

## CHAYON-RYU'S 'NATURAL MOTION' PHILOSOPHY

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You spend every class period practicing movements that are rhythmical, smooth, flowing, and in harmony with the design of the human body. You know that *Chayon* means, 'Natural Way.' I now want to explain further the significance of *natural motions* by contrasting this philosophy with two sets of thought – first, the legacy of some Kung Fu styles, the *animal* styles, and second, the circumstances which caused Okinawa/Japanese/Korean styles to devolve into, herky-jerky movements.

Some Kung Fu styles are based upon the notion that a human can fight better by using techniques and tactics learned from a particular animal. It's easy to find characteristics in different animals to admire - the suppleness, quick reflexes, teeth & claws of a cat, the deftness and precise motions of a crane, the agility and free-form unpredictability of the monkey. But, to copy their motions is to miss the real lesson to be learned from the animals: instinct!

Monkeys don't go to a monkey school to learn how to move like good monkeys, nor do cats or cranes go to cat school/crane school. They move in a manner which is ideal for their bodies because they have no overriding intellect which bumbles around, distracting their natural inclinations and generally getting in the way. Their lack of intellect is a two edged sword, of course: they can move with a natural grace and instinct which humans must gradually and painstakingly re-introduce to their bodies, but animals cannot harness their brains to construct a written language, or make clothes and cook food. This lack of intellect frees monkeys to move in a way ideal *for monkeys*, cranes to move in a way ideal *for cranes*, and cats to move in a way ideal *for cats*. This is the lesson to learn from animals: move in a way that is ideal for humans. Since we cannot disconnect our intellect, nor undo years of our lives, we have to painstakingly relearn or discover what natural motion is for a human body.

The other type of unnatural motions can be found in Karate and Taekwon-Do. Here you find stiff, jerky motions and formalized techniques that fly in the face of common sense. The tradition of these stiff techniques has two causes.

First, the traditional Oriental teaching method was limited: the teacher demonstrated a technique (once) and the students then repeated it to the best of their individual understanding. There was little or no correction from the teacher, and questions from the students back to the teacher were discouraged. This means a room of twenty students often began to practice twenty different versions of the original technique. Those students who didn't completely understand how the teacher executed that technique would later teach their imperfect version on to their own pupils.

Second, martial arts training was a secret activity for much of its history. Martial Arts training would empower you as a fighter as much by acquisition of 'secret' techniques as by diligent repetition of basic, core techniques – take the magic pill and become invincible! This perception stifled the critical analysis by students of the value of the techniques they were learning (ones steadily corrupted by the flaws in teaching method discussed above).

So far, we've looked at the design of specific techniques; now, I'd like to examine the underlying purpose of the training process itself. Here, past training methods were designed for the needs of the past: to fortify one's body for combat as a soldier – one's own life and health didn't matter. Dying gloriously in service of one's lord was highly regarded. In modern times, our techniques need to change to reflect the changing purpose of training. Now, there is no need to severely condition one's body, and strain one's joints in preparation for combat. Training serves to enhance our life and our life's goals, not hasten our demise. It is no longer an end in itself, but a foundation for the real business of one's life - be it business, homemaking, education, whatever. This is *sang hwal mu do* - Lifestyle Martial Arts. Redirecting martial arts training for constructive purposes instead of destructive ones.