



HAPKIDO A Many-Faceted Diamond

by Maggie Pierce





Hapkido is primarily a weapon of self-defense which, while relying a great deal on many different kicks, incorporates the throws of jujitsu, the hand techniques of karate, and the principles of aikido.

Hapkido has no kata, as such, but rather a series of "combination kicks," the relicts of ancient kata which were broken down into their component parts long ago to be practiced separately.

"Like a diamond," as Los Angeles hapkido instructor Chong S. Kim said, "with proper cutting, it acquires more shine. Over years, and with much experience, there is more shine."

Because of the similarities of name and basic principles, it is often assumed by the uninitiated that hapkido and its Japanese cognate are the same art, or that one is the offshoot of the other. Not entirely true. The founders of each art, Morihei Uyeshiba (aikido) and Yong Shul Choi (hapkido), each studied daitoryu aikijutsu in Japan in the first quarter of this century. Uyeshiba had practiced several other forms as well, including judo, and had also studied with Buddhist and Shinto priests since early childhood. In 1925, he combined his martial arts with his religious training into a system he called aikido.

Choi studied the same daitoryu aikijutsu in Japan from 1919 until the start of World War II, at about which time he combined his knowledge of that art with ancient native Korean styles, specifically hwarangdo and an even earlier form called tae kyun, which was solely a kicking art. The kata of tae kyun were those which, eventually broken down, became the combination of kicks of hapkido.

While the two arts, aikido and hapkido, spring from similar sources, neither one can say that it is his art on which the other is based. Of course, aikido is not the only martial art with pieces of itself wrapped up in hapkido. As one of the most eclectic of arts, hapkido has borrowed from or contributed to a dazzling variety of styles.

"People come and compare," said Kim. "They ask, what is hapkido? How

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Photos by David M. King

is it different from other styles? So I show them a little tae kwon do, then I show hapkido, how this is almost the same. But when I get a chance, I twist and throw."

One of Kim's black belt students, Steve Peterman, explained the problem some people have in separating hapkido out of all the things it seems to resemble.

"There are elements so logical, so right in hapkido that of course they are going to show up in our art," he said. "They are the same elements, just in a different order. That's one thing we constantly have to stress, because people can say, 'Oh, that's just like kenpo, or just like kung fu, or aikido, or judo.' Depending on where you catch us and how long you stay to watch, you can be totally confused. It's not any of those arts, but parts of our art show up in certain other arts."

Certainly the art most similar to hapkido is aikido, its Japanese cousin. The most obvious contrast is the simple one of technique. Aikido is primarily a blocking, throwing and holding art. Aikidoists use no kicks at all, and few strikes, while hapkido practitioners employ a large number of kicks and punches. This is, however, only a surface difference.

The fundamental distinction between the two is one of basic philosophy, for principles of aikido allow only defensive techniques. The practitioners look on aggression as unnatural human behavior. Their object is self-defense only and, on subduing an offensive person, they are content to walk away. According to Koichi Tohei in *Aikido in Daily Life*, there are only three situations in which it is permissible to use aikido techniques: when your own life is in danger, when another person encounters danger, and when one or two people are disturbing the majority. All of these are occasions of simple self-defense or unshirkable duty to others.

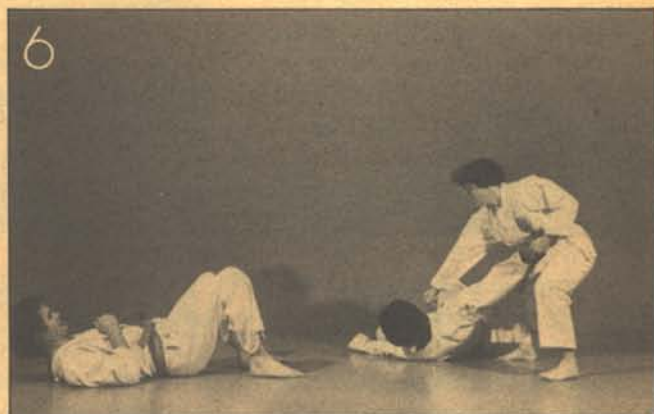
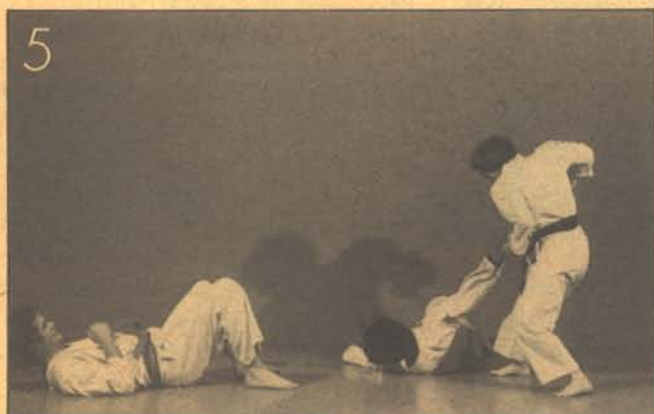
On the other hand, although the objectives of hapkido remain primarily self-defensive, they are not necessarily meant to show others the errors of their ways. C.S. Kim explained that his art is "not only defensive but offensive and counteroffensive." A hapkidoist intends to use his art only in self-defense but occasionally finds himself in a position where he must throw the first strike and does not hesitate to do so. Furthermore,

In demonstrating how kicking, punching and throwing techniques in hapkido may be combined for use in self-defense, Marc Lawson advances towards Sara Sproul, who is being held in place from behind by Harvey Hayashido. (1) As the aggressor acts, Sproul acts, delivering a kick to his (2) solar plexus. (3) Now she concentrates on the man behind by keeping his hands fixed, moving forward and lowering her center of gravity as she (4) goes into a throwing technique. (5) Sproul then prepares to deliver a (6) finishing punch to the man's head.



Sproul and Hayashido demonstrate a defense against a cross hand grab. (1) As the aggressor grabs her wrist, Sproul (2) encircles his arm by twisting her wrist in a clockwise motion, bringing it over the man's wrist as she grabs and pulls him into her (3) side kick. (4) Moving her weight to the right leg, she begins a kick, going into a (5) inside heel drop over his arm, forcing him down as she grabs his hair (6) and immobilizes him.





every defensive move carries with it a built-in counterattack.

"Aikido is more soft," Kim said in characterizing the two arts. "Hapkido is a little bit more exciting, more wild. Same idea, same principles, but more exciting. For example, in aikido you would grab and then, so softly, throw. Use the attacker's power. We are the same, but more hard."

The counterattack may be the most crucial point in a hapkido technique. Every block becomes a twist, every throw is followed up with a strike.

"Americans always seem to want to *understand* the assailant," Steve Peterman said with a laugh. "The Koreans would rather take the guy out of action."

The object of a hapkidoist's response to violence is to convince the attacker there would have been more profitable ways to use his time, or at least less painful ways. For the hapkidoist is trained in acupressure as well as striking and throwing. With very little effort he can turn a throw and twist into something almost approaching a broken arm or wrist, although breaking techniques are reserved for advanced ranks of black belts, as are the principles of acupuncture. Once a person has learned to inflict injury—and seven of the body's pressure points, properly used, can stun or even kill—he must also learn how to repair or ease the damage he may have done. Both acupressure and acupuncture are taught for this purpose.

Aikido and hapkido have in common the basic principle of nondissension or nonresistance, although their attitudes toward this principle vary slightly. Basically, however, this principle requires that one meet force with the minimum force possible to deflect and not clash with the adversary's power.

"In defending against a powerfully thrown punch, the hapkido practitioner would never step inside the opponent's area of greatest momentum and block with a hard right-angle thrust," Bong Soo Han said in his book, *Hapkido, Korean Art of Self-Defense*. "Instead, he would avoid a direct confrontation by stepping to the outside to parry the punch with a soft circular motion of the arm and hand. Once the power has been diverted, he would then be free to attack his opponent's exposed side." The circular movements are important to both hapkido and aikido at all times.



Han further explained that one uses the circular motions "to gain momentum for executing the techniques in a free-flowing manner. Straight but jerky movements are extremely hard to redirect once the power has been unleashed."

The third basic aspect of hapkido which helps to set it apart from almost all other forms of martial arts is known as "the water principle." Bong Soo Han concluded his introduction to hapkido by describing the water principles as "the quiet, direct strength in free-flowing water. As the flowing stream penetrates and surrounds its obstructions and as the dripping water eventually penetrates the stone, so does the hapkido strength flow in and through its opponents."

Also as with most styles of its Japanese cousin, hapkido has no tournament or sport forms, although its adherents sometimes compete in tournaments with a modified style. The problem is partly that hapkido is altogether too deadly an art to be considered a sport. Its use of pressure points to subdue an opponent can cause serious injury, and hapkidoists also feel that training in light or no contact would take away from the art all that makes it most effective as a weapon of self-defense. For hapkido is a most utilitarian martial art. Age, size, weight, sex, even physical handicaps, are no impediment to one who sincerely desires or who needs an effective method of self-defense.

"Many times," Kim said, "I have had a person who cannot kick. But he can use hand techniques—punching, grabbing, throwing. Older people who need a walking stick or cane may like to take a walk in the park, or walk to the

market. But then somebody attacks them. I teach them to use cane techniques.

"For older people, boys, young men, techniques are all different. If they cannot do black belt techniques, I teach the easy ones. I make them a schedule, then after two months I check to see how they are doing and make another schedule."

Hapkido also uses techniques which can be used from any body position—sitting, standing or lying down. And almost anything, from a simple pocket comb to a rolled piece of notebook paper, can be a deadly weapon in the hands of an experienced hapkidoist.

"Anytime, anyplace," said Kim, "we can fight easy. We can use anything as a weapon—a key, a woman's comb, a ball-point pen."

Women in Kim's studio generally are familiar with more techniques at any time than the men at the same belt level, primarily because they have to follow the regular men's training schedule plus a women's self-defense course as well.

If a husband and wife started studying hapkido at the same time, Kim continued, "I teach the husband two techniques a day; the wife, four or five—two plus women's self-defense."

At least one of Kim's female students, Sara Sproul, is happy to testify to the beneficial aspects of her five-year study of hapkido.

"I have rheumatoid arthritis," she said. "And I was just sitting around not doing anything athletic. The arthritis was just getting worse and worse, and I thought exercise would help. I couldn't even close my fist, and now I can. I started to notice the difference in about three months, and my family has noticed a difference, too. Stretching and exercises make you limber and stronger."

All of Kim's students had only praise for their teacher and his art. But in the middle of their conversation, Kim interrupted to admonish them that it is "bad manners to brag about hapkido and say it is better than other styles. Never say that."

"My teaching and my style are something they can't get at home or at school," Kim went on to say with a certain touch of pride. "Strong mind, strong body, strong soul."

