

Why Hikite?

Introduction:

During my early years of Shotokan training I was always told to pull my rear hand back to my hip and if you didn't it went against you at exam times, lost you points in kumite competitions, etc... so, it became a habit without understanding what I could do with it and why.

In this article I include some of my research into why I use hikite and how I teach it as part of the karate system.

Physical Benefits:

The use of hikite when performing basic techniques is useful to develop the abdominal muscles and add tension to the training exercise. It also encourages a two handed approach to techniques and improves balance in the early stages of training. The rear hand is ready to use as either a second attack or defence which allows for a smoother repetition of techniques when studying at kyu grade levels.

It also prepares the karateka for the proper use of this hand as their karate skills develop.

Where Should The Hikite Hand Rest?

Different styles of karate teach different areas and in Goju, the hand is held higher than in Shoto.

The Goju system hold the hikite hand at chest height which has applications appropriate to it.

In Shoto the hikite hand is pulled back to the hip and is the basis for this article.

What Should the Hikite Hand do?

The hikite hand is used to capture the attacker's weapon (arm, leg) and to take control of the opponent. The type of attack will dictate the effect one will cause by using hikite.

Why Return to the Hip?

Whether the attack is a foot or a hand, the angle of the weapon to the defenders hip makes it an ideal base.

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If a hand attack is being used, the pull back towards your hip will unbalance the attacker, open up vital points in the neck and bring weight to bear on his front leg. This in turn makes it suitable for a knee joint manipulation resulting in probably control over the attacker.

If a foot attack is used then the hikite hand is useful to grab the trousers or leg and pull the opponent off balance.

When pulling the attacker off balance consider your foot positioning to maximize the effect of your counter attack.

Some Examples:

Attacker punches to your head. You reply by deflecting the attack with your 'guide' arm, rotating the wrist and taking control of the attackers' arm. Adjust your position slightly to suit the defence and strike as you pull the attacker's arm towards your hip. The strike could be the age uke to the throat, soto uke to the forearm. Uchi uke to the elbow, shuto uke to the neck or upper arm... etc, etc..

Conclusion:

It is important that when teaching students we bear in mind the intention of the hikite hand and teach it as a grab/return and explain the purpose of it. Even if the student is only studying karate to do competition performance, the understanding of the hikite hand use will improve their use of the arms and body positioning.

To not teach its purpose, is in my opinion, leaving out one of the vital elements of karate.

(The comments contained herein are not intended as a statement of facts pertaining to the definition of Shotokan or a training guide for new students. They are a record of my opinions and reference to other influences on me.)