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Gyakuhanmi relation

The *gyakuhanmi* relation is when tori and uke have opposite legs forward. Either tori has the left leg and uke the right leg forward, or vice versa. This can happen in any martial art when a right-handed person meets a left-handed one. Otherwise, it is very rare in martial arts involving strikes or kicks. This is particularly awkward for right-handed persons, since they are in a vast majority and therefore have little experience of it.

In a gripping attack, though, *gyakuhanmi* is the most common relation, since it comes quite naturally when you grab someone.

Gyakuhanmi katatedori

Gyakuhanmi katatedori is when uke grabs tori's nearest wrist. Either uke's right hand grabs tori's left wrist, or the left hand grabs the right wrist. In the basic form, their foot positions have the same rela-



tion: when uke grabs with the right hand, his or her right foot is forward, while tori's left foot and arm are forward.

This grip is the most common in aikido – so much so that it is usually just called *katatedori*. *Gyakuhanmi* is taken for granted. Indeed, it is the most convenient way to grab an opponent's wrist, but the *gyakuhanmi* relation between the two is not common in other martial arts, where the *aihanmi* relation is almost always the case. Therefore, I am not sure that *gyakuhanmi* should be allowed such a dominant role in training – they are both needed. *Aihanmi* must also be studied properly.

Anyway, regarding the grip itself, it should be done in very much the same way as *aihanmi katatedori*. The little finger is the most important one, holding on the hardest. The angle and position of the hand is the same as in *aihanmi*. So is the tight contact with the palm on tori's wrist, the



spirit forward without any pushing, the extension of the arm in the unbendable arm fashion, and so on. See the text on *aihanmi katatedori* above, for more on these details.

The difference from *aihanmi katatedori* is that *gyakuhanmi* is by necessity off center. Both for uke and tori, the grip is to the side of the body, not straight in front of it. Still, it is necessary to feel the connection with the center, and not to regard the grip as something applied from the shoulder down. Also, uke should apply the grip as an initial and not a final attack. That means alertness and a continued focus on tori.

An important key to understanding the *gyakuhanmi* relation as well as its *katatedori* application, lies in carefully considering the potential of the free hand – of both uke and tori. If this is neglected, the attack is of little meaning, and so is practicing aikido techniques on it.

Ryotedori

Ryotedori is when uke grabs both of tori's wrists. It can simply be described as a double *gyakuhanni katatedori*, and what goes for the latter applies also here. Since *ryotedori* is connected to *gyakuhanni*, the stance of uke and tori should relate in the same way – that is, if one has the left foot forward, the other should have the right foot forward, and vice versa.

An interesting aspect of *ryotedori*, and some other two-handed grips, is the deviation from a single line connection with the center. Here, both uke and tori are so to say split, in regard to their center. Uke must still make the grips with extension of power from the center, and still regard the grips as means to control tori's center.

Because of this split from the center, I would say that *ryotedori* relates more to *jo* (the staff) than to *ken* (the sword). On the staff, the hands are usually separated, and should be able to move freely up and down the full length of the staff. One should still be able to maintain one's center, and to fetch the source of each movement from there.

In *ryotedori*, it is particularly tempting for uke to press tori's hands downward, but this is a flawed attack with many weaknesses – the weakened guard against counterattacks being just one of them. Don't push or pull in any direction. Maintain the position. That's what tori has to work with.

For exercising the awareness of both uke and tori, it is also good to carefully consider the potential of the legs in this position. The arms are locked in the grips, but the legs are not. So, both tori and uke should pay attention to the other's ability to kick or use the legs in other ways.



Katadori

Katadori is a grip of tori's *keikogi* (training jacket) by the shoulder. Uke should have the same foot forward as the hand gripping tori. The stance is a *gyakuhanmi* relation, which means that if uke stands with the left foot forward, then tori has the right foot forward, and vice versa.



When you grab tori's dress, make sure that it is done mostly with your little finger, which anchors the grip in your center and makes you more flexible than if done with the most power in the index finger.

Don't let your thumb get too nestled into the cloth of tori's jacket. Actually, you should be careful about all your fingers, since some aikido techniques really tie them into tori's jacket in a way that might harm them during the technique.

Keep your elbow pointing downward, to have the best stability and control in the grip. Also, make sure to use the unbendable arm extension.

Some aikido practitioners tend to grip on top of the shoulder, instead of to the side of it. This is rather meaningless, since it is very difficult to control tori that way. The grip should limit tori's ability to use the arm, which is not accomplished at all with a top shoulder grip. Only when you hold by the side of the shoulder, on the upper arm, you are able to have some control of tori's arm.

Of course, the grip should be done in the spirit of being an initial attack. Maintain readiness to continue with other attack forms (like in *katadori menuchi*, described below). There is no passive attack form in aikido, so uke should always remain alert.

For tori, *katadori* is particularly interesting because of the strength of this grip, making it very difficult to escape. Also, some of the aikido techniques are quite awkward and complicated to do on this attack form.

Ryokatadori

Ryokatadori is when uke grips tori's jacket by both shoulders, so it is simply a double *katadori*. The stance is of the *gyakuhanmi* kind, which means that if uke stands with the left foot forward, then tori has the right foot forward, and vice versa.



Grab in the same way as described above about *katadori* – mainly with the little finger, careful not to get your fingers too much nestled into the cloth of tori's jacket, and by the sides of the shoulders instead of on top of them.

In this position you really need to be able to control tori's arms to some extent, since both of your own arms are occupied by the grip you applied. For example, if tori tries to hit you, you should be able to block it without letting go of tori's shoulders.

The grip should be done in the spirit of being an initial attack, with a readiness to continue with other attack forms – like a kick, or by pulling or pushing tori. Actually, it is not a very practical attack at all, if not some continued attack move is intended.

Notice that this attack needs you to face tori straight on, to have good control. Avoid any *hanmigamae* turn of your body (*hanmigamae* is when you stand with one side of your body slightly more forward than the other). Notice also that this is an attack form which is a bit awkward to apply if tori stands in an accentuated *hanmigamae*. Therefore, it makes the most sense if tori, too, stands straight forward.

The difficulties that tori has to solve when attacked by *ryokatadori* are quite the same as with *katadori* – but doubled. Without knowing the proper body movements, tori can really get stuck in this grip.

Munedori

Munedori (sometimes spelled *munadori*) is when uke grips tori's jacket by the front, right on the chest. Because of its similarity with *katadori*, the stance is a *gyakuhanmi* relation, which means that if uke stands with the left foot forward, then tori has the right foot forward, and vice versa. Uke should stand with the same foot forward as the hand doing the grip, for maximum stability.

Do the grabbing in the same way as described above about *katadori* – mainly with the little finger, careful not to get your fingers too much nestled into the cloth of tori's jacket. Your hand should be positioned so that your little finger is down and your thumb up. This keeps a good link to your center. Your elbow points downward. When your elbow is down, tori will have the most difficulty in applying a technique on your arm. Use the unbendable arm extension, for the best control.

Also, try to apply the grip directly with just one hand – don't start by adjusting the collar of tori's jacket with the other hand. If you do, then tori should really act on the first hand coming, and not wait for the next one.

The grip should be done in the spirit of being an initial attack, with a readiness to continue with other attack forms.

What makes this attack particularly interesting for tori is its firmness. Correctly applied, this grip is not easy to get out of. An additional difficulty is the fact that tori doesn't have too much room for applying an aikido technique, since uke is blocking much of the space in front of tori.

This is an attack form which is a bit awkward to apply if tori stands in an accentuated *hanmigamae*. Therefore, it makes the most sense if tori stands straight forward.

