



KAZOKU

Eggs

By Jerry Figgiani

When it comes to the martial arts, we all have our own styles that we have been taught. Whether it be Shorin Ryu, Shotokan, Goju Ryu, etc., we all claim our style is better than the next...or is it? Our techniques are more devastating than the other styles...really? I have to admit, though, I really do favor my style of karate which is Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu over any other style. You might ask why. It is because it is what I feel comfortable doing for my body type. I feel it is important for anyone studying the martial arts to feel comfortable doing the movements of their art. If a practitioner doesn't feel comfortable within their own style, then in a realistic situation that style could work against them. However, I will not claim that one style is better than any other. It is all how you look at the style of martial arts that you are studying.

Recently, I attended a seminar in Atlanta, Georgia, hosted by Sensei Dan Smith. The seminar featured three of the top instructors from Okinawa. They were Morio Higaonna (Goju Ryu), Seisho Itokazu (Uechi Ryu), and the president of the Okinawan Rengokai, Zempo Shimabukuro (Seibukan Shorin Ryu). I was very excited to participate in the Shorin Ryu seminar given by Shimabukuro Sensei. Here was my chance to compare my style of Shorin Ryu (Matsubayashi). It was very clear from the beginning of his seminar that the kihon waza (basic techniques) of Seibukan Shorin Ryu were very different from those of Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu. Was it better?...no. Is my style better?...no. What I think is important that we realize that every style has something to offer. How we approach looking at other styles can actually enhance our own practice.

One way of enhancing our own practice would be to look deeper into one's kata. Kata contains many different principles which relate to all styles of martial art--from the stances, angles, directions, leverage, interpretations and so on. The great thing when training with someone from a different style is that they may have a totally different approach with



getting to the same outcome. Maybe something they are doing in their approach in kihon waza or kata opens your eyes as to what you are doing in yours. When we give names to styles in the combative arts or relate technique to our own style, we are actually dividing. This can also limit us in the quest for more knowledge. It could be said the same for instructors. Your mind opens up to new ideas and methods of communication when you look beyond your own style. I am not saying change your style; just don't be blind. Look at other styles in hopes to better understand your own.

A good friend of mine, Sensei Charles Barrett, came to me to learn Shorin Ryu. He has multiple black belts and over 40 years of training in the martial arts. During one particular class, I was going over stances and the differences from the way he was taught as to how I teach it. He said to me, "No problem; it's just eggs." I asked him what he meant, and he said it's all the same in one way or another... just like eggs. You can have eggs anyway you want—sunny side, scrambled, over easy, but in the end, it is just eggs.

How do you like yours? 

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