

“Stepping Onto the Battlefield” Using Gan-totsu Tactics

“When crossing marshes, your only concern should be to get over them quickly without delay.”

-Sonshi (Sun Tzu)

Samurai tactics never vary. They are always *gan-totsu*, “close and strike”. During kumite, for example, take the frontal kamae, be aware of who or what your opponent is, then go in *gan-totsu*. Don’t bother regretting that there is an opponent in front of you; instead, find a certain pleasure and attack head-on without hesitation, but with confidence and spirit.

The samurai chose never to wear heavy, defensive armor. He wore only light, flexible mat bamboo and hide woven together. Wearing only light protection matched the *gan-totsu* spirit of always carrying the attack *to* the enemy.

Defensive armor is heavy and difficult to move in. Offensive armor affords you little protection, but gives you the advantage of speed and maneuverability. Samurai, like all martial artists, were always able to attack with speed.

Whatever or whoever your opponent may be, you are not there to turn away or have any doubts about yourself. Most people who get what they want in life are more offensive-minded than defensive-minded. This is true of competitors who always win. Like the samurai, when they test their armor, they test only the front portion with the frontal kamae. They make certain that they have protection, but literally don’t try to cover their butts.

Of course “armor” is only a symbol of an attitude towards your lifetime battles or karate matches. If you go into action wearing defensive armor your mind is on protecting yourself from injury; you are concerned mainly with escaping safely. However, when you wear offensive armor, your mind is on *gan-totsu*, moving in and striking quickly. You are fighting to win, not to avoid defeat.

Gan-totsu has a larger meaning in life. It means to always engage in life, not withdraw from it. Although you may be afraid or have been hurt, failed before, shy, tired, angry, etc., never back away from or avoid problems for any reason. When you practice *gan-totsu*, you let nothing stand between yourself and where you want to go. With kamae you always go forward, bravely, joyfully, and without hesitation.