

# THE SCIENCE OF SÔGÔ BUDÔ

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How can you add soft techniques to hard or hard to soft without doing a disservice to your martial art of choice?

What if they were already included in your art in ways you had not yet discovered?

In the fifties and sixties, people studied one martial art and thought it was the ultimate in self-defense.

In the seventies, Bruce Lee not only created a new art, but dispelled the idea that any one art was sufficient to handle all self-defense situations. Young upstarts followed suit and we saw the birth and death of many new systems of pastiched martial techniques, a stew that they hoped would be the “best of *budo* (as well as *mudo* and *koushu*).”

After Lee’s death, ninjutsu, enjoyed a decade of popularity in the eighties, perhaps because it was both traditional and eclectic, both one art and many.

In the nineties, many martial artists returned to the original traditional methods, but because of videos and seminars, they more appreciate both diversity and how arts interrelate with other arts. Numerous practitioners have studied or continue to study several art forms. But how do we connect these arts so that they will not be a nineties version of *budo goulash*?

It may surprise you to know that many traditional systems have always been holistic and that many of the masters of old studied several systems under several teachers. Each art may have its emphasis, but most arts were not unaware of the concept of integration. Those “integrated” arts were called *Sogo Budo*.

Contemporary practitioners can be divided into three groups: those who practice **formalistic** martial arts, those who practice **interpretive** martial arts, and those who practice **eclectic** martial arts. General examples of these groups are shown in the chart below.

<b>FORMALISTIC</b> orthodox form is the guiding principle in these arts	<b>INTERPRETIVE</b> guiding principle is investigation and variation to develop rich application	<b>ECLECTIC</b> guiding principle is practical usage
• “preserved” old styles like Katori Shinto Ryu	• traditional arts that research their roots and adapt to their discoveries	• modern “ju-jutsu” styles or eclectic self-defense systems
• rigidly taught traditional karate styles like Matsumura Orthodox Karate-do	• traditional arts that are constantly developing techniques	• “Jeet Kune Do-like” methods
• formalistic Aikido	• some Formalistic arts studied at a very high level	• semi-traditional “urban” karate styles

Those martial artists who study the **Formalistic** way (left column of the chart) are laying an unparalleled foundation for further development but that development cannot come until they reach very high levels (see the third example under **interpretive**). One cannot integrate new or even complementary concepts without changing the orthodoxy. That orthodoxy exists to help everyone who studies the art learn it in the same predictable way with quality control of the results, but it can take the martial artist only so far. *Integration* as such does not exist, at least not for most practitioners.

Students of the **Eclectic** way (right column) have the advantage of being able to adapt any new discovery or variation that pops up as long as it is usable for them personally. Even if it might benefit someone else in the group, however, a new technique or concept may be discarded as being personally unusable. Since the new concept is not integrated into a predictable base (basics being variously comfortable to various students), it may not seem to fit the general method of training. The new concept could be used by the individual student, but may not be comfortably or reasonably *integrated* into the art.

**Interpretive** martial arts (center column of the chart) suggest that students have an orthodox or at least traditional base, and then sometime in their development, they have discovered interpretation and other methods by which they can expand their martial art's applicability. This journey toward mastery was the subject of my school's 1994 *Advanced Budo Camp* and was recorded in a five video set called *The Road to Mastery*. I personally do not advocate sprinting through the gate of interpretation and integration once it is open to you. I think people should have a very long, very strong background in **Formalistic** budo before attempting any sort of integration, but if people do not know the possibilities of integrated budo exist, they may be octogenarians before the gate opens at all. This is precisely the point made by **Eclectic** martial artists (right column). I hope to open that gate of interpretation to a somewhat younger group but simultaneously caution students not to leap through it too completely or too soon. I suggest journeying into the land of interpretation holding a sturdy cord attached to one's martial art of choice. You want to be able to find your way back to home base because the base is as important to your development as is any variation or application.

To "Sogo-ize" your existing martial practices, if you are free to do so, consider the following methods:

- PASTICHING

This was and is the method used by **Eclectic** martial arts. It *adds on* new material but does not fully *integrate* these items into each other or into an existing base or even into an existing philosophy of budo, except in the case where the philosophy is "If it works, use it." It can adapt the art around the individual student, but does not challenge the student to adapt himself to the art. As a result the art is not used to change the student.

I consider this the most fundamental and least beneficial method of "Sogo-izing," but it certainly has its place in the array of martial choices open to students. Pastiche can be very practical or it can make one a jack-of-all-trades and master of none. **(See photo series A below for an example of Pastiche, in this case Karate with Judo.)**



## • HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

Let's say your art is Shotokan karate. It is known as a hard, straight-line art especially good for "traditional" sparring. It has no study of weaponry, little or no throwing, few in-close techniques and no joint locking. Yet, if you investigate the history of your art, you will find that Funakoshi not only practiced weaponry but also taught throwing. In fact, he was responsible for teaching Jigoro Kano a throwing technique (which some say became the judo throw *uchimata*). Further study reveals that Funakoshi studied Shorin-ryu in which the stances were shorter and more upright, the combinations swifter and the kata seemingly less powerful or aesthetically pleasing. Further, you discover that Funakoshi's teacher Itosu, along with other Okinawan masters, adjusted old-style karate in order to safely teach Okinawan

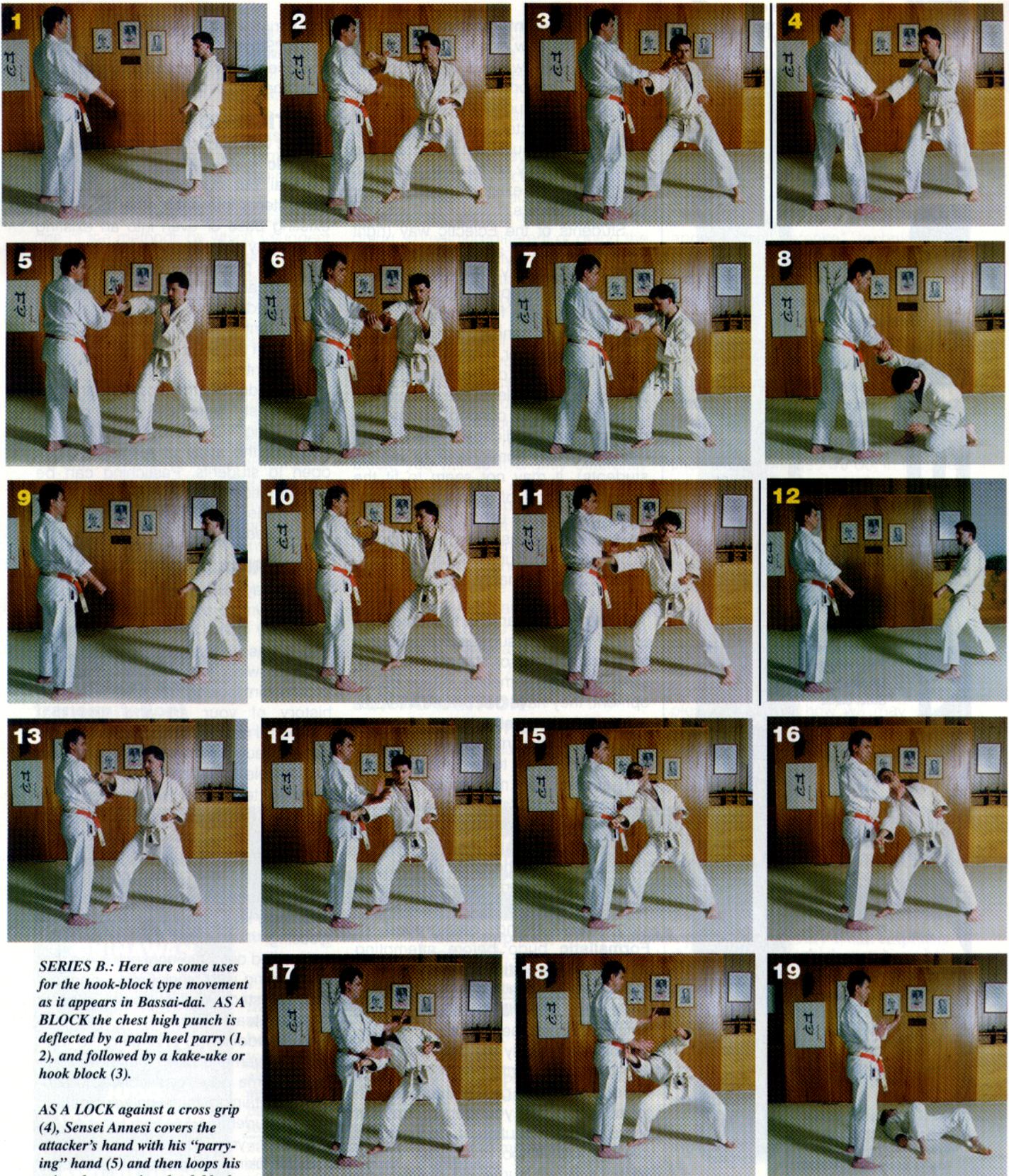
school children. In addition to changing the form of the movements, they may have eliminated some advanced concepts altogether, retaining them only for certain private students. Finding that “Shorin” was the Okinawan pronunciation of the Chinese “Shaolin”, you delve into Shaolin styles and discover that they are very complicated methods with several levels of interpretation and a lot of variety and that often they incorporate both weaponry and grappling (*chin-na*). When you see some of these movements, they do not seem as powerful or as straight as Shotokan but they do seem to work and you can recognize cognates between Shaolin and Shorin and Shotokan. Your mind has been opened to what your contemporary Shotokan can have hidden within its historical roots.

This type of historical investigation is one of the methods by which I suggest in my book *Cracking the Kata Code*. One cannot be absolutely sure of history, especially history that was orally recorded, not intended to be preserved in a time capsule. The reason many traditional martial artists balk at changing a kata or a method of training is because in doing so, one is changing whatever historical record we have. But for the **Interpretive** martial artist, history is not his to preserve but to learn from. It is not that he objects to preserving history, it is simply that he is not an archivist himself, rather he is a graduate student researching in order to better contribute his own unique perception of his art.

- **INTERPRETATION** (metaphors and transmutation)

Every technique has a form. Indeed, to orthodox styles, it has just one acceptable form. But if you look at many orthodox styles, you quickly see that each has a different “correct” form. Correctness is valid only within an orthodoxy. Outside an orthodoxy, the more **eclectic** judgment of “does it work?” comes into play. We can accept that half a dozen “correct” methods exist because we accept that each method assumes the technique is doing something different or doing the same thing differently.

First you learn the form, then you learn the variations, then you may find that even the use of the technique differs in different circumstances. What you see is not necessarily what you get. And how you see it determines whether it works or not. If you see a movement called *kake uke* (hook block) as a block, you will do it slightly differently than if it is called *kagi* (key/lock) or *nikyo* (second principle lock) and different still if it is called a circular strike, eye deception, or throwing movement. The idea that subtle changes in movements can actually change their use or that subtle changes in intent can actually change a technical form, I call *Transmutation: A Lock is a Block is a Blow is a Throw*. **(See photo series B below for an example of Interpretation via Transmutation.)**



**SERIES B.:** Here are some uses for the hook-block type movement as it appears in Bassai-dai. AS A BLOCK the chest high punch is deflected by a palm heel parry (1, 2), and followed by a take-uke or hook block (3).

AS A LOCK against a cross grip (4), Sensei Annesi covers the attacker's hand with his "parrying" hand (5) and then loops his orinned arm up in a hook block

• JUXTAPOSITION (comparison of differences)

It might sound unusual to integrate a martial art by comparing *differences*, but the segregation of the disparate elements can leave us with remnants that may lend themselves to integration. For example, although Jigoro Kano's early Kodokan brought together many different martial

arts, some of them weaponed and some unweaponed, judo has no weaponry division. Karate, although some schools append “self-defense” techniques to their traditional curriculum, has no ground grappling division. Okinawan weaponry has no kicking or grappling division. Or does it? At certain distances, a weapon becomes less useful than either striking or grappling, so the old Okinawan weaponeers made sure that they had the back-up weapons of unarmed combat in their arsenal. When we separate what we think to be distinctions, sometimes we recognize distinctions as our own false assumptions.

Most martial arts can fit into one of these four categories: (1) Weaponry, (2) Striking, (3) Locking/Throwing, and (4) Ground Grappling. To the extent that an art known for one emphasis overlaps into another, it has at least the foundation of integration. Consider the following chart for examples to discover how we may unconsciously overlook emphases:

emphasis >>> example ART ▼	weaponry	empty hand striking/kicking	locking & throwing	ground grappling
<b>OKINAWAN WEAPONRY</b>	<b>major emphasis</b>	minor emphasis; some tech. are however identical to nonweaponed tech.	minor emphasis; some tech. are however identical to nonweaponed tech.	very weak emphasis which may have been present for back-up
<b>KARATE (non-sportive)</b>	minor emphasis; some tech. are however identical to weaponed tech.	<b>major emphasis</b>	minor but stronger emphasis revealed once kata is analyzed	very weak emphasis which may have been present for back-up
<b>JUDO (non-sportive)</b>	almost no emphasis; student had to know basic sword and knife for self-defense kata	minor emphasis, especially in kata	<b>major emphasis</b>	<b>major emphasis</b>
<b>AIKI-JU-JUTSU</b>	minor to moderate emphasis; but many techniques are cognates of sword techniques	minor to moderate emphasis	<b>major emphasis</b>	very weak emphasis; mostly escapes were studied
<b>JAPANESE WEAPONRY</b>	<b>major emphasis</b>	minor emphasis; used as back-up	minor emphasis; used as back-up	very weak emphasis which may have been present for back-up

Some martial artists may not agree with the specifics of my analysis, but I hope they would concede the principle that each art may have more depth than we give it credit for. It is interesting to note that if we give a value to each emphasis let’s say 3 for “major”, 2 for “minor”, 1 for very “weak”, and 0 for “almost no” each martial art totals 8. It is not that each would be equal to the other in any given situation, but that each has an element of realistic holism that we tend to overlook.

- PHILOSOPHICAL CONSISTENCY, TECHNICAL VARIETY

Of course, if the philosophy in question is simply “If it works, use it,” an art might be philosophically consistent, have technical variety, but not be integrated very well. More precisely, it might, in fact, be integrated but at the most basic “pasted” level. One of the most challenging methods of integrating is to stay faithful to the concepts that your art puts

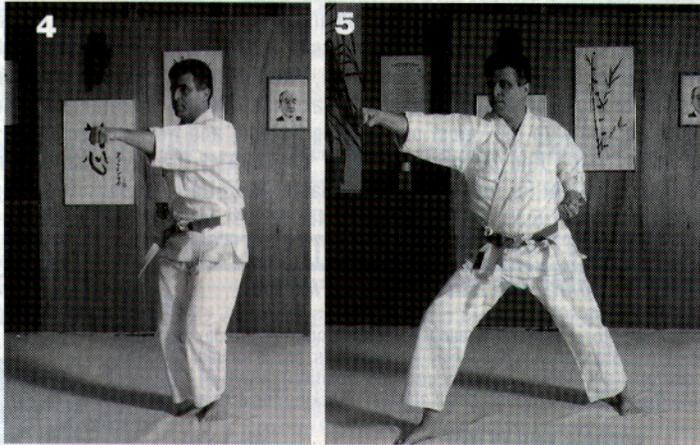
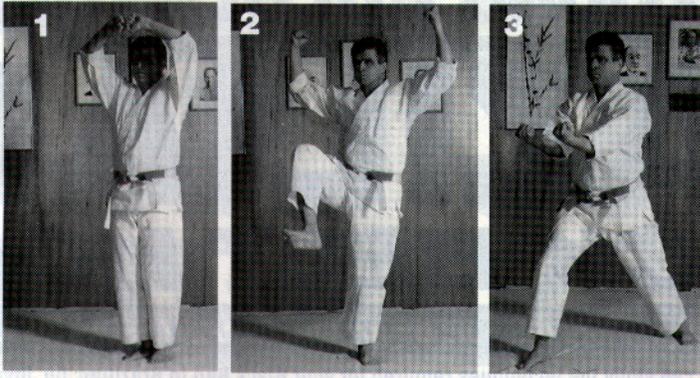
forth but allow technical input from a wide variety of sources as long as that input does not violate your basic concepts. Admittedly, “basic concepts” is a vague term. Let’s use an example or two to illustrate.

Let’s say your art’s guiding technical philosophy is that it should be used to control or arrest the opponent but not do physical harm. It would be logical, then, that your art would not practice most weaponry and would emphasize locks and perhaps some grappling. Strikes, if used, would have to be very minor. However, one would not do injustice to this philosophy, if one used weapons non-percussively (to lock or pin) or if one used strikes to momentarily shock or distract an opponent. Aikido, therefore, whose technical emphasis seems to be one of restraint of self and control of opponent might be seen through a wider lens than that through which it is currently viewed. Aikido authorities are not going to adjust the **Formalistic** art, but as an **Interpretive** practitioner, you can adjust it yourself. It can be a holistic art, the common practice of which is limited by an adherence to a philosophy.

Let’s assume your art’s guiding technical philosophy is that it should be used to drop the opponent suddenly and decisively. One would then assume that blows have to be speedy, throws hard, and locks cranked on forcefully. Weaponry, if used, cannot be flowery. All techniques must be as direct and powerful as possible. However, if one discovers an indirect method to apply a lock with less force but with more desirable results, one may actually take *more* time (using an indirect movement) to *save* time (because a more effective results with less force would occur.) This means that the art’s philosophy of sudden effectiveness is being upheld although one uses a seemingly less direct, less powerful movement to uphold it. Karate, therefore, once one understands its basic applications, will profit from a study of the less direct, less forceful Aiki-ju-jutsu, or perhaps the seemingly slower, less direct Chinese internal arts. Its guiding principle, rather than being violated, is being enhanced, but from unexpected quarters.

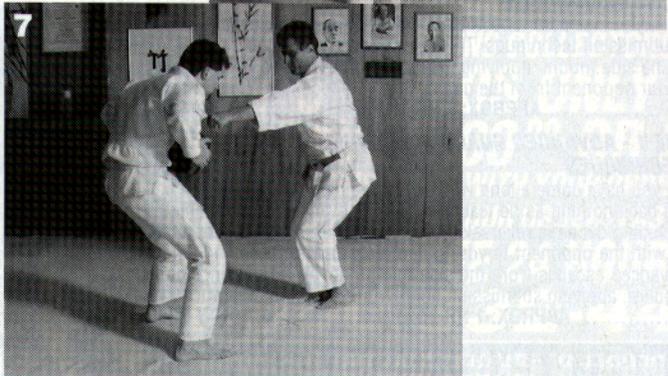
Let’s assume that your art prefers straight-line movements. It would be a violation of its philosophy to adopt *circular* movements from other arts, but it would not be a violation to adopt different *linear* movements from other arts. Shotokan practitioners might be able to seamlessly integrate movements from Hsing-i, for example, or to perhaps to discover that similar movements already exist in the Shotokan kata.

Conversely, if your art demands circular application, it would not be a violation to integrate another art’s occasional circular movement. Kempo might integrate movements from aikido, for example or vice versa. **(See photo series C.)**



**SERIES C.: A Hsing-i-like movement from Shotokan kata Bassai-dai.** After the first kiai, practitioners deliver two knife-hand blocks and then retreat in a closed-stance mountain block (1). At this point, they perform a knee lift and double hammer fist to the mid-section (2, 3). The next movement is sometimes shown as a half-step, sometimes as a half punch (4) on the way to a full lunge punch (5). Even karate-ka who perform the kata this way assume that the half-punch cannot have much power since the stance is minimal. Chinese stylists however, may recognize a similar movement from hsing-i.

Power is derived from the rear leg rushing toward the forward leg thus displacing the body slightly forward. As the weight drops into the feet-together stance, the compression helps the power burst outward (6, 7).



Finally, one might also want to *challenge* the assumed philosophy of one's art. Do we *know* that an art's technical philosophy is gentle and controlling, hard and direct, linear or circular, or do we just *assume* that this is the case because the majority of its techniques fall into these categories? If Tae Kwon Do is assumed to be a kicking art because only kicks are practiced and only kicks score in sparring, then we tend to ignore the myriad of hand-techniques present in its forms. Perhaps its supposed philosophy is not really its philosophy at all but merely a technical preference. Preferences do not necessarily exclude the art from having minor emphases as we asserted in the previous section, Juxtaposition of Differences. Should you give up Tae Kwon Do if you are too old or too injured to kick? Or should you begin to discover that the art may be richer and wider than you first thought?

The ultimate integration, of course, is that which happens unconsciously in the practitioner's body. No matter which method one uses to let in this information, no matter which method one, as an **Interpretive** martial artist, uses to perceive one's martial arts, the actual integration must go beyond the curriculum, beyond the dojo, and into the reactions and sensibilities of the martial artist him- or herself.

People have often asked me which of my martial arts I would use if attacked. With no disrespect intended, I have had to chuckle. Arts are not weapons you choose from various holsters on your utility belt, rather they are methods to educate you in the potentials of your main weapon, your body. How you use that weapon depends on the situation, your skill and your level of martial integration.

## PHOTO SERIES: photography: Jim Driscoll

**The Author illustrates the techniques and Wade Munson acts as partner.**

### Series A.:

Pastiching is simply combining elements from various martial methods. In this example, the receiver blocks like karate (**A1, 2**), counters like muay-thai (**A3, 4**), throws like judo (**A5, 6, 7, 8**) and then finishes like a monkey stylist by rolling over his partner (**A9, 10, 11, 12**).

### Series B.:

Here are some uses for the hook-block type movement as it appears in Bassai-dai.

**B1> as a block:** The chest high punch is deflected by a palm heel parry (**1a, b**), and followed by a *kake-uke* or hook block (**1c**).

**B2> as a lock:** against a cross grip (**2a**), Sensei Annesi covers the attacker's hand with his "parrying" hand (**2b**) and then loops his gripped arm up in a hook block shape (**2c**), resulting in a wrist lock (**2d, e**).

**B3> as a blow:** against a high straight punch, Sensei Annesi parries as in the example above (**3a, b**) but then uses the hook movement as a knife-hand strike (**3c**).

**B4> as a throw:** against a chest-high punch, Sensei Annesi parries (**4a, b**), hooks his block (**4c**) as in example 1 above, and then reverses the movement by using the "parrying" hand as a face slap (**4d**) and the "hooking" arm as a off-balancer (**4e, f**) resulting in a throw (**4g, h**).

**Series C.:**

A Hsing-i-like movement from Shotokan kata Bassai-dai.

After the first kiai, practitioners deliver two knife-hand blocks and then retreat in a closed-stance mountain block **(C1)**. At this point, they perform a knee lift and double hammer fist to the mid-section **(C2, 3)**. The next movement is sometimes shown as a half-step, sometimes as a half punch **(C4)** on the way to a full lunge punch **(C5)**. Even karate-ka who perform the kata this way assume that the half-punch cannot have much power since the stance is minimal. Chinese stylists however, may recognize a similar movement from hsing-i.

Power is derived from the rear leg rushing toward the forward leg thus displacing the body slightly forward. As the weight drops into the feet-together stance, the compression helps the power burst outward **(C6, 7)**.