



# TETSUZAN

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## *The "Koppo" of Kihon Happo*

The American Indians believe that life begins in the South. Next, one progresses to the West, where one sees one's inner self. West is represented by the color black, partly to signify the world growing dark as the sun sets, and partly to illustrate that as one's enjoyable childhood ends, one becomes an aware adult.

North is represented by white, which stands both for the clouds and cold winds, and gray hairs-it symbolizes the concept of respecting elders as they are completed human beings. So North is basically the direction of completion.

East is yellow, symbol of power and brightness - this is read to mean the brightness of a human's personality. So in this way the four directions South-West-North-East are each distinct, yet all linked to enlightenment. One can enter upon the path from any stage. I think it is important for martial artists to bear in mind the Indians' view of enlightenment while learning Kihon Happo. It is connected to our saying "Being natural is the ultimate secret of the art." With that as an introduction, let us now learn about Nagato Shihan's (ninth dan) Kihon Happo.



*Toshiro Nagato (Moko)*

### **Kihon Happo (December 21, 1988)**

It would be possible to write an entire book about just one of the Kihon Happo techniques. One only begins to understand Soke's teachings, in a vague sort of way, about ten years after first experiencing them. Maybe it would be truer to say that one starts to understand that one cannot understand. Soke's teachings just exist as a reality that must be experienced firsthand. Kihon Happo is said to be the basis of our Budo. But basics can be started from any point - there is no need to start from the first form and provided you do all of them some time it does not matter which one you do first. There is also no fixed historical reason to start from the beginning. Rather, what I find during teaching is that before anything else one should learn the important lesson that "either is OK." But it seems that not many people have realized this yet.

Some people even believe that Kihon Happo means simply the first eight kata, the movements themselves. Of course, this is also true, but if you can do no more than the first eight kata nothing will come of them. Anyone can do them! Unless you can perform the kata correctly and link them up to the limitless variations, you cannot say that you have accomplished Kihon Happo.

Foreign instructors coming to train in Japan have problems even in the basic forms of the kata. They say that what they learned abroad is different from what they are being taught in Japan, or that even in Noda the forms vary slightly from instructor to instructor. Of course they do!





*Soke can send an opponent flying just with a low section block.*

I want all Shidoshi to be aware of the responsibility they have to transmit the teachings correctly. If you train for a long time, you become able to see at a glance whether someone's basic movements are correct. They don't have to all be the same, they must just be correct. That's the feeling I want everyone to grasp. It takes time to understand this mindset. To a certain extent, the longer you train, the more you understand the basics and Budo itself. But it is precisely when you are devoting yourself single mindedly to mastering the basics that you can't understand the wider principles.

Kihon Happo is like a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious. I think one can say that in the midst of training the unconscious, you are in fact acting consciously. It is important to get an even balance between the two. As I accompany Soke around the world, one thing that always strikes me is the fact that everyone has problems with the basics. They all know that the basics are important, but because they do not understand or cannot do such an important thing, they lose their self-confidence in the martial arts. The work doesn't stand up as an art.

At present good Shidoshi are emerging one after another throughout the world. I want everyone to treasure having communication with them. Once you get stuck with a bad teacher, no matter how long you train you'll never get good. Videos and books are there to help. It's worth spending time on the basics, even just on the forms of Kihon Happo, and not trying to run before you can walk. Soke teaches that the most important thing in Budo is "living." Kihon Happo is a living base. One of the basic thoughts of Buddhism is "the impermanence of all things." All things are continually changing, and nothing is permanent. It sounds obvious, but few people realize the truth behind it. True Kihon Happo is likewise a living thing. It is permanently changing. My own Kihon Happo changes from one moment to the next. What has happened up until now had good reasons for it. But recently Soke has started providing answers to Kihon Happo. He waits until the students have reached a certain stage of maturity. Once that stage comes, he can teach them naturally, like a flower blooming or a fruit getting ripe. And each of us can only wait until our time comes. As I said, Kihon Happo can not be defined or delimited. Naturally, I do not think that my own Kihon Happo is definitely right, nor is it definitely wrong. To grow into a large tree as a martial artist, the roots are indispensable. I think that about sums up my views on Kihon Happo.

*Toshiro Nagato (Moko)*





1)



2)



3)

- 1) From hicho-no-kamae.
- 2) Strike with Shuto: the body's gravity becomes Shuto and opens up as you strike the opponent.
- 3) Shinobi jumonji squatting kamae.
- 4) (a&b) Striking with Shuto is the same principle as striking with Nyo-i bo. Strike so as to make the utmost use of the body's balance and the advantage of the weapon.



4a)



4b)

Thrusting is the same. When someone uses a weapon, you can see immediately how good or bad their Kihon Happo is.

## The “Kokoro” of Kihon Happo

I asked Manaka Shihan (ninth dan), Nagato Shihan (ninth dan), and Ishizuka Shihan (ninth dan) all to write about Kihon Happo. Manaka Shihan wrote on the theme of “highlights of the past year,” and Nagato Shihan wrote of the “Koppo” of Kihon Happo. One point I should add is that while the word *Koppo* is often used when talking about the taijutsu of Koto-ryu Koppojutsu, it is also used more generally in the martial arts and other traditional arts to talk of the finer points, breathing, etc.

Next Ishizuka Shihan wrote for us about the “Kokoro” (heart/mind/soul) of Kihon Happo. The reason for having these three Shihan write about Kihon Happo is to let people know of the personality, the character, and the fundamental nature of Kihon Happo. Let’s see now what Ishizuka Shihan can teach us.



(Soke)



## The “Kokoro” of Kihon Happo

Tetsuji Ishizuka (ninth dan)

When thinking about Kihon Happo I feel I must start from the time, over 23 years ago when I was allowed to become a student. At the time I was a 17-year-old high-school student, with a strong interest in Judo, Kendo, Karate, Aikido, and Shorinji Kempo. I was training in each of them. One day I dislocated my shoulder in Judo, and went to Soke’s seikotsu clinic for treatment. That’s how it all started.

The training hall at that time was a small room with a plank floor. Whether hot or cold, we would all train together there as friends. There were days when someone would stamp through a plank in the floor and we would all stop to repair it before continuing. From the senior students, I learned Ichimonji-no-kamae, Hicho-no-kamae, Jumonji-no-kamae, and strange strikes, kicks, and blocks that I had never seen before, and which I did not really understand. After some months I learned that these new techniques were Kihon Happo. How I wanted to learn some techniques! But Soke and the senior students applied blocks to me and threw me through the air. They made my body learn ukemi naturally, so my ukemi gradually became better - totally different from those in Judo or Aikido. So I could take my falls without pain whether on planks, concrete, or gravel.



*Omotegiyaku at the London seminar.*



Soke talked to us about Budo both during and after the training. Time and time again he told us “Ninjutsu is Taijutsu. Taijutsu begins with Kihon Happo and ends with Kihon Happo. If you get stuck for techniques go back and redo Kihon Happo!”

The most essential thing required of a martial artist is to have a Kokoro that is like the warm, beautiful heart of a flower in peace and harmony, or alternatively the warm, beautiful heart of a flower with the upright, flexible character of a bamboo.

I was young and often thought, “Oh not again,” but as though reading my mind Soke would say, “Takamatsu



Sensei used to tell me all of these things in the same way, and I would think, "Uh-oh, here he goes again," but later the fact that those words are really important pierced its way deep into my chest." Hearing these words, I felt them pierce my chest deeply, too.

As time passed, I sweated through the training, always cradled by Soke's warm heart, and got to teach those below me the basic Kihon Happo, like Te-hodoki, in just the same way as I had been taught in my time. When considering how each of the techniques had been passed down in this way for over 900 years, I could but wonder at the mystery of the living martial arts.

Eventually I came to have a jojo of my own, and students of my own, and realized more and more how heavy a responsibility I held for my own basics. As you are all aware, many students came from abroad to train in the martial arts. But somehow, the techniques lacked bite, and I realized this must be because they had not truly mastered the basics. I really sensed a need for everyone to learn from the Shihan how each individual movement of the Kihon Happo gets linked into techniques, and then into taijutsu, to build a stable form of movement with roots firmly implanted in the earth, combined with sharp, biting branches.

Soke is a genius - as a painter, as an author, as an actor, and of course as a martial artist. His movements do not stop at where onlookers see them to stop. The techniques flow on and on boundlessly, and so whenever you train yourself, copying the movements of this great flowing river, please watch Soke's toes, fingertips, torso - in fact watch his whole body. He uses all of the Kihon Happo I have mentioned. If you just try and copy the flow of techniques without seeing this, your techniques will have no bite.

When a baby first starts to walk, he often falls over probably because of the unbalance between his head's weight and the muscles of his body. The martial arts are the same. Just as a parent stretches out a helping hand to a baby, senior students stretch out to help their juniors, and both help and love each other. Love produces new things, raises new life.

It is said that taijutsu gives birth to miracles. And the first step of taijutsu is Kihon Happo. As it was transmitted from Takamatsu Sensei to Hatsumi Sensei, and from Hatsumi Sensei to the Shidoshi throughout the world, we have a heavy responsibility to bring about world peace and help people to lead enjoyable lives. This responsibility may be heavy, but I feel it is also somehow enjoyable in itself, how about you?

### *Kotetsu*

**K**ihon Happo-the receiver must also punch correctly. There is a tradition passed down from master to pupil that if you practice punching an imaginary target and feel it move, then the punch is correct.

Almost everyone in the modern martial arts world uses systemized training methods for their study and practice, and believe that this is the most correct method. But I would like to start again and reconsider this from the point of view of the origins of martial arts. Many, many years ago, there was a time when none of the techniques had names. The Warring States period of Japan gave birth to genuine fight techniques that were necessary to keep practitioners alive. And once you discovered a technique, you would teach it to nobody and keep it as your most treasured possession, or rather your most important weapon. If an enemy found out this technique, it would not just be disadvantageous, it could well mean that you would end up dead. And not just yourself, your whole family as well.



*In 1989, the first year of Heisei, two people were chosen for special commendation from among 40,000 firemen: Ishizuka Shihan was one of the two.*





*Muramatsu (eighth dan) at You-moi (Humour) Village*

As a matter of necessity, these fighting techniques were not written down, but rather passed on by word of mouth only to those one could trust totally. When passing on an oral tradition, one first made absolutely sure of the receiver's heart by making them vow in front of the gods. Technique names were probably created in times of peace or during a short lull in the fighting, when those with experience of war felt a need to record their fighting techniques for the future.

With this in mind, let us look at a tale I heard from Tatsuo Muramatsu (eighth dan) about training in the past, and use it as reference for our training.

### *Soke*

*One day, about three years after I first started training at the Bujinkan dojo, Manaka Shihan asked me to teach Omotegyaku-dori to a junior student. I asked him "Omotegyaku? What's that?" Manaka Shihan replied curtly "How long have you been studying Ninpo?" That was the gist of the conversation. I did in fact know Omotegyaku, I just did not know its name. At the time, we were never taught the names of techniques, or which of them were basic and which were advanced variations; instead we simply practiced using the body "like this." I didn't find this in the slightest degree strange, and simply arranged the movements, brought them out as needed, and practiced them in my own way.*

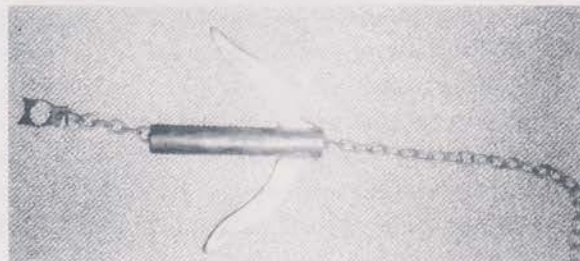
*When chatting to Soke the other day I mentioned this as a joke, but was told "nothing had a name at first." Thinking back on it now, learning the basics and the structure of techniques correctly was very difficult, but because we weren't really concerned with the names or with individual techniques, I think it was very good for developing the feeling behind our Budo, the structure of genuine techniques, and individuality (in a good sense).*

### *Tatsuo Muramatsu*

I think we can all see from this that one aspect of the martial arts is that even though someone does not know the name of a technique, they may still be able to perform it.

Now I will use Muramatsu as my partner to demonstrate some chain work with the Kompei.

As you can see in these photos, you first grasp the body of the Kompei and put the angled ring on your finger (1), so that you can send the weight flying and slide the body along the chain so as to freely regulate the distance between the body and the weight.



1)



If you practice using a Kompei, you should never use a real one but instead make a safe one for practice - use a ball-point pen and string, for example. It is very dangerous to use a real weapon, so I would like you to look at this example less from the point of view of studying martial arts than from the point of view of using it as anthropological reference material.



2)



3)



2) Taking Omotegyaku-dori with the angled ring. At the same time use the prong on the body to strike the Migi Jakkin nerve spot on the inner upper arm.

3) Having just taken Omotegyaku-dori.

4) Choking the wrist with the angled ring and chain.

4)



5)



6)



7)



8)



One Flow Leads into a Large River, an Ocean..then Kihon Happo

As all the Buyu and Shidoshi around the world mature and come in their turn to teach taijutsu to their students, they have similarly progressed to the stage of passing on their taijutsu accents, their Kihon Happo dialects. In other words, it is just like a baby who starts off saying nothing, then its first words, then speaking freely thanks to the environment around it as it grows, but who finally ends up tainted with dialects.

In the same way, a technique goes through similar stages of growth. In this case it seems that if we look at the environment (i.e, the region, the dojo as a club), we have all the members speaking the same dialect. As I look at the Buyu who have come to study at Bujinkan from all around the world, I can recognize immediately from the movements of their taijutsu that he comes from X dojo, she learn from Y Shidoshi.

This is again slightly different from the dialects picked up in Judo or Karate, and can also become a different kind of bad habit. Unless corrected at an early stage it runs the risk of becoming an obstacle for the development of free techniques. I sensed this danger, so I told all Bujinkan members that they should come and train directly with me or a high-dan instructor at least once a year.

Human beings possess Kokoro (heart/mind/soul). It is possible to analyze somebody's heart from the expression on his face or from her body's movements. In the same way, according to somebody's expression, body movements, or if you want, heart and personality, their view and thoughts of taijutsu can change completely, and if these are not correct they become a dialect. This is not just limited to the case of Kihon Happo, and I would like everyone who appreciates the martial arts to realize that such dialects can be a real handicap.

There is one direction, a straight central core as the basis of Kihon Happo. Depending upon how well the performer knows this, the duration of the training process will also vary. As a first stage, watching others is very important. This is effectively the same as watching oneself, and therefore a way of improving yourself; so watch the taijutsu of your senior students carefully.

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