks. (2) Lee and Ro practiced karate at the Shotokan dojo by Funakoshi while they were studying in Japan. They were influenced by Funakoshi' training method, *kata* (a series of fixed technique motion for self-practicing), and philosophy, which led them to found the first Karate school (the original version of Taekwondo school) in Korea around the time of Korea's liberation in 1945.

### Introduction

Gichin Funakoshi who had learned karate in Okinawa from Itosu Anko and Azato Anko not only spread modern karate to the Japanese main land but also is seemed to have influenced Jigoro Kano, the founder of Japanese judo and the judo dojo, Kodokan, as well as Won Kuk Lee and Byung Jick Ro, the founders of Korean Karate school. If that was the case, how were Jigoro Kano and taekwondo leaders influenced by Gichin Funakoshi?

### 1. Gichin Funakoshi's influence on Jigoro Kano

Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, was strongly interested in Atemi Waza (vital point attacking). Atemi Waza, to briefly explain, is to hit, strike or kick vulnerable spots

of human body. It was prohibited in judo competitions and sparring for its dangerousness while allowed only in *kata*. In 1930, Jigoro Kano designed a physical program for anyone to easily follow to improve the national physical strength and health based on judo techniques [Kano 1930: 1]. The program is *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku* (National Physical Education According to the Principle of Best Use of Energy). The *kata* of *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku* consist of *tandoku* movements and *sotai* movements. The *tandoku* movements are part of the Kodokan *kata* and include *Atemiwaza* such as stabbing, hitting, kicking, etc. The *Atemi* techniques of the *tandoku* movements are punching, kicking, *shuto*, and many others not used in judo often. Of them, there are some movements similar to the karate attacking techniques. In this situation, isn't it possible to think that Jigoro Kano was influenced by Gichin Funakoshi's karate techniques? Indeed, Jigoro Kano interacted with

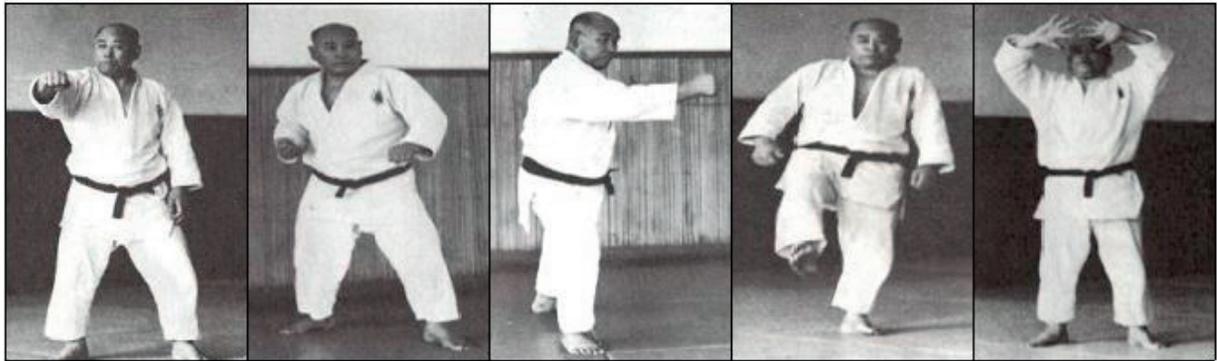


Figure 1. Tandoku movement [The newest kata of judo: 2007]

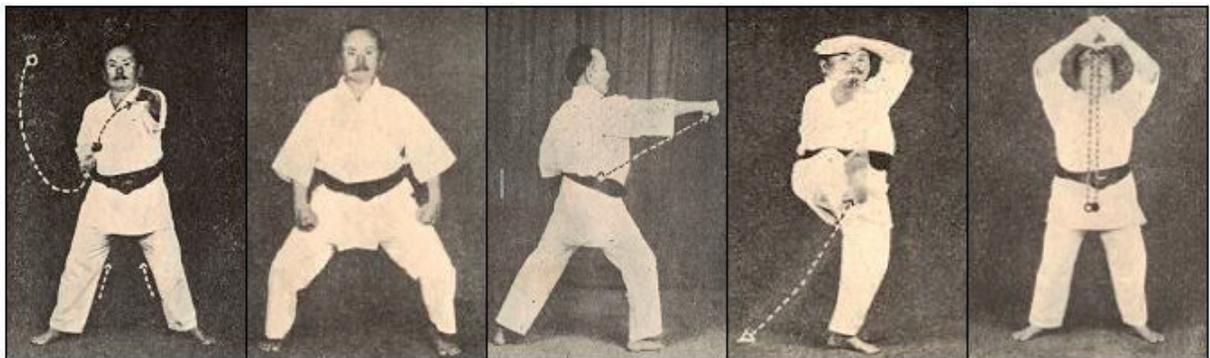


Figure 2. Karate movement [Karate kyohan: 1935]

Gichin Funakoshi and Gichin Funakoshi wrote in his book *Karate Ichiro* [1933] as follows:

"I strongly believe this to be during the end of the year of 1921. During this time I got a demonstration request from the first master of Kodokan, Jigoro Kano, ... and showed various types of kata and kumite at Kodokan (...). Later, I received another request from Jigoro Kano to teach the kata of Karate to the students of Kodokan" [Funakoshi 1933: 174]. It is noted from the quote above that Gichin Funakoshi showed a demonstration in the judo dojo, Kodokan at the request of Jigoro Kano and then he was also asked by Jigoro Kano to teach karate for the Kodokan trainees. In the book of *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku* of Jigoro Kano, there is no record that he was influenced by karate. But given the similarities in its tandoku movement techniques, it is deemed that Jigoro Kano was affected even a little by karate in building the *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku*.

The punching and kicking techniques in the tandoku movements of Jigoro Kano's physical education program show similarities with the Shotokan karate of Gichin Funakoshi. As for the punching, in particular, the punching arm turns to come round to the flank and such a way is similar to Gichin Funakoshi's karate punching. However, here, as the principle of action and reaction, when punching with one fist, behind fist crosses the other hand to make use of torso rotation, while judo does not have the rotation. Different rotation distinguishes karate punching from judo punching. In the 45-degree punching, the back of the hand does not

face upward while facing the outside of body to punch sideways. This is not in the Shotokan karate. The standing position for punching is to stand naturally in the tandoku movement whereas, in Gichin Funakoshi's karate, it is a similar position to the horseback riding posture with feet at larger than the shoulder width.

The kicking in judo, as shown in the pictures below, is done by using the upper part (balls) of the sole, presenting similarities with the karate kicking in its area of use and method. However, because karate is a martial art with deathblows while *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku* is designed for national health improvement so they are different on purposes for example in karate, the kicking technique has a accompanying upper body defense gesture, while in judo it does not.

## 2. Gichin Funakoshi's influence on Taekwondo leaders

It is known that Won Kuk Lee and Byung Jick Ro who first founded a Karate school in Korea in the 1940s, had trained karate during their study in Japan. Won Kuk Lee practiced karate in 1926 while studying at the Chuo University and Byung Jick Ro practiced karate at Gichin Funakoshi's Shotokan during his study at the Nihon University in 1936 and obtained the 4<sup>th</sup> grade recognition of karate [Korea's Monthly Joongang 1994]. Then, for what purpose did Won Kuk Lee and Byung Jik Ro practice karate under Gichin Funakoshi? Byung Jick Ro who

had been weak from his childhood, trained the Korean traditional martial art, taekkyeon and subak to improve his physical strength and developed interest in martial arts. In 1936 during his study in Japan, he started to learn karate at the Shotokan after being strongly attracted by Gichin Funakoshi's karate. Every vacation, he returned to Korea to teach it to his neighbors. And later on, on March 11, 1944, he opened a dojo to teach martial arts [The World Songmookwan Taekwondo Federation HP 2015.1.10].

During the 10-year karate training period by Gichin Funakoshi, Won Kuk Lee became deeply interested in bare-handed martial art of Okinawa, karate, which was developed as carrying a weapon had been prohibited in 16<sup>th</sup> century. Back then in 1940, Korea, just as Okinawa, was banned by Japan to carry a weapon and train martial arts. In this situation, Won Kuk Lee felt a desperate need for a martial art with bare hands and returned to Korea to establish a taekwondo dojo in 1944 to spread taekwondo [Won Kuk Lee 1968].

The two leaders seem to have been influenced as they were trained by Gichin Funakoshi in terms of not only the technical aspect but also the institutional aspect. Gichin Funakoshi's karate dojo is titled Shotokan from his pen name Shoto (松濤) [Funakoshi 1933]. The two taekwondo leader named their dojos as Songmookwan (松武館) and Chungdokwan (靑濤館), respectively, showing the same first and second letters in Shotokan (松濤館). Although there is no record that they were influenced by Gichin Funakoshi in naming their dojos, it seems they have been affected by the name of Shotokan where they had practiced before.

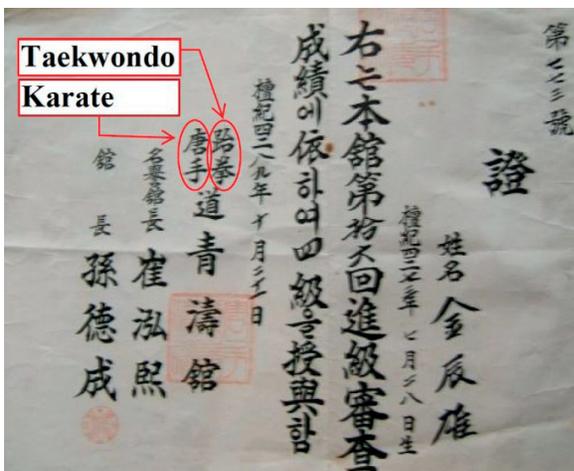
Dan certification and qualification criteria (shown in the figure below) could also prove the taekwondo leaders were influenced by Gichin Funakoshi. Before the introduction of taekwondo kata as it is now in 1967, training practices in the Taekwondo school were mostly in the form of karate. The Chungdokwan Dan certification in the 1950s used the words taekwondo and karate at the same time. Performance evaluation items

on evaluation paper also based on karate forms such as bassai, naifanchi and Kūshankū. According to Tokitsu [1993] Jigoro Kano recommended Gichin Funakoshi to apply the Dan system. Given that the same Dan system was applied to Gichin Funakoshi's karate as the judo, it is deemed to have been affected by Jigoro Kano then, in turn, affect the taekwondo leaders later on [Tokitsu 1993; Min Ho Kim 2000].

From such an example, it is noted that Won Kuk Lee was influenced by the Budo philosophy of Gichin Funakoshi in particular. His Chungdokwan emphasized form-oriented training when other dojos (Songmookwan, Jidokwan, Changmookwan, Mooduckkwan) focused on sparring practices in training. Also in his book *Taekwondo kyobum* [1968], Lee wrote a sentence 'there is no first strike in taekwondo' which means not to fight with or hurt others voluntarily. Gichin Funakoshi's book *Ryukyu Kenpo* [1922] also includes the sentence 'there is no first strike in karate'. In this sense, Won Kuk Lee is thought to be influenced by Gichin Funakoshi's Budo principle as well as the technical and institutional influence during practicing Gichin Funakoshi karate.

**Results**

1. The Shotokan karate movements of Gichin Funakoshi were found to have similarities and differences with the tandoku movements of *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku*. The similarities include the use of the turning force in punching and use the balls of feet in kicking. The differences were the use of the torso turning force in punching with the opposite fist as the initially punching fist crosses the other hand, the feet width



Rank	Kate(form)	Gyeorugi (sparring)	Board breaking	Time in training	
9 <sup>th</sup> kyu	Gicho(basics)1	None	None	1 month	
8 <sup>th</sup> kyu	Gicho(basics)2	Pre-arranged Gyeorugi	〃	1 month	
7 <sup>th</sup> kyu	Gicho(basics)3	〃	〃	2 month	
6 <sup>th</sup> kyu	Heian 1dan	K R A T E  F O R M	〃	2 month	
5 <sup>th</sup> kyu	Heian 2dan		〃	2 month	
4 <sup>th</sup> kyu	Heian 3dan		〃	3 month	
3 <sup>rd</sup> kyu	Heian 4dan		Freedom Gyeorugi	〃	3 month
2 <sup>nd</sup> kyu	Heian 5dan		〃	〃	3 month
1 <sup>st</sup> kyu	Heian 5dan, Bassai	〃	〃	3 month	
Rank	Kate(form)	Gyeorugi (sparring)	Board breaking	Time in training	
1 <sup>st</sup> dan	Heian 5dan	Freedom Gyeorugi	10pieces of tile	4month	
2 <sup>nd</sup> dan	Naifanchi, Shaolinchangquan	〃	11pieces of tile	1 year	
3 <sup>rd</sup> dan	Naifanchi	〃	12pieces of tile	3 year	
4 <sup>th</sup> dan	Kūshankū	〃	13pieces of tile	5 year	

in the standing position for punching and kicking attacks where the karate attacks and defenses simultaneously whereas the *tandoku* movements kicks only.

2. Lee and Ro practiced karate at Funakoshi's Shotokan while they were studying in Japan. They were influenced by Funakoshi's training method and philosophy, which led them to founding the first taekwondo gym in Korea around the time of Korea's liberation in 1945.

## Discussion

1. Jigoro Kano, in his *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku*, states as follows:
  - An ideal physical sport is to build balanced physical development without a risk of injury nor limitations of time, space and number of people.
  - *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku* was developed since there has been no physical program for people to easily follow to improve their health and physical strength.
  - By following *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku*, people can learn the idea of using their energy in the right way in the psychological sense and rational methods of using their bodies easily in the physical sense to strengthen their physical strength while acquiring defensive skills [Kano 1930: 7].

As shown above, Jigoro Kano appeared to study diverse other martial arts beyond his own area of judo for their benefits in designing *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku* for enhanced national health and physical strength.

2. Gichin Funakoshi had direct interaction with not only the two taekwondo leaders but Korea as well. Korea's Dong-A Daily News dated July 11, 1937, reported that Gichin Funakoshi showed a karate demonstration in the Bumingwan, the then performance dojo, for the public with 11 karate trainees of Japan's Takushoku University. The invited demonstration introduced karate to the country 7 years before the year 1944 when Gichin Funakoshi's two karate students established their Taekwondo schools in Korea. In 1944 before liberalization, the taekwondo leaders (Lee and Ro) That have been mentioned returned to Korea and taught martial arts by centering on the karate forms. Since karate was already not unfamiliar in the country thanks to karate performance demonstrations by Gichin Funakoshi, Gogen Yamaguchi, etc. By that time karate became acceptable to ordinary people. From 1955, the term taekwondo began to be used. In 1967 new *kata* was organized. Then match skills were developed and match rules were renewed. Accordingly, taekwondo was newly modernized differently from before. However, it seems obvious that the initial *kata* of taekwondo implies the influence of

Gichin Funakoshi's karate in terms of techniques, systems and philosophical principles.

## Conclusions

This study looked at the effects of Gichin Funakoshi's karate on the judo founder, Jigoro Kano, and Korean taekwondo leaders.

1. Gichin Funakoshi's karate style has some similarities with the *tandoku* movements of *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku*, in such as punching, kicking and hand techniques, which are mostly under the influence of Gichin Funakoshi's karate movements.
2. Korean taekwondo leaders, Lee and Ro learned Gichin Funakoshi's karate at the Shotokan Dojo during their study in Japan. And this karate influenced their teaching of taekwondo in Korea later on. Similarities with Gichin Funakoshi's karate are found in the title of their taekwondo dojos, techniques, Dan system and Budo philosophy.

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## Wpływ karateki Gichin Funakoshi na Jigoro Kano oraz liderów *taekwondo*

**Słowa kluczowe:** *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku*, Won Kuk Lee, Byung Jick Ro

### Abstrakt

Cel. Celem niniejszej pracy jest zbadanie bezpośredniego wpływu karateki Gichin Funakoshi, który uczył się karate na Okinawie od Itosu Anko i Azato Anko i nie tylko spopularyzował współczesne karate w Japonii, ale także wywarł wpływ na Jigoro Kano, twórcę judo, a także na założycieli sportu narodowego Korei, taekwondo, zwłaszcza Won Kuk Lee i Byung Jick Ro. Kano założył *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku* (Państwowe Wychowanie Fizyczne Zgodnie z Zasadą Najlepszego Wykorzystania Energii) w roku 1924, ale wydaje się, że jego ruch był pod dużym wpływem karate. Badanie zawiera dwa pytania: po pierwsze, w jaki sposób Gichin Funakoshi wpłynął na Jigoro Kano. A po drugie, jaki wpływ miał Gichin Funakoshi na liderów taekwondo.

Metoda. Niniejsza praca jest badaniem historycznym w oparciu o odpowiednie analizy danych. W celu odpowiedzi na 1 pytanie porównywano pojedyncze ruchy w stylu Shotokan karate-do z *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku*. W pytaniu 2, w celu zbadania motywacji, celów i przekonań Funakoshiego i wczesnych koreańskich wiodących praktyków taekwondo w związku z ich praktyką sztuk walki przeanalizowano literaturę tematu i artykuły z gazet dotyczące karate i taekwondo z Korei oraz Japonii.

Wyniki. W wyniku tego badania wykazano, iż: (1) styl karate Funakoshi i styl reprezentowany przez Kano *Seiryoku zen'yō Kokumin Taiiku* mają pewne podobieństwa, szczególnie w zakresie uderzeń i kopnięć. Stwierdzono różnice jeśli chodzi o kierunek ciosów, postawę stojącą i jednoczesność obrony górnej części ciała w atakach z użyciem kopnięć. (2) Lee i Ro ćwiczyli karate Shotokan dojo według metody Funakoshiego podczas swoich studiów w Japonii. Byli pod wpływem metody szkolenia Funakoshiego, kata (seria stałej techniki ruchu do samodzielnych ćwiczenia) i filozofii, które doprowadziły ich do założenia pierwszej szkoły karate (oryginalna wersja szkoły Taekwondo) w Korei w czasach wyzwolenia tego kraju w 1945 roku.