

## ATEMI-WAZA

### Striking Techniques

Think of each training bout as a real fight  
Then the real fight becomes like a training bout.

#### Doka

The third major branch of original judo/jujitsu is Ate-mi-waza which literally means 'striking the body techniques.' The other two are Nage-waza and Katame-waza. It is also known as Ate-waza meaning 'striking techniques'. This branch has been in judo right from the start but not in any significant way since it was never incorporated into randori.

Ate-mi, Ate-waza or Ate-mi-waza techniques can be found in such Kata as Seiryokuzenyo Kokumin Taiiku (no kata), Kime no Kata, Nage no Kata, Ju no kata and in Goshinjitsu etc. There are not that many applications of Ate-waza in judo and where they exist they are usually a reflection of the original Shobu-ho (combat) objective of Judo/jujitsu.

The art of defeating an opponent by striking his vital nerve spots (*kyusho*) and the reviving methods known as *Katsu* or *Kappo* were developed initially in ancient China and were influenced by ancient Chinese medicine. Ate-mi is also referred to as *Satsu* (killing) as opposed to *Katsu* (reviving). Many of the 657 acupuncture and moxibustion spots correspond to the *kyusho* of *ate-mi-waza*. The names, number and functional interpretation of the *kyusho* differ among the various schools of jujitsu of which few gave explanatory diagrams. The *kyusho* were mostly handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. They were often among the 'secrets' of the ryu.

As for the location of the vital spots they are situated mostly between bones, near joints, in areas where there are no bones, where muscles attach to the bones or in areas where a muscle crosses over another muscle. They are often in localities over an underlying nerve fibre, large artery or vein, nerve plexus, nerve ganglion or bifurcation of an artery that is to say in regions which are structurally weak thereby facilitating transmission of the blow to the nerves, blood vessels or viscera.

A comparatively late classification by the Japanese jujitsu schools was into 'instant death' (*sokushi*) and 'instant fall' (*sokuto*) *kyusho*. The spots of 'instant death' are anatomically closely related to the viscera or the brain and are mostly located along the median line of the body (head, face, neck and trunk). The instant fall vital spots are mostly found in the extremities where the motor nerves run close to the surface and are usually the same on each side of the body. A strong impact on the former could lead to death and temporary damage to the underlying nerves on the latter. There is one *ate-waza* known as *ichiji nemuri mikka koroshi* meaning 'temporary sleep – third day death'. Which is perhaps the so-called 'delayed death touch'.

The average number of vital spots per Japanese jujitsu school is about forty. Spots found in the same position on the left and right side of the body are counted as one.

Of these 21 are instant death (sokushi) and 19 are instant fall (sokuto). Jigoro Kano however only lists twelve vital spots. Boxing has only about nine spots so perhaps judo's small number is not significant. According to old jujitsu documents, apart from fatal injuries such as cranial bleeding or damage to the chief internal organs, the effect of atemi-waza was mostly loss of consciousness, concussion and shock (53%); numbness, sprain, dislocation, broken bones (25%); nosebleeds, laceration (20%); partial or full loss of sight or hearing etc(2%). One study of atemi concluded that blows to the solar plexus generated the most extreme physiological and psychological reactions.

The energy of atemi (E) is expressed in the equation:-  $E = \text{Mass} \times \text{velocity}^2$ . In other words the faster it is the more effect it has. This power is greatest when striking at 90 degrees to the target or perpendicularly down and the penetrating effect of atemi is greater when accompanied by a rotating or screwing action of the fist.

When the target is soft or full of liquid (urine, blood, water, food) there is a greater tendency for it (the organ etc) to rupture and bleed when struck.

Some kyusho are more difficult to hit than others and many are quite small which would require a hard pointed part of attackers body (hardened knuckles etc) to strike with. In jujitsu, atemi is used before, during and after strangles, throws and locks. Apart from causing pain, loss of consciousness or death the other main uses of atemi are to unbalance or distract the opponent before applying throws or locks.

The kyusho are not always struck. A common jujitsu technique is known as *oshi-itame* meaning push-pain. For example one part of pectoral muscle just above the nipple hurts a lot when pressed by a pointed knuckle and the forearm can be grasped in such a way that a nerve is pinched by the attacker's hand. Also the hollow behind the ear can be pressed to cause pain.

### Judo and atemi

Judo was first formed from two styles of jujitsu – namely the Kito style and the Tenjinshinyo style. The Kito style specialized in throwing and the Tenjinshinyo style specialised in Atemi of which it listed 30 vital spots. However atemi would not have been that appropriate for early jujitsu when armour was worn in battle. The atemi of judo can be seen mostly in the Kata particularly in the Seiryokuzenyo Kokumin Taiiku (kata) which first emerged in 1927. This comes in two parts consisting of 28 solo moves (*tandoku*) and ten partnered moves (*sotai*). The Sotai section is further divided into five kneeling moves and five standing ones and contains significantly reduced atemi content such as defences against a sword and some wrist releases (*tehodoki*). There are only a handful of other atemi moves in the rest of the Kodokan kata. One reason for this is that self-defence situations can be dealt with locks, strangles or throws as well as strikes.

In 1927 Kano said in a lecture to his students that he was researching a method of free-fighting which included atemi. He thought that it was possible to come up with something but that it was not easy. Nothing emerged however. Towards the end of the Pacific war when the Butokukai took control of the martial arts the judo people (& others) were instructed to use atemi-waza and other martial arts in their randori but

the end of the war was not far off and nothing further seems to have developed from this military edict.

The Seiryokuzenyo Kokumin Taiiku solo sequence consists entirely of striking techniques (apart from the opening Kagami-migaki move) but there is a bit of a mystery here. Firstly the translation of the name suggests that it is a form of physical training for the nation ('kokumin taiiku') based on (the judo principle of) maximum efficiency minimum effort (or best use of mind and body) but judo already had randori which is a very effective form of physical training. Secondly the atemi in this kata seems quite immature compared with karate kata. For example there is almost no use of various stances (apart from *shizentai*) and the hands and arms are not placed in any kind of defensive positions or used much for blocks and parries. There appears to be no use of the hips in punching and many of the moves seem far fetched. For example there are punches down to the ground with both arms and in a squatting position and double punches above the head from a standing position.

It is a fairly static linear kata (front~back~left~right~oblique) containing a number of moves which repeat. However Kano did state that this kata could be repeated several times with different degrees of vigour to create a physical workout. From about the time of its conception in 1927 to his death in 1938 Kano seems to have spent a lot of time touring Japan and its empire demonstrating and teaching this new kata. Possibly he came under pressure from the Japanese militarists to create something more useful for combat.

Kano does not especially clarify the role of atemi in his judo system except that Kano probably regarded it as damaging and dangerous and contrary to his physical education principles. It would however appear to subscribe to the karate principle of One strike-one kill and not to the boxing one of a blitzkrieg of punches. The mention and illustration of kyusho in his judo book Judo Kyohon (1931) would lend support to this view.

However in his Judo Kyohon Kano goes a bit further than the Seiryokuzenyo Kokumintaiiku (no kata). In this book he lists 22 atemi strikes (see below) and states that the attacker should concentrate his power on the part of his body that makes contact such as his fist or feet. He also recommends stepping closer to the opponent as he strikes in order to increase the power.

#### The Atemi-waza techniques in Judo Kyohon.

##### KICKS

(a) Heel strikes	Kakato Ate
Rear strike	Ushiro-geri
Side kick	Yoko-geri
(b) Ball of the foot strikes	(Sekito-ate)
Naname-geri	Diagonal front kick
Mae-geri	Front kick
Ke-age	Rising kick

Taka-geri	High kick
Yoko-geri	Side kick
(c) Knee strikes	Hizagashira ate
Mae-ate	Front strike
<u>PUNCHES &amp; THRUSTS</u>	
(d) Finger strikes	Yubisaki-ate
Ryogan tsuki	Double eye poke
Suri-age	Face slide
(e) Knuckle & clenched fist blows	Kobushi-ate
Naname-ate	Diagonal punch
Yoko-ate	Side punch
Ue-ate	Upper punch
Tsuki-age	Uppercut
Shita-zuki	Low punch
Ushiro-zuki	Rear punch
Ushirozumi-zuki	Rear corner punch
Tsukkake/tsukikake	Straight punch
Yoko-uchi	Side strike
Ushiro-uchi	Rear strike
Uchi-oroshi	Strike down to head
(f) Hand-sword strikes	Tegatana-ate
Kiri-oroshi	Cut down
Naname-uchi	Diagonal cut
(g) Hiji-ate	Elbow strikes
Ushiro-ate	Rear strike
Shita-hiji-ate	Lower elbow strike

This is quite an expanded list of Atemi-waza. A number of them are basically the same blow but are done in different positions. Many of them can be found in the various Kodokan kata but some cannot. For example the last strike above can be done when the opponent is trapped in kuzure-kesa-gatame or ushiro kesagatame. This can be seen in cage-fighting and is very effective.

The Kyusho of the Kodokan are:-

Uto or Miken	Between the eyes
Jinchu	Just below the nose
Kasumi	Temple
Suigetsu or Mizu-ochi	Solar plexus
Denko	Right lowest floating rib

Getsuei	Left lowest floating rib
Myojo	1-inch below the belly button
Tsurigane	Testicles
Tendo	Top of the head
Kachikake	Chin
Dokko	Mastoid
Shita-kansetsu	Knee

Sumo which is the ancient ancestor of judo does not allow blows with the fist or direct kicks but does allow heavy slaps (harite) to the face and head and forearm chops to the back of the neck and under the chin. The slaps are much used and occasionally stun the rikishi. One famous 'slapper' by the name of Takatoriki said that he often aimed to make his slap like an uppercut and knock the opponent out. Judo rules do not specifically ban harite slapping or slap-downs (hataki).

It would seem that with no specific ban to the contrary an instructor is free to work on atemi-waza in kata style (some experience of karate training would help) but apart from using slapping (harite) I cannot see how atemi could be incorporated into randori. One benefit of incorporating harite into randori is that it would accustom judoka to attacks to the face and head.

For more on Judo's atemi waza refer to the Kodokan Judo Kagaku Kenkyukai (6 vols) & Judo Koza (3 vols).

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