

On Footwork, Knees and Ankles

By Master Kawanabe

I would like to suggest your center of gravity should be lower, as if it is on the flat of your feet. "Sitsuku" which means to walk with knees on the floor, will do you good to train your knee and ankle movement, although this kind of training may be pretty hard to practice on the hard floor. You can make it easier with a knee protector. They have a secret (Kuden in Japanese), "Ku" means mouth and "Den" means convey, so therefore it means conveying a secret from mouth to mouth. Also many people know Oizuki is made by heelwork. I think you have already heard of this saying.

But actually I think many people can't do this the right way. Quite recently I found this can be done when you feel energy coming up from the flat of your foot and it transmits all the way to the fist by using natural ankle work just like when you walk.

This is quite a total, integrated body operation and can be done only in quite a relaxed condition. I hope you can understand this feeling and endeavor to make it before long. In Japanese they say "Gi o mite sezaruru wa yuu naki nari". "Gi" means the right thing; "mite" is past tense of "miru" or to look; and yuu means brave. Sezaruru means to act nothing, and yuu naki means not brave. In short this proverb means the spirit of playing a good Samaritan, as if you are a modern-day robin hood, who offers to the hands of the poor, weak and troubled persons in need whenever you see them.

I would like to say this noble and sacred spirit is a core and essential part of Budo men and I believe with this spirit first, the techniques you polish up become worthy. Here I would like to mention Inoue Sensei's method of breathing in thrashing a punch. Inoue Sensei exhaled with his mouth and another sword man, Kunii Sensei, with his left and right nostrils. I think you can do it in either way as you feel comfortable. After practice of the "Hachiriki" foot work, the method of walking becomes very important, although this foot work is a very difficult one. But after the right practice of Hachiriki, you must feel the lower part of your body, ankles, knees, waist and the muscles become relaxed and feel much more comfortable so you can move more naturally. "Itsu ku" means sticky" dead feet. I feel there may be something in common if you can imagine a person walking on a rope. You put weight on one side of your foot but not completely so it can be movable and can retain power and stability. This is really the ready stance you have to hold especially right before you shoot, punch or kick. I really hope you will study this movable, soft and light foot work, as this is the foundation to shoot a missile.