

ELEVATED ELEMENTALS

Martial Basics as Advanced Budo

Tony Annesi



Sample Chapter



Details effect execution. Not every detail is essential and there may be many versions of details that pass muster equally well, but there are many, many more that do not. The secret of the fundament of budo training is to get the details of the basics as near perfect as possible. Naturally, relevant circumstances will change during modification or actual execution; but training in the dojo (when one has the luxury of time and a non-violent partner) is the opportunity to get the details right. How do you know they are right for your school, style, or art? Test them.

3. The Structure of a Foundation: BASICS AS A FRAMEWORK (STRUCTURE: TSUKURIKATA/KATACHI/KATA)

Structure is, in brief, the way things are put together or, by implication, how well things are put together. There is a depth to the study of structure most martial artists do not realize. In fact, the way a basic technique is built is only the beginning.

THREE VIEWS OF STRUCTURE

There are at least three ways we can look at the concept of “structure” in martial arts basics. One is *tsukurikata* or the fabricated form of a movement. To delineate it from the other ways, we’ll call it “Construction.” In Construction, we look at how the movement is built by noting both the static shapes and the directions of motion. We are perceiving the Construction as we would a simple machine with moving parts. Of course, sometimes the mechanics and physics are not as simple as they first appear.

“Construction” can be the most basic way to look at structure or it can be a much more advanced way. Initially, while learning how to perform a movement, we need the parts explained to us. “Your arm goes here and then here and it finishes here.” This is Construction in its initial, “put-it-together” phase.

Later, after we have mastered the sequence, the testing of stability, power, or other aspects of effectiveness become the emphases of our attention. This is Con-



struction in a more advanced “does-it-work-when-put-together-this-way” phase. In other words, Construction, how the basic technique is built, helps us learn movements, test them (*shime*), as well as discover application (*oyo*). A Construction that tests positively is said to have a good or strong Structure. Structure as Construction may be as simple as learning how to do a movement or as advanced as making the movement work when tested. Subtle adjustments to improve a tested movement create the concepts of “Correctness”, the second version of Structure.

The “Correctness” version of Structure is “proper form” (*tadashi katachii*). It is the “correct” basic method as used in one school or style — the root method from which other methods are adapted. Correctness helps a beginner learn how to make his body conform to a certain coordination of muscles. This Correctness produces a usable and often artistic Construction. Without Correctness, no style exists; every student would be doing movements any way he desired. There would be no methodology to pass on to another generation. We use Correctness as a starting place.

Correctness is also employed in the choreographed movements known as *kata* or “form”. This is the third way to look at Structure. We’ll call this “Choreography”. Choreography gives us more complicated Constructions thus allowing us to see connections as well as individual constructs.

Choreography combines basics into a series of Constructions that is itself a new Construction. Let’s go over this again for clarity.

We have Construction (the way basics are built), Correctness (the base form to which variations refer), and Choreography (the various combinations of Correct Constructions, each of which can form a whole). Each can take a more basic or a more advanced appearance.

types of structure chart

TYPES OF STRUCTURE >>>	Construction	Correctness	Choreography
<i>basic</i> >>>	how the movement is put together	pre-determined traditional form	sequences or combinations
<i>advanced</i> >>>	how to make the movement stable	subtly adjusted form to pass tests (so as to work vs. different attackers)	sets or series of sequences

Let’s illustrate each of the three types of structure.

If you review the illustrated liturgy of both Karate and Aiki basics from the previous chapter, you will be able to follow the Construction of each technique. For example, a down block is constructed by having, let’s say, a right forearm rise toward the left ear with the wrist twisting the palm inward. Then the bent arm descends while the forearm untwists to a palm-downward position. Construction is

what makes a down block recognizable as a down block. Other methods may vary somewhat from the above description, but not so much as to offend our sense of what comprises the concept of “down block”.

To take this down block example and apply Correctness to it, we must detail the precise angle of ascent, the timing of the upward forearm rotation, the angle of descent, the timing of the downward forearm rotation, the accompanying rotation of the hips, the stabilization of the legs, the posture of the back, etc. Correctness is what makes one down block a Shotokan “lower level sweep,” another a Goju “dropping block,” and a third an Isshin lower block.

Construction and Correctness:

57. Shotokan lower level sweep



58. Goju dropping block





59. Isshin lower block



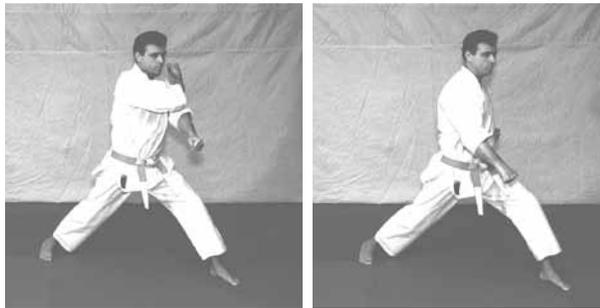
Choreography might be as simple as doing two down blocks in succession, one with the left hand, one with the right; or it may be a uncomplicated combination like down block/reverse punch, or a combination found in a traditional kata like the rooted stance down block/upper block of Shotokan's Sochin kata.

Choreography can also be as complicated as the study of basics transmuted to specific waza, combined to specific kata, and then united to form a specific kata series. Although not all possible combinations or variations are found in traditional kata, enough exist therein to give us a working repertoire as well as plenty of examples that we can vary on our own if an application requires.

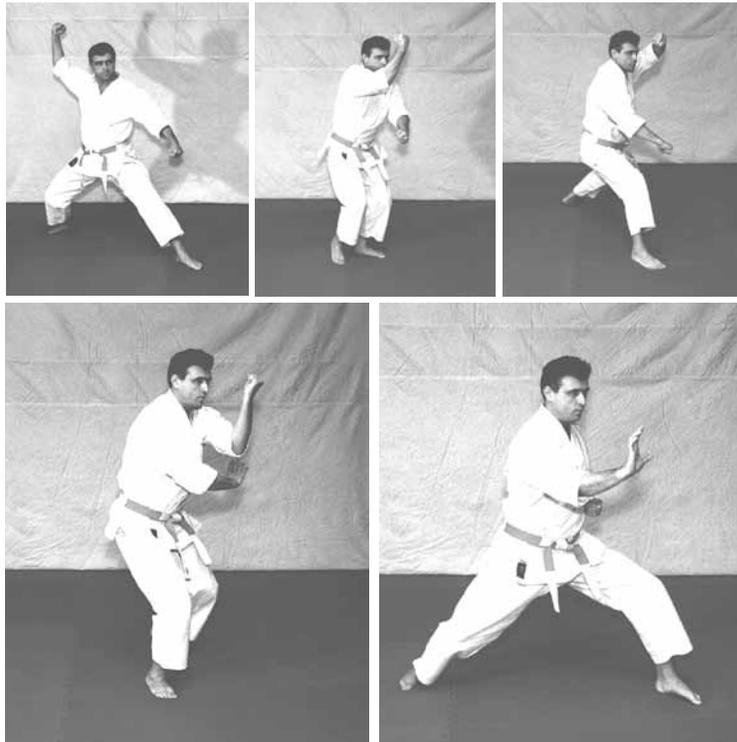
Simple Choreography examples:



60. left, right
down block in
succession



61. first lateral sequence
of Sochin





Sequences become a piece of a larger structure. Waza become kata. Kata become kata series. Kata series become the recognizable emblem of the style. Various styles with similar fundamentals become an art. Similar arts become grouped into a category of martial arts (or the martial arts in general). Martial arts become a study for self-defense and/or for developing the individual.

A STUDY OF BASICS = A STUDY OF STRUCTURE

The concept of structure is built into the study of basic technique. How would you study a basic technique if you did not look at its component parts or its progression from one position to another?

Once you establish a sequence of positions and a “final” position, you may want to ask, “Does this structure fulfill the intended purpose?” How do we know? We can either apply the movement against an attack or devise a test for it. Either way, one is testing. Through testing, one discovers beneficial adjustments then fine-tunes the structure only to test the application again.

A STUDY OF APPLICATION = A STUDY OF ADJUSTMENTS

Minor adjustments are sometimes required when applying a technique. George attacks harder than Paul; Ringo is shorter and stockier than John. The technique is never done exactly the same twice in succession, especially if the opponents change. A defender unconsciously adjusts the base technique for each opponent. This gives one more variation to test.

After one tests a number of variations, one logically draws a conclusion about the root method of applying the basic technique. One cannot memorize every variation for every situation, so one conceptualizes the many concretes one has studied into an adjusted root method, a.k.a. *kihon waza* (basic technique).

A STUDY OF APPLIED VARIATIONS = A STUDY OF PRINCIPLES

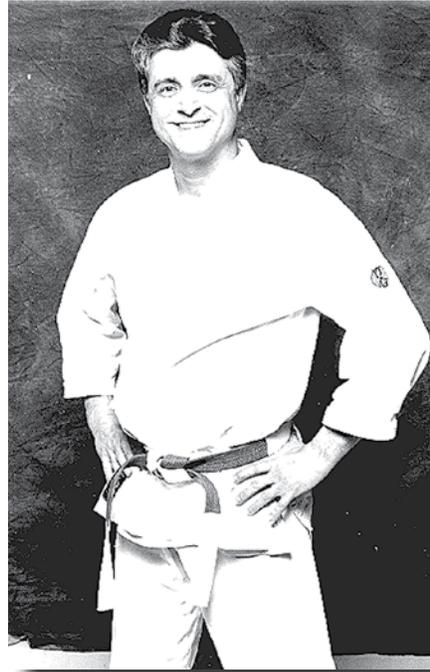
The concept of principle (how techniques work) is built into the study of tested techniques because one consciously or unconsciously draws similarities from variations. In the abstract, we call this common ground “principle” (*genri*). In the concrete, we call similarly applied techniques “style”.

Whenever one applies a movement against a simulated opponent or tests a movement with a real partner, one must slightly adjust the technique for the specific situation. Numerous situations give one enough experience to draw specific concepts or principles from the general situations. A specific set of techniques based on these principles can be called a style. Specific principles can be used in common by various styles; therefore, in actual application, many styles look more

similar than different. Beyond specific variation, in other words, is Principle; and Principle is where styles are more homogeneous than disparate. (There is much more to say about principle. I refer the reader to *The Principles of Advanced Budo* for a more detailed discussion.)

Our foundation or basics have a form or structure. The study of the basics must include the study of details: the paths of movements, shapes, and postures referred to as Structure. To test a basic movements is to test its structure and function. Small adjustments to strengthen one's test-results reveal common principles that overlap styles. Although different functional Structures produce separate functional styles, the study of how Structure works produces a knowledge of principles that unify schools, styles, and arts.

Now basics may seem to be getting rather complicated. But that is why there are stylistic basics in the first place. Fundamentals give us a simple method, a capability to return to familiar ground whenever we have been far away exploring the seas to which our basic streams have led.



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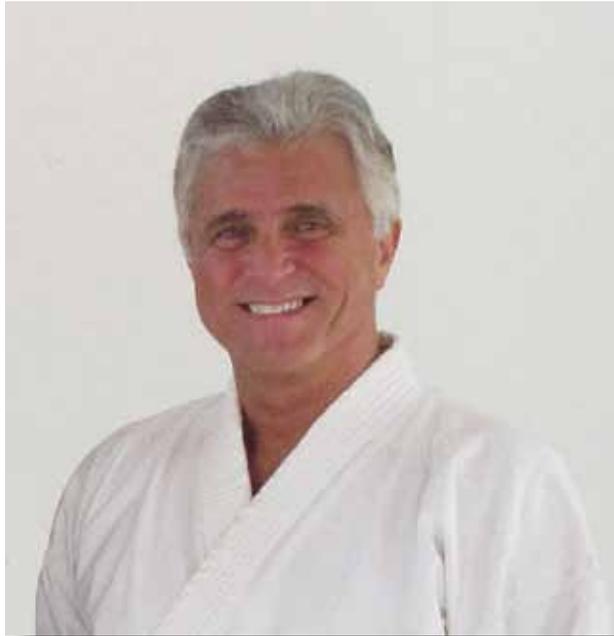
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tony Annesi, a martial artist since 1964, has earned dan-ranks in judo, aiki-ju-jutsu, and karate and has researched numerous other martial arts. Annesi is the director of BUSHIDO-KAI BUDOYA, which markets martial arts videos, books, manuals, and other educational materials. He serves as chief officer of BUSHIDO-KAI KENKYUKAI, an organization dedicated to the development of traditional martial arts in the modern world and specifically of the Takeshin Sogo Budo which it administers from its BUSHIDO-KAI HOMBU DOJO, Ashland, Massachusetts.

Annesi has written for INSIDE KARATE, BLACKBELT, INSIDE KUNG-FU, MASTERS OF SELF-DEFENSE, FIGHTER INTERNATIONAL and other publications. He is the author 8 Aiki-ju-jutsu Manuals, 6 Karate Manuals, and of *Cracking the Kata Code*, *The Principles of Advanced Budo*, *Expressing the Budo*, *Sudden Attack Defense*, *Tales of the Dojo*, *The Dojo Files*, *Elevated Elementals*, and *Comparative Aiki in Action*. Many of the above titles in video format as well as numerous kata analysis videos are available from BUSHIDO-KAI Productions.

He has also written *1969, Loss of Innocence*, a book of short stories, and *The Shangrilla Artifacts*, a fantasy novel trilogy.

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