

Toate, striking at a distance

Extracted from the book:

Histoire de Karaté-dô

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Concerning Master Egami's karate, another matter arises: what are the breadth and possibilities within his Karate, a Karate that explores a new form of effectivity, taking a mystical direction?

We have seen that technically he attained such an effectivity that his students were projected without him touching them. The toate, or **striking at a distance**, means precisely a technique that **lets you control your opponent without touching him**. Master Egami said: "If somebody attacks me, as sick as I am, he will die."

Based upon testimony that I have gathered, Master Egami seems to have attained a particular ability even though he continually suffered sicknesses. People that have given me their testimonies are completely trustworthy.

If as a result of his search for tsuki effectivity in karate, Shigeru Egami obtained such an ability in his tsuki, I think this discovery is revolutionary. A tsuki is a technique that impacts the body of the opponent, transmitting a force from the point of impact.

The initial objective of Master Egami was to find out how to concentrate all the strength at the moment of impact. If he were **able to project this energy from a distant position**, without touching the body of the opponent, we must say that this is a tsuki of the highest level imaginable.

How effective is the toate technique? This is a question that does not have an answer today considering that Master Egami died.

The toate technique that is commonly shown in Shintaido demonstrations, who have expanded on Master Egami's practice ideas. (I would like to point out that Shigeru Egami's karate is practiced today by the Shotokai and Shintaido [New way of the body] groups). But I think what is seen today in Shintaido does not have the same characteristics as Master Egami's technique. If it is the same thing, then it is more a psychopathological phenomenon than a technique.

I will analyse the Shintaido toate phenomenon in the following way: during the training sessions exercise in some movements of relatively simple cadence. Submerge yourself within the repetition of these movements with a relaxed body, until you reach the level of exhaustion, then you end up feeling as if your body has become a seaweed on the sea floor, responding to the slightest water current. These exercises try to attain a provisional suppression of the voluntary body orders,

perceptions and actions, freeing it to an invasion of the more archaic levels. It could be said that our conscious part is exhausted, and our more spontaneous part, closer to the emotional level, takes over. In this situation our intuitive perceptiveness and sensitivity is open to stimulus from others. If you exercise holding the hands of a partner you will be able to feel the smallest movement. If you continue to exercise you will be able to sense, through the subtle hand contact, the movements of your partner's will. The important feeling is one of fusion with the partner. when you feel with those that surround you, facing you, around you, the profound sensation of togetherness, your body reacts reflecting their smallest intentions. Seen from the outside you'll look as if in a trance and you could truly say that you are. Cultivating this sensation of interpersonal communication, energetic communication in this case, you will develop a special perceptivity that will let you to feel the presence of the other person, first his movements and then his intentions. In this interpersonal hypersensitive space, built upon mutual trust, a partner can dynamically respond to the intentions of the other. When two partners distance themselves a few meters, if one of them makes a movement with the thought of fusing with the other, making a voluntary and spontaneous extension of the spirit, the other person, hypersensitive, will react as if hit by an invisible energy and will be projected backwards. But contrary to the impression a spectator may have, the projected person will not feel the pain he/she would feel if truly hit by a blow. On the contrary, he/she will feel a strong satisfying sensation with the encounter and an important energetic fusion. In a way, he/she'll feel as if receiving a non-aggressive electrical discharge stimulating the central point of their being.

This experience will awaken different sensations than those we are accustomed to. During this training a person can learn to liberate a level of vital energy that normally is controlled. When one is able to eliminate pressures through these exercises and experiences, the person can then experience a totally new sensation. Thus, these experiences can help those that suffer certain psychosomatic sicknesses and recuperate their health by circulating their energy in a better fashion and liberating different tensions. I have presented a summary of the my analysis of the toate process. Seen from the outside the situation seems as if a person is projected by a blow but we must understand it is not the same type of blow as the one received in a martial arts combat. The mental state is similar, but not the consequences because in a combat situation, the two opponents are in conflict, their fighting energy hurts and interfere one with the other, whereas in toate both partners are in harmony and search to unite the energy of one with the other. In a combat situation if one of the opponents were to be projected as violently as in toate, receiving an effective blow, he/she could risk being severely injured or even die. Whereas in toate the projected person will feel good after receiving, as the effect of a radical treatment of well-being.

I believe that the expression toate is badly chosen because the word means to hurt at a distance, as if the energy of the blow were thrown as a bullet shot. This is why serious trainees within the martial arts have wished to understand this phenomenon and understand the technique. Some propose the challenge, till this moment without an answer, of corroborating the validity of this technique.

Taking into account the sacrificed trajectory of Master Shigeru Egami life searching for an effective tsuki, if he had been able to discover this phenomenon in his youth, he would surely have been one of the first to try to prove its effectivity.

Considering the process we have just analysed **it is clear that a combat and the toate situation are different.** The Shintaido method, where repeating simple gestures till exhaustion can limit the conscious efforts, the disappearance of certain sicknesses the hypersensibilization of sensing other people's presence, etc. These elements are similar to the methods used by certain sects, they reduce conscience and risk losing a critical distance to what they are doing. If you feel good and discover a mental and physical well-being, all seems perfect. Those that do not know about this well-being may seem worthy of pity because they are caught on a "wrong" path. In any case you are convinced that you are on the right road. These are the typical symptoms of a person under the influence of a religious sect.

I do not, in any manner, want to say that Shintaido is a sect, quite the contrary, this discipline is based on a conscience acquired through a deepening in the Japanese Martial Arts. I would only like to warn against possible risks when applying these methods. The toate phenomenon is an interesting discovery, mainly in the psychophysiological studies. It is possibly a starting point and a concrete point of reference for the furthering of scientific reflexion on bodily practice. In any case, the ambiguity and confusion surrounding the effective blow puts this phenomenon outside the martial arts with a mystical tag that avoids confronting it with scientific objectivity.

But the subject remains, are the toate practiced today in Shintaido, which I have just analysed, and Master Egami's toate the same? I believe they are not exactly the same. If Master Egami could do toate in free sparring situations, on an opponent that was trying to apply a real blow, this attainment would truly be the magnificent result of his research. It would be the true toate, a situation where the energy of one opponent is opposing, hurting and interfering with the energy of the other. In the history of the Japanese Martial Arts you can find similar testimonies on this type of aptitude.

The toate technique in Shintaido and certain currents of Shotokai is accesible to all through training. This helps establish a conditioning that **helps the energetic communication between partners.** On the other hand, Master Egami's toate seems to have been done without, and independent to all conditioning. We cannot verify it though, I will merely formulate a hypothesis. After many years of intense training in combat techniques, Master Egami acquired his toate ability. I ask myself if the key element in this technical transformation wasn't the closeness to death and the integration of death into his practice. He says "I have died once", he continued his research in karate with a particular closeness to death for more than 20 years of his life. Living on the border of life, could it be that he was able to surpass barriers that normally hinder our potential capabilities? Master Egami did not live close to death by his own will. Based on documentation, most of those that have developed strange or extraordinary abilities had practiced an asceticism that had taken them close to death.

This ascetic attitude is present in differing degrees in Japanese Martial Art practice. The ascetic practice is not an objective in itself, rather, it points to develop and deepen conscience, thus facilitating the understanding of natural and social phenomenon. Japanese martial arts tradition values this practice because it is associated with the Buddhist thought of deepening in self-knowledge directed towards opening a universal way. The acquisition of an important technical ability is considered the concrete sign of an advancement along this way and a development of the personality. Therefore the search for effectivity is followed spontaneously with an ethic. Here we encounter the dialectic Japanese thinking related to body and spirit: deepening in the quality and technical capacity through the body, we can heighten our spiritual level simultaneously. But the training of the spirit goes through the body.