

3 WAYS TO PRACTICE FORMS

By Grandmaster Kim Soo, 10th. Dan & Founder, Chayon-Ryu Martial Arts
Written by Sabom & Mark Newkirk



Forms can be performed three different ways, each with its own purpose. We should endeavor to study our forms intensely, questioning ourselves regarding techniques in the forms and repeating them over and over again. Knowing the three ways to practice forms is one step in that direction.

The first way is "regular". The emphasis is on the basic principles, especially proper breathing, body shifting, and balanced movement. Doing forms this way helps you physically, mentally, and spiritually. Think of forms as moving meditation. Most people should practice forms this way the majority of the time. Set up your imaginary enemies and defeat them all, kihop with sincerity and strong spirit when doing your forms in the dojang. This type of form training will help defeat your inside enemies (stress, self doubt, etc.) as well a outside enemies and also develop competitiveness.

The second way is called "combat". People only trained in the combat way in the old days because of the seriousness of war time and the lack of understanding the spiritual nature of the martial arts at the time. This was also because of the teaching style at the time of not asking questions and only learning from what you saw demonstrated in class. The emphasis is on moving as fast as you can, a kill or be killed situation, showing lots of spirit including kihops. You're not consciously thinking of the basic principles. Strong technique is the emphasis. It is good to practice, at times, because of the competitive nature of the world. Set up your imaginary enemies and defeat them in this situation also. Forms should not be done this way frequently and not at all if you are older, sick, or injured. It can lead to physical problems that may not manifest themselves right away such as problems with the back, ulcers, joints, etc. People who only practice this way have trouble adjusting to the real world.

The third and final way is "slow" like tai chi. Still a strong don jon as like in the other two, but slow strong movements with no stress to the joints. This is so you can practice even when you get older or when you are sick or unhealthy for some reason. There are no kihops when performing this way. Most healthy individuals should do forms this way only on occasion. Performing forms this way all the time tend to make people passive. For example doing movements the tai chi way on the battlefield will result in death. It doesn't build your spirit as well as the other two ways of doing forms. Due to the competitive nature of our world, this way of doing forms is a good stress reliever but does not develop competitiveness.

Most schools and martial art systems do not emphasize forms anymore, especially traditional forms. A premium is placed on sports and sparring. It is important for chayon-ryu students to realize the importance of traditional forms and continue to practice and preserve them for future generations. This includes knowing the different ways to perform them. No matter how old or what situation you are in you can always train. This also teaches us to act according to the situation in real life outside of the dojang.

Oct. 30. '05