

Legitimacy



Karate

These thoughts of mine flow on from an earlier article on the topic of “**The Hypocrisy of Rank Recognition**”.

I nearly made these points in my earlier article but I did not want to offend those karate-ka who are members of large style based organizations. I do not intend any offence to any individual or group in this article I am just stating the obvious from my perspective.

I don't think the great majority of ordinary karate-ka of every grade within the various style bases organizations see the karate world as it really is. That is not their fault as all they have is the propaganda and the insular tunnel vision of the karate world as set out by their particular organization.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with being a member of a large style based group. It is only when you as a member of such a group truly believe that your group is “the one true church” from a karate perspective, that all the problems arise.

As I said in my earlier article any organization only has power over you because you give that organization power by joining that organization or by remaining a member of it.

People misguidedly believe what these groups tell them, e.g.:

- Our organization is the only one that traces it's origins back to the founder and therefore we are the one and only true karate style.
- Unless you are one of our members and do your gradings with us then you will not be recognized anywhere and your gradings will not be recognized.
- Our gradings are recognized world wide. So we must be the best. **What Rot.** It is this myth in particular that sucks in the unknowing the most, because everyone likes to have their achievements recognized.
- Many of these groups say that their links are directly back to Japan some of these organizations have their headquarters in Japan. So they say that proves we are truly authentic and if you are not one of our members then you are not practicing authentic karate.
- You cannot question us and our legitimacy. We are direct descendants or followers of so and so.

The points I make above gain these organizations two things:

1. POWER over the individual.
2. Money.

Remember all the old Masters including Funakoshi Sensei had numerous teachers. There was no “one true church” then, just as there is none from a karate perspective now. You only have to look at the huge political upheavals within a number of these organizations in recent history to see that is the case.

While Funakoshi never wanted different karate styles, they existed in his time. The great debate over which organization is truly the successor of Funakoshi Sensei has been hijacked by various groups over the years and each organization that makes that claim, writes its history from its own perspective.

You only have to look at the way one of today's world wide associations boycotted Funakoshi Sensei's funeral but still claim to be Funakoshi's anointed successors to see how history is rewritten.

Before his death Funakoshi Gichin had virtually nothing to do with that association and in fact held a position at his son's Shotokai dojo. But since the death of Egami Sensei I believe even they have fragmented.

Needless to say all the various Shotokan organizations that make that claim "We are the true successors of Funakoshi Sensei" have splintered into various factions that support different lines of thought.

From my perspective I think the important thing is that Funakoshi Sensei's vision and work of spreading Karate-Do continues through various organizations both large and small. It is a great pity that the egocentric tend to promote themselves and not Karate-Do and that can happen in both large and small organizations.

My recommendation to anyone wanting to take up karate is to look at the teacher and not any particular association or independent school.

If the teacher is a person you can relate to (and that is very important) and displays competence and skill and by judging the ability of his/her students you believe that person can teach those skills then it matters not if that teacher is an independent karate-ka or a member of one of the large associations.

On the other hand if having one particular group's recognition is important to you irrespective of the quality of the teacher then by all means join that association.

It is interesting how most/all these large associations that do not recognize the grades of anyone else in the karate world invite/allow/encourage karate-ka from other groups to attend seminars and training sessions wearing their grades (which of course they do not recognize). I think the fee charged to attend the seminar suddenly gives you absolution for not being a member of the "real/authentic" karate style for the duration of the seminar. I can see no other explanation why they would let you attend otherwise.

Remember any organization only has power over you because you give that organization power by joining that organization or by remaining a member of it. It is your choice to join any particular style association or not. It is your choice to stay as a member of that association or to leave that style association.

To quote Bushi Matsumura:

"To all those whose progress remains hampered by ego-related distractions let humility, the cornerstone upon which karate rests, serve to remind one to place virtue before vice, values before vanity and principles before personalities"

So do not delude yourself that those of us who remain outside any particular style association are less karate-ka than those who choose to join such an association or delude yourself that our grades are of no consequence. That is only ego and self importance from one insular convoluted point of view speaking.

The reality is of course, those of us outside associations don't care one way or the other what others think in that regard. We are too busy getting on with our personal pursuit of Karate-Do to trouble ourselves with such trifles.

Remember the large associations do not recognize each other any way. They are in the main much too interested in their own self importance.

In the end you must decide what is best for you.

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