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### Jeremy Lesniak:

Welcome, you're turned in to whistlekick martial arts radio episode 486 with today's guest, Sensei Samir Berardo. If you don't know my name, my voice, I'm Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on the show, I'm the founder of whistlekick and I am a passionate martial artist and everything we do here is in support of the traditional martial arts. We do that in a lot of different ways. If you want to see all the things that we're doing, go to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). That's our online home, it's also the easiest way to find the stuff we make. Yes, we make products! Physical things that you might want to check out. If you buy one or more than one, use the code `PODCAST15` to save 15%. Everything for this show is on a whole different website. That's [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). The show comes out twice a week and the goal of this show, and of whistlekick overall, we're working hard to connect, educate and entertain traditional martial artists throughout the world. If you want to show your appreciation for what we're doing, you can do quite a few things. You can make a purchase or share an episode, follow our social media, tell a friend, pick up a book on Amazon. We're constantly adding new titles. You can leave a review or support us on Patreon, [Patreon.com/whistlekick](https://Patreon.com/whistlekick). Patreon's a place where we post exclusive content, written, audio, video and you're going to get access to more content by contributing as little as \$2 a month. What an interesting time in traditional martial arts. We have people talking about modern martial arts and the mixture or blending of martial arts. We have people who are passionate about martial arts that had to be rediscovered like historical European martial arts. Today's guest is really passionate in what he calls historical Karate and we have a long conversation about that and what that all means and whether



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or not you're a Karate practitioner, I think you're going to like this one because as we talk about historical Karate, we're talking about a lot of other things. Things that are relevant regardless of what you train. So, here's my conversation with Sensei Samir Berardo. What's going on? Did I interrupt something?

**Samir Berardo:**

No, not at all. I was studying Japanese with the headset on.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How many language do you know?

**Samir Berardo:**

About 4, including Japanese but I'm not very good at Japanese at this point. I'll be good at it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm always impressed with people when they decide. I was raised with one language and I learned another language and I'm going to keep going so what are the other languages? Obviously, English.

**Samir Berardo:**

Yeah, I speak Spanish and Portuguese so that's English, Spanish, Portuguese and then later, Japanese.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I would have guessed Spanish by the name.

**Samir Berardo:**

In Brazil, we speak Portuguese but Spanish and Portuguese are very similar and most countries around here, the neighboring countries speak Spanish so it's kind of easy for us to speak Spanish.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, I would've been wrong but close in that it's Portuguese. It's funny. I can get by in Spanish. I can't get by in Portuguese but if it's written, I can figure it out because the accent seems to be a lot more different than the spelling.

**Samir Berardo:**

Indeed, that's true. Also, people who speak Portuguese find it easier to understand Spanish than people who speak Spanish can understand Portuguese. That's peculiar.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Oh, fascinating! Why is that? Do you know?

**Samir Berardo:**

I don't know for sure but Spanish speakers have told me about that many times.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

The extent of my Portuguese is pretty much counting to 10 from my time in capoeira.

**Samir Berardo:**

If you ever come to Brazil, we can make that change. I would help you a lot.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Thank you, I'd appreciate that. If you're good with it, let's just keep going. We've got some conversation going and I have no idea if the listeners like this part of the show but I don't care because I do.

**Samir Berardo:**

Yeah, it's your show!

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It is my show and I should get to enjoy this part of it so thanks for coming on. Thanks for your willingness to join us today.

**Samir Berardo:**

Thank you for inviting me. I'm very glad to be here.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Are you in Brazil now?

**Samir Berardo:**

Yes, I am. It's 4 PM right now.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok, couple of hours ahead. It's 2 o'clock here and what have you done so far today?

**Samir Berardo:**

Today was a special day for 2 reasons. First of all, it's carnival day so it's holiday. There are many people in the streets, dancing, having fun. I didn't go to work. Also, it's a special day because of this very interview. It's not something I do every day and there was a great deal of expectations. Just a few



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minutes ago, I was messaging some of my students saying hey guys, a few minutes from now, it's going to be the interview. I am excited and kind of nervous so that's what I was doing but I was also, things that I do every day like studying Japanese.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Every day?

**Samir Berardo:**

Yeah, every day.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And for how long have you been doing that?

**Samir Berardo:**

For about 2 years but consistently just for the past year.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now, everyone has different reasons for studying languages. I'm going to guess, yours has something to do with your training.

**Samir Berardo:**

Sure, because the most important sources of the martial arts which I practice are written in Japanese especially the historical sources which are truly the most important. I practice historical martial arts so I need to go search in historical sources.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What do you mean when you say you practice a historical martial art? I think I know what you mean but I don't think I've ever heard anyone put it in that way.

**Samir Berardo:**

Yeah, I think it's a peculiar way of coining it but it's because I think I could say that I'm a Karate practitioner but if I say that, really, most people will get a very wrong figure because they will think of what is a typically known as Karate. In fact, even this name Karate, is a modern name. There were old names and the kind of Karate that the historical Karate when it used to be practiced fully as a martial arts, as a self-defense martial arts, this historical kind of Karate was really extremely different from the modern kind of Karate. Both are great, both are beautiful but they are really different. Both in what they're for. Modern Karate is made for different things and also, technically. Technically, they're completely different.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Can you speak to some of those differences because I think, most of the people listening, whether or not they train in Karate will understand what modern, we can call it modern Karate, is and I doubt very many people have an understanding of what you're calling historical so I'm interested.

**Samir Berardo:**

Also, I think this is something useful for everyone who practices martial arts with historical roots because Karate went through a process that many other martial arts have been to or similarly, most historical martial arts that have survived to this day have gone through modernization process so Karate is one among those and historically, Karate had just one main reason was self-defense. That was not Karate with this name because this is a modern name. Sometime in the past, they would call it tsude or tsuji, different names, but it was very different in the fact that it was aimed for self-defense. The techniques, there were different methodologies of teaching because every teacher, every practitioner would have their own kind of Karate but there was one thing most important for all which would be the use of kata, the forms. Also, other martial arts use forms such as Chinese martial arts and taekwondo so kata was far more important for Karate, for old style Karate, historical Karate, than it is today because kata was a way of really summing up or recording the actual fighting techniques of old style Karate, of historical Karate. For example, if we train together, I teach you stuff or you teach me stuff and in the end, we sum up everything that has been taught in one kata. Not necessarily we are the ones creating the kata, we can be practicing a kata that has been created by someone else but the point, the most important one thing here is that the kata, that kata, we know exactly what we're doing. We know the meaning of every movement because it's just a consolidation of techniques that we are practicing. We don't practice the kata not knowing the meaning of the movements. This is somewhat of a sensitive subject because for the recent year, recent decades, there has been a lot of confusion about the meaning of the katas. It's very popular, one kind of idea that people think the kata can be used for anything but that's truly not true. In fact, the movements of kata have correct meanings, historical meanings and those meanings can be brought back through historical research, through scientific research, in fact. It's many different scientific disciplines that can help bring back the meaning of kata so this is the most important difference between old style Karate and modern Karate is that old style Karate was practiced with correct understanding, with original understanding of the meaning of the movements especially not only the meaning of the movement but also, how the idea, the very idea of kata works because most people don't understand that. It is nobody's fault. That's very important to mention. It's not to blame the practitioners or the instructors. The fact is that they haven't been taught how it works so how can they practice something that they haven't been taught? How can they teach something that they haven't been taught? Now, that was the formal difference. The formal difference is the use of kata but the practical difference, technically, the way of fighting is that Karate as a self-defense martial art has no limitation in terms of rules, of kinds of strikes, kinds of techniques. It's not grappling art as some seem to be saying today. Old style Karate is not a grappling art. It's just a mixed



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art. I could say a mixed martial art but I don't like the idea very much because the phrasing mixed martial art often seems to mean something like sport. Karate was not a sport. There were no rules and this changes everything but one point is that, old style Karate would use grappling, indeed, grappling techniques, would use striking, throwing, pressure to more exposed parts of the human body like the eyes, testicles, attacks to areas which are forbidding in any kind of fighting sport but they wouldn't practice that separately as people often do today. People go to grappling school and then, they would go to striking school. If it works, that's great but there was little point to do that because when you fight for your life, you should use anything available so there's no reason to separate kinds of techniques and, in fact, in old style Karate, practitioners, it's not only a matter of not separating. The fact is that old style Karate uses everything together, sometimes even at the same time. For example, you pull someone's arm and you can perform a joint lock on that arm, for example, against the elbow joint and at the same time, you strike them on the head, on a vital point on the head; for example, the jaw, the back of the head so you do it at the same time and that's very good because when the opponent is trying to protect from one kind of strike, he might suffer the other kind. The defender, because Karate is a defensive art, the defender strikes the aggressor on the head. The aggressor is trying to defend his head and when he does that, he suffers a joint lock at the very same time because he can't protect from the joint lock because his attention was focused on the head, on the strike to the head so that's a very peculiar aspect of old style Karate. It's not unique to old style Karate. There are other old martial arts that do that same, sometimes modern martial arts do something similar but I don't think as sophisticated as it with old style Karate but that was one kind of fighting technology, fighting knowledge that was really advanced at that time because that was something that they would need for real. That's something very special. I believe there's something very special regarding historical martial arts. Today, we practice martial arts for many reasons and even for self-defense, I, myself, a self-defense teacher. At work, we practice them but we don't use them nearly as often as people from ancient times would use because we're in a far more peaceful world today. It's a safer world. For example, if I practice a martial art for 10 years, that doesn't mean that my martial art needs to work because it's very unlikely that I'll need that martial art work and what could happen? I can become a teacher without ever having needed to use my martial arts so something very peculiar happens, a teacher who has never fought will teach other people ok, I can fight, yes, for sport, and that's very good. I'm not dismissing the importance of utility of training for sport. That's really, extremely useful and good but it's just a different world. it may work. The martial art, the modern martial art that people are practicing may work. There's no problem but even if it doesn't work, that martial art can still be passed on to other people and so on to future generations and so on but in old martial arts, if it doesn't work, you're gone. You die or you don't die but there's no point to pass it on because people in old times wouldn't practice martial arts for a hobby. They wouldn't be interested. They have other stuff to do and in a different world, it was necessary for martial art to work. Even if people learn a martial art that doesn't work, ok, they learn a martial art, it doesn't work but as long as they need that martial art, they're gone and the techniques will not be passed on to future generations because if we can come back to the old martial arts, we find out it's like survival of the fittest. It's natural selection of techniques that have been used in different generations. For example,



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the A martial artist needs to use his martial arts, some of those techniques work, some of them don't work but he survives. He survives from the occasions in which some of his techniques didn't work. This A person is going to teach only what works to the B person and the B person is going to need the martial arts again, the techniques again and the B person is going to learn from many different people and this second person, the B person is only going to pass on what works again and so on for many generations so the result is a huge amount of great knowledge accumulated and this accumulated knowledge is formalized, it's conserved, it's passed on through kata so kata is the accumulated knowledge of many people, for many generations. For myself, when I say kata and sometimes I say something and I think, I talk to my students, my students feel the same. How can someone come up with this? This is genius. This is not the work of one person but that's the very point. It's not really the work of one person. It's many people teaching each other and the process goes on leading to a greater fighting technology, self-defense technology. I like comparing it to technology because technology is about the same. The future generations build upon what the generation that came before what they had already discovered but the difficult today of modern martial arts is that the context of using modern martial arts is different. What does that mean? Survival of the fittest, natural selection tends to work differently today so people will select not what works better for self-defense, for example, but they can select what works better for specific sports context or it depends on what they are doing with that, their martial arts. The natural selection can become the evolution of the martial art, can become the selection of what looks better and is that good? I think it's good but it's important to understand the differences between them. The big difference, the biggest differences between old style Karate, historical Karate that used to be practiced in the Ryukyu kingdom which today is Okinawa prefecture in Japan. That martial art that used to be practiced in Ryukyu kingdom was a self-defense art solely for self-defense for life protection. It would also be useful to protect your life in terms of giving you, of making you happier. You would be happier by practicing martial arts. That's actually still a benefit today of practicing martial arts. If we practice in a smart way, of course, because martial arts can be good or bad for the health depending on how we practice them but they would protect the lives of the practitioners both in times of peace and the virus. There were no competitions, no medal out of demonstrations, there wasn't this culture of today, of martial arts for fun or for other kinds of enjoyment so those are the differences. If I seem to have left some hole, please just ask me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're good and right out the gate and you get the theme of what we get to talk about today. Every guest comes on and one of the things I like about our format is it gives the guest the opportunity to talk about the things that are important to them within martial arts. For some, it's their accomplishments, it's the things that they've seen, it's overcoming adversity and here with you, we're talking about the differences between martial arts currently and martial arts historically. Where would you draw that line? When you're talking about historical Karate, what time period are we talking about?

**Samir Berardo:**



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That's a very good question because it's not simple. When we talk about period, maybe the only certain way of answering is somewhere in time when the kata had been established. I don't know exactly when but for example, if I practice one specific kata, for example, a popular kata, naihanchi shodan, it's a very popular kata in Karate. In Japanese Karate, some schools such as Shotokan call it tekki shodan. If we practice this kata specifically, we know that it comes from somewhere before the turn of the century from 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> century but we can't be sure when it is created. We just know that when we're practicing something from the time when they created that kata. It's a very conditional answer. It's not length to a specific time level. The level is the kata so the techniques, we know that somewhere in the past, they would be established and the kata, naihanchi shodan but we don't know exactly when. I could tell you that old style Karate would still be practiced in the old style way until around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. That's when they started teaching Karate for other reasons which were not self-defense. They started teaching Karate in that time they wouldn't call it Karate. They would call it tso-ji or tsu-ji in the uchinaguchi language which was an Okinawan language. A language that would come from the Ryukyu kingdom and in the turn of the century, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they started teaching Karate as a form of physical education to young students of the school system in Okinawa so that's when they started teaching Karate openly to many people. Before that time, the classes would be private, would be one on one, private instruction and when Karate starts to be taught as a form of physical education, that the landmark, that's when we know that it started to be changed to modern Karate. It's not the only point but it's probably the most important point that sets apart old style Karate from modern Karate but we don't know for sure how many centuries it has been practiced before. The history of Karate gets worse. We have a lot of good written sources that have been created in the turn of the century that's very good, very important but before that, they wouldn't make writings about Karate. Everything would be passed on orally so we can't say for sure so probably something about from 1, 2 centuries regarding the influence of Chinese in Okinawa and maybe, 2, maybe 4, 5, 6 centuries because maybe the immigration of a few Chinese families to Okinawa amounts to a few centuries. I don't know for sure how many centuries but it's probably about 5 or 6 centuries and those Chinese who started living in Okinawa that is in Ryukyu kingdom probably the ones who, we can't say for sure, but probably the ones who made the greatest influence to establish the one specific martial art that today we could call old style Karate. There would be other martial arts that would come before, still in the Ryukyu kingdom but before the Chinese influence, it's surely something different. What defines Karate as what it is the use of forms, of kata and most likely, the practitioners in the Ryukyu kingdom started using forms after the Chinese families emigrated to the Kume village in the Ryukyu kingdom so that's probably 4 or 5 centuries ago.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And how did you start down this path? Was this how martial arts was originally taught to you or did you start in a different way and find it?

**Samir Berardo:**





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Yeah, I believe most practitioners who are trying to find the martial arts that satisfy them the most, it's normal for them to make a path with many different stops and turns. Mine was like that. My first contact with martial arts was when I was about 12 and the city I was born in, it was Belém in the region of Pará in Brazilian Amazonia, Amazon, and it was actually capoeira and Brazilian jiu-jitsu and I think, if I asked you, you would be able to guess that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Those are the 2 Brazilian martial arts that I know of.

**Samir Berardo:**

Yeah, exactly but Belém is a very dangerous place. I'm not proud to say that but it's true. It's being considered as one of the most, 10 most dangerous cities, big cities, in the world and since I was very young, I would see violence. I've had various friends who were killed and that kind of stuff so when I practiced capoeira and Brazilian jiu-jitsu, especially capoeira because I liked it the most, it was something that everyone would practice, for example, at school or after a soccer match. We would play soccer and after that, we would keep practicing capoeira or Brazilian jiu-jitsu and actually, both of them together, I practiced in a time that people would have hard edge capoeira, a capoeira play together, people would play with each other and suddenly they went to the ground. I never liked that too much because I liked the standing game of capoeira but that was something that people would do and unfortunately, as violence is very present in our lives, people would use martial arts for fighting. It's important to notice that I'm talking about fighting. Like street fights and not self-defense, they are very different things and I'm not proud at all to have been part of street fights when I was young. I practiced those martial arts for about 4 years, 5 years and until one day, I fought in front of a teacher. Actually, it was a school teacher and he was like a father figure to me and he saw me fighting and he told me that I had done a very bad thing. I was so ashamed that after that, I never had a street fight again. Anyway, in that time, there were also many bullies. That was one of the reasons why I would practice martial arts and I really learned a lot on how to have street fights against those bullies to protect myself and sometimes, to protect my friend. I kept doing that a few years after until I finished school. I went to college and I started working very, very young so I stopped practicing martial arts at all because I had to study and work. There was no time to practice martial arts but after I graduated from college, I got a really good job, a government job and I had finished college and finally I had a good job and in that job, I would have self-defense classes. In the very beginning when I started working there, it's for a federal security agency in Brazil. We would have self-defense classes and when that happened, I thought, whoa, it's time to go back to martial arts so it was like 12 years ago and I never stopped. I actually never stopped for 1 day but when I went back to martial arts, my first teacher would be a Karate teacher and he made a very strong impression on me. He said, I hope you keep practicing after we finish those self-defense classes and that's exactly what I did and I trained with many different instructors because I thought to myself, I understand that people practice martial arts for many different reasons but I want to practice martial arts that makes me feel that it works, that it works for fighting. Not only that it's beautiful, not only that it's happy. I want it to



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work for fighting especially to protect myself because I've had self-defense classes and I want to take this to the next level so I went to one school and then to another. I not only practiced Karate. In the meantime, I practiced taekwondo. I got a black belt in taekwondo. I got a black belt in Shotokan Karate. I practiced judo. I practiced Krav Maga and I just stuck to old style Karate, to what I had found to be old style Karate because it was what seems to be, to me, the most effective martial arts method that I would know for self-defense. I'm not telling that it's the most effective martial arts method. I don't know because I don't know all martial arts and I just know a little more about old style Karate but it was the most effective one which I came across. I felt while I started myself teaching self-defense classes at work and people who practiced other martial arts as well would recognize that those techniques, those old style Karate techniques, they would agree with me. Wow, man, I have never seen this before and it really seems to work very well. Even my judo instructors, they would agree. I've had students and instructors that when we begin practicing for self-defense context, they would agree, yes, this is great. Not that I have what's greatest, I'm just a student but I'm looking for what works the best and it works for me. That's it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And I think that that quest is something that's not unique. I think most of us who venture out from our first martial arts are looking for something more. We're looking for whether it's something that works better from our mind in a practical sense or a sport sense or fits our body type better. We're often looking for that and I think that that's important and one of my favorite things about martial arts is that there are different ways to approach that.

**Samir Berardo:**

You just said something. You said that the martial arts are different and I totally agree with you but just a few days ago, I saw the internet, someone saying, it was like a famous person saying this is not important but I believe some people may think that martial arts are all the same in the end but it's not true. They are different but they are different for what reasons? The main reason why they're different, that's what I think, is that they're made for different reasons, for different contexts so for example, a sport martial arts made for a specific sports context, for example, jiu-jitsu, Brazilian jiu-jitsu competition, it's made for that kind of context so it will be necessarily different from another martial arts made for another sports context and both of them are sport martial arts. Both of them are very effective in their specific contexts but they are very different because they're not meant to do the same things and even if we have martial arts which aren't for sport, for example like "real fighting", "fight to the death" martial arts, they are very different. They can still be very different. For example, if you get martial arts with weapons, they will be very different from martial arts without weapons. That should be obvious but that shows that martial arts are different but even if you get 2 martial arts with the very same weapons, they can be different. For example, if you'll get sword, sword martial arts, Japanese sword martial arts made for military use, they will be different from Japanese martial arts made for duels. When you're a soldier, you have a very different way of fighting because you may have body armor.



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Your opponent may have body armor, there may be many opponents at the same time. You may have your other soldiers on your side as well and a duel is a totally different thing and if I am a police officer, for example, that's a totally hypothetical example but if I am a law enforcement officer in old Japan, my way of using my martial arts will also be different from the way that a person will use in a duel or a person will use in the battlefield. That's very different. A police officer is not supposed to kill his opponent immediately. A police officer is not supposed to run away. Neither should a soldier, neither should someone engaging in a duel but someone who only fights for self-defense can run away. That's something that you can do when you're using martial arts for self-defense so the context are very different. If you're a woman, if you're not physically very strong, your martial arts tend to reflect your physique, your body. If you're very strong, if you're big, you're a big man who can take advantage of your strength, your martial arts will also reflect this so martial arts are in fact very different from each other for that reason. Even self-defense martial arts will be different from each other so what we can do is look for what fits better the many aspects of what we want. The body type, just as you said, the body type, the kind of application of the martial arts and all of those details for that reason, martial arts are actually very different. Even self-defense martial arts are different from each other but if the context is completely the same, of course, different martial arts tend to look more and more similar and that's a historical fact, indeed.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, one of my, this certainly isn't my observation or comment but I've heard some people say that martial arts, when you start out looks very different but the more time you spent with them, the better you get. The more you understand, the more similar they become.

**Samir Berardo:**

That's true to some extent. That is true but it's like the balance that we have in everything, the more we know a few things, the more we see in common between them but the more we know a few things, the more we find also the details that are different so yes, that's true to some extent because the body is the same, the laws of physics, the laws of physiology are the same for everyone. To some extent, even actually, you don't need to use only martial arts. If you think of sports, for example, baseball or golf and you have your bat, you will still be willing to use your hips, the swing, the way you use many different parts of your body to perform a technique in golf or in baseball or actually in basketball, you don't throw a basketball, a ball in basketball only using your arms. You use your whole body, you use your legs so there's a lot in common with other physical activities so that's true. They become more similar but for example, if you punch with your whole body mass like a spear, that's a typical, that's not the only kind of punching technique of old style Karate but if you use this specific kind of technique, you punch like a spear and using a straight thrust against the opponents body, you would probably prefer to punch with your pointer and middle finger joints but if you punch like a series of hammers like in a circular path without using your whole body mass, you will use your body mass but not the same way. You will thrust like a piston, you can use other joints of your fist because, for example, the last 3 joints can't handle that



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amount of body weight if you use all your body weight and perform a thrusting punch. You can damage your joints but they're great to perform, for example, the classical Wing Chun style kind of punch. I believe the Wing Chun style of punch, for example, is possibly because it's meant to be used by lighter people. Wing Chun, the Chinese martial arts that's been said to have been created, we don't know if it's true, but the legend says that a woman created Wing Chun. For that reason, the punches are different from those of Karate because in Karate, we use more of our body mass, comparatively more of our body mass, doesn't mean that Wing Chun doesn't mean body mass. They use their wonderful punchers but if we use the last 3 joints of our hands, of our fists, with the same kinds of punches, it's easier for us to have that well-known boxing fracture on the fist. It's easier to damage our hands and our wrists so those are the kinds of differences.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I completely agree. Let's shift gears a little bit. We've talked a lot about martial arts and the martial arts you do but we talked very little about you and I want to get to know more about you. You talked about growing up in a rough area in Brazil. I don't think you mentioned the city though.

**Samir Berardo:**

The city is Belem. That's pretty much it. It's the same name as in Portuguese of the city where the religious figure, Jesus Christ, was born so that's the name of the city, Belem. It's the exact same city where famous Karate practitioner, Lyoto Machida. He wasn't born in Belem but he was raised in Belem so that city, he comes from that city.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm sure we have many people who know that name. Good stuff and were you always interested in history?

**Samir Berardo:**

I don't really think so, to be honest.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No, that surprises me.

**Samir Berardo:**

What's the point in researching history of martial arts? I was only interested in martial arts that worked for me, that made me feel satisfied. I think this works, that's enough for me and I didn't really even want to research. I wasn't planning to become a researcher but why do I need to stop playing video games or riding my skateboard? Why would I stop doing stuff that I like to research, to learn to speak Japanese, all of those stuff? I would prefer to do the stuff that I was already doing but in order to understand better



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the martial arts which I was practicing, I was forced to study it's history and the more I would study it's history, indeed, the more satisfied I would become with the kind of martial arts that I was practicing. It wasn't the only kind of research, not only research it's history but researching history really helped make sense of everything else. My particular research, there were a few people who know it today. There are even a few famous people who said this is awesome like for example, [Jesse Enkamp](#), the Karate nerd. I met him a few times. I showed him some of my research and he said wow, I have never seen anything equal in my life. That's something that he said and if you don't believe me, ask him. He said that I could repeat what he said so I'm ok with that. This research, I'll say it's based on 5 pillars. Is that word correct, pillar? It's based on 5 pillars. It's historical research, contextual, strategic and tactical research, analysis. I prefer to call it analysis and there's also technical research which is biomechanical and physiological research analysis again than the formal research which is the analysis of the old kata, the forms of Karate and finally, test under pressure so what I do today is based on those 5 pillars and history is just one of those pillars but it's extremely important because when I study history, I get greater input on how to do things. It's impressive how the old masters in very little time wrote so many great old style Karate books. It would be great if we have more, it would be wonderful to have more. We don't but it's impressive that in just a few decades, they had already written a lot and those books are very useful. Not only to understand the history, I'm not talking about it. I'm talking about really the practical aspect of martial arts. You don't even need to be a Karate practitioner to learn from those books. You get, for example, one book [00:55:30] was an Okinawan law enforcement officer and he wrote this book on old style Karate. He didn't even use the word Karate in his book. He called it [00:55:53] would be one of the old names for Karate and the kinds of teachings that he convinced on his book can be used by anyone who wants to learn to fight for your self-defense. He even goes to say something, funny stuff like ok, sometimes you can spit on the guy's face to buy time to flee or to hit him somewhere. He teaches stuff that is very unusual today but you can really use even though you're not a Karate practitioner. If you're a Krav Maga practitioner, jiu-jitsu practitioner focused on self-defense, you can use his teachings there. Even the technical teachings, I'm not talking only about spitting on people's faces, people's eyes but you can use the technical advice that he gives there. There are great books, really great books but it's not enough to just focus on the technical part. It's best you will make sense of everything if you study history so that's why I went into history but I just study as much as necessary because time is limited for everyone and I tend to focus on the technical aspect. There are many people out there who are doing wonderful work on uncovering the history of martial arts not only Japanese martial arts but European martial arts. There are many people out there and for Okinawan Karate, there are some people doing some really wonderful stuff and wonderful work and I'm very thankful for what they have done and they're the real people of history of martial arts. Not that they're not technicians themselves but they have done really wonderful work unveiling the history of those martial arts.

#### **Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right on. Now, we've spent most of our time today talking about the past. Whether it's your past or the past Karate so let's flip that. Let's talk about the future. You mentioned that you have a school and you



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have students so tell us a bit about that. Tell us about what you're hoping comes from your understanding of Japanese and being able to read and translate these texts and future training and all that. What's going on in the future?

**Samir Berardo:**

My only intention in the beginning was to practice martial arts for myself, to be satisfied with what I was doing but there was a point where I had come up with so many things with the research that I found out that I needed to share it with other people. In fact, even my students wanted me to share. I talked about Jesse Enkamp, he asked me what will you do if you die and this doesn't go published so today, I don't want this to be left in my mind, in my computer. I want people to learn about this and to keep taking it forward because I'm just one person and I don't treat this as the work of one person. It's like science, again, actually, my research is based on scientific method, methodology. For example, we need to replicate everything we do, we need to test, we need to submit it to other people for them to find mistakes and that's something that has happened many times so I want to make more people be aware about it. First of all, so this understanding, this knowledge will be passed on. It will become known by everyone and the second thing that I want is for people to continue the work. Not that I don't want to continue it myself but as I told you, I'm just one person and even though I'm working on it, there's no reason for me to be the only one working on it. In fact, there are other people trying to do the same and I think everyone needs to get together on this to work together. Some people have worked along with me, together with me, but unfortunately, this doesn't happen all the time. One of the reasons, I believe, this doesn't happen all the time, I understand it's part of the world. People are like that. Things are not easy. It's not that other researchers are bad people. It's not that but some people are trying to make money out of this research and that's very valid but for that reason, it's harder for them to work together with other researchers because it becomes kind of a competition and as I told you, it's part of the world. Society is like that. We can understand but the hardest part is sometimes, that competition even prevents us from testing what each other is doing or from getting together and see what really works, what works better or what makes sense so what I want to do is to make people know what I've done. I'm actually working on this. For example, just 2 years ago or 3 years ago, very, very few people would know what I'm doing. Almost only my students because my research would be private for the past years, for many years. I would never publish anything about it. I would only discuss privately with other researchers and teach my students. Also, my students are not really students. I've never taken students just to have students because I don't even charge for the classes, not that I think it's a bad thing. I think it's totally valid; in fact, I would love to have a commercial school to some extent because it would help me, for example, if I lived on teaching martial arts, that would allow me to work on martial arts for the greatest part of the day and today I don't do that. I have a very nice job in Brazilian government and I teach martial arts there. That's a very special position but I don't teach martial arts there. I don't research martial arts there for the greatest part of my day so what I would love to do is start teaching for as my main job and share with as many people as possible making them know what I've been researching and make them contribute to that research even by trying to falsify what have



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been the conclusions of my work and with that, they can all start working together. I'll give you another example. For example, if I have one kata, I told you something when we began this conversation. I told you that kata movements have a proper meaning, a correct meaning. Kata movements aren't free to interpretation. This might be not a very popular view but to be honest, I'm very convinced of this. I have a lot of evidence and never, I told someone in person about this, showed it all the evidence and the person ended up not agreeing. Everyone who sees that ends up agreeing. Wow, that's true. There's a real original meaning and of course, that meaning is not completely closed. It's very opposite. There's a correct meaning of the kata but it's fairly open to a great deal of variation but you have to know and you have to understand where you're coming from and I want to show this to other people so they can understand the reasoning behind this, behind all of this and I will tell them. This is the rule that I used to interpret, to analyze this specific sequence of movements and these movements, these are all the rules and I want to know if this is true. Of course, I've been doing the research myself and my students are my test subjects. My students, actually my visitors, the people I visit also because I've been visiting other martial artists and inviting them and having other kinds of encounters to test martial arts, to test what I've been researching so it's not something that I haven't been doing. I've been doing this for years but I want to take it to more people and for that, probably the easiest way to do it is to show in person because it's really, martial arts are not you can't begin easily but you take it every next level gets harder so it's a complex matter and it requires a lot of time to explain and even after I explain, for example, someone might very well doubt it. Oh no, I don't believe this that you're saying, Samir. You can be explaining this to me. I tell somebody about it but the person might not believe it but if I show them in person, if I demonstrate, ok, so let's try to do this for real. Let's take safety measures and I show them for real and that's how we finally, we can know for sure that it works. There's something even better. After that, they can try it themselves. They can test it with other people and there are ways for testing it with other people as well and those ways are something that martial artists have been doing for...modern martial arts have been doing it already. They've been trying to test but so far, most tests they do aren't completely, those tests aim at understanding what works, for example, self-defense. The tests are aimed, for example, to see what works in a sport environment so let's say for example, an MMA match. An MMA match is a wonderful martial arts library but there's one problem with it. It works under MMA rules. It's not that good to test what works, for example, a self-defense context. Of course, it's better than never pressure testing what we do. Martial arts is better, at least, because it's one kind of test under pressure but if you try to test it under specific environment that tries to be just as close as possible from, for example, self-defense, it helps you understand better what works for self-defense. Once the specific martial arts that I'm focused on which is old style Karate is aimed on self-defense, that's what I want to test and that means we need to have a different kind of testing and it just turns out that the Okinawans, the old practitioners of old style Karate, the people from the Ryukyu kingdom actually did have tests under pressure that they would use to see what worked and what didn't work. It wouldn't be exactly an MMA match. It's a little different because MMA has a few, very restrictive rules. Of course, some of those pressure tests will be especially dangerous but you can put different kinds of rules that will try to get you just as close as possible and at the same time, try to keep things safe, just as



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safe as possible, while keeping the realism of your test. For example, think of a wrestling match. A wrestling match is great to test grappling techniques but the striking techniques are lacking so when you add the striking techniques, maybe you get a little closer to MMA but there are a few things that don't work very well when you compare MMA to self-defense because in self-defense, you can just run away and you can't do that in MMA. At the same time, you can manage time and distance and that's something that you can't do very well and just as well in self-defense. You don't keep managing time and distance in self-defense. You fight or you flee or you die. There are different self-defense contexts so I am being a little simplistic here but most self-defense, real self-defense scenarios, I'm not talking about street fighting, I'm talking about life protection only. Most self-defense scenarios are very quick. They happen very quickly and at close range so when you think about you can try to create a kind of pressure test that is mainly focused on something that happens fast, quickly and in close range and when you do that, you create a new kind of contest. One of the things I'm trying to do in the future is to establish open pressure tests. Would we call it a sport? I'm kind afraid of calling it a sport but in the end, it's a little like that. Imagine some kind of MMA match where the practitioners can't just keep at a distance. Why can't they keep at a distance? Because that's not a realistic self-defense situation. If you keep at a distance from a real aggressor, the aggressor will close in. Maybe there are many aggressor, there are 2. You can keep a distance from one of them but probably the other one will try to get you from behind and so on. There are many differences so one of my plans for the future is to have also open contests to invite people so that we can pressure test martial arts techniques and that actually already has a name, a historical name. It actually has 2 names. Some people in the Ryukyu Kingdom would call it kakidamishi or in Japanese, it would be kakidameshi and some of them would also call it kake kumite, that's the Japanese expression. That's a kind of pressure test for martial arts but aiming at self-defense techniques. How about the techniques that are not allowed for example, in MMA, striking the back of the head. In Kakidamishi, we can agree that striking the back of the head is allowed but you can't really do it for real but if someone's back of the head is exposed, you can show an attack, simulate one kind of attack and the practitioners will understand that attack happened and it would be a very, very dangerous attack. It would be a very effective attack and that could be someone else from outside judging whether it would work or not from a self-defense scenario and that will help practitioners stop being exposed to techniques which are very effective but are not allowed and sport context. It would also help them be conditioned to use those techniques if they ever need to for self-defense so my plans for the future are to make more people aware of this research. I have my school but it's not just a school. Actually, it's a research society. Its name is Muidokan Karate Kenkyukai. It means Muidokan Karate Research Society and it happens that there is a school within the research society because we teach people to promote and to test what we do but it's actually a research society. My idea is to promote Muidokan. That includes teaching people in person through seminars. I've already been teaching seminars across Brazil. People from other countries have been inviting me to teach seminars in those countries but I don't know exactly when I'm going to do that because I need to consolidate because travelling to other countries takes a lot of time and I have my main job which is a completely different thing so I need to make sure that I can teach and at the same time, I can keep working unless I





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quit my job and start teaching for real time but that's very hard especially in Brazil and I have a good job so it's not something...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We don't want you giving that up easily.

**Samir Berardo:**

Yeah, I wouldn't. That's one of the things I want to do. The other thing is to promote, it's pretty much the same thing but I want to establish one kind of competition format, pressure test format to help more people test what they're trying to learn for self-defense. It doesn't need to be big, it doesn't even need to be especially popular even though I think it would be very popular because, think of an MMA match, it's a little like that but with a few further safety measures and at the same time, a few more open rules in terms of allowing more techniques. More techniques will be allowed, even techniques, for example that you can perform even if your opponent is far stronger than you. Once MMA forbids the most effective techniques, for example, it also forbids exactly techniques that allow weaker, physically weaker person, to subdue a stronger person, to some extent, of course. A weaker person can still subdue a stronger person but it gets harder if you can't strike them for example on the back of the head, if you can't strike them, if you can't manipulate small joints, if you can't attack their eyes. I know there's a whole big discussion about how effective attacking the eyes are so I don't want to get into this but it's something that I think anyone would be able to agree that it works. How much it works is a different matter but if it didn't work at all, really, it wouldn't even be forbidden, the matches, to begin with so that's one of the things that I want to do. Promoting the research, the contest format, the sportive, so to speak, format. Probably travel a little bit to a few countries. I'm planning to travel to Okinawa to promote what I'm doing but I have a baby girl. She is 1 year and 3 months now so I need to wait a little bit until she gets a little older and then I'm going to travel to Okinawa and show what I'm doing and I hope I'm doing this right now. I'm promoting the research through talking to you. I'm actually very glad that we're talking for that very reason.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And we are promoting it and I know you send over some links so why don't you let people know, of course, to anyone listening, unless it's their first episode that we link this to the show notes but where can people go to check out what you're doing?

**Samir Berardo:**

That's great! First of all, we have a website. It's at [muidokan.com](http://muidokan.com). M-U-I-D-O-K-A-N.com but we also have a fan page in Facebook with the same name, Muidokan. People can call for my name. People can google it but my name is not easy for those who speak English. It's a typical Brazilian name. Brazilian names are a mix of many nationalities so it's Samir Berardo, S-A-M-I-R and then Berardo, B-E-R-A-R-D-O.



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They can look for the fan page and Facebook for my twitter, that is @samirberardo and my Instagram is @samirberardo as well and they can also search for one video that is in YouTube that I have recorded with Jesse Enkamp, the Karate Nerd and that was a very peculiar occasion when I went on a seminar with Jesse Enkamp but he already knew part of my research. We already knew each other and I told him, yeah, because he is a researcher as well and most researchers are aware of each other. Some of the have friends. I think this is the best thing when we're friends. Most of them are very civil with each other. I'm very happy for that. It's a nice environment and, not all the time because that's human people, but we already knew each other and I told him hey, I'm going to your seminar so what if we take some time for me to show you a little bit more about my research and when I showed him my research, he said that's something that I have never said in public so this is the first time that I said what Jesse Enkamp said himself. He said I have never seen this before. I have never seen bunkai so advanced. What's bunkai? Bunkai is, in brief words, the act of analyzing and understanding the meaning of kata, of forms so he had never seen such an advanced bunkai and he suggested that we would make a video together with bunkai, with explanation, of any kata that I wanted to explain. After we made that video, he would edit the video and publish it and that's exactly what we did so there is a video of myself explaining the meaning. That's just the basic meaning but Jesse Enkamp put the title in the video, advanced, because it's advanced for most practitioners. I think it's kind of advanced and I'm explaining the meaning of each and every movement of one kata which is naihanchi shodan. I have done the same to really, really many katas from the first to the last movements with layers and layers of depth, of tactical explanations, of biomechanical explanations of a teaching methodology to make people really become able to apply that under real pressure for real. It's not just demonstrations. It's something that we are able to learn and then to apply for ourselves. In fact, there is one comment from a Brazilian person, Ivan Zonta, if I remember correctly. I believe it's the most liked comment in the video. It's on YouTube and Ivan Zonta says something like this, I met Samir in a seminar in Brazil and he applied that to me, against me, even though I wasn't willing to let him apply it to me. He described an experience that we had together because we really met in a Brazilian seminar by one of my instructors who is [01:26:02] He is a great Japanese instructor and both of us went to the seminar and we met in Brazil and to my surprise, he recognized me from the video that Jesse Enkamp and I made together so I offered to show him for real how that worked even though he would try to fight me as much as he could and I was able to do that against him. That's a firsthand account but there are many people who have done that with me or I have done that with many people now. I teach seminars across Brazil and I show it to people to show that it really works so I recommend people to go to YouTube and to search Samir Naihanchi Bunkai or Samir Naihanchi Bunkai Jesse because it's a video that is in Jesse Enkamp's channel. I believe it's the only video in Jesse Enkamp's channel that has the level exclusive. It's because when I showed him my work, he was very excited and he was very emphatic that he wanted to see. He thought that was very, very important to show everyone so he put the level exclusive and he said everything that I'm saying here that he said about my work, he said in front of many other people so you can ask the other.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's quite the honor.

**Samir Berardo:**

Yeah, it was really an honor because Jessen Enkamp is a wonderful practitioner and researcher himself and he has been an inspiration for me for many, many years and he still is so, anyway, I recommend people to look for this video, this naihanchi video and there are many other videos in my own YouTube account and Facebook. Facebook is a source where we have more stuff published. That's it!

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Awesome. We're going to link all that and we'll link the YouTube video. We'll make sure we'll make it easy for people.

**Samir Berardo:**

Thank you very much.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

This has been wonderful! I've had a great time talking with you and I'd like you to decide how you send us out. We always ask the guest what parting words, what wisdom, what advice, whatever you want to call it. What final thoughts would you give to the listeners today?

**Samir Berardo:**

Martial arts world is very big. People practice martial arts for many reasons and everyone, if they're happy with what they're doing, that is good enough. People practice martial arts because they get happy. I believe that's the most important thing when we practice martial arts. We need to be happy especially because when we are happy with what we are doing, we keep doing it and also, the martial arts become something better. Martial arts should be practiced by people who are happy with what they're doing but the special kind of martial arts that I mostly focus on is self-defense martial arts or practical martial arts, applied martial arts. It's different from, for example, aesthetic martial arts presentation. It's a little different from sports competition martial arts. It's more open and everyone, I would say that, everyone who is looking for martial arts that work on a real context, on a real pressure context, I think they should do their best to check to test it. When I began practicing martial arts, I tried to test from the very beginning but there were a few years when I trained under Karate instructors that would teach me to do things that I was very suspicious that wouldn't work if I tried to do to apply those things against an unwilling partner and against someone who was really fighting me so I believe that this feeling of suspiciousness about something that people are teaching us is something very common for martial arts practitioners and I believe there's no reason for us to keep feeling like that because when we feel like that, it makes us feel less happy with what we are doing but there are ways of testing, ask a



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friend, may I try to apply this against you and you will let me apply it and let's try to see how it works but, of course, above all, this needs to be done with safety measures but anyway, what I'm trying to say is, try to figure out what really works and don't just accept. It's not disrespect against our instructor if we feel suspicious. We can pretty much ask our instructors to demonstrate with safety, carefully but we need to see if it works. If we're focused on practical martial arts, we need to see if it works. It's the same thing, for example in science. If I try to come up with a new cellphone, mobile phone technology, I can't just sell this cellphone saying that it works and when people try to turn it on, it doesn't even turn on or it doesn't do what I am claiming it to do. Science needs to work. I believe it should be the same thing for martial arts. Of course, for those interested in pragmatic and practical martial arts, of course. If they just want to practice martial arts for the beauty, for the philosophy, that's great but if they're interested in practical martial arts, my message is test it and look for more people who are trying to test it because today, it's easier for people to communicate with each other and so, it's easier to test and when more people speak out that they are trying to see what works, it's easier for them to get together to test to see what works and finally, bring a real evolution for martial arts.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I love hearing people talk about what gets them fired up about their training, about their understanding of what they do and why they do it and I felt like we got a bit of a window of who Sensei Berardo is with this episode because if you understand why someone does something, you get to understand a lot about who they are and that what I felt was on full display today so thank you so much for coming on, sir. I had a great time, hope to talk to you again. If you want more, go to [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). There you can find videos and links and social media and more. Just more! Not just for this episode but every single episode we've ever done. If you're down to support the way that we do, you can do quite a few things. You can make a purchase in [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com), don't forget the code `PODCAST15` to get 15% off or you can share an episode, leave a review, tell a friend or contribute to the Patreon. That's [Patreon.com/whistlekick](https://Patreon.com/whistlekick) and remember if you see somebody wearing a whistlekick hat or a shirt out there, talk to them, say hello, ask them about their favorite episodes or how they find the company because what do you know when you see them wearing that? You know that they train and if they train and you train, maybe you can be friends. Who doesn't want more friends that train? I do. Why do you think I do it? If you have suggestion for guests or topics or other things, let's hear them. You can email me, [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com), and you can follow us [@whistlekick](https://twitter.com/whistlekick) all over the place. That brings this episode to a close so until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!