



KATA: *The Gathering*

By
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I am asked from time to time about my beginning movement in kata. I thought I would share my explanation with you in the hopes of bringing more understanding to the meaning of these movements and to share some of my views on kata.

Once I have a kata in my mind to train with for the day, I settle in yoi dachi and move to musubi dachi, crossing my open hands in the center to enter mokuso. This is our way to begin each kata and it is this specific movement of the hands that I want to explore with you today.

I like to bring my hands together in a broad, circular way, joining them in the center. This is a relatively slow, calculated move that is done with purposeful breathing. Breathing is inhaled and as the hands come together, exhaled. As with any athletic movement of a karateka, my center drops immediately as the hands begin their movement. My knees “tighten” and come together. My lower back has a slight arch, similar to that of seiza, to maintain physical posture. As the hands join, my legs straighten upward to rest with only the slightest bend. My focus is straight, my peripheral vision active, senses alert.

This movement is what I like to call the “gathering”. It brings together the mind-body focus and “gathers” our physical and spiritual resources for the battle ahead. And while we are preparing

for battle we are also always in the battle, as all movement in kata is linked to that of self defense. The hands protect and are positioned for strikes, the knees tighten to defend, the center drops to prepare for movement, the senses are alert for anticipation, the eyes searching, the body straight for jissen and body positioning.

The gathering is actually one of my favorite parts of kata. Even the seemingly small details of kata, especially for an old student, can be immensely beneficial and educational. Kata is a great link to kihon and kumite and I encourage all karateka to explore what it has to offer you. As with most things, constant training and reflection is the key to understanding through excellent instruction.

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