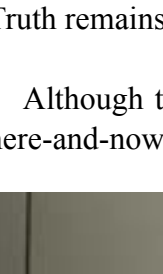


## The Four Interconnecting Roots of Martial Arts, Monastic Martial Science & Yoga

By Hayashi Tomio, Shifu



If someone tells me there is a dimension of martial practice *beyond the obvious*, above the commonly held mainstream methodologies and techniques, I want to know a tangible way to express or ground it into a workable practicality. And so, it has been my martial quest over the last twenty-five years to penetrate and to decode the concepts, principles, techniques, language and relevancy of a broad area of study defined by different labels as, Internal Martial Art, Esoteric Principles, Energy Practices, Monastic Martial Science, Mystical Teachings, etc. At present, and in my opinion, there is a great deal of ambiguity within the Hard style community regarding 'Internal' martial study and, you may be surprised, that some confusion even exists amongst practitioners of these very Arts.

My particular foray into this field circumvented the mainstream paths. After several decades of formal karate training I forged a new route for my curiosities, which by happenstance created a hybrid language and understanding slightly different from Classical and Traditional descriptions. Truth remains truth regardless of how it is dressed.

Although this outcome was not my intention, it served me to firmly anchor this subject into the here-and-now world we must all survive within.

### The Activation Gap

The language of the Internal, Esoteric and Monastic masters was and is not a common parlance. It is acutely foreign, particularly to Western ears and educational upbringing. It is therefore easy to overlook, minimize, misinterpret or disregard.

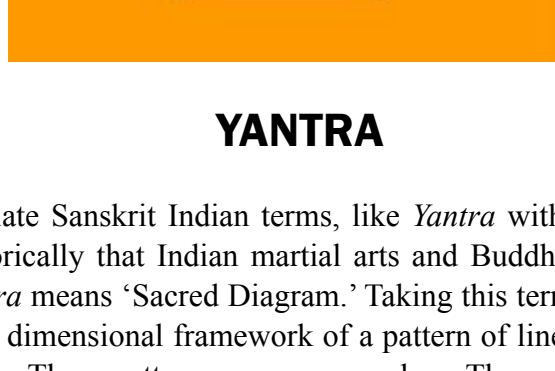
In the Esoteric world, martial technique is not what it appears on the gross physical plane. Techniques still retain their physical properties. A block is still a block. A punch is still a punch, *just more so*. It is this 'more so' that I have sought for decades to understand using my martial skill base, intuitions, historical research, and testing methods.

If you cannot see or grasp the practical relevancy of a martial concept or technique presented to you then you have an *activation gap*. That is, you cannot activate or apply any idea, principle or technique which you are unaware or do not understand.

In this light I would like to address the **Four Roots** of the Authentic Martial Lineages that the Tennessee Buddhist and Aikibudo Shifu, Tenshin Arakawa, describes as the foundation of the Esoteric Principles in Monastic and Internal martial study: *YANTRA*, *MUDRA*, *MANTRA*, and *MANDALA*. In doing so, I hope to offer some clarification for those who might be interested in the relationship between the Esoteric Teachings in martial arts and their link to both monastic Buddhist martial practices and Yoga.

This will be a new language for many and there is no one statement or essay that can contain the breadth and complexity of this field of study, any more than a martial novice could have a karate master explain, in a few words, the entirety of his External art.

Both sides of the coin, External and Internal, represent an interdependent *process* that must be lived and experienced to be fully grasped. However, I will attempt a conceptual mooring for the more curious of you in the hope that it will spur you to investigate this fascinating subject further.



### YANTRA

We do not usually associate Sanskrit Indian terms, like *Yantra* with Asian martial art practices, even though we know historically that Indian martial arts and Buddhism were deeply influenced Asian fighting arts. The word *Yantra* means 'Sacred Diagram.' Taking this term at its literal value, a Yantra is often a depiction in a two dimensional framework of a pattern of lines that range from the simple to the geometrically complex. These patterns are never random. They are said to contain mystical or inner teachings within their structure that cause *activation* of actual and specific human experience or phenomenon.

This last statement is critical. We are to experience 'something' when engaging a Yantra, and this experience will take place on one of two distinct levels; 1. when we actually *look* at the Yantra's more complex patterns and 2., when we *physically move* along their lines. Yantra are not benign. And the experience of a Yantra is not just psychological. So what is this 'something' that a Yantric design activates in martial training?

Some karate practitioners are familiar to the concept of the *embusen* in kata performance. *Embusen*, a Japanese term meaning *performing warrior line* (*Em* = performance, *Bu* = warrior, *Sen* = line) refers to the spot where a kata begins and to its line(s) of movement or floor pattern. Embusen floor patterns vary for kata. A commonly experienced kata embusen series is the 'I' or 'H' pattern found in the basic routines or *Taikyokus* in many karate styles.

Where the embusen refers to the simple directions followed by the karate practitioner, the Yantra hints that the direction itself is critical for the kata's activation. The distinction between an embusen and a Yantra is that an embusen refers to the superficial or material structure, while the Yantra refers to the design's Esoteric or 'spiritual' potential. For those who place little merit in things 'spiritual', I can easily swap out the term for a more scientific one and use the word, 'Quantum,' suggesting small, unseen, but vital detail. Most kata embusen are not, or no longer, practiced as Yantra. For example, most karate practitioners are unaware that some historically essential kata are *only* properly activated if they begin facing the correct cardinal direction.

There are instances of Buddhist forms leaving complex floor diagrams that only initiates would be aware of, and whose significance would be reinforced by drawing its Yantra with one's footwork upon the ground. Most westerners would take this design to be of a psychological nature, perhaps a means of reinforcing a vital concept or principle. Tracing the symbol of 'compassion' on the ground, for example, would reinforce the focus on giving compassion. But this definition doesn't offer much martial insight into the Yantra if such a simple goal as memory recall is intended, for the idea of compassion could simply be chanted or remembered in more direct ways.

Imagine performing a kata that spelled out with your footwork, '*Keep you hands up when fighting.*' This would be a nonsensical act. There are far easier ways to remind oneself such.

### A Yantra is considered an actual 'event' not an inert visual structure.

The true value of the Yantra is that it leads us into the non-cognitive realm, or to say it differently, into non-ordinary mind. The Yantra activates an aspect of physical reality *whether you are aware of it or not*.

So what could these martial mystics have possibly wanted us to activate that we professionals don't already see? What did they want to activate for themselves?

In a martial context, the answer can be arrived at deductively. This activation had to be a property that increased power; physical and/or mental, a power that gave one an advantage in an engagement.

The floor pattern of a Yantra, if begun in the correct cardinal direction, if traced with the appropriate footwork and stances, including breathing patterns, precise limb arrangements and actions, and using specific mental foci, would yield an enormous power advantage to its practitioners. This is a feature of kata beyond its obvious details.

But this is a rare, hidden or secretive art, known only to a shrinking martial minority in the world today. This knowledge is disappearing at an increasing rate from the Authentic martial lineages because society is propagandizing materialism over spiritualism and is thus creating a cultural momentum that devotes tying up one's time in lengthy complex 'otherworldly' alternative practices, certainly in methods that empower a person without them having to pay a premium in the consumer marketplace. Enlightenment practices are simply anti-consumer.



The Taikyoku's I Form embusen is a Yantra, a Sacred design, that has today lost its inner application and meaning. From my perspective this embusen and Yantra shapes an arm of one of the oldest Buddhist symbols, the right-facing *Svastika* that in *conceptual* performance would more look like this:

Yantra may have originated thousands of years ago when early man observed the patterns of the stars in the sky and associated the appearance of certain celestial arrangements with benevolent energy, whether for bountiful crops, or surviving hardships like disease or warfare. According to the research of the Australian martial artist and Chen Yen Buddhist, Kate Marshal, some primitive peoples believed that actually walking those star patterns, redrawn on the ground, could bestow that same bounty upon the Star Walker, whether it was in good fortune, needed strength or vitality. If this observation is valid, it would not be a stretch to see such patterns appearing later in history in elevated martial communities. *Walk this way than that way....* and you would have an activated event whose phenomenon would yield heightened awareness, extra-human strengths or bountiful harvests. Why else walk the pattern?

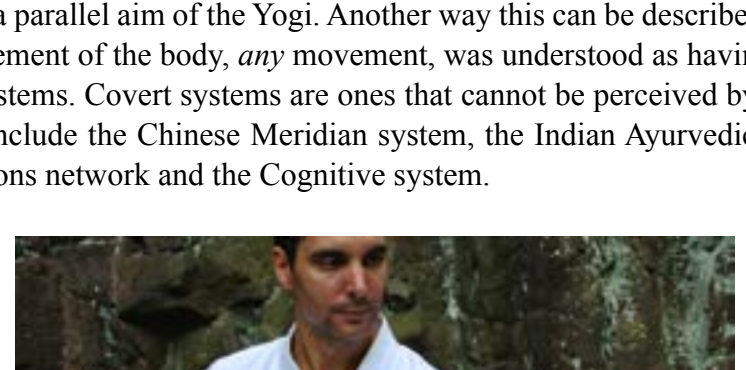
In the Isshin Kempo system we have decoded the Yantric pattern of a basic, issinryu-modified, block/punch Taikyoku Form to a fine degree. Our technical dissection goes beyond correct and obvious biomechanics—see a clear Yogic action of manipulating Source energy for the distinct advantages mentioned—*significantly more power*. However, to move properly along the Yantric track one must also be versed in the *energetic* mechanics of another broad concept, that of the *MUDRA*, and its correlation to the assembly or arrangement of martial techniques into *activating sets* following the Yantric's conceptualized lines on the ground.



### MUDRA

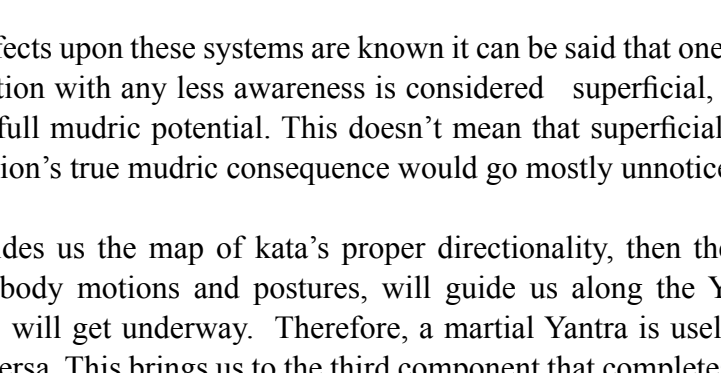
A *Mudra* is commonly understood as a symbolic *hand gesture* used in Hindu and Buddhist ceremonies, statuary, and Indian dance. A mudra is also considered a *pose* or *pose* in yoga.

Let's look at this traditional definition more closely; *a movement or a pose in Yoga*. If we extend our mudric definition to include *martial* movements or poses we could say that a Mudra is, in essence, *any conscious martial gesture*.



### "A Mudra is, in essence, any conscious martial gesture."

This definition seems at first like a dead end statement. *Any gesture?* So what? This isn't going to help a karate practitioner see past the obvious in their arts—until you add the adjectives, *Sacred* or *Activating* gesture. In the Authentic Lineages it was understood that *every* gesture consisted of both a mundane and sacred value. Hidden within the sacred teachings lay the Mudra's elevated application. The Mudra was meant to convey that another value, equal or superior to its surface attribute, was to be activated. That activation was the knowledge of how specific poses and/or bodily actions affected Source Energy flow, a parallel aim of the Yogi. Another way this can be described is that the posturing of the body, the movement of the body, *any* movement, was understood as having a specific effect on our *covert* Energy systems. Covert systems are ones that cannot be perceived by the eyes or ordinary senses. This would include the Chinese Meridian system, the Indian Ayurvedic/Chakric system, the Fascial communications network and the Cognitive system.



For example, a student performs a traditional middle-blocking action. The resistant strength of the middle block is tested. The ability to resist is noted. The test is conducted again. This time the student is instructed to make subtle changes in breath, limb and torso posturing, possibly even torso direction. In thousands of tests conducted over a twenty-five year period, these changes often led to a dramatic 50-100% increase in physical strength. This is too significant a difference to ignore in one's training. This is why we have a whole field of study called *Internal Karate* and why terms like *Ki* or *Chi* came about as an Asian label for this unique phenomenon.

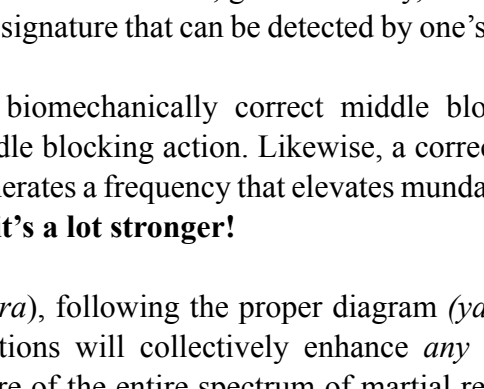
When the actual effects upon these systems are known it can be said that one is, at best, a proper Mudra. A physical action with any less awareness is considered superficial, or at best, an action or pose moving toward full mudric potential. This doesn't mean that superficial actions lack power. It does imply that an action's true mudric consequence would go mostly unnoticed and unfelt.

If the Yantra provides us the map of kata's proper directionality, then the Mudra, by means of its precise gesturing body motions and postures, will guide us along the Yantra's pathways, and the activation process will get underway. Therefore, a martial Yantra is useless without its Mudric component and vice versa. This brings us to the third component that completes the activation process in the Authentic Teachings, the concept of the *MANTRA*.



### MANTRA

Originally in Hindu and Buddhist culture, *Mantra* is a word or sound repeated to assist concentration in meditation, or a statement repeated frequently. This is the conventional definition. Both these definitions however, fail to reveal the Mantra's activation rationale for martial artists, for neither explains exactly why or how a Mantra aids in concentration or why one would repeat a martial pattern outside of the obvious.



### "A mantra is the soundless sound (quality) of a repeated gesture."

The Esoteric Teachings give us a much broader interpretation of this concept. A Mantra is the 'sound' or 'quality' of a Mudra (gesture). Sound and quality are meant to be synonymous. A mantra is the *soundless sound* (quality) of a *repeated gesture*. This quality is inaudible to the human ear yet, it can be heard by initiates who have awakened their *Third Ear*. When we hear the more common term *Third Eye*, what is being suggested is the awakening of non-ordinary sensing or sensitivity. Our so-called *Sixth Sense* detects changes in human frequency, shifts in human Energy fields. So, we repeat a high quality martial gesture because it gives off a higher quality frequency. This higher quality frequency gives us expanded awareness, greater vitality, more strength. And this high quality frequency has a distinct energy signature that can be detected by one's sensitive, non-ordinary senses.

No one will argue that a biomechanically correct middle blocking action is preferred to a biomechanically incorrect middle blocking action. Likewise, a correct, repeated sacred sound (a bio-energetically correct move) generates a frequency that elevates mundane technique to sacred technique *with practical consequences—it's a lot stronger!*

The correct gesture(s) (*mudra*), following the proper diagram (*yantra*) gives off the correct aura/frequency (*mantra*) whose actions will collectively enhance *any* martial technique. All of these activations form a whole picture of the entire spectrum of martial reality in any given moment, thus forming what could be called the ideal representation of the universe in a microcosmic parallel to the macrocosmic world. When a student is aware of and activates this level of performance the totality of the parts that make up the kata is understood to be a *MANDALA*.



### MANDALA

A Mandala (Sanskrit: lit, circle) is a spiritual and ritual symbol in Hinduism and Buddhism representing the Universe. In this case, our Mandala represents an encircled space—the martial universe—in *its entirety*, because, in principle, this circle has encompassed both the mundane and the sacred. Under this lens the martial world becomes a projection of the entire universe because all dimensions are contained within it.

All the above-mentioned practices and the four interconnecting roots that frame and support them: *Yantra*, *Mudra*, *Mantra* and *Mandala* create the foundation for Authentic Esoteric Martial and Yogic Lineages of the world.



Hayashi Tomio is a Buddhist monk in the Chen Yen Shingon Mikkyo sect, head of the Isshin Kempo system (Isshinryu's Internal sister art). He is a career Karatedo teacher with nearly fifty years experience and author of several books, including: *Internal Karate: Mind Matters & The Seven Gates of Power* [issinkempo.com/internal-karate.html](http://issinkempo.com/internal-karate.html). His latest work *Rebel Isshinryu, The 57 Challenges: Exploring Karate's Myth, Madness and Mysteries* was recently released, [www.issinkempo.com/rebel-issinryu.html](http://www.issinkempo.com/rebel-issinryu.html). [www.issinkempo.com](http://www.issinkempo.com)