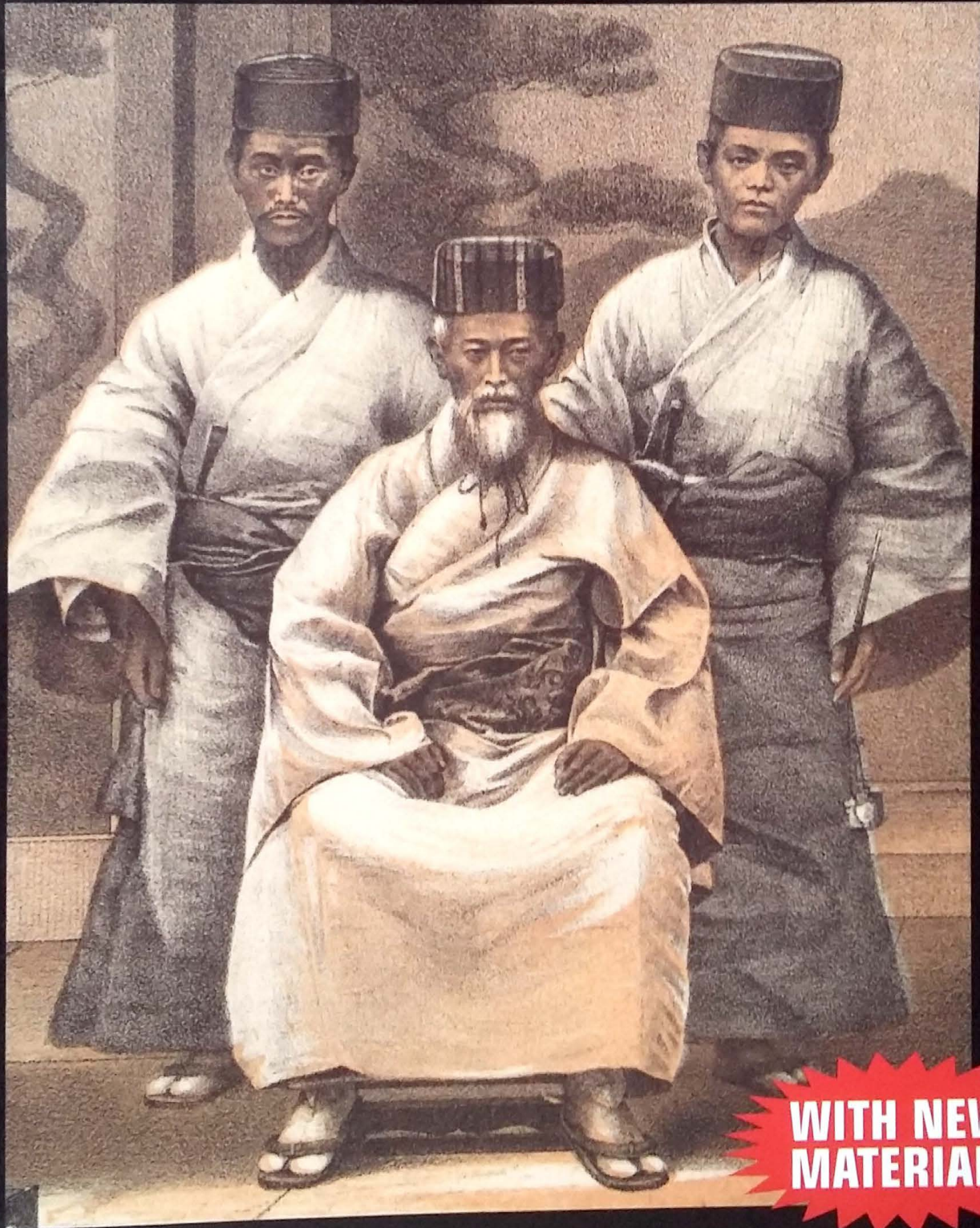


Shotokan's Secret

EXPANDED EDITION



The Hidden Truth Behind Karate's Fighting Origins

by Bruce D. Clayton, Ph.D.

BLACK BELT
B.O.O.K.S

Shotokan's Secret

EXPANDED EDITION

**The Hidden Truth Behind Karate's
Fighting Origins**

Bruce D. Clayton, Ph.D.

Shotokan's Secret

EXPANDED EDITION

The Hidden Truth Behind Karate's Fighting Origins

Bruce D. Clayton, Ph.D.

Edited by Sarah Dzida, Cassandra Harris, Raymond Horwitz,
Wendy Levine and Edward Pollard
Graphic Design by Ghislain Viau
Cover and Additional Design by John Bodine

©2010 Cruz Bay Publishing, Inc.

All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010926557

ISBN-10: 0-89750-188-8

ISBN-13: 978-0-89750-188-0

First Printing 2010

WARNING

This book is presented only as a means of preserving a unique aspect of the heritage of the martial arts. Neither Ohara Publications nor the author make any representation, warranty or guarantee that the techniques described or illustrated in this book will be safe or effective in any self-defense situation or otherwise. You may be injured if you apply or train in the techniques illustrated in this book and neither Ohara Publications nor the author is responsible for any such injury that may result. It is essential that you consult a physician regarding whether or not to attempt any technique described in this book. Specific self-defense responses illustrated in this book may not be justified in any particular situation in view of all of the circumstances or under applicable federal, state or local law. Neither Ohara Publications nor the author make any representation or warranty regarding the legality or appropriateness of any technique mentioned in this book.



A Division of

BLACK BELT BOOKS
OHARA PUBLICATIONS, INC.

World Leader in Martial Arts Publications

Karate is the most difficult martial art.
Kata is the most difficult part of karate.
Bunkai is the most difficult part of kata.
Vision is the most difficult part of bunkai.
Silence is the most difficult part of vision.
Self is the most difficult part of silence.
Silence reveals the answers.
Answers contain the vision.
Vision teaches bunkai.
Bunkai inspires kata.
Kata makes karate real.
Karate teaches us to live.
Only self bars the way.
Set self aside and listen to the silence.

Bruce Clayton

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Hanshi Vincent Cruz and the senior instructors (the San Ten Shihans), of the International San Ten Karate Association, who are my instructors, colleagues and friends. If this book earns any praise, they deserve part of the credit.

I would also like to thank my friends in the International Karate Association especially Richard Gould, Tom Frobel, Paul Lopresti, Sal Lopresti, Paul Allan and Jerry Lupkes. Their creative approach to traditional karate has been an inspiration.

Justin Butler, the *soke* of San Ten Jujutsu, and his partner Mike Sullivan have taught me many painful *jujutsu* lessons—the best kind—as we have shuttled back and forth between our respective *dojo* in California and Colorado. I owe a debt to George Kirby, grandmaster of *budoshin* jujutsu, for his patient explanations of obscure jujutsu techniques and how to perform them safely in the dojo. Harold Brosious and his students were generous with their time and creativity, answering many questions about jujutsu. David Oliver Shipley helped me gain insight into “the arresting art” of *taiho jutsu*. Thanks to Brett Denison for his help with the “pistol grip.” I have crossed paths with Don Cunningham more than once on this quest, and he has always been helpful.

Special thanks to Abbot Daiei Matsui, administrator of the Ryosenji Treasure Museum at Shimoda, Japan, for permission to reproduce the images of the Black Ship Scroll.

Other friends have also made valuable contributions. Gary Simpson of Perth, Australia, was a typhoon of *bunkai*. Colin Wee, also of Perth, has generously shared his knowledge of *aikido* and *taekwondo*. Liu Haixiang of Beijing helped me make simultaneous sense of Japanese, Okinawan, Chinese and Korean karate terminology. Eri Takase, who is San Ten Karate’s Japanese interpreter and calligrapher, has been patient and helpful throughout. David LaVerne taught me the difference between *honne* and *tatema*. Robert Camden-Ishimaru introduced me to the hidden art of *chi gerk*. Rafael Malabanan gave permission to publish a portion of his computer-generated Shuri Castle map.

Philip Sneyd reminded me that many modern Japanese *sensei* are much more approachable and cooperative than has been the case in the past. Sneyd also provided the remarkable photo of the *Shinbyouden* and

negotiated with the abbot of the Ryosenji temple for the pictures from the Black Ships Scroll.

Special thanks are owed to the San Ten Karate photographic models. My black-belt assistants—Tony Wilcox, Jim Wooles, Audrey Heeren and Nigel Gerritzen—posed for hundreds of photos at the *Claw of the Dragon* dojo in Mariposa, CA. We were assisted by Taurus Bailey, Randhir Singh Bains, Justin Butler, Peter Clarke, Timothy Gaines, Andrew Garcia, Albert Gu, Jon Hartley, Cindy Hellman-Wylie, Ashton Jardine, Armando Jemmott, Langston Johnson, John and Anisa Kinsey, David and Dianne LaVerne, Gilles Lavigne, John Leggett, Kevin Little, Ricardo Llewelyn, Bruce Lee McGlynn, John M. Morris, Marcelino Navedo, Jasmine Nguyen, Steven Oliver, Cephra Raja, Richard Rodriguez, Eli Rowney, Robert Rushing, Don Shimosono, Robert Stevenson, Michael Sullivan, Beth Waldow, Jenny Williams and Robert Young. They had not read the book when they posed for the pictures. I appreciate their trust in me.

Special thanks to Jose Fernandez for shooting hundreds of photos during the 2009 Sierra Camp. Jose gets the photo credit for many of the bunkai photos in this book. Thanks also to Ira Estin for the composite photo of Hanshi Cruz and the San Ten Shihans. The photo of the "bone beach" in Okinawa is courtesy of Dom Grisanzio, who was there.

Every single person I know has taught me something important. My wife Jeannie most of all. I am thankful every day that she is still with me.

About the Author

Author Bruce Clayton is a self-described “polymath”—a person with extraordinarily broad interests who can integrate those interests into a single view. Because of that diverse life outlook, Clayton has been a dishwasher, producer and adapter of plays, staff botanist at the Huntington Gardens in San Marino, California, researcher and actor for the Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Films unit in Hollywood, graduate entomology student in Montana and has a Ph.D. in population ecology. He is also a longtime author and martial artist.

As a martial artist, Clayton is a student of Hanshi Vincent Cruz (10th *dan*) of Madera, California. Cruz was an Air Force combatives instructor who holds six black belts, all from Japan. He is the founder of the International San Ten Karate Association.

Clayton is ranked seventh dan in traditional karate by International San Ten Karate Association, sixth dan by the United Karate Associations International, and third dan in the San Ten Jujutsu Association. Clayton has also taken rifle and pistol combat training at the American Pistol Institute (API) in Paulden, Arizona, under the eye of the legendary Col. Jeff Cooper. He has brown-belt status in Okinawan *kobudo* under *shitoryu* Master Fumio Demura.

San Ten Jujutsu specializes in the *jujutsu* techniques that complement the *shotokan* karate *kata*. It was founded by *Soke* Justin Butler of Denver, Colorado. Butler was trained by Hanshi Dennis Palumbo, yet another Air Force combatives instructor with belts in karate and jujutsu from Japan. Palumbo was a *kaiden* master of *hakkoryu* jujutsu, and the author of three books on this subject with Paladin Press.

Over the years, the San Ten Black Dragon Society has honored Clayton with the titles of *renshi*, *kyoshi* and *shihan*. Master Cruz refers to him affectionately as “the Witchdoctor.”

As an author, Clayton began the four-volume *Black Medicine* series, using the pen name “Mashiro,” while a graduate student in ecology at the University of Montana. He is also a well-known survival expert, author of *Life After Doomsday*, *Fallout Survival* and *Thinking About Survival*. He has camped out in the Sierras in the winter using Native American survival skills under the supervision of survivalist Ron Hood. In 1984, he received a Citation from the Governor of California, George

Deukmajian, for his work in “educating the public about the importance of emergency preparation.” His most recent survival book is *Life After Terrorism* (2002).

Clayton has been interviewed by several national television programs, including *The CBS Evening News*, *The Tomorrow Show*, *Today* and *60 Minutes*. He has also appeared on many local radio programs in the United States, Great Britain, Canada and Australia.

Clayton lives with his family near Yosemite National Park in California. He thinks that commercial television and radio are a waste of heartbeats and never listens to either. As a result, he has had the time to read over 4,000 books.

For the record, Bruce Clayton has never been a member of any political party, any religious organization, or any group that is based on animosity, intolerance, or cruelty. He is equally at home with friends from every walk of life, from every race, creed and orientation, and from every corner of the world. He believes that our shared life experiences make us all brothers, while our differences just make us more interesting.

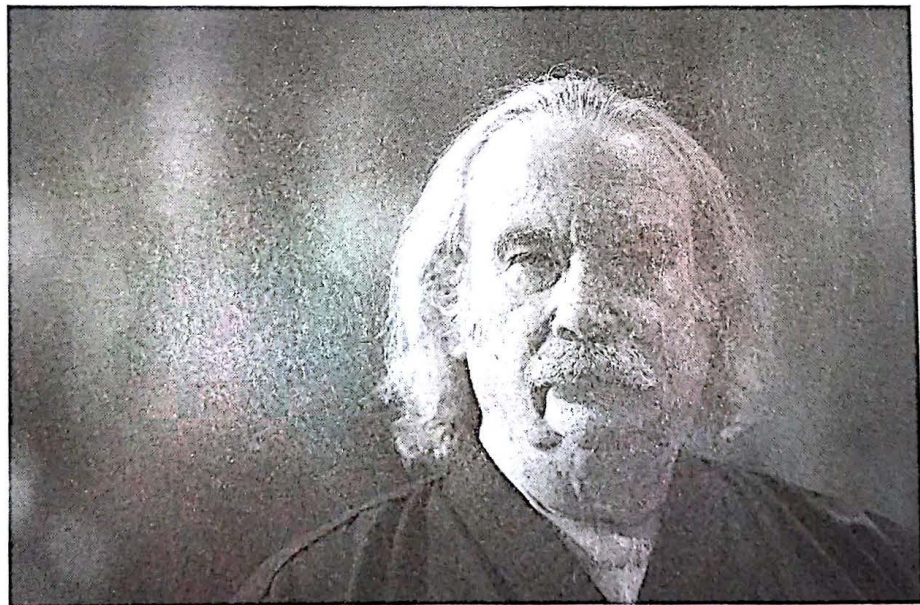


Figure E-1: Shihan Bruce Clayton, “the Witchdoctor,” at the San Ten Sierra Camp 2009. (Photo by Jose Fernandez.)

The San Ten Shihans

"A black belt is just a white belt who never quits."

– Hanshi Vincent Cruz

Bruce Clayton is part of a faculty of about 30 senior *shotokan* instructors under the direction of *Hanshi* Vincent Cruz. These teachers are known as the San Ten Shihans. They are the senior instructors of the International San Ten Karate Association, founded by Cruz in 1979.

This team is dedicated to researching and promoting the basic principles of linear karate power, which have all but disappeared in the world of sport karate. This work is based on the lifelong research of the late Hidetaka Nishiyama, a karate legend in his own lifetime and Cruz's teacher for over 50 years.

For more information on the activities sponsored by the International San Ten Karate Association, visit our Web site at www.santenkarate.com.

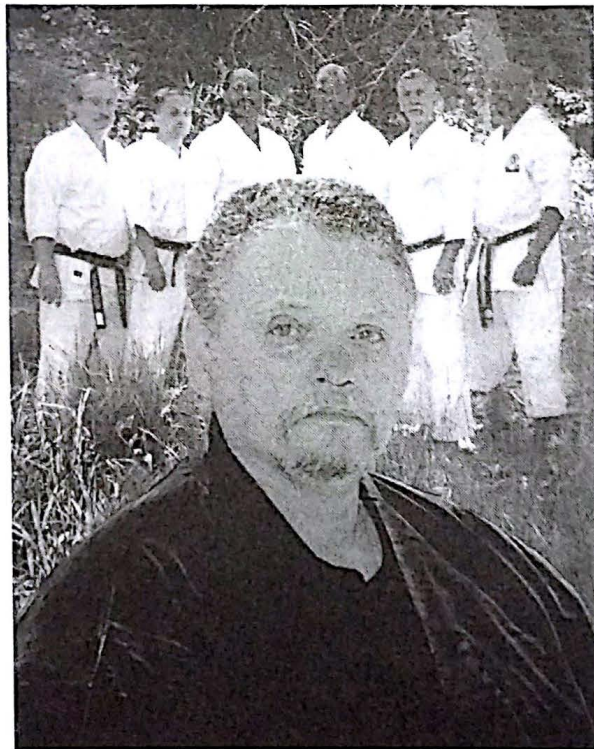


Figure E-2: *Hanshi* Vincent Cruz and (a few of) the San Ten Shihans, at the Sierra Camp in 2002. Left to right: Bruce Clayton, Randhir Bains, Robert Stevenson, Ricardo Llewelyn, Jerry Fitzpatrick, and Armando Jemmott. (Photo composite by Ira Estin.)

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	5
About the Author	7
The San Ten Shihans	9
Introduction to the First Edition (2004).....	17
Introduction to the Second Edition (2010)	21
1 The Place and the Time	25
1.1 Island of Conflict.....	26
1.2 Shuri, Naha, and Tomari.....	28
1.3 Second Sho Dynasty	30
1.4 Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa.....	31
1.5 Satsuma Invasion	35
1.6 Musashi	37
1.7 Peasants, Lords, and Overlords	38
1.8 Kobudo	40
1.9 Shuri Castle	42
1.10 Inside the Seiden	45
1.11 Western Barbarians	47
1.12 Meiji Restoration	50
1.13 Satsuma Rebellion.....	51
1.14 Early 20 th Century	53
1.15 The Shuri Crucible	53
2 The Lords of Karate	57
2.1 Japanese Language	58
2.2 Chinese Language.....	60
2.3 Three Official Myths.....	61
2.3.1 Official Myth No. 1: "It came from ancient China."	61
2.3.2 Official Myth No. 2: "It is a secret I learned from my grandfather."	63
2.3.3 Official Myth No. 3: "We teach the original version."	63
2.4 What is Truth?.....	64
2.5 Chi-Niang Fang and White Crane.....	66

2.6	Kumiuchi Kenden: The Secret Heritage	68
2.7	Satunushi "Tode" Sakugawa.....	70
2.7.1	Sakugawa's Training.....	70
2.7.2	"Tode"	71
2.7.3	Pirates in the Dark	72
2.7.4	Kusanku Kata	73
2.7.5	Sakugawa's Legacy	73
2.8	Sokon "Bushi" Matsumura.....	74
2.8.1	"Matsumura"	75
2.8.2	Matsumura's Skills	76
2.8.3	Matsumura's Career	78
2.8.4	Matsumura's Fights	78
2.8.5	Patsai (Bassai) Kata	82
2.8.6	King vs. Karma.....	84
2.8.7	Matsumura's Legacy	85
2.9	Yasutsune Itosu	86
2.9.1	"Itosu"	86
2.9.2	Itosu's Skills	89
2.9.3	Itosu's Fights.....	90
2.9.4	"Saint" Itosu.....	91
2.9.5	Itosu's Career	92
2.9.6	Itosu's Kata.....	93
2.9.7	Itosu's Legacy	94
2.9.8	"Shorin Ryu"	94
2.10	Yasutsune Azato	95
2.11	Chofu Kyan.....	98
2.12	Seisho Arakaki	98
2.13	The Seeds of Shotokan.....	99
2.14	Shuri Spear Carriers.....	100
2.14.1	Kokan Oyadomari.....	101
2.14.2	Kosaku Matsumora.....	102
2.14.3	Peichin Yara.....	103
2.14.4	Sanda Kinjo	104
2.14.5	Peichin Kiyuna	104
2.14.6	Conclusion	104

3	The Japan Expedition	107
3.1	Commodore Matthew Perry	108
3.2	Perry Arrives in Naha	109
3.3	Perry Invades Shuri Castle	112
3.4	Perry at the Regent's House	115
3.5	Perry's Report.....	120
3.6	The Black Ship Scrolls.....	121
3.7	Familiar Faces	121
4	Dispossessed and Abandoned.....	125
4.1	Chotoku Kyan.....	126
4.1.1	Kyan's Health	127
4.1.2	Kyan's Attitude	128
4.1.3	Kyan's Fights	129
4.1.4	Kyan's Kata	131
4.1.5	Kyan's Legacy.....	132
4.2	Kanryo Higaonna.....	132
4.3	Naha-te, Shuri-te, Migwa-te	135
4.3.1	Kenpo.....	136
4.3.2	Naha-te	136
4.3.3	Shuri-te	137
4.3.4	Naha-Shuri Rivalry	138
4.3.5	Migwa-te	138
4.3.6	Shito-ryu.....	139
4.4	Gichin "Shoto" Funakoshi.....	140
4.4.1	Funakoshi's Career	141
4.4.2	Karate Missionary	142
4.4.3	Karate in Tokyo	144
4.4.4	"Karate"	145
4.4.5	"Shoto"	147
4.4.6	"Taikyoku"	148
4.4.7	Shotokan and Kobudo.....	149
4.4.8	Funakoshi's Tabu Precept	151
4.5	Typhoon of Steel.....	152
4.6	Conclusion	157

5	Defending Shuri Castle	159
5.1	Enemies	160
5.2	Threat Analysis	161
5.2.1	Assassination	161
5.2.2	Conquest	162
5.2.3	Battery and Abduction	163
5.3	Military Resources	164
5.3.1	Intelligence	164
5.3.2	Bushi Bureaucrats	166
5.3.3	Special Agents	167
5.3.4	Female Servants	168
5.3.5	Matsumura and Itosu	169
5.3.6	Sho Tai Himself	169
5.4	Shuri Castle Architecture	170
5.4.1	Concentric Architecture	170
5.4.2	Escaping the Castle	170
5.4.3	Secret Passage	172
5.4.4	Hidden Armory	174
5.5	Tactics	175
5.5.1	Close Protection: The Extraction Team	176
5.5.2	Counter Assault: The Reaction Team	176
5.5.3	Tactical Reserve	177
5.6	Tactical Themes in the Kata	178
5.7	Firearm Techniques	180
5.8	Conclusion	181
6	Researching Bodyguard Bunkai	183
6.1	Methodology	185
6.1.1	Keeping It Real	186
6.1.2	Other Mountains	187
6.1.3	Lesson Plan	188
6.1.4	Occam's Razor	189
6.1.5	Crabtree's Bludgeon	190
6.1.6	Dinglehoppers	191
6.1.7	Hand Grenades	192

6.1.8	Waldow Principle.....	195
6.1.9	Shadow Principle	195
6.1.10	Shadowboxing Principle	196
6.1.11	Symbolism Rule.....	197
6.1.12	Last Move Rule.....	197
6.1.13	Shotoism (Anachronism) Rule	198
6.1.14	Dunning-Kruger Effect.....	199
6.2	Setting a Higher Standard	200
6.3	Conclusion	201
7	Skin Against Steel.....	203
7.1	Sugiyama's 25 Kata.....	206
7.2	Variations on Heian Nidan	206
7.3	Historical Applications of Heian Nidan	208
7.3.1	Live Blades	209
7.3.2	Step 1-3: Tachi Dori, Makikomi.....	210
7.3.3	Step 4-6: Tachi Dori, Nito-Ryu.....	212
7.3.4	Step 7: Mae Geri Keage	212
7.3.5	Steps 8-10, 12-15: Kesa Kiri	214
7.3.6	Step 11: Tsuki Uchi	216
7.3.7	Steps 16-21: Maki Waza	217
7.3.8	Step 22, Tsuba Zeriai.....	219
7.3.9	Steps 23-26: Debana Ude, Kote Chudan, Kote Jodan	220
7.4	Conclusion	222
8	Fighting by the Roadside	225
8.1	Heian Shodan was Revolutionary	227
8.2	Variations in Heian Shodan (Pinan Nidan).....	228
8.3	Historical Applications of Heian Shodan.....	230
8.3.1	Steps 1-2: Ikkajo and Hiji Ate	231
8.3.2	Step 3: Kami Nage, Atama Makikomi.....	234
8.3.3	Steps 4-5: Ikkajo, Nikajo, Te Kagami, Tetsui Uchi.....	235
8.3.4	Step 6: Gedan Barai Nage	240
8.3.5	Steps 7-10: Tai Otoshi, Kube Shioku Yoko Nage.....	240
8.3.6	Steps 11-14: Replay Steps 2-5.....	244

8.3.7	Steps 15-17: Oi-zuki!	244
8.3.8	Steps 18-21: Shutō Uke, Shutō Uchi, Ami Uchi.....	245
8.4	Conclusion	249
9	Policing the Floating World.....	251
9.1	Variations on Heian Sandan	253
9.2	Historical Applications of Heian Sandan	255
9.2.1	Steps 1-6: Ude Guruma Ushiro, Chi Sao.....	256
9.2.2	Step 7: Hiji Mochi Nikajo	258
9.2.3	Step 8: Nukite, Teisho, Chi Sao	261
9.2.4	Steps 9-10: Escape from Ikkajo Wristlock	263
9.2.5	Steps 11-17: Ushiro Zeme Otoshi, Chi Gerk, Kata Guruma	265
9.2.6	Steps 18-21: Koshi Guruma, Ushiro Koshi Nage.....	273
9.3	Conclusion	278
10	Wrestling Over the Sword.....	281
10.1	Vulnerability of Samurai Armor	283
10.2	Variations on Heian Yondan.....	286
10.3	Historical Applications of Heian Yondan.....	287
10.3.1	Steps 1-4: Uchi Komi Dori, Shomen Uchi Ikkajo, Ken Dori	288
10.3.2	Steps 5-8: Ikkajo, Nihou Geri, Kabuto Uchi	292
10.3.3	Steps 9-11: Kumiuchi, Nihou Geri, Empi Uchi	296
10.3.4	Steps 12-19: Riote Kanoha Gaeshi, Nihou Geri, Kabuto Gaeshi	297
10.3.5	Steps 20-22: Riote Kanoha Gaeshi Come-Along.....	301
10.3.6	Steps 23-26: Nihou Geri, Riote Kanoha Gaeshi	301
10.4	Conclusion	303
11	Sabers and Bayonets	305
11.1	Variations on Heian Godan	306
11.2	Historical Applications of Heian Godan	308
11.2.1	Steps 1-3: Ude Osae Dori, Ude Makikomi.....	308
11.2.2	Steps 4-7: Ikkajo, Hiji Mochi Nikajo	312
11.2.3	Steps 8-12: Tekubi Shime Waza, Jinzo Tsuki	312

11.2.4	Step 13: Shihonage, Nihonage.....	317
11.2.5	Step 13: Gakun Nage, Yonkajo	319
11.2.6	Steps 14-21: Seionage (for Beginners).....	320
11.2.7	Bayonet Combative Measures.....	323
11.2.8	Steps 14-21: Bayonet Disarming, Dead Side	326
11.2.9	Steps 22-26: Bayonet Disarming, Live Side	331
11.3	Conclusion	332
12	Lessons Learned	335
12.1	Breaking Out of the Box.....	336
12.2	The Character Development Myth.....	338
12.3	Why there are Five Heian Kata	340
12.4	Why Did Itosu Bury the Bunkai?.....	342
12.5	Karate Isn't Empty-Handed	343
12.6	The Missing Skill.....	344
12.7	Milk for Babies, Meat for Men.....	345
12.8	Masters and Minions	346
12.9	The Truth About Giri	348
12.10	Ringling the Bell	349
	Appendix A: Karate Lineage Chart.....	351
	Appendix B: Training Videos.....	352
	Appendix C: Glossary	354
	Appendix D: Bibliography	368
	Index	377

Introduction to the First Edition (2004)

Shotokan's Secret asks and answers a number of important questions about the past and future of hard-style karate. The first question is: How did this book come to be written?

This book began as an innocent quest for a picture of Yasutsune Azato, who was *shotokan* Master Gichin Funakoshi's first teacher. Karate historians say that there is no known picture of Azato, but I wanted one to put on the wall of my *shotokan dojo*. I could not believe that no one had ever made a picture of Azato. I made a two-year hobby of searching for this picture.

Azato was a member of the court of King Sho Tai at Shuri Castle in Okinawa, whose reign began just before the American Civil War. Surely, I reasoned, somebody had taken a daguerreotype photograph of the king and his advisors during some important ceremony. There must have been a coronation, or a wedding, or some other event worthy of a photograph. I searched for this photo. I studied books on the history of Japan and Okinawa. I dug around for original sources. I sent e-mails to experts. I bid on rare Japanese books at auction. I scoured the Internet looking for clues. I even learned to interpret *kanji* symbols into English so I could translate the captions in Japanese books. In the end, Azato sadly remained as elusive as before, but along the way, I discovered a remarkable window into the early history of karate.

For over a thousand years, Okinawa imported unarmed martial techniques from China with no particular evolution of the art. The Okinawans seemed content to use the imported skills while making only minor modifications to them. Then suddenly, in the middle of the 1800s, a group of Okinawan lords set aside their traditional Chinese fighting skills and began to practice a new and highly lethal form of unarmed combat.

The new art, called *Shuri-te*, was fundamentally different from traditional *chuan fa*.¹ Compared to Chinese fighting, the new art was shockingly ruthless. The new style made no attempt to subdue the opponent through painful nerve strikes or immobilizing joint locks. Instead, every

¹ I am using "*chuan fa*" as the equivalent of the American term "kung fu." There is endless debate about the proper use of these terms. In this book they both mean "Chinese boxing" in a general sense.

element of the new art emphasized destroying the opponent completely in one or two seconds. We recognize this art today as the first emergence of hard-style, linear karate.

Shuri-te was based on overwhelming impact and largely ignored the grappling and submission skills of traditional chuan fa. This was not just a natural evolution of chuan fa based on an accumulation of small differences over time. It was a sudden revolution in the early 1800s that requires an explanation.

Karate historians have done an impressive job of collecting random facts, stories, legends and surmises about the early masters of Shuri-te karate. They have shown us a picture of formidable men pounding their *makiwara* posts secretly in the dead of night. The historians have dug diligently, comparing techniques and records with legends and rumors, searching for the origin of each individual piece of modern karate. They have done an outstanding job of collecting the minute fragments of the karate puzzle.

I respect them deeply, but I think they missed something. We already knew what the Shuri-te masters did at night. The unasked question is: What did they do in the daytime?

When you read about karate history, you quickly learn that karate arose on the tiny island of Okinawa in the East China Sea. As you read more deeply, you realize that hard-style karate arose in Shuri, the capital of Okinawa. A little more reading reveals that the Shuri masters were all knights and nobles, the lords of Okinawan society. After studying the history of Okinawa itself, it gradually becomes clear that the masters were not just idle gentry, as we would naïvely expect. They were, in fact, hard-working employees of the Shuri national government.

The seat of Okinawan government was a small cluster of buildings in the center of Shuri Castle. The castle is not a very large place, and most of the office space was in four wooden buildings surrounding a central square. One building in particular, the Seiden, was the king's office complex and throne room. On a typical business day in the 1850s, the Seiden and adjacent buildings were full of famous karate masters working diligently to administer the government of Okinawa.

The Shuri masters performed routine government functions in offices only a few yards from the throne room. In modern terms, they were coworkers. They worked together every day, with some of them walking to

work together in the morning and strolling home together in the evening. They planned and executed government projects, confronted and solved national problems, advised the king and ran the country together.

And in the middle 1800s, they invented linear karate—together.

Shuri was not a tranquil place in the 1800s. The national interests of Japan, China, Europe and America collided fatally in 19th century Shuri, with consequences that changed Okinawa and Japan forever. The Shuri ministers were in real physical danger during this period, but they didn't have a single weapon to use in their own defense. All they had was their bare hands. This is the situation I call the "Shuri Crucible."

At the center of this storm stood Sokon "Bushi" Matsumura, a brilliant fanatic whose commitment to the martial arts bordered on madness. For 50 years, Matsumura was the military officer responsible for the safety of Okinawa's royal family and the Shuri ministers. During this time, Matsumura confronted many groups of angry, armed adversaries. Under the intolerable pressure of the Shuri Crucible, Matsumura changed the soft techniques of Chinese chuan fa into a new kind of unarmed fighting in which a single blow could be as decisive as a pistol shot.

This book is founded on historical fact and detailed with more than 250 footnotes. (516 in the current edition.) The background information about the people, the dates and the geopolitical events cannot be seriously challenged. We are forced to rely on anecdotal information and oral tradition to fill in personalities. While anecdotes are instructive, undoubtedly some of this information has been exaggerated, altered, misunderstood, suppressed or even invented. At a certain point, both fact and oral tradition fail us, and we must fill in the gaps guided by our own martial experience and common sense. The historical context, however, defines Matsumura's tactical problem quite clearly. It is easy for us to recognize his solution to the problem because linear karate fits the tactical problem like a key fits a lock.

There are overlooked documents that show us the Shuri Crucible in action. One is the two-volume narrative of U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew Perry's expedition to Japan in 1853. Another is Perry's personal diary that he kept during this expedition, which was not published until 100 years after his death. Perry negotiated with the Okinawan ministers and was not happy with the results. He forcibly led 200 U.S. Marines into Shuri Castle to express his displeasure. In Perry's narratives of this event, we

get to see something truly special: We see what the Shuri karate masters did in the daytime. Seeing them at work explains, once and for all, why they stayed up late every night learning how to kill with their bare hands.

Matsumura's tactical problem was unique and has never been duplicated anywhere in the world. He faced opponents and weapons that will surprise you. His tactical applications were vicious and practical, even for today's street scenarios. It is a small wonder that a unique martial art was born from it. The Shuri Crucible opens whole new avenues for interpreting the shotokan *kata* (and *kata* of many related styles of karate).

I started out looking for a picture of Azato, and ended with a completely new view of hard-style history and *bunkai*. I uncovered many interesting things along the way that have greatly enriched my own shotokan classes. Even if you don't agree with my conclusions, I promise that you will enjoy reading this book. I certainly enjoyed writing it. And when you finish, you will know a lot more about karate and shotokan *bunkai* than you did when you started. *Shotokan's Secret* brings karate to life. The reward is worth the effort.

I never found that picture of Azato, but I came very close.

Bruce D. Clayton, Ph.D.
April 2004

Introduction to the Second Edition (2010)

First, I want to thank all the people who sent me pictures of Azato! You will not find them published here because no two people sent me a picture of the same man. Before we conclude that a picture is Azato or Itosu or Matsumura, we need to see the same face in more than one picture. As far as I am concerned, that search is still on.

Not so long ago, it was hard to collect applications for *shotokan kata* because Japanese masters would demonstrate only two applications per kata, and it was always the same two applications. These applications were often very impractical.

Then two things changed. Japanese dominance over karate began to fade. Old-guard Japanese masters are retiring, and Western masters with half a century of experience are taking their places. Many of these masters have cross-trained in combatives and grappling arts. They have been silent for decades out of respect for the grand old men, but that era has ended. Teachers are talking openly about the *jujutsu* applications of shotokan.

The second change was the rise of digital communication on a world-wide basis. In the past, your classmates were your only friends in the art. With the growth of the Internet, we suddenly have access to students and teachers all over the world. Through video-sharing Web sites we can peek into the *dojo* of every art to see what they are teaching.

Many people are teaching jujutsu interpretations of the *heian* kata. I became acquainted with people like Gary Simpson and Colin Wee of Australia; Tom Frobels of Vermont; Paul Lopresti of Philadelphia; Justin Butler of Denver; and Iain Abernethy, Peter Clarke and Steve Leak of England; all of whom are openly promoting the grappling applications they see in the shotokan kata.

The critical moment came when Iain Abernethy published his DVD on heian applications in 2006.² In the space of two hours, Iain showed us more about practical fighting than I have seen in decades of karate classes. Iain's applications were brutal and effective, and he matched multiple

² Abernethy, Iain, *Bunkai Jutsu, Volume 1, The Pinan/Heian Series*, DVD 120 minutes, Summersdale, 2006.

techniques to every cluster throughout the heian kata. Iain's DVD was a tour de force of practical fighting that made traditional karate teachers lose face rather badly.

Karate-jutsu experts like Iain have made dramatic contributions to our understanding of our kata heritage, and yet, in one way they have all missed the mark. Their kata applications are random insights with no unifying theme. They do not teach the lesson that the kata was intended to teach.

Itosu's heian kata are disciplined, symmetrical, balanced, polished, and organized. The heian applications should be as organized as the kata themselves. The applications cannot be a random series of disjointed, unrelated techniques without any continuity from one cluster to the next. Itosu's mind didn't work that way.

I collected every martial-arts or combatives technique I could find that had any similarity to the heian clusters. It didn't matter what the source of the technique might be, because all fighting arts overlap. Whenever I found a good match between a technique and a kata cluster, I took a hard look at the techniques that are typically taught along with the first one. I checked the surrounding kata clusters to see if they resembled the related techniques. I began to build chains of applications that made sense in context with one another.

One day, I mapped a series of bayonet-disarming techniques into the second half of heian *godan*. The standard combatives lessons for rifle disarming were all present in heian *godan*, and the moves were there in step-by-step order! Would Matsumura and Itosu have taught that lesson to their recruits? Yes, without question. They faced rifles and bayonets on more than one occasion. I looked at the first half of the same kata and realized that those clusters could all be explained as jujutsu disarming techniques, and they would also work against sabers. Had Matsumura and Itosu faced sabers? They certainly had! Perry's officers wore sabers when they invaded Shuri.

Heian *godan* is about fighting Perry's naval officers and marines. Every move in the kata can be tasked to that end, and the applications form chains of escalating ruthlessness. Itosu seemed to be saying, "Try this. If that doesn't work, shift to this." The whole kata suddenly made sense on multiple levels. The lesson was organized, complete, and ruthless.

This generated new questions. If we were fighting Perry's soldiers in heian godan, who were we fighting in heian yondan? Heian sandan? Heian nidan? It took years of additional research for me to come up with those answers.

The first half of this book is about the history of karate in the 19th century, up to World War II. The second half presents the search for the heian kata applications. That has been the quest of a lifetime.

Martial masters of the past have told us that the goal of our training is not invincibility, but humility. There is no quicker path to humility than publishing a book. You show the world all the things you have found, and the world points out the things you have missed. For me, this process has been a joyous one. Most *sensei* would be proud to have a thousand students. I have a thousand teachers.

If anything in this book offends you, I regret it very much. I do not enjoy making people uncomfortable. Even so, there are hard truths to be said here, and some of them cannot be said gently. Your comfort is not guaranteed in these pages. I hope you will agree that any pain was worthwhile, because this path leads to a larger, brighter world for karate and for us.

Bruce D. Clayton, Ph.D.
March 2010

Chapter 1



The Place and the Time

Shotokan's Secret: Hard-style karate was invented in the mid-1800s by the bodyguards to the king of Okinawa. These unarmed guards were often outnumbered by armed and aggressive enemies. To defend themselves and the royal family, they were forced to turn their bodies into lethal weapons.

To make this argument, I need to take you back to 19th century Okinawa so you can see for yourself how this came about. In this opening chapter, we will set the stage for our drama. The material may seem familiar at first, but within a few pages, we'll be exploring paths you haven't seen before in a karate history book.

The problem with published karate history is that there is too little information about things that made a difference and too much about things that did not. In particular, karate historians have entirely overlooked the enormous political pressures that shaped and then destroyed the Okinawan way of life in the 1800s. To understand the men who invented linear karate, we have to understand the danger they were in.

There is a dramatic story behind the birth of karate, but we must assemble it from tiny fragments scattered among a plethora of truly irrelevant information. Leafing through karate history, one feels like an archeologist sifting through tons of dirt for a few fragments of broken pots. This chapter, and the next, present the few fragments that matter and place them in context so we can see what they mean.

1.1 Island of Conflict

The Shuri Crucible was born out of simple geography. The island of Okinawa is one of those unfortunate places that will always be a battleground. There are half a dozen places like this in the world, where great powers come into conflict.

Okinawa is a semi-tropical island similar to Hawaii. It is the largest island in the Ryukyu (or "Loo Choo") Archipelago, which stretches from Japan on the north to Taiwan on the south. Okinawa has sugar-cane fields, beautiful beaches and palm trees. The waters off Okinawa are rich with ocean life, including a large population of humpback whales. These whales, oddly enough, played a significant role in the history of karate.

The island is large enough to have a solid population of tax-paying farmers and fishermen but too small to support a standing army. It has



Figure 1: Okinawa in 1853. Tomari is the village on the near side of the Asato River; Naha lies in the distance. U.S. warships ride at anchor in Naha Bay. The Okinawans with bare legs are peasants. Figures in floor-length *hoari* coats are *keimochi* nobles.³

a very attractive harbor at Naha, situated halfway between Japan and China. Throughout history, the Okinawans have had China looming on one side and Japan on the other. Okinawa could neither run nor hide and was not strong enough to resist invaders. Naturally, the island has been conquered by both powerful neighbors.

The Okinawans are a long-suffering people. Their name for themselves is the *Uchinanchu*.⁴ They have their own language, *uchina guchi*, which is distantly related to Japanese and Chinese in the sense that English is distantly related to French and German.⁵ A person who grew up on

³ Some of the pictures reproduced here look like fabulously detailed paintings, but they are actually *lithographs*. A lithograph is an etching made on a sheet of limestone by tracing a photograph. The etched stone was used to print high-quality copies of the picture. In the 1850s, there was no other way to print a photograph in a book. I obtained 160-year-old lithographs from the narrative of the Perry expedition and scanned them for these illustrations. See Perry, M.C., *Narrative of the Expedition to the China Seas and Japan, 1852-1854*, reprinted by Dover Press, 2000.

⁴ McCarthy, Patrick, *Ancient Okinawan Martial Arts: Korryu Uchinadi*, Volume 1, Tuttle, 1999a, p. 104. Karate historians fight a continuous battle to sort out the original Okinawan terminology. Very few people still understand *uchina guchi*.

⁵ Sells, John, *Unante, The Secrets of Karate*, 2nd Edition, W.M. Hawley, 2000, p. xvi. Sells points out that karate books often identify the Okinawan language as "Hogen," which is simply the Japanese word for "dialect."

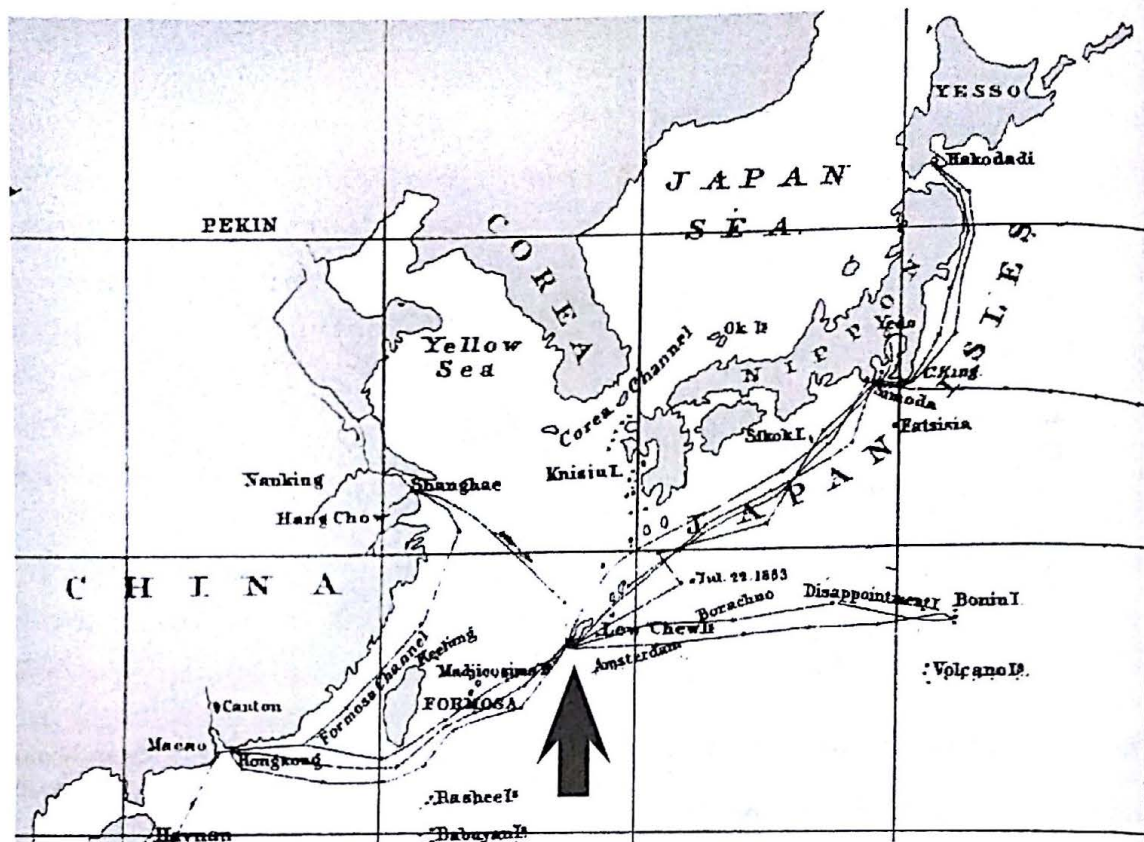


Figure 2: Vicinity of Okinawa, showing a tiny island trapped between China and Japan. This is the map of Commodore Perry's voyages in 1852-54. Okinawa was called "Lew Chew" by Perry's Chinese translators. (See arrow.)⁶

Okinawa in the 1800s could not make himself understood in either China, Japan, or Korea, even though all three languages are written using the same *kanji* characters. Since Okinawa was halfway between Japan and China, they had, and still have, a constant need for translators.

1.2 Shuri, Naha, and Tomari

At the local level, the development of linear karate occurred mainly in Shuri,⁷ the capital of Okinawa, in and around Shuri Castle. People also speak of famous karate masters who lived in the nearby seaport villages of Naha and Tomari. One prominent figure lived in Asato village on the road from Tomari to Shuri. Every history of karate mentions these famous landmarks.

⁶ Perry, 2000, p. 513.

⁷ According to George Preble, a midshipman on Perry's expedition, "Shuri" was pronounced "Shuda" by the natives. Preble, George, *The Opening of Japan*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1962, p. 90.

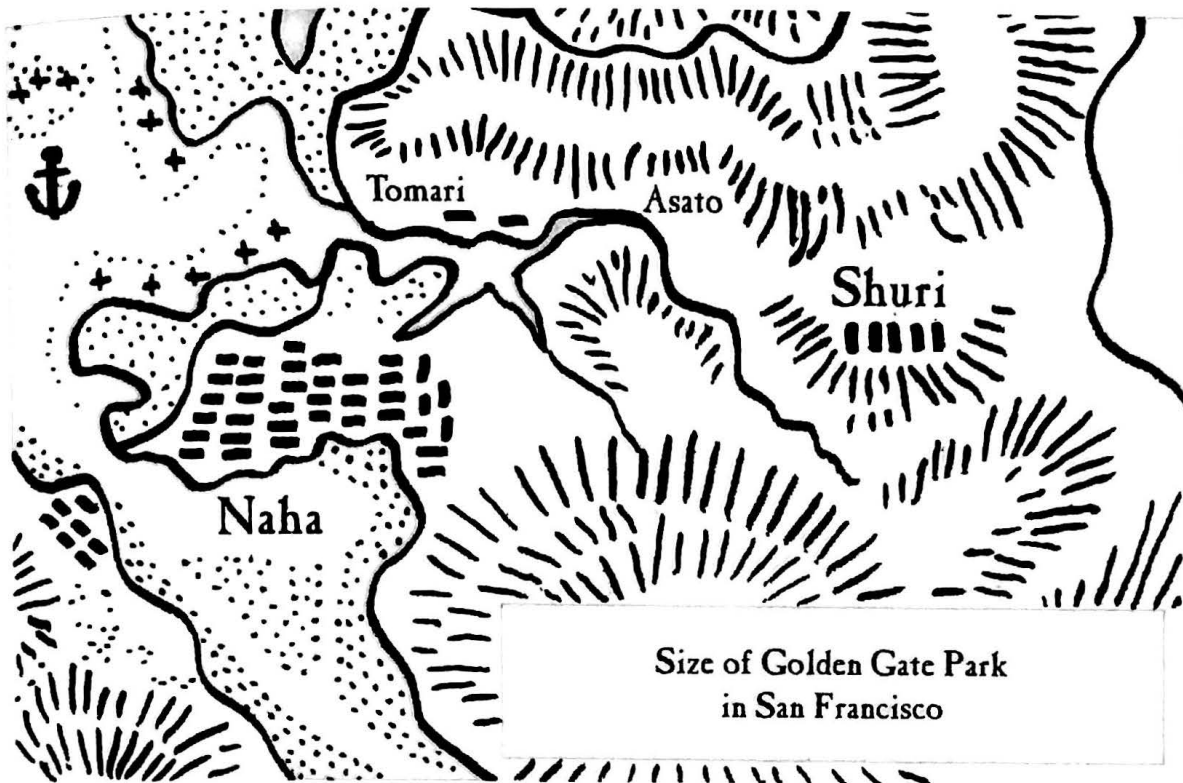


Figure 3: Vicinity of Naha; Tomari and Shuri, Okinawa, where karate was born. The anchor shows where visiting ships could anchor safely. Compare with Figure 1, which was taken from the ridge above Tomari, facing southwest.⁸ The coast near Naha was lined with salt flats, and there were reefs, shoals and rocks just offshore. It is a three-mile walk from Naha to Shuri.

Residence at Shuri marked a man as a member of the court, or one associated with it in daily service; residence at Tomari suggested scholarship and association with the Chinese living there. [Residents of Naha included] the venturesome seafarers, the traders who matched their wits with Korean sailors, the Chinese merchants driving their hard bargains, and the Japanese who sailed these seas as privateers.⁹

In the 1920s, there arose a karate myth that these three communities were somehow isolated from one another and that different kinds of karate “developed” separately in the three locations. This story served the needs of the time, but it has no historical basis. It is important to realize that these “villages” are all part of the same small community. The whole Shuri/Naha/Tomari triangle is about the same size as Golden Gate Park in San Francisco or Central Park in New York City. If you wanted to fly from Shuri to Naha, you’d just taxi the airliner to the far

⁸ This map is based on Perry, 2000, p. 184.

⁹ Kerr, George, *Okinawa: The History of an Island People*, Tuttle, 2000, p. 114.

end of the runway and get off.

The men who invented linear karate spent their *entire lives* in this limited area. It is very hard to justify the idea that a martial artist who grew up on the streets of this community was significantly "isolated" from anyone else who lived there. Let's set that myth aside and look a little harder for the truth.

1.3 Second Sho Dynasty

Okinawa has been populated since the end of the last ice age, but the period we are interested in is known as the Second Sho Dynasty. This dynasty was founded when an ambitious accountant saw an opportunity and took it in 1470, declaring himself Sho En, King of Okinawa. The island had nominally been the property of China since the Chinese conquest in the seventh century. Okinawan kings have always ruled under a license from the Ming Emperor in China. Sho En petitioned the Emperor for a charter to be King of Okinawa and was approved. Reading about Sho En, there is no doubt that money changed hands. He was an unprincipled rascal.

This would not concern us except that his son, Sho Shin, was one of the great kings of Eastern history. In his nearly 50-year reign (1477-1526), Sho Shin transformed Okinawa from a collection of bickering warlords to one nation under a strong central government. He built a palace on a hill at Shuri, moved the scattered Okinawan warlords into nearby townhouses where he could keep an eye on them, and collected all of their swords in a warehouse. His building projects stimulated the economy, and for about a century there was peace and prosperity in Okinawa. The historical accounts may be exaggerated, but you get the impression that Sho Shin was a genuinely benevolent dictator. He turned his impoverished island into a peaceful and prosperous kingdom.

Having taken away civil war as the primary diversion of the Okinawan nobility (the *keimochi*), Sho Shin wisely drafted them into his new government and established hereditary stipends for various government offices. He put the disarmed warriors to work by creating a bureaucratic ruling class who staffed the government offices at Shuri Castle. Every family had perpetual job security as long as they were loyal to the Sho dynasty. (There were less than a hundred keimochi families, so the government could easily employ two or three members of each family at a time.)

Sho Shin established a hierarchy of classes within the keimochi. The royal family was at the top of the pyramid, of course, and the former warlord families formed a princely second layer. The third layer was devoted to the ministers, who were the powerful department heads of the government. After the third layer came four ranks of keimochi who were government employees (not unlike the system of salary ranks used in the U.S. government today.) These nobles were granted the special title of *peichin*, which was similar to being a knight. Saying "Peichin Takahara" was like saying "Sir Takahara."

The peichin nobles were assigned jobs in government service, such as tax accounting, law enforcement, map making, diplomatic relations, translation, warehousing rice and sugar (their version of banking) and keeping official track of Okinawa's complex family genealogies.

Since these knights could not carry swords, they needed some other outward sign of their noble status. They adopted a unique, turbanlike hat, the *hachimaki*,¹⁰ as the badge of their high rank. The color of the hat declared the wearer's exact status. They also wore their hair in a tight bun, or topknot. A special silver pin, stuck through the topknot, served as a second method of declaring rank. The size and design of the pin served as a form of heraldry to declare a family's exact status.¹¹ Other signs of high keimochi status included the *haori* topcoat, with its floor-length skirts and enormous belled sleeves; and *tabi*, the split-toed socks one wears with *zori* sandals.¹² Peasants were not allowed to dress so ostentatiously. Peasants wore a pullover smock and little else.

Disarming the warlords established an Okinawan tradition of life without visible weapons, a tradition reinforced and continued by subsequent historical events. This stopped petty wars but proved somewhat short-sighted in the end. The absence of weapons made Okinawa a little too vulnerable.

1.4 Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa

One of the important factors that led to the invention of karate was the genius of Ieyasu Tokugawa, the warlord who took control of Japan

¹⁰ Kerr, 2000, p. 95, and others, use *hachimaki* to refer to this headgear, meaning it looked like a turban. The familiar Japanese headband is a very minimal turban.

¹¹ Sells, 2000, p. 5-10.

¹² McCarthy, Patrick, *The Bible of Karate: Bubushi*, Tuttle, 1995, p. 48.

away from the imperial family in a series of battles and intrigues at the beginning of the 17th century.¹³ Tokugawa was not a benevolent dictator. He was a ruthless tyrant with a genius for enslaving people. Once he had declared himself *shogun*, or military dictator of Japan, he set about establishing a dynasty. To secure the shogunate for his family, Tokugawa issued a series of proclamations designed to make revolution against him impossible. Tokugawa created a strictly-regulated society in which freedom, innovation and new ideas were not only forbidden but were regarded as dangerous. The punishment for the slightest infraction was torture and death.¹⁴

The Tokugawa edicts allocated land to specific friends of the regime. The land grants made Tokugawa's samurai allies wealthy (but not wealthy enough for any one samurai to build an army as big as Tokugawa's). In return for their wealth, the samurai families were required to administer the economy and taxes of the nation. They were also to ruthlessly enforce the rules of correct behavior.

If you had lived during the Tokugawa dynasty, you would have found that every aspect of your life was regulated and spied upon. Every profession had a list of rules to follow. These rules controlled how you did business, what clothes you could wear, what kind of house you could live in, what kind of person you could marry, what kind of gifts you could give your children on their birthdays, where you could build your outhouse, and the exact limits of where you could go and what you could do without explicit overlord permission. Any sign of independent thought was evidence of rude behavior, and death followed swiftly.

It is hard for us to imagine the severity of punishments in Tokugawa's Japan. Crucifixion was common for crimes as small as the theft of a radish. Mothers were crucified with their babies strapped to their chests, so the mother had to watch her baby die of thirst before succumbing herself. The samurai showed great ingenuity in devising other novel forms of execution, such as boiling victims to death in volcanic hot springs or beheading them with a saw instead of a sword.

¹³ Clavell, James, *Shogun*, Dell, 1976, presents the story of Tokugawa's rise to power through the fictional Lord Toronaga.

¹⁴ Henshall, Kenneth, *A History of Japan from Stone Age to Superpower*, St. Martin's Press, 1999, p. 48-69.

A criminal could be certain of execution, but often his family died too, and sometimes the punishment included neighbors, friends and entire villages. In one situation, 35,000 people were put to the sword—one throat at a time—to purge a province that had become too tolerant of Christians.¹⁵

It is no wonder that the Japanese people developed a culture where the greatest virtue was to follow the rules and behave exactly like everyone else. This was the only way to protect one's family and friends from accusations and retribution. The fear of being different even forced left-handed people to pretend to be right-handed. In ancient Japan, a man who discovered that his wife was left-handed had legal grounds for divorce.¹⁶

The people memorized the rules of behavior by creating *kata*, which were rituals that exactly prescribed how to perform everyday activities like dressing, bowing and cooking. If you followed the *kata* exactly, you were following the rules and your family was safe.¹⁷ The Japanese tea ceremony is an example of *kata* taken to a high art, as is the ceremony of sword making.

Since all questions had been answered in advance by the shogun's edicts, anyone who raised his voice to ask questions was a dangerous freethinker. Such a person would be punished for being inquisitive, and punishments were harsh.¹⁸

Tokugawa's conquest of Japan in 1600 was assisted by a stranded English sea captain named Will Adams.¹⁹ Adams helped Tokugawa by building ships and forging cannons for the dictator. Tokugawa took a lesson from this experience: new foreign ideas and new foreign technology could be a threat to his heirs. He issued orders to seal the borders of Japan and allowed no commerce with Western societies.²⁰ As a society, Japan went into suspended animation. This edict applied to the home islands but was also enforced on outlying provinces such as Okinawa. Contact

¹⁵ Henshall, 1999, p. 55.

¹⁶ This is from a Web site for left-handed people. It might be apocryphal, but it fits. <http://www.amusingfacts.com/fact/fact.php?PostID=7380>.

¹⁷ De Mente, B. L., *Behind the Japanese Bow*, Passport Books, 1993, p. 47.

¹⁸ *Deru kui wa utareru*. "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down." Japanese proverb.

¹⁹ Alexander, George, *An Analysis of Medieval Japanese Warrior Culture and Samurai Thought as Applied to the Strategy and Dynamics of Japan's Twentieth Century Era of Warfare*, doctoral dissertation, Western Pacific University, 2001, p. 37.

²⁰ Henshall, 1999, p. 56. The Dutch were allowed to dock at one seaport, and there was continuing coastal trade with China and Korea. Other than that, it was a shutout.

with the West was prohibited, avoided, strictly regulated and sometimes severely punished for the next two and a half centuries.

The Tokugawa shogunate lasted from 1603 to 1867. The policy of isolation was successful until 1853 when U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew Perry sailed a squadron of warships into Tokyo Harbor and demanded at gunpoint that Japan open her doors. By that time, Japan was so far behind the industrial West that she couldn't really refuse.

Tokugawa had been right. His dynasty lasted only as long as Western ideas could be locked out. The Tokugawa regime lost face and everything else within 15 years. Revolution ensued. The shogun's dynasty ended. The Japanese imperial family resumed control of the nation in the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Japan began a program of ambitious industrial modernization that led directly to a series of wars with Russia, Korea, China and, ultimately, the United States.

Tokugawa's influence is still very evident in modern Japan, and also in our formal karate classes. We have Tokugawa to thank for the fact that students line up, sit down and stand up strictly by rank; must all wear identical clothing; and must all tie their belts in exactly the same way.

In many karate schools, it is considered rude and disrespectful to ask questions of the master. Your next promotion might be deferred by a year to teach you humility. This makes an important point about karate history. You can learn the techniques and kata by imitating the teacher, but you can't learn about history that way. You have to ask questions. In most karate organizations, the seniors are distant, unapproachable and do not tolerate an inquisitive attitude. As a result, the seniors themselves never learned very much about karate history. They can't answer our questions. They don't know.

Ieyasu Tokugawa is still very much with us. For the purposes of this book, the important thing is that he created a police state in which subjugated people could not own weapons and contact with the West was absolutely forbidden. This proved to be a deadly diplomatic problem for a small, disarmed island with a strategic seaport.

Tokugawa's tomb is the original source of those three famous monkeys who advise that we "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil." At least, that is the Western interpretation. In the original Japanese, the saying is more stark: "Hear *nothing*. See *nothing*. Say *nothing*." This was the parting thought from the man who taught a nation to live in terror.

1.5 Satsuma Invasion

In 1609, Lord Shimasu of Japan's southern Satsuma province trumped up an excuse for war by claiming that the king of Okinawa had insulted him.²¹ With the blessing of the new shogun, Ieyasu Tokugawa, Shimasu sent 3,000 soldiers into the Ryukyu Islands with ambitions of conquest that were quickly realized.

The battle for Okinawa was fierce but brief. The Japanese invaders lost 57 men. They killed 539 Okinawan fighters who had been hurriedly armed and were unprepared for war. Mass killings happen when the invaders have firearms and the defenders have never used their grandfathers' rusty old swords.^{22,23} The Satsuma victors liked the idea that Okinawa was unarmed and suggested pointedly that this policy should continue. This order remained in force for the next two and a half centuries.

The invaders had an agenda of economic exploitation. The sugarcane plant was a new discovery,²⁴ and Satsuma understood its economic potential. The Ryukyu agricultural base was reorganized into sugarcane plantations, and the islanders were pressed into service in the cane fields. The enslavement was especially bad in the northern Ryukyus, where this period of history is remembered as *sato jigoku*, or "sugarcane hell."²⁵

After 1609, Okinawa was in fact a colony of Japan, even though it did not suit the shogun to admit it. Okinawa continued to be a nominal province of China while actually being controlled by Japan, a bizarre situation the historians refer to as "dual subordination." The long-suffering Okinawans paid taxes to both neighboring nations. To facilitate this delicate diplomatic situation, the Second Sho Dynasty spent 250 years as a puppet government. They faced the world as the rulers of Okinawa, but in fact had no independent authority. The puppeteers watched from the shadows, fingering their swords.

²¹ Satow, E.W., "Notes on Loo Choo," *The Phoenix*, Vol. III, No. 55, May 1873, p. 174-177.

²² Hokama, Tetsuhiro, *History and Traditions of Okinawan Karate*, Masters Publications, 2000, p. 24.

²³ Cook, Harry, *Shotokan Karate, a Precise History*, (no publisher), 2001, p. 6.

²⁴ Kerr, 2000, p. 184.

²⁵ OPN-LA, "Early History of the Ryukyu Kingdom and its Relationship with China and Japan," Okinawa Peace Network of Los Angeles, http://www.uchinanchu.org/uchinanchu/history_early.htm.



Figure 4: Satsuma overlords.²⁶ A party of Satsuma samurai examining a map in the 1860s. These were the evil puppet masters who controlled the kings of Okinawa. Note the ostentatious display of weapons.²⁷

The Satsuma officials wielded the full, despotic authority of the shogunate. They ordered the Shuri officials to conceal and deny their relationship with Japan, to the extent that it was forbidden to speak Japanese or wear Japanese clothing in the presence of foreign visitors.^{28,29}

The Chinese knew perfectly well what was going on, but they didn't want a war either. They were still getting their tribute ship from Okinawa every year. Why rock the boat? They took their money and looked the other way.

This created a unique situation that bears forcefully on the history of karate. The Sho kings were not allowed to keep military forces. In fact, even the king had no right to own or carry weapons.³⁰ The king had no

²⁶ "Satsuma overlords" and "Satsuma oppressors" are phrases drawn from Nagamine, Shoshin, *Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters*, Tuttle, 2000.

²⁷ Bennett, Tony, *Early Japanese Images*, Tuttle, 1996, p. 82. Photo by pioneer photographer Felice Beato.

²⁸ Kerr, 2000, p. 247.

²⁹ Sells, 2000, p. 21.

³⁰ Some karate Web sites claim that the Okinawan king and nobility were armed, just like the samurai. Contemporary photos of samurai show them carrying swords. Similar photos of *keimochi* show them carrying parasols.

authority to make treaties or agreements with foreign powers. He had to pretend to be a head of state, but in fact, he had only enough power to collect taxes and enforce local laws. If his men made a mistake, he paid for it personally.

Life under Japanese domination was brutal but stable during the 1600s and 1700s. The 1800s were a more turbulent time. The last three kings of Okinawa played roles in the creation of linear karate. King Sho Ko reigned from 1804 to 1827 when he was deemed unreliable by his Japanese minders and was forced to give up the throne.³¹ His son Sho Iku reigned from 1828 until 1847 when he was arrested and taken to Tokyo.³² This put the last king of Okinawa, Sho Tai, on the throne in 1847 at the age of seven. (Most of the story of karate takes place during the reign of Sho Tai.)

In 1879, the office of king was abolished. Sho Tai was deposed by Imperial Japanese decree and forced to live as a hostage in Tokyo, along with many of his family and court retainers. Sho Tai died in exile in 1901. These three kings did not die in office. They were all fired and placed under house arrest. The fact that a king could be fired shows just how bizarre this situation really was.

All of these facts are missing pieces to the puzzle of linear karate. We'll touch on each of them again as our story develops.

1.6 Musashi

At about the same time as the Satsuma invasion, a legendary eccentric made his mark on Japanese culture. Miyamoto Musashi was a swordsman of such skill that he survived more than 60 one-on-one duels and died undefeated. He was the founder of the two-sword school of Japanese fencing known to *kendo* practitioners as *nito-ryu*, which is relevant to some of the kata applications later in this book. Japan has had very few eccentric geniuses, so Musashi's fictionalized biographies are very popular.³³

Musashi just didn't get along with other sword fighters. In 1604, he challenged the master of the Yoshioka sword school to a duel. Musashi

³¹ Kerr, 2000, p. 244.

³² Kim, Richard, *The Weaponless Warriors*, Ohara, 1974, p. 51.

³³ Yoshikawa, Eiji, *Musashi*, Kodansha, 1981. For the movie version, see the *Samurai Trilogy*, three films about Musashi directed by Hiroshi Inagaki.

won. The master's brother insisted on another duel. Musashi won that one. The master's son assembled a force of seventy swordsmen, archers and musketeers and challenged Musashi to another duel, which was really an ambush. They intended to murder Musashi at any cost. The details of the battle are obscured by the glory of the legend, but three facts are agreed upon. Musashi was hard-pressed to deal with so many opponents, so in the heat of battle, he drew both swords and fought with a sword in each hand. Musashi killed the master's son. The Yoshioka school was humiliated and closed forever. The legends say Musashi killed 35 people in this fight.

Among other achievements, he fought a duel with rival Sasaki Kojiro in 1612. Kojiro used an extra-long sword he called "the laundry pole." To express his contempt, Musashi fought Kojiro using a *bokken* crudely whittled from an oar at the last minute. Musashi broke Kojiro's ribs and then smashed his skull with the oar. (One does not win by having the better weapon.)

In his old age, Musashi wrote *The Book of Five Rings*, which martial artists regard as a masterpiece even though many sections of the book are opaque to the modern reader.³⁴ One section instructs the reader in five deadly cuts that "disarm" an attacking samurai by cutting his arms from below as he raises his sword.

The Musashi legend is older than any part of our karate heritage, and was well-known to all of the Okinawan masters who contributed to shotokan. He was a legendary figure to them, just like he is to us. They knew about the two-sword school of combat, and they had read *The Book of Five Rings*.

1.7 Peasants, Lords, and Overlords

The Okinawan karate stories contain unexpected class distinctions, which make it hard for modern readers to interpret the Okinawan legends. We often hear that karate was invented by "peasants" as an unarmed defense against samurai. This idea is distorted by Japan's contempt for conquered peoples. From the samurai point of view, *all* Okinawans were "peasants," even the king.

The Okinawans didn't see it the same way. Karate arose from the conflict between the disarmed Okinawan nobility and the armed

³⁴ Musashi, Miyamoto, *The Book of Five Rings*, Shambhala, 2005.

Satsuma overlords. The peasants laboring in the sugarcane fields were not involved.

There were several classes of people walking the forested lanes of Naha/Shuri in the 1800s:

- **Okinawan keimochi:** Disarmed for two centuries, these were the traditional island nobility. This class includes all of the famous Shuri masters, including Gichin Funakoshi. The police were lower-ranking keimochi reporting to the minister of military affairs. Linear karate and *kobudo* arose among this class, not among the peasants.
- **Satsuma samurai:** These were the samurai overlords who administered the enslavement of Okinawa. In daily life, they carried swords but were not dressed for battle. In the early years of the occupation, these samurai officers were experienced warriors, but as time wore on, their military experience deteriorated. Samurai living in the mid-1800s had never seen battle.
- **Foreign sailors:** Naha was a deep-water seaport with many visiting sailors from all over the world. These visitors were armed with knives, clubs, swords, harpoons, pistols and sometimes rifles. The foreigners made life exciting for the unarmed Okinawan police. In the legends, these visitors are often identified as “pirates.”

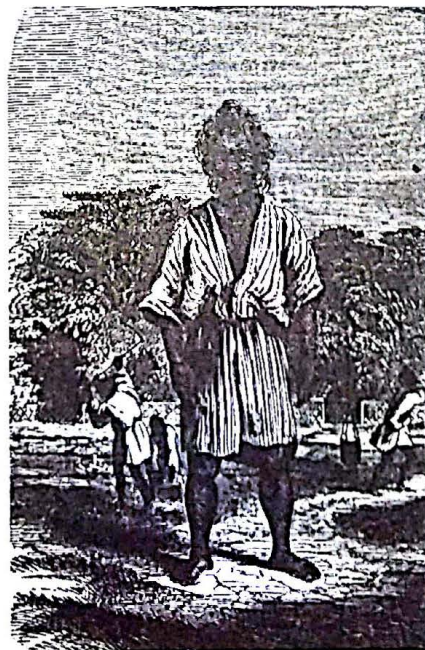


Figure 5: Okinawan peasants working a field barefoot, ungroomed and nearly naked.³⁵

³⁵ Perry, 2000, p. 157.

- **Japanese soldiers:** Satsuma maintained a garrison of soldiers in Naha to back up the authority of the bureaucrats.³⁶ They were armed and also armored, making them a special challenge for the unarmed keimochi.
- **Foreign soldiers:** In the 1800s, European warships sometimes stopped at Naha and unloaded squads of "modern" soldiers who were equipped like American Civil War soldiers.
- **Peasants:** Impoverished and downtrodden, these farmers and fishermen were little more than semi-naked agricultural slaves. Most of them did not have the leisure or the freedom to study martial arts during the 1800s.
- **Martial artists:** The legends of medieval Okinawa mention many prominent martial artists, especially those trained in traditional Chinese arts.

Until you understand the relationships among these groups, karate history will make no sense at all.

1.8 Kobudo

Kobudo is the indigenous Okinawan art of weaponry. Okinawans have a unique tradition of sophisticated fighting techniques associated with common household and agricultural objects such as millstone handles, sickles, threshing flails, bridles, oars, turtle shells, machetes, and staffs. Kobodu also includes some uncommon items such as the *sai*. Okinawan peasants used to receive the credit for developing kobudo, but this romantic idea is simply not supported by the facts.³⁷

Okinawan sensei claim that kobudo has a 1,000-year history, but the evidence of this seems very thin.³⁸ People have hit each other with sticks since the dawn of time. There was no pressing need for sophisticated kobudo until the 1609 Japanese invasion turned Okinawa into a slave

³⁶ Kerr, 2000, p. 179.

³⁷ McCarthy, Patrick, *Ancient Okinawan Martial Arts: Korryu Uchinadi*, Volume 2, Tuttle, 1999b, p. 92-93. The peasant origin of *kobudo* "can no longer support the weight of serious consideration."

³⁸ McCarthy, 1999a, p. 9, where Shinken Taira cites fragments of stick-fighting evidence running back to the 10th century.

camp. From that point on, makeshift weapons were a priority, and not just for peasants. Kobudo dates from this period.

The ancient Okinawan kobudo experts were not peasants. They were keimochi nobles at Shuri who had a unique need for nonweapon weapons. Most of the Shuri nobles whose names are prominent in this book as karate masters were also well-known kobudo masters.³⁹ Kobudo mastery is particularly evident among the keimochi who served as royal bodyguards and police because they encountered Satsuma overlords and armed foreigners on a daily basis. They used “peasant weapons” but they were not peasants.

The theory that kobudo is the creation of agricultural slaves has all kinds of practical problems, chief among them: the sai. The sai is not a peasant farming implement. Peasants could not afford steel tools, which had to be imported from Japan or China.⁴⁰ The sai is a steel truncheon with a cross guard, almost identical to the *jutte* police nightstick used in Japan in the same period.⁴¹ When we understand, however, that the chief proponents of kobudo in the kingdom of Okinawa were upper-class keimochi policemen, suddenly the sai makes perfect sense. It was a weapon issued to police.⁴²

The *nunchaku* presents another problem that needs airing. Jointed-staff weapons are well-known in Eastern history, but the foot-long nunchaku is not. There were no nunchaku kata, no nunchaku masters and no nunchaku combat stories until about 1920. This historical vacuum is in stark contrast to the rich lore about staffs, sickles, sai, grinder handles, flutes and oars. People struggle to find the Okinawan “agricultural implement” that gave rise to the nunchaku, but nothing really fits. The best they can do is to point out that the horse bridle was carved from two crescent-shaped sticks that could possibly have been used like a nunchaku.

It looks like the nunchaku was invented in the early 20th century and was never present in classical Okinawa. There is precedent: the *manji sai*

³⁹ McCarthy, 1999a, p. 10-11.

⁴⁰ This point was made by kobudo expert Fumio Demura at a seminar I attended in Foster City, CA, in 2001. The seminar was hosted by Bernard Edwards.

⁴¹ Cunningham, Don, *Secret Weapons of Jujutsu*, Tuttle, 2002, Ch. 6.

⁴² McCarthy, 1999b, p. 125, says the *sai* and *bo* were standard issue for Okinawan police from the time of Sho Shin onward.

was invented at about the same time.⁴³ Certainly all the nunchaku kata are modern inventions.

Now that I have tried to take away one of your favorite toys, it is only right that I offer you a new one. Have you ever heard of the *kasa*? It is a kobudo weapon that has not received the attention it deserves.

The *kasa* was a parasol or umbrella routinely carried by keimochi men in historical Okinawa. This Okinawan "brolly" served the dual function of sun protection during the tropical midday and rain protection during the tropical afternoons and evenings. It also offered a third kind of protection. *Kasa* from the 1850s had a wooden handle that was three or four feet long and almost an inch in diameter. It was a *jo* stick!⁴⁴

They hid their weapons in plain sight. Keimochi were very clever about that kind of thing. They carried those umbrellas everywhere, rain or shine, day or night.

Remember those hatpins that the keimochi wore to indicate their status? The king's jeweled crown was secured by the ultimate hatpin. It was about ten inches long and as thick as a pencil. He was not allowed to carry a sword or dagger, but no one questioned his right to wear that ice pick in his hair!

The unarmed Okinawans were never completely unarmed. The umbrellas and hatpins went everywhere with them.

1.9 Shuri Castle

Shuri Castle is the palace of the Sho kings. It was built by Sho Shin on a limestone hill about three miles inland from Naha, where you can see a panorama of the East China Sea on the western horizon and the open Pacific Ocean to the east. The view is magnificent, and the castle lives up to the grandeur of the site.⁴⁵

Shuri Castle was originally built in the 1500s, imitating on a small scale the beautiful royal lodgings of China and Thailand. The castle was surrounded by graceful, curving walls that put blocky Welsh castles to

⁴³ McCarthy, 1999a, p. 107.

⁴⁴ Perry, 2000, facing p. 226. My manly kobudo friends turn purple at the thought of performing parasol kata.

⁴⁵ Visit the Web site of the "Shurijo Castle Park" [sic] for photos and history of the castle. <http://oki-park.jp/shurijo-park/english/facilities/index.html#>



Figure 6: The Seiden, or throne room, of Shuri Castle. These students of the Shuri Dai Ichi Elementary School are practicing *pinan nidan*, led by Shimpan Gusukuma.⁴⁶ *Pinan nidan* later became *heian shodan*. Note the long front stances, a characteristic of *Shuri-te*. The teacher's white karate uniform indicates that the picture was taken after 1936.⁴⁷

shame. There were beautiful ramps and garden pools, all created with an eye for beauty that made Shuri Castle an incredible work of art. The central courtyard was laid out in stripes of white and red pavement with red-tile-roof buildings on all four sides. The castle contained multiple Okinawan national treasures dating back centuries.

In World War II, the Japanese Imperial Forces callously used Shuri Castle as their command post, and U.S. forces utterly destroyed it. The Okinawans have been rebuilding it ever since. Today it shines with more glory than ever.

One approaches Shuri Castle through a series of gates and ramps up the northwest side of the hill. The central courtyard, with its red and

⁴⁶ Shimpan Gusukuma and Shimpan Shiroma are the same person. Apparently, "Gusukuma" is the Okinawan reading, while "Shiroma" is the Japanese reading of the same name.

⁴⁷ This famous picture is from page 61 of *Karate Do Dai Kan*, an anthology by Gichin Funakoshi, Genwa Nakasone, Hiroki Otsuka, Hanashiro Nagashige, Shimpan Gusukuma, Choshin Chibana, Kenwa Mabuni, and Shinken Taira, published in Tokyo by Tocho, Inc., in 1938.

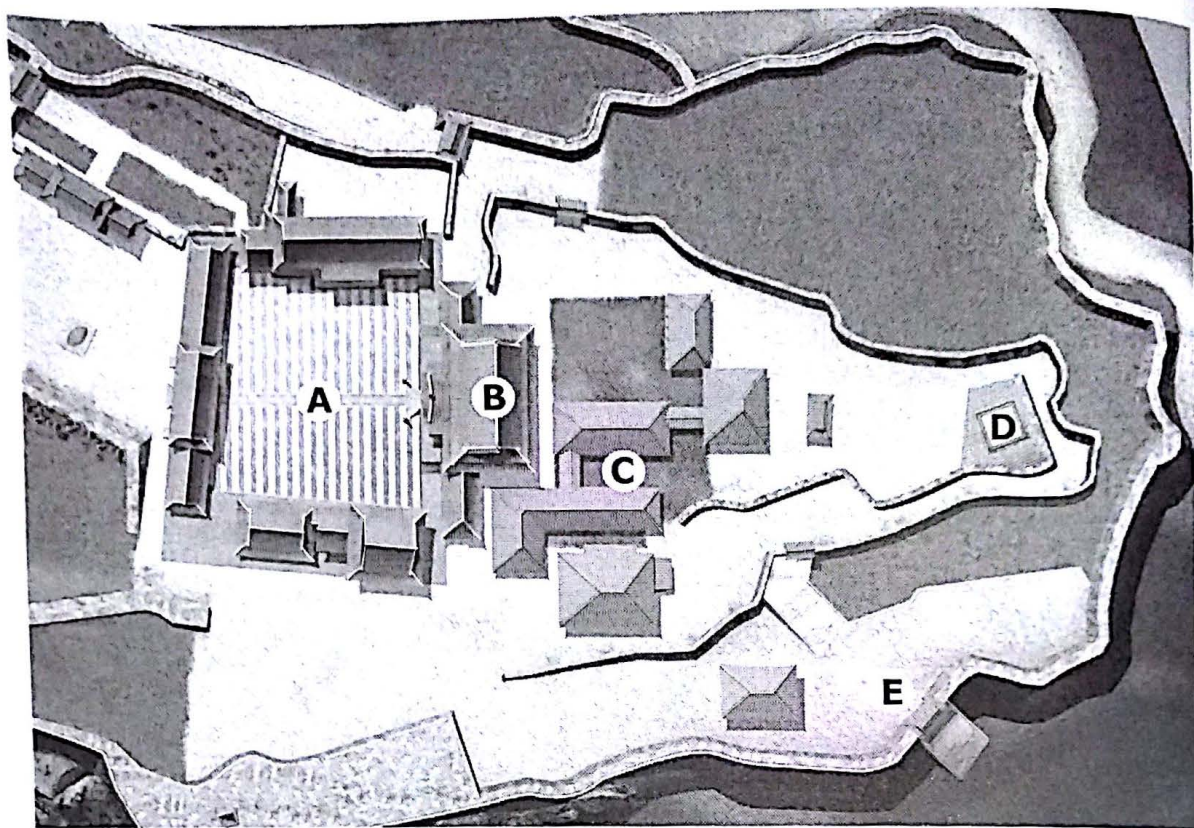


Figure 7: East half of Shuri Castle. You can see the striped courtyard at the left (A), dominated by the Seiden or throne room (B). The king's living quarters are the small buildings in the center of the image (C). The isolated square building on the right is the king's private mausoleum (D), and the private gate is at the bottom edge of the picture (E). (This 3-D computer model of the castle was created by Rafael Malabanan.)

white pavement dominates the hilltop (Figure 7 A). On the east side of the courtyard is the palatial reception hall, the Seiden (B), where one has audiences with the king. It is the king's office building, devoted to the business and ceremony of running the government.

The two adjacent halls, forming the north and south sides of the square, were devoted to additional offices and facilities for foreign envoys. Part of the north building (the Hokuden) was used by emissaries of the Ming Emperor of China, who maintained the illusion that Okinawa was a Chinese province. Part of the south hall (the Nanden) was allocated to representatives of the Shimasu clan from Satsuma who secretly represented the shogun of Japan.

The fourth side (the west side) of the courtyard was occupied by another hall that had a reception area in one wing and offices in the other. On the west side of the courtyard was the Houshinmon, the elaborate gatehouse that was the official entry to the courtyard. The bureaucrats who ran the government at Shuri were members of the Okinawan keimochi

nobility. They were proud of their warrior heritage, even if they had been disarmed for 200 years.

The west half of the castle area and the surrounding grounds were devoted to various gardens, temples and isolated buildings in scenes of great beauty. We are more interested in the eastern half, behind the Seiden, called the Ouchibara. This was the hidden half of the castle.

The king worked in the Seiden, but he did not live there. The royal family actually lived in a series of smaller apartments hidden from view in a parklike area behind the two-story pavilion (C).⁴⁸ Here the king lived with family members and a large staff of female servants. Male servants and casual visitors were banned from this area. At the extreme east end of the hill, about 100 feet from the residential buildings, was a small mausoleum surrounded by a 10-foot high stone wall with a stout gate (D). The gate was locked and guarded. Only the king could enter.

On the southeast corner of the hill is a small gate and path down to the surrounding forest (E). This gate lies on the opposite side of the hill from the main entrance and opens in the royals-only zone behind the Seiden. The small gate looks like a convenient back door for times when someone undesirable was pounding on the front gate.

1.10 Inside the Seiden

The Seiden, the king's hall, is a two-story office building in the center of Shuri Castle. It contains two throne rooms, one on each floor, surrounded by offices and rooms with special purposes. The king spent most of his time on the second floor. These were the executive offices of the kingdom. From the second floor of the Seiden, elevated corridors lead to adjacent buildings in the private area of the castle.

There is a central stairway from the second floor down to the public throne room on the ground floor. This stairway, called the *ochokui*, opens directly behind the *urasuka*, which was the raised platform where the king sat during audiences. This staircase was the king's normal route to and from public appearances.

⁴⁸ The Google Earth coordinates of the Shuri Castle site are 26.21719000, 127.71914400. The castle has been completely rebuilt in the last 50 years, and is still incomplete. The Ouchibara, for instance, is a parking lot.

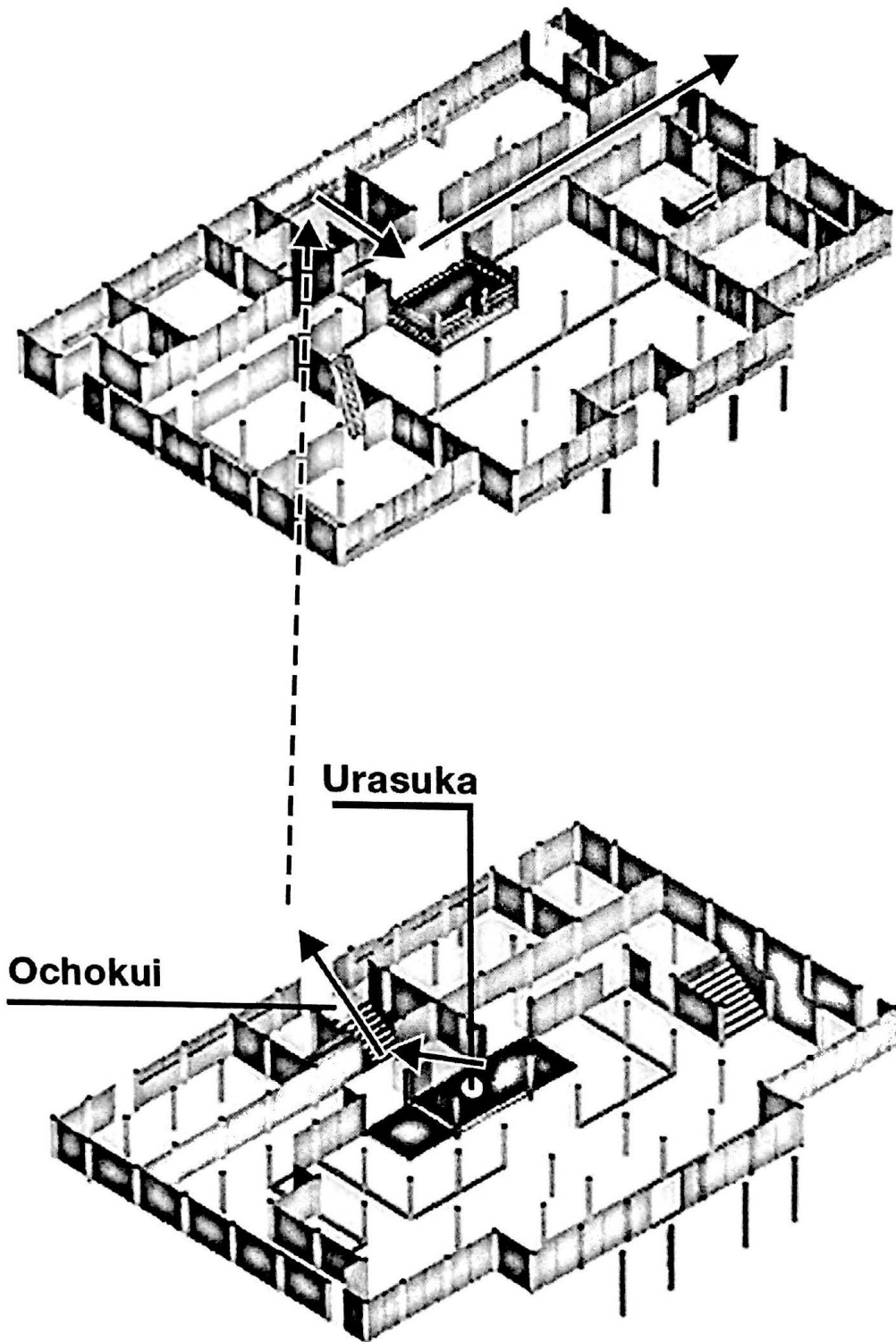


Figure 8: Interior of the Seiden, the royal administration building. The *ochokui* is the hidden staircase to the second floor, only a few feet behind the *urasuka*, the raised dais for the throne. The arrows show the escape route from the public throne room, up the stairs, through the upper offices, to the royal residence. The stairs were the defensible bottleneck in the route.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ 3-D models of the interior of the Seiden adapted from the "old" Shuriyo Park Web site. http://oki-park.jp/shuriyo_park//syuri_e/c/c409000.html.

If the king were ever attacked during an audience on the ground floor, his bodyguards would have whisked him up the stairs to the secure second floor and then to a prepared escape route away from danger. The ochokui is the tactical bottleneck in the escape route. It would be natural for the bodyguards to make a stand at the stairway to block pursuit.

1.11 Western Barbarians

One of the critical elements of the Shuri Crucible was a revolution in European seafaring skills at the end of the 18th century. In 1762, the English inventor John Harrison perfected a navigational chronometer accurate enough to let British naval officers calculate their exact longitude within 18 feet, even after a year at sea.⁵⁰ This chronometer was the 18th-century technical equivalent of warp drive. Within 10 years Captain James Cook had circumnavigated the world using this new technology, going boldly where no Englishman had gone before. Within 50 years the technology had spread to other seafaring powers, including the upstart United States of America.



Figure 9: Tomari from the sea showing Western ships at anchor.⁵¹ This is the opposite point of view to Figure 1.

⁵⁰ Sobel, Dava, *Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time*, Walker & Company, 1995.

⁵¹ Perry, 2000, p. 316.



Figure 10: “Whaddaya mean, not welcome?” This whaling crew has dropped anchor and is looking forward to shore leave. Imagine being the unarmed *keimochi* official who has to send them back to their ship. (Courtesy of The New Bedford Whaling Museum.)⁵²

Naturally, the Western seafaring nations wanted to open trade relations with the Orient, but it was really the whaling trade that lured Americans to the shores of Japan. By the 1840s, there were over 1,000 American whaling vessels hunting humpback whales in Japanese waters. They often needed to put into port to make repairs or to resupply, but they were always refused. Landing on the Japanese mainland was a deadly mistake. Just a few days’ sail to the south, however, was the legendary weaponless paradise of Okinawa. Whalers thought they would get a better reception there, and if not, they could always *insist*.

It takes a daring man to stick a spear in the back of a whale from a tiny rowboat, and whalers were not the least bit squeamish about blood and gore. Each crew was answerable only to their captain. When these men came ashore, they were like a mob of gangbangers who had just spent five

⁵² This photo comes from the collection of The New Bedford Whaling Museum and was probably taken after 1900. The actual crew, ship and location are unknown. They look like a tough bunch of sailors.

months in jail. They were ready to party. After months at sea, they wanted fresh food, liquor and women. These commodities were available in Naha.

In the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s, Okinawa received a steady stream of whalers who put in to Naha and Tomari to resupply, recreate or trade. They were met at the shore by regretful Shuri ministers who explained that there was nothing Okinawa wanted to buy and nothing for sale on the entire island. The visitors were not welcome and should go back to their ships. These confrontations could easily have led to violence and indeed must have on numerous occasions.

Whaling ships from Europe and America were very common in Okinawan waters, and hairy Western barbarians dropped anchor at Naha with distressing regularity. The captains expected to barter for supplies and trade items in Naha. They were not happy when the Okinawans inexplicably *refused* to trade.

On their part, the Okinawans were shaken by fear and uncertainty when the Western ships began to call at Naha. Shuri had no firm precedents with which to govern its behavior. As we shall see, Satsuma's official attitudes veered with changing policies [...] sometimes encouraging foreign intercourse for the sake of trade, sometimes frowning on it, and always meting out heavy punishments to those who violated orders. The Europeans who came were unacquainted with the rituals and procedures traditionally associated with the reception and dispatch of embassies and trading missions, and this led to many crises within Shuri Castle walls.⁵³

This policy naturally led to many angry confrontations with visitors, where the Westerners became increasingly frustrated with the helpless Okinawan ministers. The visitors didn't understand the deadly three-way game involving the Sho kings, Satsuma and Beijing. They thought Okinawa was an autonomous island kingdom and didn't realize that it was really a part of Japan. As such, it was a capital crime for Okinawans to engage in any commerce with foreigners. If the king's staff had dared to make any agreement with the visitors, even a secret agreement, they would have been risking the life of the king. The Shuri ministers simply wouldn't take that chance.

⁵³ Kerr, 2000, p. 248.

For example, in 1853 the people of Naha were plagued by an obnoxious Christian missionary named Dr. Bernard Bettelheim. The history books agree that Bettelheim was the kind of missionary who is hated by everyone he meets. In five years, Bettelheim converted only one Okinawan to Christianity, and that man was promptly stoned to death by his neighbors.⁵⁴ Bettelheim could not get the Shuri officials to sell him any provisions, or even to feed his starving wife and children. He had plenty of money donated by charity organizations in England, but he could not spend it. Therefore, he simply stole anything he needed and dropped a coin on the ground in payment. When Bettelheim at last departed from Okinawa, the Shuri government presented him with a small chest containing *every coin* the missionary had distributed in six years. The Okinawans absolutely would not accept payment.⁵⁵

Sometimes the Westerners sailed away in frustration. Sometimes they just took what they needed. Sometimes they rioted and caused so much trouble along the waterfront that the ministers purchased supplies out of their own funds and gave them to the visitors, just to get them to go away.

In every visit, there was a moment of truth when the unarmed Shuri ministers had to meet the barbarians face-to-face and say, "You are not welcome here. Go back to your ship." It was never pleasant or safe to do so. The same crisis played out, like a recurring nightmare, every time a Western ship dropped anchor in Naha harbor from about 1820 to 1868.

1.12 Meiji Restoration

The downfall of the shogunate in 1868 put the imperial family back in control of Japan for the first time in three centuries. This revolution is known as the Meiji Restoration. (The first restored emperor was named "Meiji.")

The Meiji Restoration was good news, and also very bad news, for Okinawa. On the one hand, it rescinded the shogun's laws about avoiding contact with foreigners, so a new era of trade began. The new emperor was not amused that Okinawa paid tribute to China, so the tradition of

⁵⁴ Walworth, Arthur, *Black Ships Off Japan, The Story of Commander Perry's Expedition*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1946, p. 46.

⁵⁵ Kerr, 2000, p. 340.

dual subordination ended abruptly. Japan was no longer afraid of war with China. In fact, the new Japan looked forward to a war with China.

These changes might be considered improvements, but the changes didn't stop there. Emperor Meiji naturally felt that there was room for only *one* king in Japan, so King Sho Tai was demoted to Mr. Sho, a common citizen of the empire. He was ordered to move to Tokyo as a ward of the government. Many of Okinawa's highest nobility were required to go with him as hostages. They resisted the move for several years, but were forced to comply in 1879.

The remaining keimochi families in Okinawa were dismissed from their government jobs and declared to be commoners. For five centuries these keimochi families had performed government functions in return for hereditary salaries. Suddenly they were thrown on their own resources with no social position, no jobs, no lands and no income. Virtually everyone in Shuri was suddenly unemployed with no market for their bureaucratic skills. This is why so many stories about karate masters describe their severe poverty in the late 1800s. The keimochi families were starving.

1.13 Satsuma Rebellion

It wasn't just the keimochi families who suffered from the Meiji reforms. The samurai, too, depended on government stipends. In the 1870s, the Meiji government, led by Home Minister Toshimichi Okubo, set about to destroy the samurai class in Japan. Hereditary samurai stipends were ended and replaced by government-issued bonds that paid only 60 percent as much.⁵⁶ Swords were outlawed. Samurai clothing was discouraged. Samurai topknots were prohibited. Worst of all, the government established the Imperial Japanese Army, putting modern military weapons into the hands of *peasants*. The lesson was plain: Japan was determined to be done with the samurai.

The Satsuma samurai did not take this lying down. In 1877, Saigo Takamori led a revolt against the Meiji government. Okubo took the field against him, commanding the new conscript army. This conflict was

⁵⁶ Weston, Mark, *Giants of Japan, The Lives of Japan's Greatest Men and Women*, Kodansha, 1999, p. 179.



Figure 11: Takamori Saigo, "The Last Samurai," with his officers in 1877.⁵⁷ Note the general's Western uniform.

romanticized in Tom Cruise's film, *The Last Samurai*,⁵⁸ as a battle where swords, arrows, and honor made a last stand against bayonets, artillery, and autocratic power. In real life, both armies used "modern" weapons, including rifles, howitzers and Gatling guns. The heroic Saigo did not dress like a samurai. He wore a western-style general's uniform complete with brass buttons, boots and spurs. If he owned a *katana*, he left it at home and used his Western saber instead. The Satumas fought bravely, but were outnumbered five to one on the battlefield and were crushed.

The last remnant of Saigo's forces retreated to the crest of Mount Shiroyama, a hill overlooking Kagoshima harbor. They held out for three weeks in the face of massive artillery bombardment, naval gunfire and repeated infantry attacks. In the final moments of the battle, the last forty samurai drew their swords and charged down the hill into the muzzles of 30,000 rifles. They were mowed down in seconds.^{59,60}

⁵⁷ From the Wikimedia Commons, this lithograph was published in *Le Monde Illustré* in 1877.

⁵⁸ *The Last Samurai*, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2003.

⁵⁹ Kerr, 2000, p. 74-75.

⁶⁰ Ravina, Mark, *The Last Samurai: The Life and Battles of Saigo Takamori*, John Wiley and Sons, 2004, p. 4.

As a footnote to the story, six samurai hunted down Okubo and assassinated him a year later. He died with a *tanto* (dagger) in his forehead.⁶¹

In the space of ten years, both the keimochi and their samurai oppressors vanished into history. The descendents of both groups are known today, rather sadly, as *shizoku*, “the people who used to be samurai.”⁶²

1.14 Early 20th Century

There was a 60-year period from 1880 to 1940, during which linear karate matured and went out to meet the world. During the first two decades (up to 1900), karate was still practiced in secret, at night, and in enclosed places like graveyards. During the second two decades (up to 1920), karate became well-known in Okinawa and attracted the attention of visiting Japanese dignitaries. During this period, karate was adopted by the Shuri public schools as a physical education program. In the final 20 years, karate invaded Japan and began its expansion into the world.

We will examine all of these developments in more detail as we meet the people involved. The new art had found acceptance in the public eye, and the future of karate looked bright indeed.

1.15 The Shuri Crucible

In this chapter we have established some of the historical background of Okinawa in the 1800s. These circumstances created a deadly trap for the Shuri nobles and resulted in the birth of linear karate.

This island paradise was conquered by the Japanese shogunate, a regime with open contempt for human life. In a brazen twist of foreign policy, this brutal regime wanted the conquest kept secret.

The puppet government of the island was composed of keimochi bureaucrats, who carried out the business of the government in four large wooden buildings in Shuri Castle.

The keimochi nobles were constantly watched by their Satsuma masters. If they made a misstep, Okinawa’s king answered for it.

The shogun’s edicts prohibited Okinawa from having any commerce with Western visitors. When visitors showed up anyway, keimochi nobles

⁶¹ Weston, 1999, p. 180.

⁶² McCarthy, 1999b, p. 123.

were ordered to meet them at the beach and turn them away. The Japanese overlords stayed discreetly out of sight during these angry confrontations.

This situation was workable for the first 200 years of the Japanese occupation, but in the 1800s, Western whaling ships and naval vessels began to drop anchor at Naha quite frequently. Their crews didn't understand why the king of Okinawa was so rude to visiting sailors.

The Shuri ministers had no choice but to confront the visiting sailors. They had no choice but to frustrate, disappoint and anger these dangerous barbarians. They had no choice but to enter these encounters outnumbered and unarmed.

After each such encounter, the Satsuma overlords demanded recounting. The Shuri ministers were in mortal danger during these interviews, too. Again, they had no choice and no weapons. The Satsumas fingered their swords as they decided the fate of each Okinawan official.

This explains why the lords of Okinawa stayed up late every night hitting their *makiwara* posts until their knuckles burst through their skin. With Satsuma overlords on one side and Western sailors on the other, the Shuri lords were trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea.

The situation just kept getting worse until 1853, when the Shuri ministers found themselves caught in a brink-of-war confrontation between the despotic shogunate and the United States of America. The Shuri ministers were ordered down to the beach yet again to put the barbarians back on their ships. This time the "barbarians" were United States Marines.

Sokon Matsumura was the chief bodyguard to the kings of Okinawa during this entire period. It was his duty to bring the elderly Shuri ministers safely out of any confrontation, whether against drunken sailors, Satsuma overlords, or U.S. Marines bristling with weapons. When violence erupted, he was in the front, first to fight and last to retreat. When Matsumura went into action, the odds were one against many, and the weapons were skin against steel. This was his destiny for 50 years of active service.

In a chemistry laboratory, a crucible is a ceramic cup used to heat crystals or metals to extremely high temperatures. Inside a crucible, conditions are so extreme that the original materials become changed into something new and different. Raw ore is smelted into metal. Sand turns into glass. With enough heat and pressure, carbon can be transformed into diamond. A crucible is a place where heat and pressure

produce dramatic changes.

Shuri Castle in the 1800s was a martial-arts crucible. Matsumura faced the same threats repeatedly throughout his 50-year tenure as Shuri's chief military officer. During this period, the Shuri Crucible forged a new martial art in Matsumura's mind, burning away unsuitable techniques and compounding new ones in their place. Decades later, Matsumura's protégé, Yasutsune Itosu, opened this scorched vessel and poured out the hard-style karate kata and techniques we practice in shotokan today.

In the next chapter, we will meet the people who spent their lives in the Shuri Crucible. Matsumura faced Shuri's enemies barehanded, but he did not face them alone.

Chapter 2



The Lords of Karate

Now that we have laid out the broad strokes of Okinawan history, we need to meet the people who lived and worked in Shuri in the 1800s. Most karate history books introduce the Shuri masters as isolated, elderly curmudgeons who practiced in secret to guard their special knowledge from each other. This picture is very misleading.

The impression of hostile isolation was created in the early 1900s and pertains mostly to the students of the original Shuri masters. Some of these young masters were bitter rivals with churlish attitudes toward one another. It is easy to see how we got the impression that karate masters were jealous and secretive.

Fifty years earlier, however, the original Shuri-te masters had been young officials of the Shuri government. They trained together and shared karate knowledge quite freely because it was their only means of mutual defense. On June 6, 1853, when the population of Shuri fled before an advancing column of U.S. Marines, four elderly ministers awaited the invaders at the north gate of Shuri Castle. Behind them stood a dozen grim young men. Who were these courageous men, if not Matsumura and his students? These men became the first masters of hard-style karate.

This chapter repeats some of karate's famous stories, but it does more than that. I have chosen specific anecdotes because they contain subtle clues about the personalities and circumstances of these men who invented linear karate. Who were they? What were they like? What lives did they lead? Who were their enemies? Who were their friends? This information is critically important to interpreting bunkai, the applications of our modern kata. To understand the creators of karate, we have to understand the context in which they lived. The context created the karate.

2.1 Japanese Language

Before we get into the details, I need to explain a few things about the Japanese language and culture. If this seems like a pointless detour, have faith. The Shuri masters played word games when they named kata and styles. We need to be aware of these games.

Written language did not exist in Japan before about 450 A.D., when the Japanese began to imitate the very complex kanji ideographs they

observed in neighboring China.⁶³ There are thousands of these kanji characters, each representing a specific word or idea to the Chinese.

The Chinese people use inflections (singsong sounds) to distinguish similar words from one another in conversation. The Japanese adopted thousands of Chinese words along with the kanji writing system, but did not adopt the intonations. This created many homophones (words that have different meanings but share the same sound). Every language has a few homophones, but Japanese has hundreds of them. This created no end to the confusion, resulting in the present-day situation where written Japanese uses 2,000 to 3,000 kanji characters and three different phonic alphabets to sort it all out.⁶⁴

Each of the original kanji characters came with a “Chinese” *on* reading, which is allegedly the sound of a word in some form of ancient Chinese. To this the Japanese added a *kun* reading, which was a Japanese spoken word that had approximately the same meaning. Over the centuries this situation became more complex, and today, each of the thousands of kanji characters may have multiple *on* and *kun* readings, and as many multiple meanings.

For instance, in English, we have the familiar homophones *two*, *to*, and *too*. In Japanese, the number two is *ni*. *Ni* is the *on* reading of eleven kanji characters, which collectively may mean: you, so, only, since, at, by, for, from, in, on, to, virtue, benevolence, man, child, and nun. Of course, it also means two. *Ni* is the *kun* reading of five more kanji symbols, meaning: red, red earth, load, cargo, baggage, boil and cook.⁶⁵

Therefore, a short phrase written in kanji can have several possible meanings and can be read aloud in multiple ways. For instance, the kanji for the “heian” kata means “tranquility.”⁶⁶ The “heian” kanji can be read as “pinan,” depending on your preference for the *on* or *kun* voicings. It is the same kanji, the same idea and the same kata, but half the karate world says “heian” while the other half insists on “pinan.”

The name of a kata passed down by oral tradition may have lost its original kanji symbols. In this circumstance, the name can have dozens

⁶³ Henshall, 1999, p. 18.

⁶⁴ Katakana, hiragana, and romaji. They have also wisely borrowed the Indo-Arabic numeral set.

⁶⁵ Mark Spahn and Wolfgang Hadamitzky, *The Kanji Dictionary*, Tuttle, 1996.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

of competing meanings. When someone tells you "the meaning" of a kata name, the correct response is skepticism. They have told you only *one* of the meanings. There are always other meanings, and they may not have chosen the right one. As we go forward, you may be surprised to discover what some of the familiar Japanese karate terms actually mean.

2.2 Chinese Language

We need to render some respect to the Chinese, too. Much of Japan's martial tradition came from China or was influenced by Chinese teachers, so we also sometimes find meaning in Chinese names and words.

For instance, martial skills are referred to as *bujutsu* in Japan. You may have heard that the corresponding Chinese term is *wushu*. Did you know that the kanji are the same for both terms?

KANJI	Chinese (Cantonese)	Chinese (Mandarin)	Japanese (ON)	Meaning
武 術	Mou	Wu	Bu	Martial
	Seot	Shu	Jutsu	Art

Figure 12: Japanese and Chinese. "Wushu" and "bujutsu" are the same term meaning "martial art." (Courtesy of Philip Sneyd.)

KANJI	Chinese (Cantonese)	Chinese (Mandarin)	Meaning
北 京	Pe	Bei	North
	King	Jing	Capital

Figure 13: Cantonese and Mandarin. "Peking" and "Beijing" are the same word meaning "North Capital." (Courtesy of Philip Sneyd.)

There are many “Chinese” dialects. Most of these are local variants of either Mandarin or Cantonese. China has roughly 2,500 miles of seacoast. If you divide this long coastline into thirds, you find that the northern and southern segments are occupied by people who speak Mandarin. People in the *middle* third of the coast speak Cantonese.

So what is the name of the capital of China? Is it Peking or Beijing? I’m sure you have seen both terms in news stories and on maps. The correct name of the capital depends on which kind of Chinese you are speaking.

The northern limit of Cantonese along the coastline is roughly opposite Okinawa, so the Okinawans had to deal with sailors, merchants, officials and visiting martial artists who used multiple dialects of both Cantonese and Mandarin. This means that our speculations on what a kata name might have meant in Chinese are on very uncertain ground. There are too many kinds of “Chinese.”

2.3 Three Official Myths

When you ask your *sensei* about the history of karate, you are likely to hear three standard myths. It would be harsh to call them “lies” because the sensei doesn’t know that they are lies. His sensei told him; he’s telling you. It is up to you to break the chain.

You should never take these statements at face value.

2.3.1 Official Myth No. 1: “It came from ancient China.”

When asked the origins of the art, the sensei says, “It came to us from ancient China.”

The best lie is the one that is partly true. Much of the martial knowledge of Japan, Korea and Okinawa did pass through China at one point or another, but this fact is used to conceal more relevant truths.

The Okinawan, Korean and Chinese peoples share a deep respect for ancient Chinese culture. They also have a loathing of Japan that is quite dismaying, due to repeated episodes of Japanese invasion, conquest and occupation.

The Nanking Massacre of 1937 shows us why. Japanese invaders captured the Chinese city of Nanking and launched a six-week campaign

of murder and rape against the citizens. Witnesses were left stunned and aghast.

Westerners and even Nazis living in the security of the Nanking Safety Zone, described their experience as an "unimaginable hell." And if it was "hell" for the Nazis, what must it have been like for the people of Nanking?⁶⁷

Approximately 80,000 women were dragged from their homes, raped and murdered by gangs of Japanese soldiers. Azuma Shiro, a Japanese soldier who participated in the slaughter, testified:

"We took turns raping them. We always stabbed and killed them. When we were raping her, we looked at her as a woman. But when we killed her, we just thought of her as something like a pig."⁶⁸

Imagine this attitude multiplied by many thousands of soldiers. Okinawa and Korea have had *centuries* of this treatment. For instance, there are war memorials in Japan that contain the ears and noses of tens of thousands of Koreans who were murdered by samurai in the 1590s.⁶⁹ The "warriors" didn't get paid unless they brought in a bag of noses each day.

This is why Korean karate teachers angrily deny that *taekwondo* had its roots in Japanese karate.^{70,71} They have worked hard to conceal this from their students, including inventing new kata to replace the shotokan kata that they used to practice.⁷² Their rejection of the Japanese is absolute.

I think that Okinawans, in turn, didn't acknowledge how much their grappling arts owed to the *jujutsu* of their samurai oppressors. The Ryukyu islanders suffered at the hands of the Japanese, too, and for far longer periods of time. Unlike Korea and China, the Okinawans are

⁶⁷ Rhawn, Joseph, "Japanese Testbooks, Koizumi, Sex Slaves, & the Nightmare of Nanking," George Mason University's *History News Network*, 10-17-05, <http://hnn.us/articles/14566.html>.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Weston, 1999, p. 151.

⁷⁰ Capener, Steven, "Problems in the Identity and Philosophy of Taegwondo and their Historical Causes," *Korea Journal*, Vol. 35 No. 4 Winter 1995, p. 80-94.

⁷¹ Haines, Bruce, *Karate's History and Traditions*, Tuttle, 1995, p. 110.

⁷² Thomas, Chris, "Did Karate's Funakoshi Found Taekwondo?" *Black Belt Magazine*, November 1988, p. 26-30.

still under Japanese dominion. Thankfully, that dominion is no longer as harsh as it once was.

Thus, if you can't admit that you learned your art from people you despise, you can always point to ancient China instead. That gives your art impeccable roots, as well as a comforting sense of antiquity.

2.3.2 Official Myth No. 2: "It is a secret I learned from my grandfather."

Japanese instructors venerate the ancient and are disdainful of the new. They love to invent new kata and new techniques, but it isn't socially acceptable to admit it. Their recourse is to claim that the information is ancient but has been kept secret from the public until now.

When a traditional sensei invents a new technique, he often says, "It is a secret I learned from my grandfather." Then he names a grandfather who is conveniently dead. This deflects all further questioning.

We sometimes see such "secret" knowledge attributed to the sensei's dead teacher, too. Usually the source of this revelation was not the sensei's son or his senior student. Apparently, the teacher didn't trust his son and senior student, so he confided in a relative stranger instead. I hope you understand how unlikely that is.

When a sensei reveals a "family secret," it means "I made it up." If it were a real family secret, he would keep it secret.

2.3.3 Official Myth No. 3: "We teach the original version."

Masters who revise kata generally don't admit it. Confronted by the fact that their kata don't match the kata of other schools, they reply, "We teach the original version. Those other guys have corrupted the kata!" This was how Chotoku Kyan explained the extensive revisions he made to Itosu's heian (pinan) kata.

During my research for this book, I did a step-by-step comparison of the heian kata in multiple branches of karate. The differences between one style and the next are enormous, yet every branch claims to be doing the original version, unchanged for a thousand years. When a sensei says, "We teach the original version," he really means, "We teach *my* version."

Even within shotokan, numerous changes to the heians have crept in. Shotokan masters can tell which videos you own by watching the details of your kata performances.

When I studied taekwondo in the 1970s, we practiced pinan (heian) kata that were almost identical to those of shotokan, including the signature H-shaped floor pattern. Then one day, it was forbidden to mention them. We had to learn the new *palgue* forms instead. It was clear to us that the *palgue* forms were a hash of techniques from the *taikyoku* and heian kata, with some pieces of *jion* and *kanku dai* thrown in for flavoring. The H-shaped pattern was still there underfoot. When we asked about this similarity, we were curtly told, "These are the original forms! They came from ancient China and were kept secret for generations!" We got all three lies in one breath!

These standard myths are heard whenever the teacher doesn't want to answer your question.

2.4 What is Truth?

As if karate history were not confusing enough, one eventually realizes that many Japanese writers and karate masters enjoy a very special relationship with the truth. It confounds the naïve Western reader to discover that respected Japanese sensei have casually concealed, distorted or fabricated stories about karate's historical origins for their own purposes. In traditional Japanese culture, the official story is more important than the actual truth. In fact, they considered the official story to be another *kind* of truth, even if the story was completely fabricated and deliberately misleading. For a person to question the official story was shockingly rude. People who insisted on digging for verifiable facts were derided as *rikutsuppoi*, or "reason freaks."⁷³

We can lay this philosophy at the feet of Ieyasu Tokugawa, the master of mind control. The Tokugawa edicts forced the Japanese people to adopt a double standard of truth. Every person had their private opinion, their secret *honne*, which was not safe to share even within the family. Instead, they all staunchly supported the official government story, the *tatemae*. It was the only safe thing to do in an era when a careless word could doom an entire family, or even a village.

⁷³ Van Wolferen, Karel, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, MacMillan, 1989, especially Chapter 9, "The Management of Reality."

The distinction between *honne* and *tatemae* appears again and again in karate history, especially in books by old-school karate masters. *Honne* refers to a person's true feelings, underlying motives, or the true facts of the case. *Honne* is written using the kanji for "true or real" plus the kanji that means "sound." *Tatemae* means the cover story and is written with kanji that mean "to build" and "in front." In other words, *tatemae* is the screen we erect to hide the truth.

For example, in 19th-century Okinawa, the *tatemae* (official story) was that the Sho kings were in charge of the kingdom, and they reported only to the Emperor of China. The hidden *honne* (the real situation) was that the Satsuma overlords were secretly in control. The Sho kings didn't make a move without Satsuma approval. That's the difference between *honne* and *tatemae*.

Sometimes, *tatemae* took a physical form. The Dutch were allowed to anchor a trading ship in Nagasaki harbor once a year, but they were not allowed to go ashore. During these visits, a Japanese gunboat patrolled the harbor, making a great show of her fearsome cannons. Armored samurai warriors paraded on the deck of the gunboat, shaking their weapons and shouting threats at the Dutch sailors.

One day the top-heavy gunboat capsized and sank. The armored samurai vanished beneath the waves—but the cannons floated! The Dutch found this very amusing.⁷⁴

Tokugawa's tyranny ended 150 years ago. Since the end of World War II, Japan has learned to be less militaristic and to develop a more enlightened attitude toward the excesses of the past. That said, the problem of *tatemae* sometimes still surfaces. In the last three decades, Japan has been repeatedly embarrassed by government-sponsored textbooks that try to whitewash Japan's brutal history. According to some of these textbooks, the appalling Nanking Massacre was just an "incident," the sexual enslavement of the Korean "comfort women" is a myth, and the evil United States of America forced the peaceful Japanese to attack Pearl Harbor.⁷⁵ To their credit, the Japanese people did not adopt these textbooks. Their neighbors in Korea and China were outraged by them.

⁷⁴ Walworth 1946, p. 81.

⁷⁵ Rhawn, *loc. cit.*

As we go forward with this analysis, I'll point out the pretense (*tatema*) and the truth (*honne*) in many situations.

2.5 Chi-Niang Fang and White Crane

If you are interested in the history of linear karate, the first person you should meet is a young woman named Chi-Niang Fang of Yongchun Village in Fukien (Fujian) Province, China. Chi-Niang Fang was the daughter of a murdered Shaolin priest. Sometime in the late 1600s, Fang lost a fight with a stork.

According to one legend, the stork was eating Fang's grain, so she tried to drive it off with a stick. Using its strong wings and sharp beak, the stork fought back and gave Fang a beating. Fang decided to base a fighting style on the antics of this stork and use it to avenge the death of her father.^{76,77} This was the beginning of the Shaolin white crane branch of chuan fa.⁷⁸

Most of the chuan fa "origin stories" are simple folklore, recycled by various teachers to explain the lost history of their arts. For instance, proponents of multiple styles of chuan fa tell a very similar origin story in which a Buddhist nun, Ng Mui, one of five survivors of a massacre at the Shaolin



Figure 14: Chi-Niang Fang fights a stork. (Courtesy of The Martial Source; www.martialsource.com.)

⁷⁶ De Turreil, Paul, "Fukien Shaolin White Crane Kung Fu: A Portrait of Grand Master Lee Kiang Ke," *Kungfu Magazine*, March/April 2001.

⁷⁷ McCarthy, 1995, p. 62, for another stork legend with the same general theme.

⁷⁸ This is the Fukien white crane, not the same as the older Tibetan white crane.

temple, invented a new style of fighting. Ng Mui must have been very busy because she gets the credit for inventing at least five martial arts.⁷⁹

This folklore has a basis: The Manchu Qing Dynasty displaced the Ming government in the mid-1600s. The Shaolin monks were Ming loyalists, so the Manchus sacked the Shaolin temple multiple times between 1640 and 1674. There were repeated massacres and hundreds of “murdered” monks. The myths of a refugee nun fighting back bare-handed against Manchu invaders date from this period.⁸⁰

Regardless of its origin, the new style quickly spread across southern China and became very popular. Fukien white crane became known as a style of quick hand movements using fingers or knuckles to “peck” sharply at the vital points of the enemy. (Shotokan’s *ippon ken* and *nukite* techniques come from white crane.) It is not an overly powerful style, but it relies on a flurry of vital-point strikes to debilitate each opponent. The white crane fighter typically sidesteps a charging opponent and counters while the attacker is still lunging forward.

White crane kata emphasize punches, blocks and joint locks, and are frequently designed as two-person forms. The second half of the kata contains the countermoves to the first half so you can practice solo or with a partner. This is important because one-on-one fighting encourages the study of joint locks and grappling. (Most people cannot grapple with multiple opponents successfully, although there are a few who can.)

The white crane style includes many weapons, such as the seven-star staff, the spear, three-sectional staff, halberd, cane, horse-cutter broadsword, the tiger fork, the double iron rods, the double broadswords and the southern short swords. Additional weapons include the single broadsword, straight sword and the fighting fan.

Okinawan unarmed fighting in the 1700s consisted mainly of white crane and similar styles of chuan fa imported and re-imported countless times from mainland China. The only clear difference between mainland and island fighting arts was that Okinawans could not openly

⁷⁹ According to the Wikipedia article on Ng Mui, itself a form of folklore, she was involved in the creation of the *wing chun*, five-pattern *hung kuen*, dragon style kung fu, *wu mei pei* and Tibetan white crane styles.

⁸⁰ Shaha, Meir, *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion, and the Chinese Martial Arts*, University of Hawaii Press, 2008, Chapter 7. The mistreatment continues as the monastery was sacked again by the Japanese in 1941 and by the Chinese Red Guard during the “cultural revolution” of 1966. The temple is currently a government-sponsored tourist attraction.

study the white crane weapons; they substituted kobudo weapons instead. Some of Naha's Chinese families, particularly in the Kumemura district of Naha, must have studied the weapons in private anyway.

The important things to remember about the white crane style are the use of *tai sabaki* to evade attack, the forms where you grapple with an opponent to subdue him, the vital-point "pecking" designed to wear an opponent down and the plethora of weapons. These ideas are important because modern linear karate has discarded most of white crane. Shuri-te was a shocking departure from the Chinese arts on several levels.

In shotokan, you can still see the crane peeking out of kata like *kanku dai*, *gankaku* and *unsu*, but for the most part hard-style karate has renounced the white crane heritage. As we will see, there were good reasons for this development.

2.6 Kumiuchi Kenden: The Secret Heritage

The "dual subordination" of Okinawa to China and Japan extended from 1609 to roughly 1868, some 259 years. During this time, Okinawan keimochi nobles confronted samurai bureaucrats on a daily basis. They secretly trained to fight these samurai, knowing that the fight would be to the death, barehanded against the blade. Any martial artist in that situation would learn as much as possible about the fighting habits of the enemy. The keimochi must have studied Japanese arts for their own survival.

Samurai boys were groomed for their warrior destiny throughout their childhood and were sent to military finishing schools as teenagers to acquire the technical skills of warriors. These schools, the *bugei ryuha*, prepared samurai sons to become military officers. No two schools taught exactly the same thing, but the typical curriculum included multiple weapons, horsemanship, gunnery, tactics, signaling, field fortifications and *kumiuchi kenden*, which means "wrestling over a sword."⁸¹

Our picture of samurai swordfighting is distorted by too much emphasis on kendo-like dueling. Kumiuchi wrestling was an essential survival skill for a samurai youth because battlefields were chaotic.

⁸¹ Mol, Serge, *Classical Fighting Arts of Japan, A Complete Guide to Koryu Jujutsu*, Kodansha, 2001, p. 27-32.

It is easy to lose control of your sword or to have it break at the worst possible moment. The samurai in battle often found himself rolling in the grass with another warrior, desperately trying to kill an armored enemy with his bare hands. Battlefield wrestling used the enemy's armor against him, using documented techniques such as *kabuto gaeshi* (helmet twisting) to break an opponent's neck.⁸² Kumiuchi began as a battlefield survival skill, but over the centuries, it became more sophisticated and less associated with the battlefield. One offshoot of kumiuchi was devoted to bodyguard applications, including overturning and subduing a guest who stood up suddenly during a meeting or meal. This takedown was accomplished from the rear by yanking the guest's legs out from under him as he started to rise. The bodyguard then braced the guest's locked knee joint over his shoulder and stood up, effectively hanging the guest in midair with his whole weight against the locked knee.⁸³

All branches of modern jujutsu trace their roots back to kumiuchi, as do the derivative arts such as *aikijutsu*, *aikido* and judo. Karate students who cross-train in jujutsu discover an enormously rich heritage of grappling techniques in the shotokan kata. The kata seem to be about 80 percent grappling and only 20 percent striking. The grappling is used to set up the opponent for a fatal karate blow, which seems more like an execution than a fight.

In light of these discoveries, the traditional punch/block/kick interpretations of karate kata can no longer be considered adequate. We need to understand karate in the context of its grappling heritage, and we need to acknowledge that much of the grappling knowledge came from Japan, not from Okinawa or China. This is the "secret heritage" that is on display in the kata.

It should go without saying that Okinawans, like Koreans, would never admit that they owed anything to their Japanese tormentors. They would claim they learned it all from China instead.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 11-15. Three bodyguard techniques are illustrated in detail.

2.7 Satunushi "Tode" Sakugawa

Peichin Satunushi Sakugawa is the first teacher in the shotokan lineage who made specific contributions to the karate we study every day. His martial technique was very different from ours (based on white crane chuan fa), but his ideas about teaching were very modern. He represents the third generation before Funakoshi.

2.7.1 Sakugawa's Training

Sakugawa was born March 5, 1733, about 40 years before the American Revolution.⁸⁴ His father died from internal bleeding after a beating by drunken bullies when Sakugawa was a teenager, sometime around 1750. The father took several hours to die and spent the time in agonized conversation with his family. He exacted a promise from his horrified teenage son that he would never allow himself to be a helpless victim of violence.

After burying his father, Sakugawa sought expert instruction in the martial arts. He found a Buddhist monk, Peichin Takahara, who was an expert in *tode*, the Okinawan version of chuan fa.⁸⁵ Takahara was an Okinawan noble who worked as a surveyor and mapmaker at Shuri Castle.⁸⁶ He accepted Sakugawa as an apprentice. The teenager studied with Takahara for six years and was a very dedicated and proficient student.

In view of subsequent events, I'd like to suggest at this point that Peichin Takahara was one of Shuri's bodyguards to the royal family. It turns out that the Shuri government made a policy of employing very skillful martial artists to fill routine staff positions in the immediate vicinity of the king. These bodyguards were also bureaucrats, secretaries, translators, diplomats, inspectors, military officers, tax collectors, accountants and administrators, but they performed their daily duties within a few yards of the unarmed king. Takahara was a prominent martial artist with a position at Shuri, and may well have been one of these bodyguards. If

⁸⁴ Birth dates and death dates of Okinawan karate masters are cited authoritatively, and inconsistently, by every author in the field. McCarthy, 1999b, p. 124, lists Sakugawa's birth year as 1733, 1744, or 1762, depending on who you believe. Death dates are equally random and unreliable.

⁸⁵ Okinawan *sensei* claim that *tode* ("Chinese hand") was a uniquely Okinawan form of fist fighting with a long, independent history. This is their *tatemaie*. On the evidence, it is difficult to demonstrate that *tode* was more than the local name for a haphazard mix of imported Chinese skills.

⁸⁶ Sells, 2000, p. 23.

so, then Sakugawa's apprenticeship eventually qualified him as a Shuri employee and royal bodyguard, too.

We would like to think that our karate ancestors were all noble and dignified men of wisdom, but even wise men begin as passionate and foolish youths. Sakugawa was daring and mischievous at 23. One night, he contrived to push a visiting Chinese dignitary into a stream for the fun of it.⁸⁷ The Chinese, Kong Su Kung, used his own martial arts knowledge to turn the tables on Sakugawa. The young prankster was shamed and humiliated, and thus, he was forced to humble himself and apologize.⁸⁸

Showing astonishing mercy and wisdom, Kong Su Kung invited the shamed Sakugawa to become his student and study white crane chuan fa with him. With the enthusiastic support of Takahara, Sakugawa accepted. The white crane style was a new and exciting development at that time, and Takahara probably expected to learn about it through his student. Sakugawa studied with Kong Su Kung for another six years.

2.7.2 "Tode"

Somewhere during this period, Takahara got sick and died. On his deathbed, he asked Satunushi Sakugawa to take the name "Tode" in honor of his teacher's art. Sakugawa wore the name with honor for the rest of his life.

Kanji symbols can be "read" in multiple languages. "Tode" is written using two kanji symbols that mean "Chinese hand." Tode is a mix of on and kun readings. The Japanese kun reading of the same two symbols is "kara te," which still means "Chinese hand." The same characters, when read in Korean, are pronounced "tang soo" (as in *tang soo do*) and still mean "Chinese hand."⁸⁹ A Western reader would think that tode, karate, and tang soo do were three different arts, but the Asian reader sees at a glance that all three terms mean the same thing. They mean "Chinese fist-fighting."

⁸⁷ McCarthy, 1999b, p. 47. There is documentary evidence that Kong Su Kung was a Chinese *chuan fa* expert who arrived in Okinawa in 1756 (or just a few years prior to 1762, anyway). This is one of the very few actual facts in early Okinawan history. It also validates Sakugawa's birthdate as 1733.

⁸⁸ Kim, 1974, p. 21.

⁸⁹ Haines, Bruce, *Karate's History and Traditions*, Tuttle, 1995, p. 110.

⁹⁰ Kanji images with *on* and *kun* readings are based on Spahn and Hadamitzky, 1996.

"Tode" Sakugawa and "Karate" Sakugawa are the same man. In Korea, I suppose they might call him "Tang Soo" Sakugawa. It just depends on who reads the kanji.

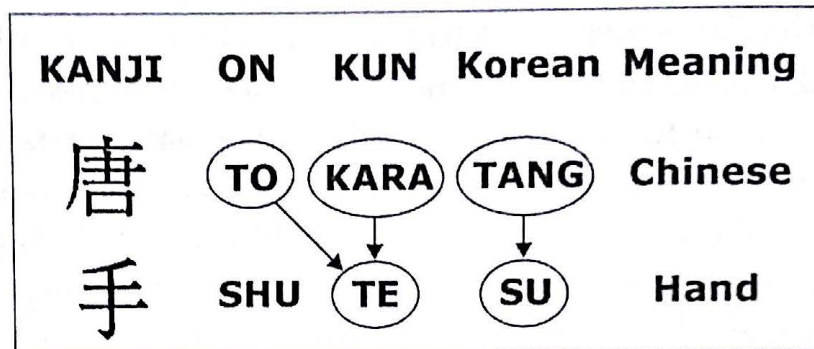


Figure 15: Kanji symbols for Tode, with on, kun and Korean readings.⁹⁰

2.7.3 Pirates in the Dark

According to multiple sources, Kong Su Kung taught "night fighting" and grappling techniques to Sakugawa. During this period of history, military combat usually occurred in the daytime, but self-defense fighting usually occurred at night. It was not unusual to be set upon in the darkness, beaten unconscious and robbed—even in peaceful Okinawa. Grappling is the natural approach to night-fighting because it is difficult to punch or kick someone you cannot see.⁹¹

Sakugawa became one of the rising stars of the Okinawan royal government, probably in a dual role as junior diplomat and bodyguard. He was sent to China to learn Mandarin and, perhaps, to study Chinese martial techniques. He got a ride on the annual tribute ship, which was laden with taxes from Okinawa to China. As his ship approached Fuzhou harbor late at night, another ship loomed beside them in the darkness. It was a pirate vessel, and Sakugawa's ship was attacked.

There were no cannons as we might expect of Caribbean pirates. It was hand-to-hand combat in the dark. The pirates simply grabbed everyone on Sakugawa's ship and threw them into the sea to drown. Their plan was to kill the crew and sail away with the entire ship, Okinawan treasure included. (The "treasure" probably consisted of a cargo of rice,

⁹¹ Sells, 2000, p. 25. In the era before automobiles and electric lights, walking home at night was a dark and dangerous adventure.

sugar and alcoholic beverages, which explains why the pirates wanted to steal the whole ship.)

Sakugawa was a bitter surprise to the pirates. Try as they might, they could not get a grip on him. With his extensive knowledge of night-fighting, he single-handedly defeated the pirate crew and drove them over the rail into the sea. Severely outnumbered, he grabbed the last few pirates and heroically hurled himself overboard, saving the ship.

Fortunately, the Chinese harbor patrol rescued all the swimmers. Unfortunately, they then threw them all in jail. Sakugawa was almost executed for piracy before he learned enough of the local Chinese dialect to protest his innocence. We can only imagine how many fights he had in prison with the pirates before winning his freedom and returning to Okinawa.⁹²

2.7.4 Kusanku Kata

In later years, Sakugawa created a new kata to honor his Chinese teacher, Kong Su Kung. The teacher's name is also rendered as Kusanku.

The kusanku kata of night-fighting techniques⁹³ was the basis of shotokan's *kanku sho* and *kanku dai kata*. Kanku is the living heart of shotokan, and it comes from Sakugawa.

2.7.5 Sakugawa's Legacy

Sakugawa is credited with creating the *dojo* system of teaching. By writing the first set of kun, he also created the rules of behavior for a karate student. Kong Su Kung also introduced Sakugawa to the principle of *hiki te*, the pullback hand. In kobudo circles, Sakugawa is honored as the inventor of the famous bo kata, the *sakugawa no kon*.⁹⁴

In 1811, when Sakugawa was 78 years old, he was introduced to a troubled 14-year-old named Sokon Matsumura who had an ambition to become the greatest fist fighter in Okinawa. He wanted to study under Sakugawa, possibly to apprentice himself as a royal bodyguard. There was something strange about Matsumura's face that made Sakugawa

⁹² Nagamine, 2000, p. 13-14.

⁹³ McCarthy, Pat, *Classical Kata of Okinawan Karate*, Ohara, 1987, p. 139.

⁹⁴ McCarthy, 1987, p. 28.

hesitate to accept him. "Master," insisted Matsumura, "I will not disappoint you."⁹⁵ Sakugawa was impressed by the boy's spirit and decided to give him a chance. This meeting was one of the seminal moments in the history of linear karate.

The important things to remember about Sakugawa are that he invented the dojo training system and the original kusanku kata, and that he was the first teacher of Matsumura. It seems clear that he did not make the leap to the raw power of linear karate. He relied heavily on circular (soft) technique and grappling, or so it seems from the branches of karate that still practice early versions of the kusanku kata.

Tode Sakugawa died on August 17, 1815, at the age of 82, after training Matsumura for only four years. This was quite an advanced age. He lived more than twice as long as an average person in that time and place. After his death, Western ships began to call at Naha more and more frequently. The death of Sakugawa marked the beginning of the Shuri Crucible.

2.8 Sokon "Bushi" Matsumura

Sokon "Bushi" Matsumura is one of the two central characters in our story. Linear karate apparently did not exist before Matsumura, but it was recognizably modern in the next generation to follow him. Matsumura represents the second generation before Funakoshi. He was the commander of the Shuri Castle garrison for 50 years.

It seems clear that Matsumura was a prime mover in the development of linear power technique, and yet it is hard to prove the case. The reason is that Matsumura was intelligent, creative, ambitious, ruthless, manipulative and deceptive. He was a driven man who embraced the martial arts with fanatical devotion. At age 14, he was determined to become the greatest fighter in the kingdom. At 25, he was widely acknowledged as having achieved this goal. How does something like that come about?

⁹⁵ Kim, 1974, p. 32.



Figure 16: Sokon “Bushi” Matsumura in old age, as pictured by Okinawan artist Akira Miyagi.⁹⁶ According to Funakoshi, Matsumura was known for his piercing, hawklike eyes. Every story about Matsumura mentions his unusual eyes.

2.8.1 “Matsumura”

Let’s take a quick look at Matsumura’s name. It is composed of two kanji symbols. “Matsu” means “pine tree.” “Mura” is a common suffix that means “village.”

KANJI	ON	KUN
松	SHO	MATSU
村	SON	MURA

Figure 17: “Matsumura” means “pine village.”

⁹⁶ Nagamine, 2000, p. xix for the artist’s credit, and p. 17 for the portrait. Unfortunately the provenance of this portrait is not explained.

"Matsumura" is the kun pronunciation of the name. It could equally well be translated or spoken using the on reading, which is "Shoson." Take note of the "pine tree" image in Matsumura's name. Pine trees and forests are very common symbols in the karate styles that trace their roots to Matsumura. We'll encounter them again and again in later sections.

2.8.2 Matsumura's Skills

We first see Matsumura as a disciple of Tode Sakugawa, when the ancient teacher was approaching 80 years of age. Born in 1796,⁹⁷ Karate historians usually pass over Matsumura's early years without special comment. They say he studied with Sakugawa and "became" the chief bodyguard to the king of Okinawa a few years later. I find this incredible. How did an untrained teenager become the most feared martial artist in the kingdom in just a few years?

Karate historians report that Matsumura had a new approach to generating power. George Alexander says that Matsumura originated a "scientific" theory of martial arts that gave his blows astonishing power compared to the competition. The theory was stated as "torque plus speed equals true power."⁹⁸ John Sells agrees, "Matsumura evidently believed that speed was the key to power."⁹⁹

To a person schooled in the basic principles of shotokan power, these statements leap off the page. In them, one can see the core of linear impact technique. In a technique like *oi-zuki*, one generates knockdown momentum (power) through rapid forward motion of the *hara* (the lower belly, meaning the body's center of gravity). The more speed, the more power.

There is an obscure scientific principle that may explain Matsumura's technical breakthrough. Matsumura may have been the first to appreciate that kinetic energy increases exponentially with the square of the speed. Kinetic energy is the ability to do work, which in this case means

⁹⁷Nagamine, 2000, p. 17 insists Matsumura was born in 1809, based on an interview with an elderly woman who thought her mother once said she was born in the same year as Matsumura's 88th birthday. This tenuous chronology contradicts every previous account of Matsumura's life and should not be taken seriously.

⁹⁸ Alexander, George, *Okinawa, Island of Karate*, Yamazato Publications, 1991, p. 44. The quote is not attributed.

⁹⁹ Sells, 2000, p. 30.

the ability to damage or move the other person's body. This means if you can double your forward speed at the moment of impact, you can quadruple the damage. Move three times faster, hit nine times harder.

If you are feeling skeptical, think of a pistol bullet. A bullet is just a lead pebble. Take a pistol bullet in your hand and toss it at your *senpai*,¹⁰⁰ at a speed of about 10 feet/second. The bullet bounces off his chest and rattles harmlessly to the floor. If you fire the same bullet from a pistol, however, it will strike the *senpai*'s chest traveling about 1,000 feet/per second. This is 100 times faster than before, so the bullet hits the *senpai* with (100×100) 10,000 times more kinetic energy and well-known lethal consequences. The lead pebble is identical in both situations. The only difference is speed.

Even a modestly capable person can knock an opponent completely off his feet by hurling the *hara* forward at high speed behind the punch.

Legend has it that Matsumura was in many fights and never lost because of this discovery. He became famous by publicly challenging and defeating one fighter after another until no one would agree to fight him. If Matsumura was the first to fully realize the exponential nature of power, he might well have cut a swath through the local *chuan fa* and *tode* fighters. Their karate required them to stand still, relying on rooted strength and endurance. Matsumura's linear technique sent them sprawling in the mud. This must have been very annoying. No wonder they refused to fight him.

Linear impact technique lets small people knock down large, muscular opponents. This was not the case with *chuan fa*, where the best fighters were the ones with the biggest muscles. That fact explains why hard-style karate swept across the world in a few decades, while the traditional Chinese arts have mainly lingered in China for the last 15 centuries. *Shuri-te* was different. *Shuri-te* let smaller, weaker people fight larger, stronger people and win.

The discovery of exponential power could explain how Matsumura defeated the proud fighters of Okinawa, but it does not explain why. From an early age, he desperately wanted to fight and defeat the toughest, most dangerous men he could find. This is not the portrait of a normal

¹⁰⁰ I am addressing my remarks to the *sensei*. The *senpai* is then the senior student of the *dojo*, the *sensei*'s assistant.

teenager. We recall that Sakugawa was driven to greatness by the tragic death of his father. Something powerful drove Matsumura, too, but the legends are silent. We have only one clue. Every story says there was something unusual about Matsumura's eyes. One witness after another mentions these eyes. That might be the key to the whole mystery.

Early in his career, Matsumura took a leave of absence and went to Kagoshima, capital of Satsuma. There he enrolled in the *jigen ryu* training program for young samurai. Being naturally talented and deeply motivated, he not only graduated but received a *menkyo kaiden*, a certificate of absolute mastery in the samurai fighting arts.¹⁰¹ This strongly suggests that he was trained in kumiuchi (battlefield wrestling), as well as the weapon arts of sword, spear, glaive, dagger and gunnery.

2.8.3 Matsumura's Career

Having established a superhuman reputation, Matsumura rose quickly through the ranks to become chief of security to the royal family. (Funakoshi says that Matsumura was the "minister of military affairs," which would be a very high position indeed—reporting directly to the king.)¹⁰² This was during the reign of King Sho Ko, who was deposed by Satsuma in 1828, so Matsumura probably received this appointment when he was in his 20s.

Matsumura continued as the chief of security to King Sho Iku from 1828 until he was deposed in 1847, and for Sho Tai from 1847 to the date he was deposed in 1879. Matsumura died in 1893 at the age of 97. This was almost three times the lifespan of a typical person at that time.

2.8.4 Matsumura's Fights

There are many stories about Matsumura that provide insight into his character, five of which shall be summarized here. The first has to do with fighting a street robber, the second with fighting a bull, the third with fighting his wife and the fourth with using psychology on a superstitious opponent. The last story has to do with punching out the king.

¹⁰¹ McCarthy, 1995, p. 51.

¹⁰² Funakoshi, Gichin, *Karate-Do Nyumon*, Kodansha, 1988, p. 102.

In the first story, Matsumura as a young man was walking home late at night after having had a little too much to drink.¹⁰³ A masked or hooded figure suddenly attacked him using a pair of sai. The attacker threw a sai at Matsumura who dove to the ground to avoid it. Then, Matsumura drew a *tessen* (iron fan) from his belt and returned the attack. The attacker ran away with a broken wrist.

There are two important features to this story. The first is that Matsumura avoided a thrown sai by diving to the ground, as one does in *kanku dai*. (Remember that the original *kusanku kata* was created by Matsumura's teacher and passed down to us through Matsumura himself.)

The second interesting point is that Matsumura defeated the mugger by using a *tessen* he carried in his belt. The *tessen* is an iron truncheon disguised to look like a folding fan. In skilled hands, it is lethal and can even give a man a fighting chance against a sword.

The next story concerns King Sho Ko, the first of the three kings Matsumura served as bodyguard. Sho Ko was a well-known lunatic. This is often a problem with hereditary kings, and his lunacy led to his early retirement when the Satsuma overlords decided he wasn't a reliable figurehead for Okinawa's government.

One day, shortly after his "retirement," Sho Ko announced a spectacle for his own entertainment. On a certain day, his bodyguard, the great Matsumura, would fight a raging bull barehanded. Sho Ko invited the whole island to come watch the fun. This was exciting news for the islanders because Okinawan bullfights usually pitted a bull against another bull.¹⁰⁴ For a man to fight a bull was very unusual. But barehanded?

One can only imagine the look on Matsumura's face when he learned of this. There was no way that he could decline without losing his position. He had to fight the bull.

The stories agree that Matsumura faced the bull that legendary day, but there was no fight. Matsumura met the bull in the middle of the arena and fixed his hawklike gaze on the animal. The bull suddenly lost its nerve and ran away, bellowing in terror. King Sho Ko was delighted.

¹⁰³ People who have had too much to drink are prominent in the karate stories from Okinawa. They lived stressful lives, and had no TV to watch in the evening. Overindulgence in "adult analgesics" was common.

¹⁰⁴ Sells, 2000, p. 32.

His bodyguard was so fierce that his very gaze would terrify a bull! He issued a royal decree, granting the title "bushi" (warrior) to Matsumura. This was the highest honor awarded to any karate artist in history, until very recently.¹⁰⁵

Some versions of this story explain that Matsumura achieved this feat by visiting the bull in its stall every day for a week before the fight. There he would gaze fiercely into the eyes of the bull while jabbing its nose with a needle.¹⁰⁶ He trained the bull to run away. One story says he enlisted the aid of the bull's keeper after swearing him to secrecy.¹⁰⁷ You have to admire Matsumura. He planned for success and didn't leave things to chance.

Matsumura married a legendary woman named Tsuru Yonamine, who was a formidable fighter in her own right. Some writers romanticize Yonamine as a demure Japanese maiden who happened to know some martial arts. Others openly state that the incredible stories about her just can't be true.¹⁰⁸ They underestimate the lady. The stories about her are completely consistent and entirely plausible.

Yonamine enjoyed sumo wrestling with men and often won. (This tells us something significant about her size and weight.) She enjoyed tode fighting, too, bareknuckle and full contact. The girl's father despaired of arranging a marriage for her and offered a large dowry to anyone who would dare to court her.¹⁰⁹ Courting Yonamine was asking for a beating. She was a lady with attitude.

One story, repeated as folklore in Okinawa, says that Matsumura first encountered his future wife as an anonymous opponent in a full-contact street match. He didn't realize he was fighting a woman and was puzzled that repeated kicks to the groin had no effect. "Later on,

¹⁰⁵ On November 3, 2000, the late shotokan Master Hidetaka Nishiyama was designated a Japanese living national treasure by the Emperor of Japan in a special ceremony conducted at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

¹⁰⁶ Nagamine, 2000, p. 25, says Matsumura used a club instead of a needle. Silvan relates that Matsumura beat the bull with either a bo staff or with his bare fist. Silvan, Jim, "Oral Traditions of Okinawan Karate," *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1998, p. 73.

¹⁰⁷ Kim, 1974, p. 39.

¹⁰⁸ Cook, p. 20, says he can't believe that Yonamine could have developed a version of *Seisan* kata that would let her fight with a baby strapped to her back. John Sells (personal communication) cautioned me that stories of Yonamine's feats were probably "apocryphal."

¹⁰⁹ Nagamine, 2000, p. 27.

Matsumura found out that this person was a woman and they got married."¹¹⁰ It must have seemed like the only decent thing to do under the circumstances.

Matsumura's student Chotoku Kyan once saw Yonamine lift a 132-pound sack of rice with one hand while sweeping up the kitchen.¹¹¹ Whatever Yonamine was, she was not demure.

After the wedding, the stories say, Matsumura harbored secret doubts about his wife's ability in actual combat. The stories vary in detail, but the central idea is that Matsumura contrived to send Yonamine on a journey by herself at night. He then disguised himself and waylaid her on the road as if he were a robber. The legends agree that Yonamine knocked him out with an *uraken* to the temple, then tied him to a tree with his own belt. Matsumura spent an uncomfortable night by the roadside and had some explaining to do when Shuri residents found him the next morning.¹¹²

The fourth Matsumura story has to do with his duel with Uehara, a skilled metal craftsman who was also a well-known, if undisciplined, martial artist in the Shuri area. The story says that Matsumura sought out Uehara to have some slight repair made to his pipe. Uehara recognized Matsumura and asked the great bushi to accept him as a student. Matsumura declined, claiming that his only student was the king himself. Uehara, hoping to learn something (or to prove something), challenged Matsumura to a fight.

There are many versions of this story, some in substantial conflict with others. Matsumura apparently knew that Uehara was superstitious, so he suggested that the fight take place before dawn in a nearby graveyard. At the time of the fight, Matsumura used careful staging and his legendary hawklike gaze to unnerve Uehara, who lost his composure and begged forgiveness.^{113,114}

Matsumura served at the pleasure of the king and was once suspended

¹¹⁰ Silvan, 1998, p. 79.

¹¹¹ Bishop, Mark, *Okinawan Karate, Teachers, Styles and Secret Techniques*, Tuttle, 1999, p. 55.

¹¹² Kim, 1974, p. 36, tells a more elaborate version of this story in which Matsumura goes to Sakugawa for advice and then defeats his wife in a rematch by punching her in the breasts.

¹¹³ Funakoshi, 1974, p. 101-108.

¹¹⁴ Kim, 1974, p. 42. I prefer the version posted on the Legacy *Shorin-ryu* Web site, <http://www.shorinryu.ca/story.php?storyid=7>

for several weeks when he lost patience with his royal student.¹¹⁵ The king launched a flashy but impractical attack, and the bushi knocked him out to teach him a lesson. It was his duty to protect the king, but he had no control over the king. Lack of control of a subject has always been a problem for bodyguards.

What do these stories tell us about Matsumura? First of all, a man who marries a woman after repeatedly kicking her in the groin has very unusual priorities, and the same might be said of the woman. Matsumura and Yonamine were both misfits in a society where conformity was demanded. This may have forged the bond between them.

Second, Matsumura was very well-prepared for his encounters. He studied his enemies closely and made plans for their defeat.

Third, he had a secretive and deceptive side. He wasn't above disguising himself or disguising a weapon if it suited his purpose. He would sometimes enlist assistants under an oath of silence.

Fourth, he was a master of psychology. He not only outwitted Uehara, he outwitted King Sho Ko and the bull.

Fifth, he was impatient with his students, even royal students. What kind of person punches a king?

2.8.5 Patsai (Bassai) Kata

Bushi Matsumura is regarded as the original or primary source of the *patsai* (*bassai*) family of kata. The kata tells us a little more about him.

Bassai dai is the black-belt test kata of shotokan, a place of central honor that seems significant to me. Our linear technique comes from Matsumura, and we honor him by using his kata to rank our black belts. The kata is asymmetrical, powerful, brutal, and there is a sense of impatience in it. The legend is that *patsai* means "to break into a fortress," and that it "turns disadvantage into advantage." It is interesting that Matsumura defended the Shuri fortress, and he did so from a position of extreme disadvantage. He must have had nightmares about people breaking into his castle. Reversing this disadvantage was his lifelong mission. It is entirely appropriate that *bassai* would be his kata.

By the way, the widespread legend that "*bassai*" means "to penetrate

¹¹⁵ Funakoshi, 1975, p. 23.

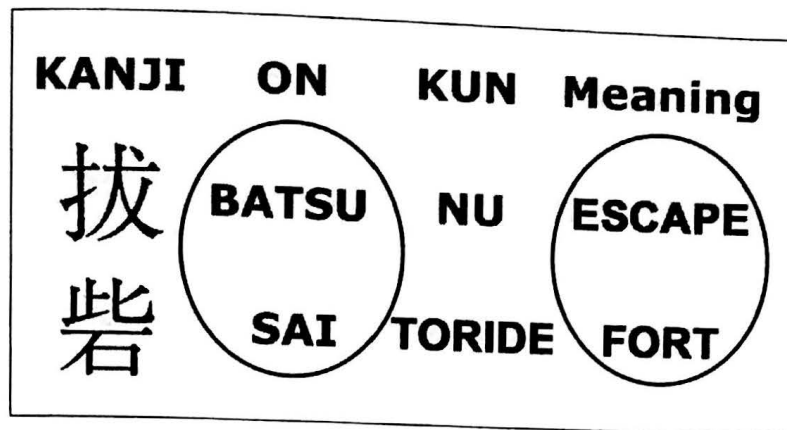


Figure 18: “*Bassai*” means to “escape” from the “fort.”

a fortress” does not seem to be true, even if it does come directly from Funakoshi.¹¹⁶ The earliest “*bassai*” kanji I have located are in *Karate Do Dai Kan*, an anthology of Okinawan karate by Gichin Funakoshi, Genwa Nakasone, Hiroki Otsuka, Hanashiro Nagashige, Shimpan Gusukuma, Choshin Chibana, Kenwa Mabuni and Shinken Taira, published in Tokyo by Tosho, Inc., in 1938.¹¹⁷

“*Batsu*,” as seen in *Karate Do Dai Kan*, has multiple meanings including: pull out, outdistance, remove, escape and be missing. In combination with other kanji it contributes to ideas such as drawing out a sword, be free from, extract, pull out, sneak away, slip away, secret passage, exit, loophole, bypass, way of escape, steal a march on, forestall, set sail, circumvent, get away from, get out of, outrun, evade, run through (a gate) and swindle (by slipping out the back door).¹¹⁸ There is another “*batsu*” character that means to attack or cut down, as in chopping down trees, but that isn’t the “*batsu*” character we see here.¹¹⁹

“*Sai*,” as seen in *Karate Do Dai Kan*, means fort or fortification.¹²⁰ That is its only meaning.

The “*batsu*” ideogram is heavily laden with escape and evasion images but not with attacking, breaching and conquering images. If “*bassai*”

¹¹⁶ Funakoshi, Gichin, *Karate-Do Kyohan*, Kodansha, 1973, p. 36.

¹¹⁷ Funakoshi, et al., 1938, p. 239. In the first edition of *Shotokan’s Secret*, I based this translation on the kanji used in Sugiyama, 1989, which substitutes *sai* meaning “block” or “barricade” for *sai* meaning “castle.”

¹¹⁸ Spahn and Hadamitzky, 1996, p. 606-607.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1235.

refers to a castle, it is pretty clear that we are breaking *out* of the castle, not into it. It's a jailbreak.

2.8.6 King vs. Karma

From your own experience in tournaments, you know that the rules of *kumite* have a profound impact on the strategies and techniques used by the contestants. For instance, karate didn't use any high kicks until contest rules outlawed strikes to the testicles in the 1930s. Suddenly, it was safe to expose the groin during a match because the rules protected the testicles. High kicks became very popular. (Street fighters are contemptuous of our high kicks.)¹²¹

The profound difference between Shuri-te and the previous Chinese styles is that Shuri's circumstances changed the rules. Shuri stylists fight in a different moral context than Chinese stylists, and all of the subsequent differences in technique, kata selection and bunkai flow from this difference.

The Chinese styles owe a large debt to the Buddhist monks of the Shaolin Temple. These monks learned the martial arts for self-discipline and self-defense. Wandering monks penetrated the worst sorts of neighborhoods and were often attacked by bullies, thieves and thugs. A Buddhist monk under attack had a serious moral dilemma to resolve. He wanted to defend himself, as we all do, but he also had to protect his *karma*, the future of his spirit. He believed that the pain he inflicted on others would return to him in the next life. Nathan Johnson, a martial artist and Zen Buddhist, makes it clear that inflicting unnecessary pain and destruction is antithetical to the Zen Buddhist point of view.¹²²

The monk must minimize the damage he does to his opponent because of the karmic backlash. If you are trying to minimize damage to your opponent, you naturally favor submission fighting because it gives the opponent every opportunity to admit defeat without serious injury. Combat becomes a series of escalations that eventually force the

¹²¹ MacYoung, Marc, *Cheap Shots, Ambushes, and Other Lessons*, Paladin, 1992, p. 55-57. This is one of the best books in all of the martial arts. Study it.

¹²² Johnson, 2000, p. 124. "Dreadful karmic penalties."

opponent to surrender or flee.¹²³

A natural corollary is that the monk is going to get hit a few times in every encounter. It is a very monklike attitude to strengthen and harden the body to withstand this kind of punishment. We see these fighting strategies at the core of the Chinese arts, including such neo-Chinese arts as *goju-ryu* and *uechi-ryu*. Goju/uechi stylists may not think of themselves as Buddhist monks, but they diligently practice *sanchin kata*. Sanchin builds up your muscles for grappling while training your body to withstand pain and impact. People who practice sanchin are on the Shaolin Temple path.

When you are under attack, you are at liberty to behave like a monk. When someone else is under attack, however, you do not have the same degree of moral freedom. You may sacrifice yourself to protect your karma, but it would be karmic suicide to sacrifice someone else. The moral landscape shifts abruptly when a third party is in danger.

Matsumura was not a monk. The Shuri bodyguards were *keimochi*, born to live and die in the service of their lord. As military bodyguards, their opponents were not lone drunks and robbers. Their opponents were mobs of sailors, armed samurai and sometimes organized military units. In order to protect the king, the Shuri bodyguards had to be absolutely ruthless. They couldn't afford to worry about karmic consequences. Which is more important to you, king or karma? The monk defends his soul. The bodyguard wages war. Their different goals force them to play by different rules.

This is what makes hard-style karate so different from the soft Chinese styles. Matsumura optimized Shuri-te to inflict maximum injury in minimum time. He was unconcerned about the damage he might cause. Between the block and the lethal counterstrike there is no time to surrender or withdraw. An instant passes in the blink of an eye, followed by the sickening sound of neck bones dislocating.

2.8.7 Matsumura's Legacy

Matsumura was the focal point of a revolution in combat technique in the middle 1800s. Due to the Shuri Crucible, he had a different set of combat priorities than his predecessors. His discovery of

¹²³ McCarthy, 1999b, p. 13-14.

exponential impact gave him a new tool to exploit. He seems to have developed or invented most of the high-impact techniques we use in shotokan today.

Matsumura made trips to China and Japan to study their martial arts, including a pilgrimage to the Shaolin Temple. He allegedly brought back several kata including early forms of *naihanchi* (*tekki*), *seisan* (*hangetsu*) and *gojushiho*, among others. Most accounts agree that Matsumura created the kata called *chinto* (*gankaku*), using techniques he learned from a shipwrecked Chinese martial artist in Tomari. Some accounts say he is the original author of the kata we know as *heian nidan*. The kata passed down to us by Matsumura eventually formed the very core of shotokan.

Matsumura is also well-known in kobudo circles for his mastery of the bo staff, the sai and the ekubo (oar). He created kata for all three weapons.

Matsumura spent over 50 years as the chief military officer of Shuri Castle, from the mid-1820s until 1879. It is no wonder that his style became known as Shuri-te. All branches of modern linear karate descend from Matsumura through his remarkable protégé Yasutsune Itosu.

2.9 Yasutsune Itosu

Matsumura is one of the two central characters in the birth of Shuri-te. The other is Yasutsune Itosu. Matsumura was the inventor; Itosu was the teacher. People say that Matsumura built the car, but Itosu drove it.¹²⁴

When we turn our attention to Itosu, we have at last reached a teacher who taught the same karate that we practice in shotokan today. In Itosu's classes, the principles of hard-style karate became a reality. If Funakoshi was the father of shotokan karate, then Itosu is definitely the grandfather. In fact, most of our daily karate activities come directly from Itosu, with the exception of *jiyu kumite* (free-fighting), which he would not have liked.¹²⁵

2.9.1 "Itosu"

Itosu's name has confused a lot of people. As a practical matter, the interpretation of Okinawan names from written kanji is very

¹²⁴ See the Legacy Shorin Ryu Web site: <http://www.shorinryu.ca/story.php?storyid=7>

¹²⁵ See McCarthy, 1999b, p. 24, for Kenwa Mabuni's opinion that sport karate brings out "the worst in human behavior." Most traditional sensei agree with that opinion, as do I and therefore probably also Itosu.

uncertain. You can see the man's name written in kanji on page 88, but the translator has to guess whether to use the on reading or the kun reading for each character in the name. Sometimes there is also a third, Okinawan, voicing of the name. Therefore, translators have rendered these names inconsistently.¹²⁶

"Itosu," for instance, is the kun (Japanese) reading of Itosu's family name. The on (ancient) reading of the same name is "Shishu." Itosu's personal name is read "Yasutsune" (kun) or "Anko" (on). Both readings are correct and are used interchangeably. Yasutsune Itosu and Anko Shishu are the same man, and in fact, it is the same name. There is no rule against mixing on and kun readings, so Anko Itosu is often seen.

I have adopted the Western habit of placing the personal name first and the family name last as a courtesy to the reader.¹²⁷ Experienced



Figure 19: Yasutsune "Anko" Itosu, as depicted by Akira Miyagi. Compared to Matsumura, Itosu has a friendlier expression and a more relaxed attitude. He had remarkably Caucasian-looking eyes. His body was as hard as rock.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Eri Takase, www.takase.com, calligrapher and translator, in personal communication with the author. Ms. Takase is San Ten's Japanese translator and calligrapher, and she has helped us create many beautiful and authentic karate grading certificates, including the *judan* certificate we presented to Master Hidetaka Nishiyama on November 1, 2003. We endorse her service and recommend it to you.

¹²⁷ Except for the names of the Sho kings.

¹²⁸ Nagamine, 2000, p. xix for the artist's credit, and p. 45 for the portrait.

KANJI	ON	KUN
糸	SHI	ITO
洲	SHU	SU
安	AN	YASU
恒	KO	TSUNE

Figure 20: Kanji characters of Itosu's name, with on and kun readings.

Nipponophiles can recognize the names in either order, but newcomers may need some help. I have chosen to accommodate the beginners by presenting the names in a familiar English fashion: title, personal name, family name.

Many karate writers, however, try to show respect for Japan by reversing the name order. This means that Yasutsune Itosu is often presented as Itosu Yasutsune, or Itosu Anko, or Shishu Yasutsune. This can be very confusing, especially when they throw the "peichin" title into the mix. I have seen Itosu's name in print in half a dozen different forms.

The real trouble begins when a Japanese translator forgets himself and shifts back and forth between two readings of a name in the same book. In Funakoshi's early book *To-Te Jutsu*, translator Shingo Ichida used "Itosu" on page 18, but shifted abruptly to "Shishu" on page 22. This creates the illusion that he is talking about two people when there is really only one.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Funakoshi, Gichin, *To-Te Jutsu*, Masters Publication, 1994.

2.9.2 Itosu's Skills

Itosu was born in 1830 and was regularly beaten by his father as a child because his father wanted the boy to develop an aggressive martial spirit. He studied directly under Bushi Matsumura as an apprentice bodyguard from age 16 to 24; this would be the years 1846 to 1854, roughly during the period when King Sho Tai was a small child.¹³⁰ During his apprenticeship, Itosu became the king's personal secretary, and continued to work side-by-side with Matsumura for the next 30 years. Working as a secretary seems to have been a typical arrangement for the Shuri bodyguards, as we will see.

Funakoshi described Itosu as barrel-chested and average height. He had a kind face and, in old age, a long beard. Itosu's punch and grip were legendary. Funakoshi says Itosu could crush a green bamboo stalk in his fist.¹³¹ After eight years with Matsumura, Itosu's body was so hard he could absorb heavy blows without any sign of discomfort. He liked to arm-wrestle with his friends and always won. There is a story about someone who tried to punch Itosu on the back and found himself caught by the wrist, unable to break away. Itosu then dragged the miscreant through a crowded restaurant and forced him to kneel and wait (sobbing for mercy) while Itosu ordered drinks. He released the man's arm only after the drinks arrived.¹³² In another story, Itosu found himself in the path of a charging bull. He literally took the bull by the horns and wrestled it to the ground. (These stories are significant because some of Itosu's kata applications might have required his immense strength.)

Itosu's punch was simply awe-inspiring. There are many stories about his fists. A makiwara punching post was not sufficient for his workouts, so one day he found a solid stone wall to hit instead. He hung a leather sandal on the wall as a pad for his knuckles. After a few punches, however, the stone behind the sandal pushed through the wall and fell out the other side. He moved over and tried a different stone, but the same thing happened. Karate historian Shoshin Nagamine says that Itosu's workout ultimately destroyed the wall.¹³³

¹³⁰ Kim, 1974, p. 51.

¹³¹ Funakoshi, 1988, p. 16.

¹³² Funakoshi, 1988, p. 33-34.

¹³³ Nagamine, 2000, p. 49, for the stories of the bull and the wall.

2.9.3 Itosu's Fights

In *The Weaponless Warriors*, Richard Kim tells several stories about fights Itosu won as a young man in Naha. In one adventure, Itosu challenged a loud bully named Tomoyose who was openly disdainful of the Shuri style of fighting; he called it "parlor karate." Expecting a fair fight, Itosu was instead attacked by members of Tomoyose's gang, some of them armed with clubs.¹³⁴

The first opponent threw a powerful, but looping, right-hand punch. Itosu pounded his face with a triple *renzuki* (multiple rapid punches), knocking out the attacker before his punch landed.

Two more opponents rushed in with clubs. Itosu caught one man's arm and held it in his bamboo-cracking grip while landing a side kick on the jaw of the second man. This combination produced another knockout. Itosu finished off the first man with a snap kick to the groin. The man went down moaning in agony.

This was too much for Tomoyose, who waded in to finish off the upstart from Shuri. Tomoyose threw a killer punch aimed at Itosu's head. The Shuri-te expert sidestepped it and broke the bully's arm (maybe the collarbone?) with a single *shutō* strike.

Once his opponents were disabled, Itosu stepped back and the fight was over.

When Itosu was 75 years old, he was challenged to a *shiai* (arranged fight) by a Japanese judo player half his age. The challenge was blown out of proportion because of the antagonism between Okinawa and home-island Japanese citizens. The Okinawans hoped karate would win the match, while the Japanese hoped judo would prevail.

Itosu showed up for the match and introduced himself to the judo champion. The *judoka* was very condescending, promising to defeat the elderly Okinawan as gently as possible without doing any serious damage.

As the match began, the judo champion took hold of Itosu's jacket, preparing to throw the old man to the ground. Itosu punched the younger man once in the solar plexus, using his left hand. The judoka collapsed in a heap, unable to move or breathe. Itosu gave him first aid until he could breathe again and then left the arena.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Kim, 1974, p. 51-52.

¹³⁵ Kim, 1974, p. 57.

It is important to notice how suddenly Itosu defeated each of his opponents, generally by using a single blow that was delivered while the opponent was making his opening attack. The ability to consistently end a fight with a single blow is a very significant development in karate and is quite different from chuan fa.¹³⁶ Itosu didn't "peck" his opponents with vital-point strikes or subdue them with joint locks. He simply destroyed them in a fraction of a second. This ruthless strategy was a new and somewhat disturbing characteristic of Shuri-te.

2.9.4 "Saint" Itosu

Itosu lived to be 85 years old and died in 1915. After his death, local martial artists gave him the title *kensai*, (fist saint)—Saint Itosu.¹³⁷

Shoshin Nagamine is the author of *Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters*, a book that describes Itosu as a saintly man who never had a fight in his life. "In his 85 years," states Nagamine, "there was not a single episode describing such an encounter."¹³⁸ Nagamine does not say that the Itosu fight stories are untrue. He says that no such stories exist. That is nonsense. There are many such stories, but you won't learn about them from Nagamine. Why not? Nagamine thought his students needed a saint to admire, so he created one. This was Nagamine's official story (*tatema*) that his students were in no position to challenge.

Historian Mark Bishop commented on this issue, too, describing other writings of Shoshin Nagamine:

*"...One should read works on 'eminent masters' with a pinch of salt, taking into consideration the generational time frame of the writer. For people of Shoshin Nagamine's age group, exaltation and veneration of the deceased is far more important [...] than is the recording of objective facts; yet many younger writers have been highly influenced by mythical works, mistaking descriptive, poetic fantasy for unbiased information."*¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Kim, 1974, p. 98. In contrast, Kanryo Higaonna's first real fight (using white crane and praying mantis chuan fa) lasted 15 minutes and ended when both fighters were too winded to continue.

¹³⁷ "Kensai" is usually translated as "sword saint" when applied to Musashi Miyamoto, but it is translated as "fist saint" for various Okinawan karate masters.

¹³⁸ Nagamine, 2000, p. 46.

¹³⁹ Bishop, 1999, p. 79.

It isn't just Nagamine. Official lies (*tatemaē*) are everywhere in the karate history books. Credulous Western readers need to understand that this, too, is a part of karate history. If a Japanese writer thought the truth wasn't appropriate, he'd make up a new truth that sounded better. Nagamine's attempt to whitewash Itosu's life is just one example.

The unspoken truth is that the great Okinawan masters were just people like ourselves. They had strengths and weaknesses. With the insights of modern psychology, we can see that they became masters because of their weaknesses. Funakoshi, Kyan and Higaonna were all very small men, for instance. Karate helped them compensate for their size. Sakugawa was haunted by the horrible death of his father. Tsuru Yonamine was a most unfeminine woman. Itosu was beaten as a child. There was something strange about Matsumura's face. These people all had psychological issues that karate helped to alleviate.

Itosu was no saint. By every account, he was a powerful fighter, a gifted teacher, a noted scholar, and in every sense, a pillar of the community. Now and then, he was attacked on the streets of Naha and forced to defend himself. The stories of these fights emphasize how easily he dealt with his attackers.

2.9.5 Itosu's Career

Itosu, like many Shuri inhabitants of the *keimochi* class, was trained in Japanese and Chinese languages, philosophy and calligraphy so he could serve as a clerk or bureaucrat in the government. In fact, he served as the personal secretary to King Sho Tai for three decades until Japan ended the Sho dynasty in 1879. Itosu did not follow the king into exile in Tokyo but remained in Shuri and started a family printing business. He taught karate to a small circle of students that included, at long last, Gichin Funakoshi. These classes were conducted secretly in Itosu's house in the middle of the night, over a span of 20 years, roughly from 1880 to 1900.

During this period, Itosu was approached by a youth named Choki Motobu (Motobu the Monkey), who would become a famous karate master in his old age. In his youth, however, Motobu was the worst sort of brawler. Each time Itosu taught him a new technique, Motobu would rush down to Naha's red-light district and try it out on someone. Since

Shuri-te is much more lethal than chuan fa, this was not a good policy. When Itosu found out about these experiments, he publicly humiliated Motobu by expelling him from the class.¹⁴⁰ Motobu became a lifelong enemy of Gichin Funakoshi, who was a student in the same class. One wonders if Funakoshi was involved in this incident. It seems almost inevitable that he was.

In 1902, Sho Tai died in exile. The Shuri bodyguards were released from any oath of secrecy that they might have sworn. Up to this time, karate had been taught and practiced in the strictest privacy, but following the death of Sho Tai, Itosu obtained permission to teach karate in the public schools at Shuri. By 1905, Itosu was teaching karate classes at the Prefectural Dai Ichi College and the Prefectural Teachers Training College. Karate was finally out in the open.

2.9.6 Itosu's Kata

During this period, Itosu produced his matchless masterpiece: the five heian kata.¹⁴¹ They were first taught to junior high school students in 1905.

Itosu is generally credited with the expansion of the *naihanchi* (*tekki*) kata into three kata, although there is some argument about that. Most people give him credit for introducing the *chinte* kata after learning the techniques from a Chinese fighter. He standardized *kusanku* (*kanku*) into sho and dai versions, and he did the same for patsai (*bassai*) and gojushiho. He created the *roh'ai* kata, from which Funakoshi extracted *meikyō*. Shotokan's *empi*, a very old kata dating from 1683, is usually traced through Itosu.

Itosu laid his hands on the ancient kata and changed them. He seems to have revised nearly all the Shuri kata to standardize their portrayal of linear, hard-style technique.¹⁴² When we practice our shotokan kata, we are repeating the lessons designed and laid down by Itosu himself.

¹⁴⁰ Bishop, 1999, p. 68.

¹⁴¹ Bishop, 1999, p. 89. Itosu's authorship of the *heian* kata in 1905 is common knowledge among karate historians. These kata are not "ancient."

¹⁴² People talk about how much the Shotokan kata have changed over the years. Compared to the sweeping changes Itosu made, subsequent alterations have been trivial, bordering on invisible.

2.9.7 Itosu's Legacy

Every biography of Itosu mentions that the students he secretly trained in his home during the 1880s and 1890s include some of the greatest names in karate, men who established famous schools and styles in later years.¹⁴³ One of the things Itosu taught his students was absolutely revolutionary: *You can do karate in public*. If Itosu had maintained the extreme secrecy of previous karate teachers, karate would still be a secret in Okinawa.

The important things to remember about Itosu are that he felt the need to revise the kata, he demonstrated well-developed single-blow victories and he made karate public in 1902. The other interesting thing about Itosu is that his famous students uniformly established karate styles where the form of the kata was well-documented but the meaning of the bunkai was not.

Itosu created the heian kata. They distilled his lifetime experience as a teacher of royal bodyguards and police. Is there any doubt that he had applications in mind for them? He must have known the applications of his own kata. Even so, no branch of karate seems to know the revealed truth of the heian bunkai. Itosu taught the moves but not the explanations. Why would he do that? We'll explore that question later in this book.

The karate legends make it clear that Itosu studied kobudo kata,¹⁴⁴ but he doesn't seem to have created any. He put his energies elsewhere.

2.9.8 "Shorin Ryu"

Legend has it that the Shuri-te type of karate was called "*shorin-ryu*" by Itosu.¹⁴⁵ "Shorin" is how the Japanese mispronounce "Shaolin," referring to the Shaolin Temple of China. When a master names his style "shorin," he has invoked two of the three "official myths" we discussed earlier in this chapter. "Shorin" is a claim that the art came from China, and simultaneously, it is a claim that this version is the original, unmodified art of the Shaolin Temple. It isn't just the Japanese arts that suffer from this kind of opportunism, of course. The Chinese government recently

¹⁴³ I have included a chart showing how Matsumura's teachings found their way into our modern karate styles as an appendix to this book.

¹⁴⁴ Kim, 1974, p. 30.

¹⁴⁵ Alexander, 1991, p. 27.

cracked down on kung fu teachers who infested the slopes of Mount Shaoshi, site of the historic temple. They each claimed to be the only survivor of the original temple. (You have heard that “karate is like climbing a mountain.” Mt. Shaoshi is the mountain they are talking about.)

“Shorin ryu” is one of the places where karate masters play word games with us. The original “Shaolin” label is written using kanji that mean “young forest.” Itosu wrote “shorin” using kanji characters that mean “bright forest” instead.¹⁴⁶ He was saying, “We’re the same as Shaolin, but we’re also different and unique.”

Over the years multiple masters founded additional shorin-ryu styles. These masters continued the word game. By using different selections of kanji characters, they kept the “shorin” voicing while staking out their own divisions of the art. The on readings are “shorin” in every case, but the kun readings are quite different: *kobayashi-ryu*, *shobayashi-ryu* and *matsubayashi-ryu*. These labels mean “young forest style,” “small forest style” and “pine forest style,” respectively. The names differ significantly, but the Japanese reader can tell at a glance that they also say “shorin.”

“Shorin” can also play into multiple meanings when it is spoken. For instance, Shuri-te was founded by Itosu’s teacher, Matsumura, whose name means “pine village.” The first kanji character in Matsumura’s name has the kun reading “matsu,” meaning “pine tree.” The on reading of this same character is “sho.”

When Itosu and his students called the Shuri-te style “shorin-ryu,” they might have been referring obliquely to their own Master Sho. Matsumura was the big pine tree; his students were the young forest of pine saplings springing up around the big tree and shorin-ryu was the karate they practiced in the bright forest.

2.10 Yasutsune Azato

Born in 1828, Peichin Yasutsune Azato is a very intriguing character in our story because very little is actually known about him. Funakoshi called Azato the greatest karate master he ever met, which is high praise, considering the 20 years Funakoshi spent with Itosu.¹⁴⁷ Like his best friend Itosu, Azato is one of the grandfathers of modern karate.

¹⁴⁶ Sells, 2000, p. 72.

¹⁴⁷ Funakoshi, 1988, p. 30.

Peichin Azato himself was another direct student of the redoubtable Bushi Matsumura. His role in the Shuri government was “military attaché” and foreign affairs advisor to the Sho kings.¹⁴⁸ He was the hereditary lord of the village of Asato [*sic*], located halfway between Shuri and Tomari, a little north of Naha. The Asato neighborhood is still on the maps today. (See Figure 3.)

Azato was Funakoshi’s first teacher, and Funakoshi was Azato’s only student, at least at that time. Funakoshi paints an amusing picture of his training under Azato, which was conducted secretly after midnight in the courtyard of Azato’s house. Azato drilled Funakoshi in the *naihanchi* (*tekki shodan*) kata over and over again for three years. Most sessions consisted of Funakoshi performing the kata by lamplight, and Azato sipping tea and muttering, “Do it again.” Rarely did Azato unbend and grunt, “Good.” He was not easy to please.

Funakoshi was amused, maybe even proud, that his secretive midnight journeys to Azato’s house led his neighbors to conclude that he was sneaking out to visit the red-light district in Naha.¹⁴⁹ He was about 12 years old at the time and undoubtedly found this flattering.

Azato and Itosu were close friends, often found in each other’s company. They were almost the same age, shared similar names, similar heritage and similar employment, and they both loved the martial arts. They were best friends throughout their lives.

In Azato, we have yet another legendary martial artist and shotokan forefather in daily attendance with King Sho Tai at Shuri Castle. He was part of the inner circle, like Matsumura and Itosu, and often advised the king on questions of international politics. Funakoshi says Azato used his influence to get Itosu the position of secretary to the king. It’s likely that Matsumura had something to do with that, too.

We know that Azato was a highly-trained swordsman, horseman and archer. He was expert at *jukendo*, which is a form of bayonet fighting in which you jab your opponent with the padded end of a carved wooden rifle.¹⁵⁰ He regarded hands and feet as deadly weapons, “Think of the hands and feet of anyone who has trained in karate as swords. They can

¹⁴⁸ Funakoshi, 1988, p. 31.

¹⁴⁹ Funakoshi, 1975, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ Sells, 2000, p. 58.

kill with a touch."¹⁵¹ He was not impressed with Itosu's ability to withstand heavy blows because that strategy is a disaster in a sword fight. Azato felt that a true martial artist should step out of the way (of the sword or bayonet) and avoid being hit. He was an expert at lightning-fast tai sabaki.

Azato once tested his ability in an extreme way by challenging a sword master to a match. Azato fought Yorin Kanna, a master from the jigen ryu school in Satsuma prefecture. Kanna had a sword; Azato used his bare hands. The legends say that Azato deflected Kanna's incoming strikes "with his arm" and immobilized the master, not once but several times.¹⁵²

Azato drops out of the history of karate at about the same time King Sho Tai was forced to abdicate and move to Tokyo. He may have been one of the keimochi hostages who went into exile with the king, as several other nobles and court officials did. Funakoshi says cryptically that Azato "served as an ambassador to Tokyo for many years" (which sounds better than "hostage"). Azato died in 1906 at the age of 78.

Azato has been neglected by history. He had few students and left little heritage. Most of what we know about him comes directly from Funakoshi. It turns out that Azato was a pro-Japanese patriot, which would have made him very unpopular with his peers in the Okinawan gentry. This may be another reason why Azato moved to Tokyo and became the "invisible man" of karate.

In terms of kobudo, Master Azato clearly preferred real weapons. He doesn't seem to have left any kobudo heritage. In terms of karate kata, there are rare references to Azato versions of kusanku and patsai, but there are no details.

It is certainly a shame that the greatest karate master Funakoshi ever met didn't leave us any more heritage than he did. To date, no one has located a photo or drawing of Azato.¹⁵³ Sadly, it leaves us wondering what he was really like. However he was, Funakoshi admired him very much.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Funakoshi, 1988, p. 31.

¹⁵² Funakoshi, 1975, p. 14. Not everyone believes this story, however. See Sells, 2000, p. 59.

¹⁵³ I would like to extend my thanks to readers who thoughtfully sent me pictures they found of Azato. The pictures were all of different men. No two were the same.

¹⁵⁴ Azato's grandson, Yoriyuki Azato, moved to Tokyo in 1933 and established the *Shobukan* dojo. It is possible that Azato's teachings persist there. He used the "Sho" royal family name kanji in "Sho bu kan."

2.11 Chofu Kyan

Chofu Kyan ("Chan") was a respected martial arts expert who held the hereditary office of Royal Steward to the Sho kings, and had the additional honor of being the Keeper of the Royal Seal. The position of "steward" sounds like Kyan was a valet or butler, but I suspect that the Keeper of the Royal Seal was someone who could disburse funds and sign orders on behalf of the king. The seal is the *hanko*, which is literally the king's signature. In other words, we are close to the truth if we think of Kyan as the king's "chief of staff." He was certainly a powerful and trusted member of the inner circle.

Born in 1835, Kyan was just a few years older than Itosu. During his career, Kyan was in constant attendance of the king. When Sho Tai was deposed in 1879, Kyan moved to Tokyo for four years "on assignment." The king still needed his chief of staff, even in exile.¹⁵⁵ Kyan died in 1889.

There isn't much known about Kyan except that he was the father of Chotoku Kyan, the sickly little boy who later became one of the most notorious figures in karate history. Stories about the father and son training together during their exile in Tokyo show that the senior Kyan was the kind of sensei who believed that training barefoot in the snow builds character.¹⁵⁶ He held his son to a brutally high standard. Kyan trained the sickly little boy relentlessly in an attempt to improve his health. Behind the ruthless sensei was a loving father trying to strengthen his weak and ailing son.

Kyan is the fourth legendary martial artist who was employed in the immediate vicinity of the throne. He was there every day with Matsumura, Itosu and Azato.

2.12 Seisho Arakaki

Unless you are a student of kobudo, you have probably never heard of Seisho Arakaki. Born in 1840, he was 10 years younger than Itosu and Azato. He was employed as a Japanese and Chinese language interpreter at the Shuri court in the 1860s, and he served as an envoy to China as late as 1870.^{157, 158} He was one of Chotoku Kyan's teachers.

¹⁵⁵ Bishop, 1999, p. 72.

¹⁵⁶ Nagamine, 2000, p. 82.

¹⁵⁷ Sells, 2000, p. 41.

¹⁵⁸ McCarthy, 1995, p. 36.

Arakaki was a master of monk fist and white crane chuan fa, and is said to have been the first teacher of Kanryo Higaonna.¹⁵⁹ He was the source of the *niseishi* (*nijushiho*), *sochin*, and *unsu* kata that we practice in shotokan. His nickname was "Maya," (the Cat), because he could leap high into the air and land without making a sound.

Arakaki is also known as *Kamadeunchu*, the sickle master. He is famous in kobudo circles for his mastery of the sickles, sai and bo. He is said to have practiced over 200 bo techniques for use against a swordsman.¹⁶⁰

As a court interpreter, Arakaki was yet another shotokan ancestor who worked every day within a few yards of the throne. When you stop to think about it, that's an astonishing concentration of martial arts talent in one room.

2.13 The Seeds of Shotokan

Matsumura was Shuri's chief military officer, in charge of all military and law-enforcement personnel. Azato was the king's foreign affairs advisor, like a modern secretary of state. Itosu was the king's secretary, translating his letters and legal documents. Kyan supervised the staff and paid the king's bills. Arakaki translated documents and represented Shuri to foreign governments. All five of these men could deal out instant death with either hand. All of the modern "Shorin" styles point straight back to this exact group of men as the source of hard-style karate—as well they should. These are the chief players, noting their contributions to modern karate, especially shotokan:

- Matsumura: Source of bassai, gankaku, heian nidan, tekki shodan, kanku, gojushiho, hangetsu. Inventor of linear technique.
- Itosu: Source of heians, tekki 2 and 3, jion, *jitte*, *jiin*, chinte, rohai (meikyo), empi. Source of sho/dai versions of bassai, kanku and gojushiho. Funakoshi's mentor.
- Azato: First teacher of Gichin Funakoshi. Master of tai sabaki and disarming techniques.
- Chofu Kyan: Father (and first teacher) of Chotoku Kyan. Emphasized health and character development issues.
- Seisho Arakaki: Source of unsu, nijushiho, sochin.

¹⁵⁹ McCarthy, 1999b, p. 6.

¹⁶⁰ Sells, 2000, p. 296.

In this list we can see the shotokan style coming together a decade or more before the birth of Funakoshi. This list accounts for all 26 of the shotokan kata except for *wankan*, which seems to have been created by Funakoshi's son, Gigo, at a much later date.¹⁶¹

It looks as if Matsumura quietly surrounded the king with a team of world-class bodyguards, all performing routine duties as members of the Shuri staff. Think of them as the Shuri Secret Service. They had legitimate government positions and stipends, but they arranged their routine duties to keep them near the king so that they could protect him. Other than these few men, Sho Tai was completely defenseless. As we have seen, the unarmed king was often in danger and needed protection.

Five men cannot provide around-the-clock protection without help. There must have been others. Who else might have been part of this special team?

2.14 Shuri Spear Carriers

The cast of a play is divided into the lead actors, the supporting actors and the people who stand around in the background and don't say anything. In Shakespearean or classic Greek theater, these background actors are called "spear carriers" because they literally stand around holding spears. Even more aptly, in bronze-age warfare, the "spear carriers" were assistants to the warriors who kept them supplied with spears and came to their rescue if they were wounded.

When you picture the Shuri throne room, Matsumura and Itosu stand out as lead actors on the right and left sides of the throne. Azato plays a supporting role as a military advisor. Chofu Kyan and Arakaki pass through frequently as their duties require. As you read about karate history, you gradually become aware of additional figures standing silently behind the throne. They didn't carry spears, of course, but they were there, just out of sight. Now and then, we can glimpse one of them well enough to identify him.

There were quite a few famous martial artists employed in the immediate vicinity of the king in the middle 1800s. To recognize these men in your reading, look for individuals with the title "peichin," who were born

¹⁶¹ Sells, 2000, p. 266, 277. Wankan seems to have been invented by Gigo Funakoshi, and possibly also the JKA version of sochin.

about the same time as Itosu in 1830. You will find these men casually mentioned in the karate history books as “the teachers of Chotoku Kyan.”

This is a critical point. The Shuri martial artists firmly believed that karate improved health and promoted longevity. Chotoku Kyan was the sickly son of the Shuri chief of staff. Picture him as “the boss’s son.” Little Chotoku was a pathetic figure—emaciated, stunted, wheezing with asthma and nearly blind with myopia. When the chief of staff asked the Shuri bodyguards to train his son, he was really asking them to save the boy’s life. The Shuri bodyguards understood the reason for the request and undertook the challenge with grim determination. As a result, Chotoku Kyan grew up to be the most relentlessly over-trained martial artist in history.

Here is a short list of “spear carriers” who may have been part of Sho Tai’s bodyguard team. They all became very well-known masters in later years. It was as if the Shuri throne room had served as a martial arts graduate school. They all knew each other, worked together and spent years training little Chotoku.

2.14.1 Kokan Oyadomari

There is little doubt that Kokan Oyadomari was part of the team of martial artists surrounding Sho Tai. Oyadomari was born around 1830, which makes him the same age as Itosu. He is often listed as a student of Bushi Matsumura. He is regarded as one of the patriarchs of Tomari-te karate. Tomari-te has not survived to the present day, mainly because it looked so much like Shuri-te. Oyadomari was trained at Shuri, and his karate had that Shuri flavor.¹⁶² Oyadomari’s title of “peichin” means he held some kind of position at Shuri. When Chotoku Kyan was 8 years old, his father asked Matsumura, Itosu and Oyadomari to be the boy’s first instructors.¹⁶³ This implies that Chofu Kyan knew Oyadomari as well as he knew Matsumura and Itosu. In other words, Oyadomari must have been a familiar face to the king’s steward.

In terms of kobudo, there are rare references to Oyadomari kata for the sai, *tonfa* and bo.

¹⁶² *Empi* kata, which Okinawans knew as Wansu or Wang Shu, has been practiced in Okinawa since 1683, and is vaguely associated with Tomari. Our version came from Matsumura and Itosu.

¹⁶³ Nagamine, Shoshin, *The Essence of Okinawan Karate-Do*, Tuttle, 1976, p. 40.

Oyadomari is a respected and legendary master. If he was there in the throne room, he was part of the bodyguard team. He would not have shirked this duty, even if he had a choice. Let's pencil him in as another bodyguard to Sho Tai.

2.14.2 Kosaku Matsumora

If Oyadomari was one of the Shuri bodyguards, then Kosaku Matsumora must have been one, too. Matsumora (not the same as *Matsumura*) was born around 1830 like Itosu and Oyadomari. Matsumora was yet another government figure, had a legendary reputation as a fighter, taught Shuri-like technique in Tomari when he retired and was an early instructor to Chotoku Kyan, son of the chief of staff.

In addition, karate historians emphasize that Oyadomari and Matsumora were "on very good terms,"¹⁶⁴ that they were inseparable friends, that they traded kata and shared students—to the extent that some people speculate that they might have been brothers. If Oyadomari was one of Bushi Matsumura's special agents, Matsumora would not have been far behind. They did everything together. One possible explanation is that they both lived in Tomari, but both worked two miles away in Shuri. If they walked to and from work together every day, it would explain much of their reputation for "togetherness."

Kosaku Matsumora became famous at the age of 20 (around 1850) when he stole a sword out of the hands of an angry Satsuma overlord using only a "wet towel" as a weapon.¹⁶⁵ The Japanese overlord was disorderly, probably drunk, and was threatening a crowd of unarmed Okinawans with his sword when young Matsumora confronted him. Nagamine says, "Matsumora quickly removed the moist Japanese towel which he had recently been in the habit of carrying concealed inside his garment." Matsumora hit the astonished samurai with the wet towel and grabbed the sword. In the process, Matsumora lost a thumb. He threw the thumb and the sword in the nearby Asato River.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Bishop, 1999, p. 65.

¹⁶⁵ Nagamine, 2000, p. 32.

¹⁶⁶ When we use open-hand techniques (*shut*, *nukite*, *teisho*), we are taught to keep the thumb tightly retracted at the side of the hand, and never let it stick out. Now you know why.

In *budo*, there was no greater contempt than to humiliate your opponent and then turn your back and walk away. There is an implication that the opponent is so cowardly that you do not fear his revenge. This episode was so insulting to the hated Japanese overlords that Matsumora became an Okinawan folk hero overnight. He had to hide out in the woods for a couple of years until the Satsumas stopped hunting for him.

Let's stop and read between the lines here. The official story (*tatemaie*) comes from Nagamine and doesn't sound quite right. Nobody in his right mind would habitually carry a wet towel wrapped around his body under his garments. What was the unspoken *honne*?

Responding to the emergency, Matsumora probably created an expedient weapon by urinating in the towellike loincloth he wore "concealed under his garments." It was easy for him to hike up his kimono to "unwind" it. He flung the dripping underwear in the opponent's face as a distraction, and stole the sword in the moment of gagging shock that followed.

Kosaku Matsumora's admirers must have loved telling this story. Nagamine may have cleaned it up a little for publication.

There is no question that Matsumora would have been welcome at Shuri. He was a daring fighter, a hero and a natural team member or advisor. He was also a student of Bushi Matsumura, and both men learned the famous *chinto kata* from a Tomari pirate at the same time.

2.14.3 Peichin Yara

Peichin Yomitan Yara belonged to the generation between Bushi Matsumura and Itosu. His reputation as a martial artist rests mainly on various *kobudo kata*. (The *kobudo* masters were not peasants!) He also passed down a second *kusanku kata*, inherited from Chatan Yara, a relative, who was a contemporary of Sakugawa and another student of the legendary Kong Su Kung.

Peichin Yara was a noted martial artist, a Shuri government employee and another teacher of little Chotoku Kyan.¹⁶⁷ It is very likely that he was one of the bodyguards. There isn't very much known about him, but he fits the bodyguard profile.

¹⁶⁷ Sells, 2000, p. 26.

2.14.4 Sanda Kinjo

About 10 years younger than Itosu, Sanda Kinjo was a famous kobudo expert. According to historian George Alexander, Kinjo was the chief of the civil police at Shuri for 40 years and did double duty as a bodyguard to the king.¹⁶⁸ It is likely, almost inevitable, that he reported to Matsumura, the minister of military affairs. Because of his duties as a policeman, Kinjo had to be proficient with all weapons used by the lower classes of criminals. Matsumura recognized and rewarded this kind of talent.

There isn't much evidence that Kinjo was part of the daily retinue of the king in the throne room. He clearly had duties that took him elsewhere. In an emergency, however, he and his constables would have quickly filled in the second rank behind the bodyguards. They were there to back up Matsumura's play.

2.14.5 Peichin Kiyuna

Little is known about Peichin Kiyuna, except that he was a contemporary of Itosu, had a government position as a security guard (night watchman) at Shuri Castle, was trained by Bushi Matsumura and had a very powerful punch. He once used a tree on the castle grounds as a makiwara, but after ten days of pounding, the tree wilted and died.¹⁶⁹

In later years, Kiyuna contributed training to both Taro Shimabuku and Gichin Funakoshi.¹⁷⁰ Shimabuku was a student of Chotoku Kyan, and of course, Funakoshi was a protégé of Itosu. These connections demonstrate that Kiyuna was connected to the inner circle of martial artists at Shuri and was a good candidate to be another shadowy bodyguard lurking near the throne.

2.14.6 Conclusion

There appear to have been other "spear carriers," but they are only names with no details. In 50 years of service, Matsumura must have trained dozens of young men for service in Shuri Castle.

¹⁶⁸ Alexander, 1991, p. 49.

¹⁶⁹ Nagamine, 2000, p. 48.

¹⁷⁰ Alexander, 1991, p. 51.

Their stories are lost, but I think it is evident that the inner circle of Shuri Castle was a college for martial-arts masters. In later years, these masters all went their separate ways in Shuri and Tomari, but in the 1850s and 1860s, they were a highly trained team and protecting Sho Tai was their collective mission.

In retrospect, the Shuri bodyguards must have done rather well. They kept the king and the elderly ministers safe from both the Satsuma overlords and from the crews of visiting ships who periodically overran the waterfront of Naha. They kept the peace, protected their lord and did their duty. We have to respect them for succeeding in this very difficult situation.

Their nemesis turned out to be a ruthless barbarian from a wilderness called Rhode Island. He landed without permission at Naha. He forced his way into Shuri Castle. He went to Tokyo and demanded an audience with the emperor. After his visit, the Tokugawa and Sho dynasties crashed in ruins. Revolution and civil war followed. The samurai and the keimochi were persecuted and destroyed. Modern Japan emerged from the ashes.

Every Japanese school child knows the name of this man. Most Americans have never heard of him.

Chapter 3



The Japan Expedition

By this point, veteran readers of karate history may be getting restless while revisiting these well-worn stories about Okinawan masters. It was necessary to include these stories because the clues to the mystery of hard-style karate, as well as the bunkai, lie in the details and personalities revealed by these specific tales. The story of American Commodore Matthew Perry, however, will take many karateka by surprise. As far as I can tell, karate history books haven't acknowledged Perry.¹⁷¹ He played a crucial role in the creation of shotokan.

Perry's visit to Naha triggered a revolution in Japan that destroyed the Tokugawa shogunate and brought an end to the samurai way of life. This, in turn, destroyed the Shuri government and cast the keimochi into abject poverty. Documentation of his visit comes from English-language diaries and journals more than 150 years old. Several of these journals are sitting on the shelf next to my desk. Japanese masters don't seem very interested in these rare publications.

3.1 Commodore Matthew Perry

By the 1840s, Ieyasu Tokugawa's longstanding policy of isolation from Western contact was rubbing a lot of people the wrong way. There were many U.S. ships in Japanese waters, mostly whalers from New Bedford, and shipwrecked Americans who washed up on the shores of Japan. Other Americans were treated very badly indeed. They were often killed.¹⁷² Friendly attempts to open diplomatic relations with Japan were rudely rebuffed, to the considerable embarrassment of the U.S. government. For instance, in 1845, a U.S. emissary was shoved back into his boat by a Japanese soldier when he tried to come ashore at Edo (Tokyo). He never got ashore. His mission failed.¹⁷³

There was a strong feeling in the U.S. Congress that "the Japan question" needed to be resolved, by force if necessary. In 1853, President Millard Fillmore dispatched Commodore Matthew Perry with a fleet of 15 sail-and-steam-powered warships to force Japan to open its doors and establish diplomatic and financial relations with the rest of the world.

¹⁷¹ Nagamine, 2000, p. 37, mentioned Perry but didn't expand on his history. Sells, 2000, p. 34-35 gives Perry two short paragraphs.

¹⁷² Sells, 2000, p. 34.

¹⁷³ Kerr, 2000, p. 299.



Figure 21: The Sakai Incident, 1868. Samurai murdered 11 French sailors attempting to come ashore near Osaka. (This melodramatic depiction was *not* drawn from a photograph.)¹⁷⁴

Perry knew that the Japanese respected only strength and brutality, so he decided to give them something to think about. Instead of sailing directly for Tokyo, he took his fleet to defenseless Okinawa instead. His idea was to act like a bully in Okinawa in order to create a reputation that would serve him later in Tokyo.

3.2 Perry Arrives in Naha

Most historians portray Perry as a pompous egotist, based on the testimony of his officers, but that was a shallow assessment. Perry had read every available book and report on Japan before embarking on his expedition.¹⁷⁵ He deliberately imitated the behavior of a Japanese *daimyo* (“a western Mikado”) in order to generate respect for his authority and power.¹⁷⁶ Perry’s personal journal shows a deep awareness of *honne* and *tatemae* to which his assistants were simply blind.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ This public-domain image is from the Wikimedia Commons and first appeared in *Le Monde Illustré* in 1868.

¹⁷⁵ Kerr, 2000, p. 301.

¹⁷⁶ Statler, Oliver, *The Black Ship Scroll, An Account of the Perry Expedition at Shimoda in 1854, and the Lively Beginnings of People-to-People Relations between the Japan & America*, Tuttle, 1963, p. 37.

¹⁷⁷ Perry, Matthew, *The Japan Expedition 1852-1854: The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry*, edited by Roger Pineau, with an introduction by Samuel Elliot Morrison, The Smithsonian Press, Washington D.C., 1968.

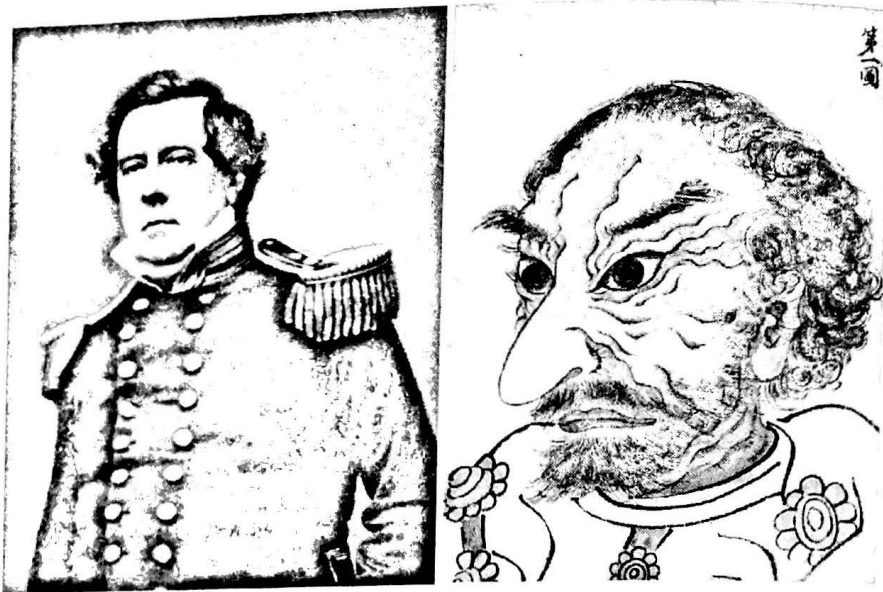


Figure 22: Commodore Matthew Perry, shortly after the conclusion of his mission to Japan (left). On the right is a woodblock print from the Black Ship Scroll (courtesy of the Ryosenji Treasure Museum). The unknown Japanese artist saw Perry as a “hairy western barbarian” with the long nose and slanted eyes of a temple demon.

When Perry arrived in Naha, he began by throwing the port authorities off his ship and rejecting their gifts, claiming they did not have sufficient rank to speak to him. This was an official lie intended to bring the real authorities into the open.

Shortly thereafter, he was visited by Sho Taimu,¹⁷⁸ who introduced himself as the regent (acting king) of Okinawa. Sho Taimu was a member of the royal family and the hereditary lord of Mabuni village.¹⁷⁹ At that time, King Sho Tai was still a boy, too young to take command. Historians have come to the conclusion that Sho Taimu was only pretending to be the regent (*tatema*) while the real regent was in hiding with the young king and the king's mother (*hon*ne). Sho Taimu was the “designated decoy,” appointed by the Satsuma overlords. Their orders to him were remarkably similar to the commands of Tokugawa's three monkeys: Tell them *nothing*. Agree to *nothing*. Sell them *nothing*. Make them go away!

Sho Taimu came aboard Perry's flagship with a small number of grim-faced *keimochi* assistants. Matsumura and Itosu were almost certainly in this group. They took a tour of the ship and were extremely impressed with the engine room. The massive steam engines were

¹⁷⁸ In the history books, Sho Taimu appears as Shang Ta-mu. “Shang” is the Chinese reading of the kanji character for the royal “Sho” family name. Perry's translators were Chinese.

¹⁷⁹ Perry, 1968, p. 61.

completely alien to the Okinawans. Later, they had dinner with the Commodore and his officers.

Perry then made a series of demands. He wanted to speak to the Okinawan king about signing a contract to cover the price of provisions sold to U.S. ships visiting Naha. He wanted a building to use as his base onshore. He wanted to establish a coal depot for visiting steamships. He was politely but firmly refused on every front. Sho Taimu had no authority to make such agreements.

Perry then demanded to speak with the real king. Sho Taimu made official excuses, saying the king was just a little boy and not yet in power. His mother, the dowager queen, was terribly ill and was not seeing anyone. It was so regrettable, but Okinawa could not sell any supplies of any kind to visiting ships. Sho Taimu would not compromise on any point.

The regent was simply enforcing Japan's iron policy of zero contact with Western nations (the unspoken *honne*), but the Satsuma overlords didn't allow him to say so (the official *tatemaie*). For his part, Perry was deliberately picking a fight over false issues (*tatemaie*) in order to create a confrontation that he would certainly win (*honne*). He needed a hard reputation and he meant to obtain it. Sho Taimu played right into Perry's hands.

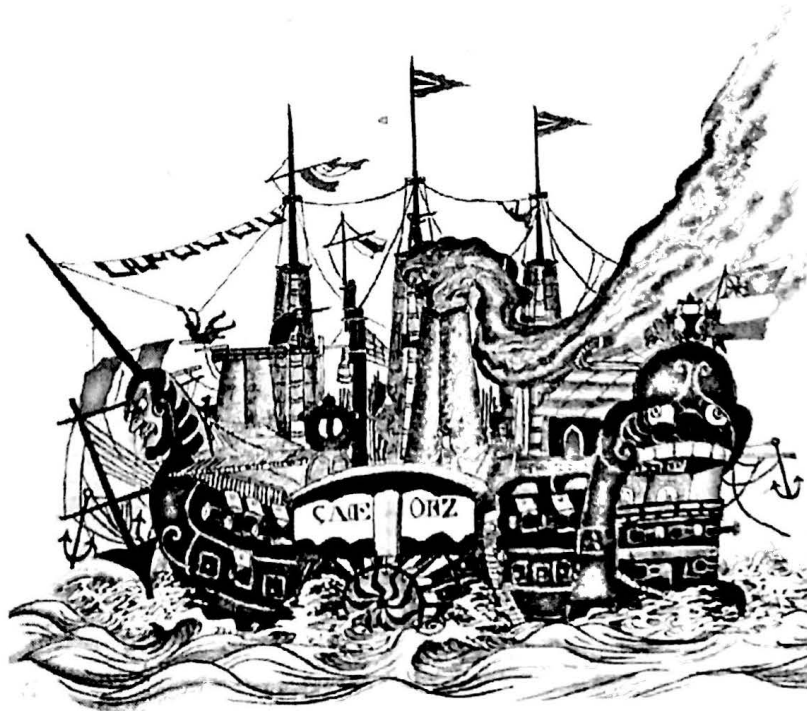


Figure 23: Perry's flagship, seen through Japanese eyes. The Japanese wondered if the Americans had learned how to make floating volcanos.¹⁸⁰ Compare to Figure 9, which shows a similar ship. (From the Black Ship Scroll, courtesy of the Ryosenji Treasure Museum).

¹⁸⁰ Walworth, 1946, p. 71.



Figure 24: Perry's marines in Japan. There is a brass band at the head of the column. (From the Black Ship Scroll, courtesy of the Ryosenji Treasure Museum).

3.3 Perry Invades Shuri Castle

On Monday, June 6, 1853, Commodore Perry forced the issue by landing two cannons and two companies of U.S. Marines bearing Springfield rifle-muskets and flashing bayonets. Along with 50 naval officers and two brass bands, Perry set out for Shuri Castle.

It was an impressive parade. The vanguard was a party of 30 sailors dragging two cannons. Behind them was a brass band in red coats. Next came a company of Marines proudly displaying Old Glory. Perry himself was carried forward in a sedan chair made just for the occasion. The chair was carried by eight Chinese coolies exactly as if he were the shogun himself. Behind the commodore came his 50 naval officers in blue jackets and white trousers. Each officer carried a saber, and some carried cap-and-ball revolvers.¹⁸¹ The second brass band in red coats followed the officers. Bringing up the rear was another American flag and the second company of Marines. It was literally a red-white-and-blue procession.¹⁸²

The procession was an invasion disguised as a parade. In modern terms, it was "deniable." Perry was very good at this sort of thing. The column looked like a parade (*tatemaie*), but the cannons and the bristling bayonets sent a clear message (*honno*). It takes enormous effort to offload

¹⁸¹ Walworth, 1946, p. 105. When Perry reached Japan, local officers were very curious about these pistols and asked for a demonstration. They were astonished to see the pistol fire *six times* without reloading!

¹⁸² Perry, 1968, facing p. 93. Perry's personal journal contains a watercolor painting of the procession. Unfortunately, it could not be reproduced here with any clarity.

two cannons, transport them to shore in rowboats and drag them three miles uphill by hand. This was not an innocent or casual act.

The column arrived at Shuri and found the castle locked against him. Perry made it clear that the ancient gates were not going to stop him. The Okinawan officials conferred with one another and stared fearfully at the cannons. After a few minutes, they reluctantly opened the gates. Perry and his officers marched into the heart of Shuri Castle, leaving most of the Marines behind to secure the gates.¹⁸³

Shuri Castle was the seat of the Okinawan government and must have employed at least a couple of hundred bureaucrats and clerks. We know there were a hundred female servants attending the royal family. When Perry entered, however, the castle was deserted except for Sho Taimu, three senior ministers and a dozen shadowy assistants. Perry and his officers were escorted into the large reception hall on the north side of the courtyard (the Hokuden). The Americans filled the hall, except for one corner occupied by the Okinawan officials. The two parties stood and glared at each other, sipping weak tea and chewing twists of stale gingerbread supplied by the grim Okinawan hosts.

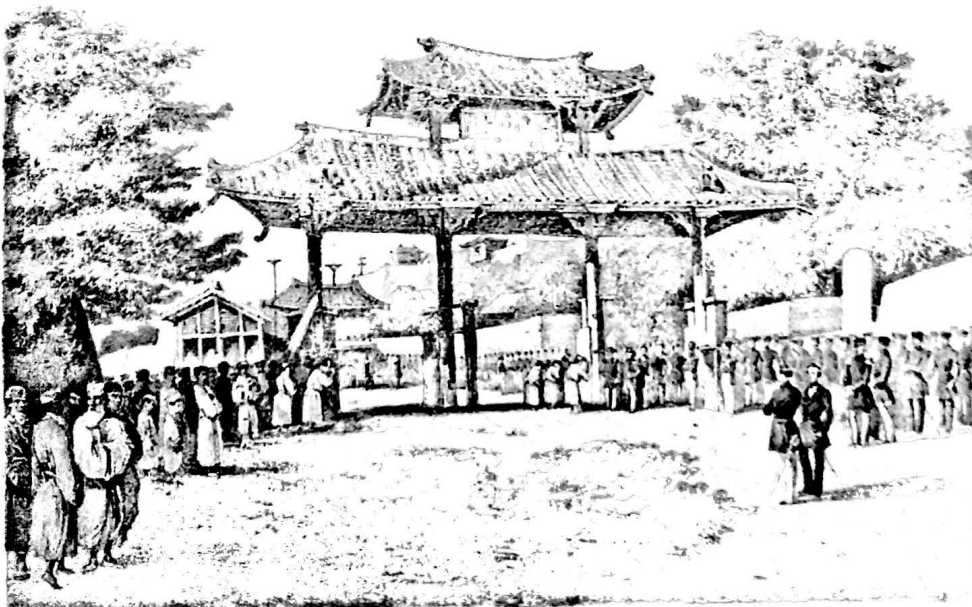


Figure 25: Commodore Perry brings two companies of U.S. Marines to force open the gate of Shuri Castle.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Perry, 1968, p. 65.

¹⁸⁴ Perry, 2000, p. 188.

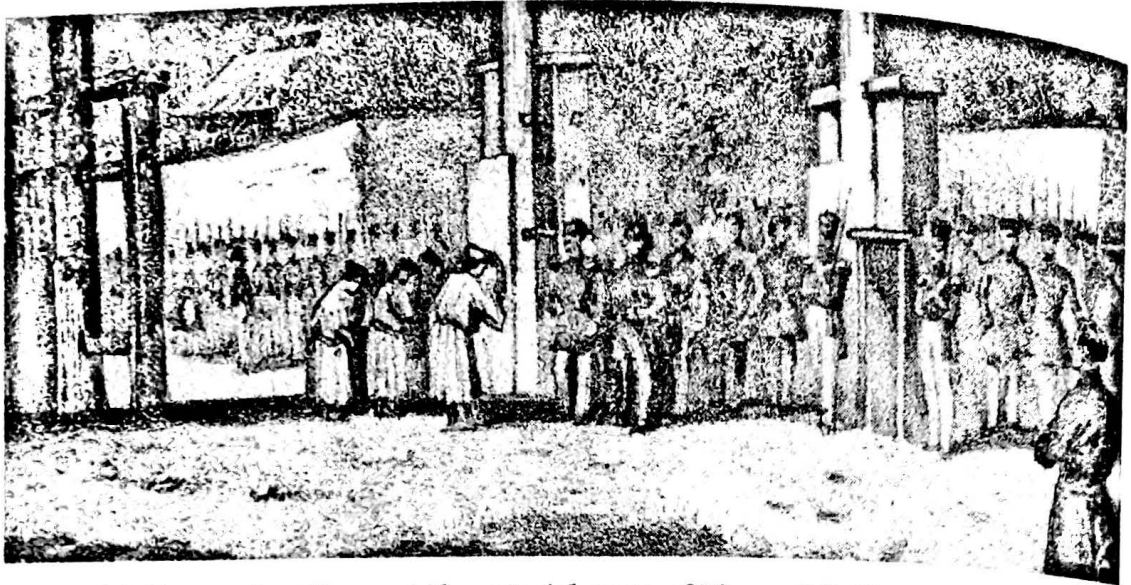


Figure 26: Commodore Perry at the gate (closeup of Figure 25). Okinawan officials greet the Commodore (foreground). Ranks of U.S. Marines carrying rifles and fixed bayonets are visible against the white wall in the background.

The Okinawans were very tense because, in their experience, there was only one reason a military force would invade Shuri. They expected Perry to declare himself the military governor of Okinawa, and declare the island to be a United States possession. (Okinawa did in fact become a U.S. possession about 90 years later.) They could not understand why he would invade the castle at gunpoint and then stand there silently chewing that disgusting gingerbread.

The tension naturally resulted in some awkward silences. Francis Dawks, the principal author of Perry's *Narrative*, noted that "the interview was becoming rather uninteresting, and it was quite plain that the magnates of Lew Chew, for some cause or other, were not quite at their ease."¹⁸⁵ Small wonder, considering they expected to be arrested or killed at any moment.

Arthur Walsworth, a historian writing in 1946, described the melancholy of the Shuri lords in these words:

"The faces of the islanders showed that, for them, the occasion had no fragrance. What would the Japanese overlords say, they were wondering, when the spies reported that the foreign barbarians were entertained in the royal palace itself? Heads might be lopped off for this!"¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Perry, 2000, p. 191. "Lew Chew" or "Loo Choo" is the Chinese name of Okinawa (Liúqiú), which the Japanese write as "Ryukyu."

¹⁸⁶ Walworth, 1946, p. 52.

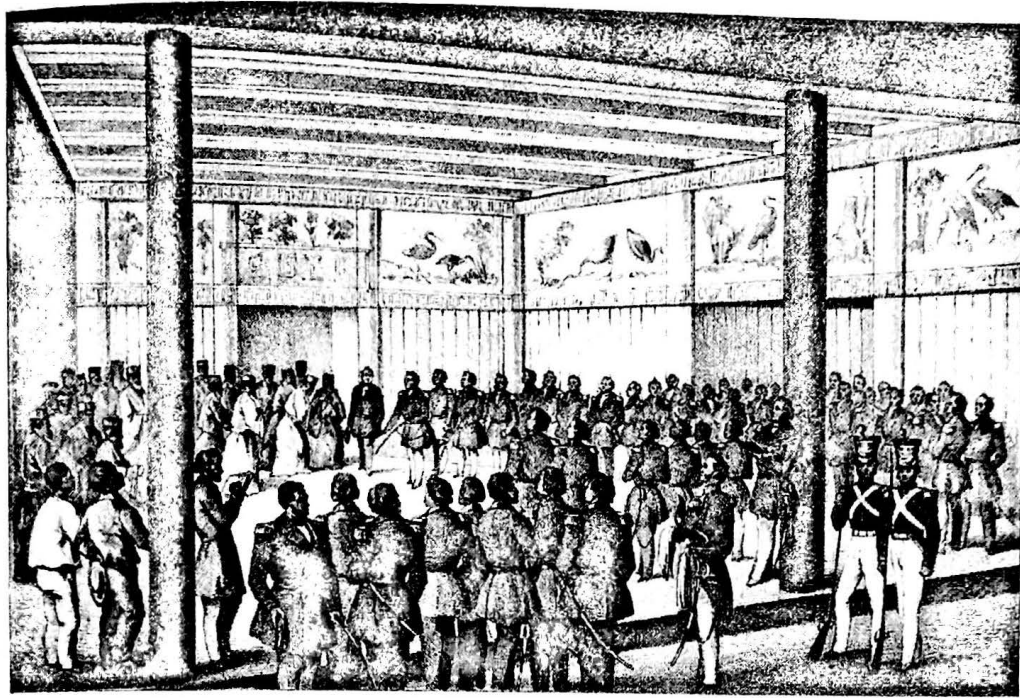


Figure 27: Commodore Perry received with stale gingerbread at Shuri Castle. The Okinawan officials are huddled in the far left corner of the room.¹⁸⁷ Except for this room, the castle was deserted. (In today's Shuri Castle, this ballroom is a souvenir shop for tourists. How the mighty have fallen.)

For his part, Perry had no intention of seizing the castle because he had accomplished his real goal by forcing his way in. He knew he would be taken seriously when he reached Tokyo. He didn't care about conquering Okinawa. Who would want to conquer Okinawa?¹⁸⁷

3.4 Perry at the Regent's House

After a while, the regent invited Perry's officers to his home for dinner (tatemaie, again), which was really a weak attempt to lure the barbarians out of the castle (honne, the hidden motivation). To the astonishment of Sho Taimu, Perry accepted this invitation. The invasion force turned around and marched out of the castle again. We can be certain that the castle gate was firmly bolted behind them as they left.

The regent treated his guests to a 12-course dinner. The number of courses was symbolic, meaning that Perry was honored as a head of state. The nature of the dinner, however, sent a different message. The first eight courses of the meal consisted of bowls of thin soup, which one witness described as "so similar in composition as not to be distinguished by a

¹⁸⁷ Perry, 2000, p. 190.

palate unpracticed in Loo Choo delicacies."¹⁸⁸ That's a diplomatic way of saying that they were served the same soup eight times.

The remaining four courses consisted of gingerbread, bean sprouts with onions, balls of a sugary paste the Americans could not identify and scrambled eggs. Pork and fish, the staples of Okinawan cuisine, were missing from the meal.

The meal was not a complete disaster. The naval officers were pleased at the abundant supply of *awamori*, Okinawa's powerful distilled spirit. Some noted, however, that the "wine" had an odd flavor, similar to turnips.¹⁸⁹ Perry's men were lucky that the regent didn't introduce them to *habushu*, which is awamori fortified with the venom of a *habu* pit viper. Each bottle of habushu contains a drowned snake.¹⁹⁰

While dining at the regent's house, Perry demanded a photograph of their royal host for his report. The picture of Sho Taimu (Figure 29) speaks eloquently of his attitude toward his guests. He looks absolutely furious. He was appalled by the barbaric behavior of the Americans and was still quite uncertain about Perry's intentions. Who can read the mind of a barbarian from an uncivilized wilderness like America?

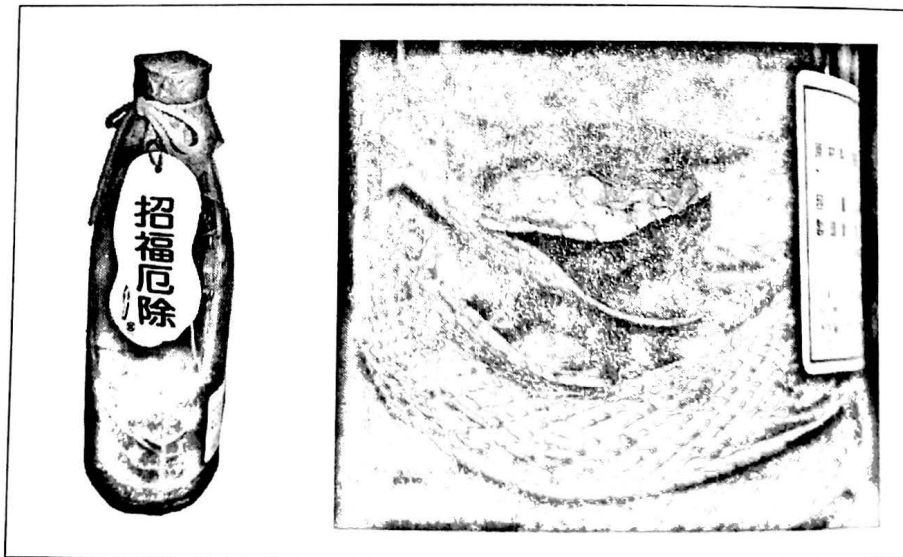


Figure 28: Habushu, the "spirit" of karate. Each bottle of this expensive Okinawan liquor is fortified with the body of a habu pit viper (*Trimeresurus flavoviridis*). Master Funakoshi wrote, "The habu understands very well the spirit of karate."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Taylor, Bayard, *A Visit to India, China and Japan in the Year 1853*, G. P. Putnam & Co, 1855, p. 385-386.

¹⁸⁹ Walworth, 1946, p. 54.

¹⁹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habu_sake

¹⁹¹ Funakoshi, 1975, p. 48. Habushu is alleged to have medicinal properties similar to Viagra.

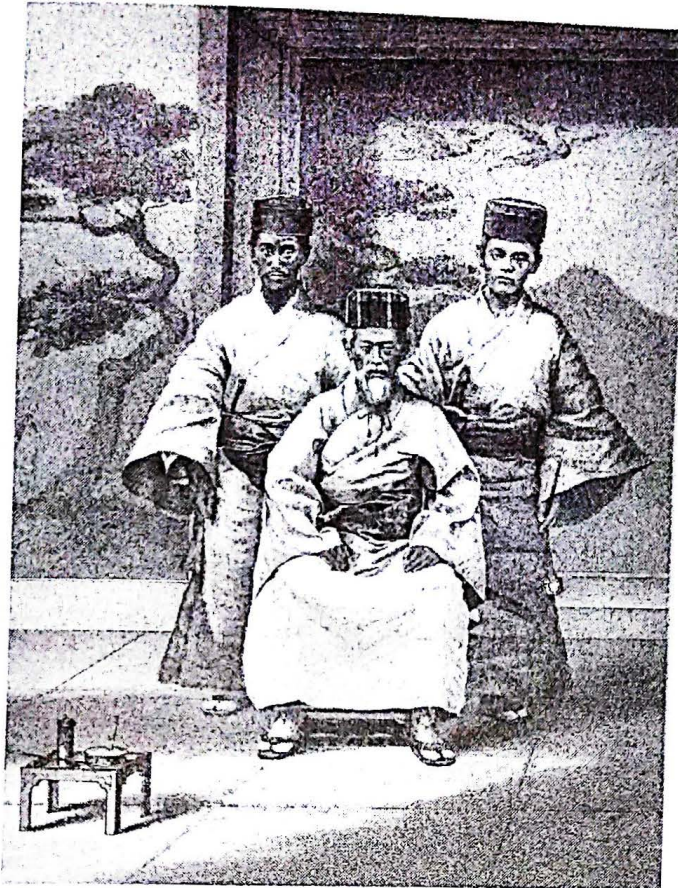


Figure 29: The regent of Okinawa, Sho Taimu, during his last public appearance on June 6, 1853. Sho Taimu was a very angry man that night.¹⁹²

The meatless dinner, the eight courses of dishwater soup and the sour wine were probably a calculated insult on the part of Sho Taimu. Tiring of turnip-flavored wine, Perry led his entourage back down the hill to Tomari and spent the afternoon getting the cannons back on board ship. Shuri residents breathed a large sigh of relief.

After Perry was out of sight, Sho Taimu turned grimly back toward the castle. The Satsuma overlords had ordered him to keep Perry aboard his ship. Sho Taimu had failed spectacularly. The barbarian had not only left his ship, he had marched soldiers within a few feet of the Japanese overlords themselves! Sho Taimu collected his dignity as he walked back to the Seiden. There he made his report and submitted himself to the terrible wrath of Satsuma.

Just after this incident, Perry made a brief excursion to the nearby Bonin Islands (which include an obscure lump of rock called Iwo Jima). When he returned to Okinawa, he was surprised to discover that Sho

¹⁹² Perry, 2000, p. 218.

Taimu had disappeared and was rumored to have committed suicide. No one knows what actually happened to Sho Taimu. The Satsumas would certainly have punished him for his spectacular failure, and *hara kiri* was a possibility. All we really know is that there was a new regent when Perry returned from the Bonin Islands, and Sho Taimu was not seen again.¹⁹³

Perry could not officially admit that he had caused the old man's death, so he directed Dawks to write that the former regent had simply grown tired of his post and resigned. According to Perry's personal journal, two unidentified officers later saw the old man alive.¹⁹⁴ We don't know whether to believe that report or not. Either way, the lesson of Sho Taimu's disappearance was not lost on the Commodore. A few weeks later, he wrote a brief passage in his journal, sympathizing with the lethal plight of the Shuri ministers:

"...Those in power can never know how soon any of their acts, however harmless in their own estimation, may be construed into some offence against the state, and finding their lives consequently in jeopardy are compelled to purchase safety by humility, or a good share of their substance. These failing, they commit suicide to save their families from ruin, and their fortunes from confiscation."¹⁹⁵

Who was he speaking of, if not Sho Taimu?

On June 28, 1853, Perry held another dinner aboard his flagship. The new regent (the new decoy) and his entourage attended in their most formal finery. Dawks described the new regent in these terms:

"The new regent was a small man, apparently about forty-five years old, of more swarthy complexion than any of his suite, and with a slight cast to his left eye. He was remarkably grave and taciturn, seemed to be perpetually awake to the novelty of his position, having at times a restless and uneasy expression of countenance, and never spoke except when he was particularly addressed. It was very evident that he was less at his ease than any person present."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Perry, 1968, p. 83.

¹⁹⁴ Perry, 2000, p. 215.

¹⁹⁵ Perry, 1968, p. 115.

¹⁹⁶ Perry, 2000, p. 217.



Figure 30: Admiral Perry, the new regent, and the regent's bodyguards, at dinner on June 28, 1853.¹⁹⁷ This is a magnified view of an etching in Perry's *Narrative*. The "regent" is peeking out from behind the pillar on Perry's right. Note the *keimochi* bodyguards watching Perry from the shadows.

The "regent" was a dark, tense man with an unusual eye. He sat on Perry's right, and can be seen peeking out from behind the pillar in Figure 30. There is little detail in this engraving, but the shape of the regent's face bears a strong resemblance to Matsumura. For that matter, the square-headed man behind the regent's right shoulder resembles Itosu.

Perry had many other adventures in Okinawa, almost all of a threatening and invasive nature, but never quite resorting to actual violence. For instance, his Marines spent several weeks practicing amphibious assaults on the salt flats near Naha, in full sight of the natives.¹⁹⁸ Eventually, he sailed for Japan to complete his diplomatic mission. Japan was forced to open her doors to the rest of the world, and the shogunate lost so much face that it soon lost control of the country. Revolution followed. Interestingly, it was the Satsuma samurai who led the revolution, confirming Ieyasu Takugawa's early opinion that they would one day be dangerous to his dynasty.

¹⁹⁷ Perry, 2000, p. 218.

¹⁹⁸ Walworth, 1946, p. 69.

Perry made a final call at Naha after humiliating the shogunate and, by association, the Satsuma samurai. This time the Okinawans were much more cooperative and even agreed to open the marketplace to Perry's officers. Once a degree of free trade had been established, the Okinawan ministers turned out to be very shrewd businessmen. They wanted payment in silver for everything, and they drove very hard bargains.

3.5 Perry's Report

Commodore Perry edited the official report of the expedition so that it reflected very well on him (*tatema*). To prevent any embarrassing contradictions, Perry issued an order forbidding his men from keeping their own journals of the expedition. Several of his men defied this order and kept detailed diaries in secret. One midshipman evaded the order by mailing his diary pages home to his wife as "letters."¹⁹⁹ The writers of these secret journals criticized the commodore severely for his pompous and irrational mistreatment of the peaceful Okinawans. These accounts are very entertaining to read and provide a wealth of information on daily life in Okinawa in the 1850s.^{200,201}

In the months that the Americans spent exploring the island, they didn't see anything they recognized as a weapon.^{202,203} They never saw the child king or his mother, whom they called the "dowager queen." They met two different men playing the role of "regent," always flanked by the same grim attendants. The American visitors didn't have the faintest idea that martial arts like karate, tode, or kobudo even existed. Their reports do not mention any names we would recognize except for the king himself.

But they kept journals, wrote letters, drew sketches and took photographs all over the island. Those few months are the best documented period of Okinawan history.

The Perry expedition published its two-volume narrative report in 1856.²⁰⁴ The photographic plates were destroyed in a fire a few years later,

¹⁹⁹ Preble, 1962.

²⁰⁰ Kerr, 2000, Chapter 7.

²⁰¹ Walworth, 1946.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁰³ Preble, 1962, p. 96.

²⁰⁴ Perry, 2000.

but surviving lithographs from the original report show near-photographic details of scenes in and around Shuri Castle in 1853. This brings the birth-place of karate to life in a way that vague oral histories can't.

3.6 The Black Ship Scrolls

While Perry was trying to censor all writing within the fleet, the Japanese were busy making their own records of his visit. Japanese artists descended on Perry's men when they reached Tokyo and drew pictures of everything the strange barbarians did. These drawings and paintings were assembled into long scrolls, which were the documentaries of their time. Many copies were made of these scrolls so they could be distributed to all the cities of Japan. Several examples of these "Black Ship Scrolls" have survived to the present day.²⁰⁵

The paintings of Perry and his men all look either demonic or Chinese, as if the Japanese artists couldn't quite grasp Caucasian faces. The big noses of the visitors fit the Japanese stereotype of a demon, so that may explain part of it. Also, most of the surviving artworks are clearly copies, made secondhand or thirdhand by artists who never actually saw Perry. Artists used a lot of imagination to embellish the paintings.

It is clear that the artists were very impressed by the bayonets carried by Perry's soldiers. Some of the artists exaggerated the length of the bayonets and took the time to meticulously include hundreds of bayonets when they painted pictures of columns of infantry on parade. Perry put those bayonets on display deliberately, and it is clear that the Japanese got the message.

3.7 Familiar Faces

When Perry invaded Shuri, he ended the day at the regent's house. The portrait of Sho Taimu, Figure 29, was taken during this tense confrontation. As my understanding of the Shuri bodyguards developed, the young man to the regent's left started to look familiar. The relaxed, wide-set eyes, broad forehead and casual posture reminded me of someone I had seen before. I turned back to Figure 19 and studied the Miyagi sketch of Itosu as an old man.

²⁰⁵ Statler, 1963. You can view more Black Ship images at the web site of the MIT Visualizing Cultures project, http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/black_ships_and_samurai/index.html.

If Miyagi's sketch is accurate, then the man on the regent's left is Itosu at the age of 23. The shape and proportions of the nose are an exact match to the sketch. The line of the jaw and shape of the lips are identical in both pictures. The broad, square forehead is there. The pronounced naso-labial folds of the sketch are just starting to show in the younger face. The round, Caucasian-looking eyes are startling in both the sketch and the lithograph. Allowing for the difference in age, the facial features are point-by-point identical. This is Itosu.

If Itosu is guarding the regent's left flank, who is the man on the regent's right?

The dark-skinned man on the regent's right looks startled, possibly by the detonation of the photographer's flash powder. The expression of surprise makes it hard to recognize him at first. After a closer look, however, I have no doubt that this is Matsumura.

When I first examined the Miyagi sketch of Matsumura, I was struck by the angry and deeply slanted eyes. I thought the artist had deliberately

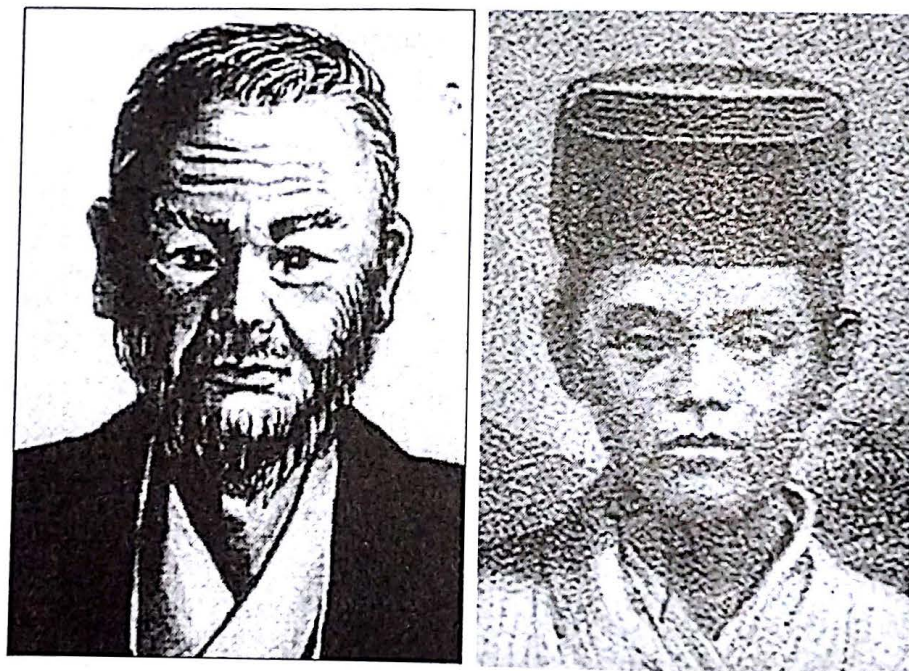


Figure 31: The Miyagi sketch of Itosu compared to the face of the regent's younger bodyguard. Allowing for the difference in age, the facial features are point-by-point the same.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Perry's photographers would redress their subjects, closing the kimonos backwards, placing swords on the wrong side and making other adjustments to correct for the mirror-image reversal caused by the daguerreotype process. Therefore, a close comparison of these images requires a left-to-right reversal of the lithograph image. (http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/black_ships_and_samurai/bss_visnav05.html.)

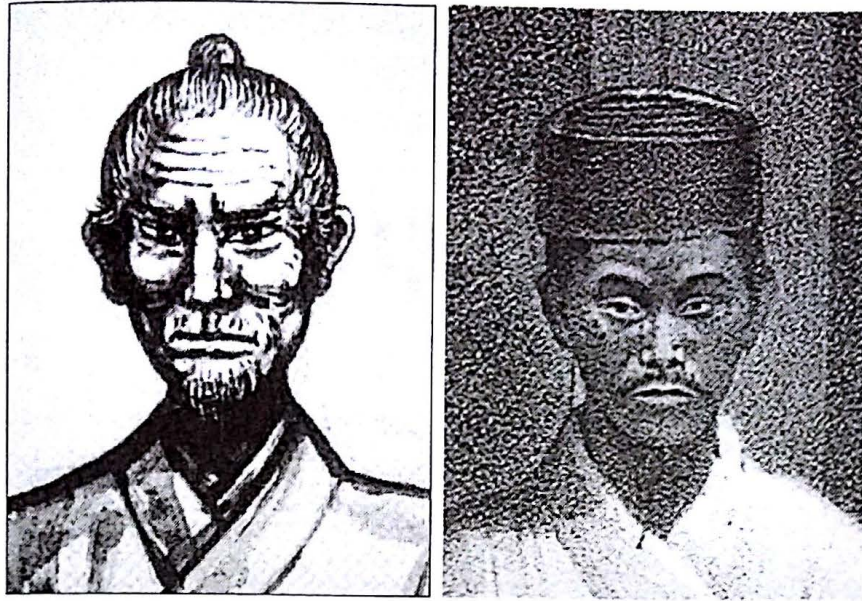


Figure 32: The Miyagi sketch of Matsumura compared to Sho Taimu's senior bodyguard. The proportions of the forehead, nose, cheekbones, jawline and mouth are a perfect match. Note the mismatched eyes in both pictures. This is Matsumura at approximately 55 years old.

given Matsumura the slanted eyes of a tengu demon to express his fierce fighting spirit, like the artist who sketched Perry for the Black Ship Scroll (Figure 22). Japanese art often portrays warriors in much the same way.

When I compared the Matsumura sketch to the lithograph of the senior Shuri bodyguard, I realized that the extreme eyes were not an exaggeration. The demon eyes were drawn from life. The bodyguard's two eyes are slanted *differently*, and one eye is thickened and distorted. This eye was reshaped by a birth defect, an infection or some injury early in life. The eyes match the sketch.

The startled expression in the lithograph made it hard to recognize Matsumura, so I took the liberty of using facial-expression software to make his expression more hostile.²⁰⁷ This can be done without altering the underlying face. When I dialed in an "angry" look, suddenly Matsumura's hawklike glare materialized. You can see why everyone who saw it would remember it. The uneven eyes make his gaze very disquieting.

There's the man with the remarkable eyes, glaring at us across a century and a half of silence. I can't help but wonder what he would think of our karate. I wonder if he would even recognize it.

²⁰⁷ FaceFilter Studio 2 from Reallusion, Inc.

Chapter 4



Dispossessed and Abandoned

The Meiji Restoration ruined the keimochi nobles of Shuri. Prior to 1868, the lords of Shuri were in constant danger, but their hereditary stipends made them financially secure. After 1868, the danger evaporated and so did the stipends. Karate continued to develop, but karate's "next generation" suffered from poverty and indignity.

The men described in this chapter did not share the common bond of the Shuri bodyguards. They had no common interests and no common dream. They inherited a remarkable martial art that no one needed anymore. Many of them didn't like or trust one another. They became "lost souls" who went into the world to establish their own independent karate kingdoms. Linear karate fragmented down new paths, toward new destinies.

For the purposes of this study, the two giants of this generation were Gichin Funakoshi and Chotoku Kyan.

4.1 Chotoku Kyan

Chotoku Kyan ("Chan") is not one of our shotokan forebears. Kyan was an incredible fighter who had deep emotional and moral problems. If Funakoshi is the father of shotokan karate, then Kyan is the black-sheep uncle the family never talks about. Funakoshi's silence about Kyan is eloquent.

In Kyan's biography we see *tatema* at war with *honne*. When you read Richard Kim's or Shoshin Nagamine's accounts of the life of Chotoku Kyan, you can see the authors struggling to portray Kyan as a heroic and noble master. His life doesn't lend itself to that interpretation. After reading every available story about Kyan, I found myself describing him as "Funakoshi's evil twin." It is very disturbing when every story about a famous sensei has some ugly twist to it.

Half of the so-called "shorin" karate styles are based on the teachings of Kyan. His faithful students believe that they are preserving Itosu's shorin tradition (the *tatema*), but that is doubtful. For instance, Kyan learned the same pinan kata as Funakoshi and Mabuni, but the pinan kata he taught are almost unrecognizable. Most of Matsumura's revolutionary linear techniques are missing from these kata. Kyan was no fan of Shuri-te.

On the other hand, Kyan made some unique contributions of his own, and his story is worth telling.



Figure 33: Chotoku Kyan, or Chan Migwa, the most over-trained martial artist in history. Note the enlarged knuckles from pounding the *makiwara*.

4.1.1 Kyan's Health

Kyan was born in 1870, which makes him almost the same age as Funakoshi and about 40 years younger than Itosu. He was not part of the inner circle at Shuri Castle, but his father was. As you recall, Chofu Kyan was chief of staff to the king, a position that Chotoku would have inherited except for the abolishment of the keimochi class while he was a child.²⁰⁸

Chotoku Kyan was a sickly baby with some of the problems one associates with a premature birth. As a child, he was small, weak and thin. He wheezed because of asthma and squinted because of myopia. Other boys made fun of him and nicknamed him "squinty-eyed Chan," or Chan Migwa. His small body contained a brooding and angry spirit. Kyan trained from the age of 8 under the iron supervision of the Shuri bodyguards, who were all friends of his father. Kyan was small, but Nagamine says that trying to fight him was like trying to swallow a needle. The size of the needle just isn't relevant.

Kyan was a ferocious fighter and an inspiring teacher, judging from his remarkable students, but he had serious character problems. Photos

²⁰⁸ Nagamine, 2000, p. 81.

of Kyan show a sour little man with a grim mouth. He glares bitterly at the world. He might have become the second most powerful man in Okinawa, the royal chief of staff, except for Perry's destruction of the shogunate. Instead, he struggled with poverty all his life.

4.1.2 Kyan's Attitude

Chotoku Kyan's father loved his sickly son and wanted to make him healthy. He arranged for the boy to undergo the most vigorous martial training available, thinking that hard training would strengthen the youngster's failing health. Given the circumstances, little Chotoku probably had nothing to say about this decision. In fact, Chotoku Kyan might not have wanted to become a martial artist. It was a destiny forced on him by his domineering father.

According to karate master Richard Kim, Matsumura put the sickly little boy through "the type of training that would have done justice to a Zen temple."²⁰⁹ From the age of 8 onward, little Kyan suffered through private lessons with all of the most accomplished martial artists of Shuri and Tomari. He learned every kata and every weapon from at least a dozen sensei, who must often have contradicted and undermined each other. By the time Kyan was 19 years old, he had become the most grimly over-trained (but healthy!) youth in karate history. He also seems to have developed a teenager's rebellious anger toward his tormentors.

The Kyan stories convey a sense of backlash against his father and the Shuri masters. Most martial artists show a lifelong loyalty to their principal teachers, but this doesn't seem to be the case with Kyan. He spent his life changing the Shuri kata in various ways, although not always constructively. It may be that Kyan saw no advantage to linear technique, so he discarded it and reverted to vital-point technique instead.

Kyan's unique contribution was that he combined China's vital-point strikes with Shuri's ruthless philosophy of *ikken hisatsu*. One strike, sudden death. He went for the eyes and throat first, which a Shaolin monk would never have done.

Late in his life, Kyan apparently abandoned Shuri-te completely and taught only pre-Matsumura kata and techniques. That tells us quite a lot about his attitude toward Shuri-te and the Shuri masters. In the end,

²⁰⁹ Kim, 1974, p. 63.

he completely turned his back on them.

4.1.3 Kyan's Fights

Because of his small size, Kyan specialized in rapid sidestepping and vital-point strikes. The stories of his fights show Shuri-te's amoral commitment to single-blow victories, but no sign of linear impact technique. He turned vital-point technique into a lethal art. Let's look at some of these stories.

Kyan had two young followers who walked around with him like bodyguards, often just causing trouble. These friends were Ankichi Arakaki²¹⁰ and Taro Shimabuku.²¹¹ There is a famous story in which the trio went to a cockfight, and Kyan entered his favorite fighting cock in the contest. As they were about to leave, Arakaki and Shimabuku circulated the crowd telling several men that Kyan had insulted them. Then they hid nearby to watch the fun. When Kyan came out, every fist was against him. He had to fight his way through the crowd.

This is where the story gets interesting. Kyan cut through the mob so effortlessly that he never had to let go of his pet rooster.²¹² The stories of this incident say that Arakaki and Shimabuku were astonished, as if Kyan drew on secret techniques the two troublemakers had not seen before.²¹³

There is another story involving Kyan and chickens. Kyan once set a trap for a gang of four strong-arm robbers. He bought two live chickens and carried them back and forth along the Naha-Shuri road each evening for several days, waiting to be mugged. When the gangsters finally appeared, Kyan threw the squawking chickens in their faces as a distraction, then leveled the criminals with a series of vital-point strikes to the eyes, throat and testicles. According to Richard Kim, Kyan gave the moaning gang members a sermon about their moral obligation to society, followed by a stern warning to mend their ways or face the consequences. According to George Alexander, Kyan simply killed all four and took his chickens

²¹⁰ First teacher of Shoshin Nagamine. Not the same as Seisho Arakaki, who gave us *nijushiho*, *sochin* and *unsu kata*.

²¹¹ Brother of Tatsuo Shimabuku. Taro used to beat up his little brother. Tatsuo decided to take karate lessons, too, and later founded *isshinryu*.

²¹² Alexander, 1991, p. 60, and Bishop, 1999, p. 74.

²¹³ This sounds like an example of *chi gerk*, the Chinese art of fighting with the feet alone. See section 4.2 on Kanryo Higaonna.

home.²¹⁴ This may be another example of face-saving *tatemaie* contrasted with more brutal *honne*.

Kyan once provoked a bully, Matsuda, to a match by the riverside. Matsuda charged in to crush the frail-looking youth with the thick glasses. Kyan sidestepped and kicked Matsuda in the thigh, hitting the sciatic nerve. Matsuda lost control of his leg and hurtled into the water.²¹⁵

Alexander relates a story in which Kyan fought Tairaguwa, a famous strongman and, one hopes, some kind of outlaw. Kyan killed Tairaguwa by jumping out of a tree and breaking his neck.²¹⁶ (Try to picture Funakoshi lurking in a tree so he could break someone's neck!)

Challenged to a friendly match by a 6th dan in judo, Kyan stuck his thumb inside the opponent's mouth, dug his nails into the man's cheek and yanked him down to the ground "in an attempt to separate the skin from the bone."²¹⁷ Kyan could have finished off his opponent with a hammerfist blow to the face, but he withheld the fatal blow. It was a friendly match, after all. No need for killing.

Bishop also tells an unsavory story about Kyan selling piglets in the marketplace for his wife, then stealing part of her money so he could accompany his friends to a brothel. The traits of morality, humility and honor one expects of a karate master were not always evident in this bitter, self-centered little man.

Apparently Kyan, Arakaki and Shimabuku were in the habit of issuing open challenges. One of these challenges resulted in the early death of Arakaki at the age of 28 (or maybe it was 31). Karate teaches you humility because there is always someone who is bigger and faster than you are. The handsome and dashing Arakaki met this bigger-faster man and died, apparently of internal bleeding.²¹⁸

According to karate historian Mark Bishop, Kyan warned his students that hard drinking and fornication with prostitutes were an essential

²¹⁴ Kim, 1974, p. 61. Alexander, 1991, p. 59.

²¹⁵ Nagamine, 2000, p. 85.

²¹⁶ Alexander, 1991, p. 59.

²¹⁷ Nagamine, 2000, p. 87.

²¹⁸ Bishop, 1999, p. 74. Shoshin Nagamine loyally insists that his beloved teacher *really* died of stomach ulcers. Nagamine, 2000, p. 113. This *tatemaie* diverts attention from the fact that Arakaki lost the fight.

part of their martial arts training.²¹⁹ This seems very amusing until you think about it. To me, it sounds as if Kyan was mocking his fanatical father, who had forced him to endure every type of physical abuse as “an essential part of your martial arts training.”

Kyan survived the terrible Battle of Okinawa in 1945 but starved to death in the aftermath. There is a legend that he gave up his ration of rice so that destitute children might eat. This noble legend (the *tatema*) is repeated much more widely than the stories about the disrespect, the fights, the drinking, the stealing, the whoring and the premeditated murders (the *hon*).

In spite of the noble gesture toward the children, Kyan’s death was a suicide. The utter destruction of his home, and the deaths of so many of his friends, were more than his bitter spirit could bear.

4.1.4 Kyan’s Kata

Our modern idea that kata are immutable would have taken the Shuri masters by surprise. The “ancient” masters of Okinawa, including Kyan, did not hesitate to change the kata that they learned from their teachers. Kyan studied many different versions of common kata, and made no attempt to teach a consistent system of his own. Attempts to preserve kata “exactly as taught by Kyan” are noble but pointless because he seems to have taught every student something different. Anyone who preserves a Kyan kata is preserving something that Kyan himself eventually abandoned.

Kyan’s iconoclastic attitude must be a problem for the karate styles that are based on his teachings, but it is actually a blessing in disguise for our present purposes. His lack of respect for Shuri led him to teach pre-Shuri kata to some of his students. As a result, some of Kyan’s students established styles based on kata that were not modified by Itosu. In particular, Tatsuo Shimabuku studied under Kyan during the 1930s when the master was in his 60s. At that time, Kyan had gone back to basics by teaching older versions of Okinawan kata instead of the forms modified at Shuri.^{220,221} These kata are preserved in Shimabuku’s

²¹⁹ Bishop, 1999, p. 73.

²²⁰ Sells, 2000, p. 189.

²²¹ Smith, Victor, “The Complete Tatsuo Shimabuku,” Web site of *Fighting Arts Magazine*, <http://www.fightingarts.com/content01/shimabuku.shtml>.

style, *isshinryu*. The *isshinryu* kata are in a time capsule showing karate before Shuri-te. I encourage you to examine them.

4.1.5 Kyan's Legacy

Some say that there are only three philosophies in the world. The first is the happy innocence of people who have never been shot at. The second is the sober watchfulness of people who have been shot at. The third is the grim reality of people who have been shot.

You know these people. Think of the carefree couples who have never had children, the couples who engage in the long war of parenthood and the tragic couples who lived beyond that war and buried their children. They see three different worlds, as if the sun were three different colors for them.

Chotoku Kyan was the most formidable fighter ever trained at Shuri. Even so, he never stood with his back to the wall, facing 200 American Marines like Itosu did. Itosu was a grim and sober veteran of the Shuri Crucible. In contrast, Kyan was a bitter rebel who had never faced long rows of gleaming bayonets. It made a significant difference in their behavior toward the art.

4.2 Kanryo Higaonna

You would think that Kanryo Higaonna had little to do with the history of Shuri-te and shotokan, yet a big part of *heian sandan* seems to come from him. Higaonna is regarded as the founder of Naha-te, the principal rival of Shuri-te in Okinawa. We'll explore the rivalry between Naha and Shuri in the next section.

The Japanese habit of inventing history is very evident in Higaonna's life story. Higaonna's history contains very few verifiable facts prior to 1902, so various authors have made up stories to cover his early life. These stories are wildly contradictory. Paul Okami summed it up nicely:

*"There are at least three popular versions of [Higaonna's] life story, each one differing in almost every single detail."*²²²

²²² Attributed to Paul Okami in Kane, Lawrence, et al, *The Way of Kata*, YMAA, 2005, p. 4.

We really have no idea what Higaonna did prior to 1902, except that he spent some years in China studying martial arts. Even so, we can piece together an outline of his life if we are cautious about believing the details.

Higaonna (sometimes the kanji are read “Higashionna”) was born in 1853, the year Commodore Perry marched on Shuri Castle.²²³ That made him about 20 years younger than Itosu and 15 years older than Funakoshi. He was never a royal insider. He came from a high-ranking keimochi family that opened a firewood business when the gentry were dispossessed in 1868. From this point on, Higaonna’s family was too poor to have him educated, so he grew up illiterate.

Higaonna may have studied tode or even Shuri-te with Seisho “The Cat” Arakaki as a teenager.²²⁴ When he was 16, his family lost their royal stipend and had to rely entirely on their firewood business. Faced with conscription into the Japanese Imperial Army in 1873, Higaonna ran away to China where he spent 14 years weaving baskets while studying white crane and praying mantis chuan fa.²²⁵ He practiced sanchin kata to the point that he developed the muscles of a bodybuilder.

Higaonna suffered profoundly from depression during the long, dark years of his exile. He taught himself Mandarin and painfully struggled through the Confucian classics to educate himself. He dreamed of a triumphant return to Okinawa, where he would become a famous teacher loved by all as a master of Chinese fighting technique and philosophy.

Higaonna returned to Okinawa sometime in the 1880s, but his hopes were cruelly dashed. The Japanese Meiji government had forbidden Okinawa to have any further contact with China. In fact, the Japanese were busy stamping out the Okinawan language itself, forcing everyone to speak Japanese. Old schools that taught Okinawan and Chinese languages were forced to close. New Japanese schools opened in their place. A teacher of Chinese arts and philosophy was not only useless but officially unwelcome.

Instead of opening a school, Higaonna resumed his family’s firewood business and, according to Nagamine, did not teach martial

²²³ Nagamine, 2000, p. 60, says Higaonna was born in 1853. Or maybe it was 1845, (Kim, 1974, p. 95). Or 1851, (Alexander, 1991, p. 51).

²²⁴ Nagamine, 2000, p. 60.

²²⁵ Kane, 2005, p. 5. Note that Masatoshi Nakayama spent World War II in Beijing for essentially the same reason. In modern terms they were “draft dodgers.”

arts for 20 years. Weighed down by depression, he regularly abandoned himself in Naha's red-light district. One story from this period emphasizes how well he could fight even when lying on the ground, too drunk to stand up.²²⁶ He was immensely strong, extremely fast in combat and was a master of unexpected attacks to the legs and knees. People called him the "secret bushi," a warrior pretending to be a mere woodcutter.

That comment about "unexpected attacks to the legs and knees" is significant. You have probably heard of *chi sao*, "sticky hands." This is the Chinese art of ensnaring the opponent's arms so he cannot strike or block. Some *wing chun* schools also teach *chi gerk*, "sticky feet." Chi gerk is a grappling art using the legs and feet to attack the opponent's legs and feet. Chi gerk contains leg-breaking techniques that most people would describe as "unexpected." Apparently, Higaonna was well-schooled in this devastating art.

Itosu and Higaonna naturally found each other and became friends. When Itosu started teaching karate in public schools in 1902, Higaonna dusted off his chuan fa and opened a class, too. He accepted a few students and quickly established a reputation as a demanding, but rather boring, teacher. He followed the mainland policy that a student should practice sanchin kata for three years before being taught anything else.

Sanchin kata is grueling. It consists of about a minute and a half of exhausting isometric muscle contractions during which your teacher strikes your chest, back and legs with a stick to inure you to pain. The kata leaves bruises on your body. Some of the time the kata is performed while carrying heavily-weighted pots, using only your fingertips to grip the rim of the pot. Imagine how punishing it would be to do sanchin 50 times a night for three years. This is the tradition that prompted Bruce Lee's opinion that kata practice is "organized despair."²²⁷ On the other hand, it builds huge shoulder muscles and eventually makes you tough as a tree root.²²⁸ Higaonna's most famous student was the remarkable

²²⁶ Nagamine, 2000, p. 63-64.

²²⁷ Lee, Bruce, "Liberate yourself from classical karate," *Black Belt*, Vol. IX No. 9, September 1971, p. 27.

²²⁸ Porta, John and Jack McCabe, "Karate of Chojun Miyagi," *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1994, p. 69. There is a controversy about whether sanchin kata aggravates high blood pressure. Chojun Miyagi, a champion of sanchin, suffered from high blood pressure and died suddenly at age 65 of a heart attack.

Chojun Miyagi, the founder of goju-ryu.²²⁹ Higaonna was also one of the teachers of Kenwa Mabuni and Shimpan Gusukuma (Shimpan Shiroma), the founders of the two *shito-ryu* styles.

The most important thing to remember about Kanryu Higaonna is that he taught traditional chuan fa newly imported from China.²³⁰ He didn't teach at all before 1902, and yet there is a widespread tatemae that Naha-te is an ancient Okinawan branch of karate;²³¹ it would be very hard to justify that idea. Certainly there had always been a few martial artists in Naha, particularly among the secretive Chinese families, but there was no developing martial tradition there before Higaonna began to teach at the beginning of the 20th century.

4.3 Naha-te, Shuri-te, Migwa-te

There are several very different kinds of "Okinawan karate," with different masters, different origins, different histories, different kata and different means of generating power. This causes a lot of confusion about "karate" history. There are multiple karates with multiple histories. The picture is not a simple one. The truth about karate history is rarely told because it is in no one's best interest to tell it.

When karate became popular in Japan in the 1920s (largely due to Funakoshi), Okinawan masters felt a bit left out. In 1926, they made an effort to organize their local arts and get some national recognition. As part of this reorganization, they coined the terms "Shuri-te," "Naha-te," and "Tomari-te," to describe the types of karate they were teaching in these three towns.²³²

Shuri-te and Naha-te are well-known, but in my opinion, there is little reason to discuss Tomari-te. The men who taught karate in Tomari were retired Shuri bodyguards. The idea that Tomari-te is significantly different from Shuri-te strikes me as wishful thinking by someone in Tomari who was trying to attract new students. Over the years, Tomari-te gradually vanished, absorbed into or was just eclipsed by Shuri-te.

²²⁹ Nagamine, 2000, Chapter 6.

²³⁰ Sells, 2000, p. 37. "Southern Chinese Fujian *kung fu*."

²³¹ Sells, 2000, p. 47. Sells says Higaonna taught a few private students beginning in 1889. That makes the same point.

²³² McCarthy, 1999b, p. 3-4.

Even without Tomari-te there are still three kinds of Okinawan karate. They are Naha-te, Shuri-te, and the arts based on Chotoku Kyan. When Taro Shimabukuro founded isshinryu in 1956, his original name for the style was "Chan Migwa-te" to honor his teacher. It is fitting that we should refer to Kyan's heritage as Migwa-te.

4.3.1 Kenpo

For the record, we also see a fourth kind of karate in Japan and Okinawa, usually labeled *kenpo*. "Kenpo" is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese "chuan fa" kanji. Kenpo was originally kung fu in a Japanese uniform, but in recent years, it has mixed in liberal amounts of other martial arts. All versions of "karate" have begun to resemble one another under the influence of sport karate competitions.

KANJI	ON	KUN	Korean	Chinese	Meaning
拳 法	KEN	KOBUSHI	KWON	CHUAN	Fist
	HO	NORI	BOP	FA	Law

Figure 34: *Kenpo* (Japanese), *chuan fa* (Mandarin) and *kwon bop* (Korean), all mean "the law of the fist."

4.3.2 Naha-te

Naha-te is the Okinawan karate that is still close to its Chinese roots. It is known as soft-style karate, circular karate, or the Shorei style. "Shorei" refers to the Shorei-ji, the *Southern Shaolin Temple*.²³³ Naha-te is sometimes listed as a branch of white crane chuan fa. It was founded by Kanryu Higaonna in 1902 and, according to Nagamine, was almost pure chuan fa, newly re-imported from China at that time.

Higaonna emphasized body building and stationary, rooted stances. Soft-style kata performers tend to stand still while breathing deeply and moving their hands in complicated gestures. There was an emphasis on upper-body muscle power and on keeping your hands in contact with

²³³ Sells, 2000, p. 47.

the opponent while you fight. This lets you grapple with an opponent in the dark. For this reason, Funakoshi says that Shorei technique is best for muscular body-builders like Higaonna.²³⁴

Naha-te quickly evolved into Okinawan goju-ryu. The other branch of modern Naha-te is uechi-ryu, which didn't arrive in Okinawa (from China, via Japan) until 1945. Chuan fa may be ancient, but the unspoken truth of Naha-te is that it arose and was named in the 20th century.

4.3.3 Shuri-te

This book is mainly concerned with the development of Shuri-te under the influence of Bushi Matsumura and Yasutsune Itosu. Shuri-te is also known as linear karate, hard-style karate and shorin karate. The tatemae of "Shorin" is that it refers to the original Shaolin Temple, although there is no visible connection between Shuri-te and Shaolin chuan fa.

This type of karate arose in Shuri among upper-class royal bodyguards in the 1800s. Instead of developing the arms and torso, Shuri-te emphasizes deep stances that build leg muscle. Shuri-te is said to be best for people who are "light and quick on their feet" because it uses body momentum to generate impact. This type of karate is characterized by *one-step sprints*, using massive leg muscles to leap forward, backward or to the side in an instant.²³⁵ Some exceptional practitioners can avoid attack by leaping straight up and letting the opponent pass by underneath!²³⁶

Shuri-te has many long-range weapons such as oi-zuki (front punch), which require enough light to be able to see your opponent. This hard-hitting karate first appeared in the 1820s when Matsumura was young, and it developed steadily through Itosu's death in 1915. In traditional shotokan karate, we continue to research and refine the Shuri-te principles to the present day.²³⁷

²³⁴ Funakoshi, 1973, p. 8. Note that Shorei technique is not for *heavy* people but for *muscular* people.

²³⁵ The hardest of hard-style summer camps, conducted by Shotokan Karate of America, features a session in which the students squat in a deep horse stance and don't move for two hours. They take leg muscles seriously.

²³⁶ Warrener, Don, and others, *JKA Kumite 70s, Masters of the Martial Arts*, Part II Vol. 4, VHS 45 minutes, Masterline Video, 1997. See the footage of Mikio Yahara leaping over his opponent.

²³⁷ See the forum on "basic principles" on my Web site, ShotokansSecret.com.

4.3.4 Naha-Shuri Rivalry

Quite a lot of rivalry arose between Shuri-te and Naha-te between 1902 and 1930 due to the extreme differences in their philosophy, origins and technique.

- Naha-te arose on the grimy waterfront; Shuri-te came from a sparkling palace. That alone would cause friction.
- Naha-te was rooted in upper-body strength and grappling, while Shuri-te emphasized strong legs for speed and impact.
- Naha-te was used to subdue an opponent; Shuri-te sought to *destroy* the opponent. This created quite a bit of moral tension between the two styles.
- Above all, Naha-te, and the southern Chinese styles, place an enormous emphasis on sanchin kata. Sanchin was the ordeal they endured to harden themselves for combat. Shuri-te abandoned sanchin completely, which the Chinese stylists found unthinkable. No wonder the traditionalists were shocked by Shuri-te.²³⁸

It is clear that neither Shuri nor Naha can claim that their art is based on “hundreds of years of secret development” in weaponless Okinawa. That romantic idea might apply to kobudo, but it is not valid for any form of karate. The period of “secret development” for Shuri-te lasted about 50 years during Matsumura’s tenure at Shuri Castle. There was never a period of secret development for Naha-te. Higaonna’s techniques were imported straight from Fuzhou and were not developed in Okinawa at all. Any subsequent development that took place happened under the direction of Chojun Miyagi after the veil of secrecy was lifted.

4.3.5 Migwa-te

And what of Migwa-te? These are the karate styles influenced by Chotoku Kyan. This group includes issheinryu, Shoshin Nagamine’s matsubayashi (shorin) ryu and several other “shorin” styles. As we have

²³⁸ Shotokan technique is mainly *Shuri-te*, but Funakoshi wanted his students to sample from a wider experience. Therefore several of shotokan’s “advanced” kata are borrowed from the older Chinese tradition. *Hangetsu* kata is shotokan’s version of sanchin.

seen, the “shorin” label doesn’t imply any strong relationship either to Itosu’s Shuri-te or to the Shaolin temple. (Everybody wants a school on the slopes of Mt. Shaoshi.)

The thing the Migwa-te styles have in common is that they have come full circle, passing through hard-style Shuri-te karate and then returning to soft-style technique. They preserve Itosu’s Shuri-te kata, but the hard-hitting linear technique is missing. Momentum techniques have been systematically removed. To a shotokan stylist, it is bizarre to see people open pinan nidan (heian shodan) by turning to the left and then *backing away* from the first block. These are styles where the performer stands upright much of the time and power generation often has a whiplash feeling to it.²³⁹ They are not using heavy upper-body power, and are also not using momentum impact. When you see Shuri-te kata done without high-impact body shifting, then the style is neither Shuri-te nor Naha-te. It is something else, a different kind of karate, and Migwa-te is an appropriate name for it.

4.3.6 Shito-ryu

Before closing this section we should acknowledge the shito-ryu approach. Two different masters, Kenwa Mabuni and Shimpan Gusu-kuma (Shimpan Shiroma), founded styles they called “shito,” which was another word game. “Shi” was a character from Itosu’s name, while “to” was borrowed from Higaonna. The goal of shito-ryu was to preserve both Shuri-te and Naha-te at the same time. As a result, shito-ryu students memorize an appalling number of kata. Funakoshi attempted much the same thing by combining shotokan’s original 15 hard-style kata with 10 “advanced” kata drawn from the soft Chinese tradition.

There is some question in my mind about how successful these attempts have been. In both shotokan and shito-ryu, performers seem to do all the kata the same way. Shotokan students use hard-focus technique in all of their kata, including the supposedly “soft” advanced kata. Shito-ryu students use a blend of hard and soft across all of their kata. You don’t see hard-style technique in one kata and soft-style technique in the next one. I doubt this was the intention of the founding masters.

²³⁹ Look on the Internet for *matsubayashi* (shorin) ryu kata videos of Jim Sindt.

4.4 Gichin "Shoto" Funakoshi

As a shotokan sensei, I always have Gichin Funakoshi in my thoughts. A brief sketch of Funakoshi is necessary to connect the events of karate's prehistory to our own experience in the modern era.

Funakoshi was a schoolteacher. He had faults, like other masters, but his were the faults of fanaticism. This man was unflinchingly honorable and rather severe. He avoided fights, respected his wife, and apparently, never lied, cheated or stole. He never challenged a gang of bullies. He never climbed a tree to jump on the neck of an enemy. He never fought a bull with his bare hands. He defended himself only two times in his life, and was deeply ashamed afterward. He believed that a real master can win without fighting. Being forced to use his fists humiliated him.

Funakoshi led a blameless and somewhat boring life, setting an austere standard very few of us would want to equal. At the age when most men retire, he left his family behind in Shuri and became a karate missionary in Tokyo. He was very successful in popularizing karate in the nation's capital. For this he is widely acknowledged as "the father of modern karate."

Funakoshi's life is amply described elsewhere, including his own autobiography,²⁴⁰ so I will confine myself to a few significant events of his life that are pertinent to this study. The first is that Funakoshi was born around 1868, the year of the Meiji Restoration. This means he was a preschooler when the samurai were disarmed and disbanded. He was 10 or 11 years old when the Sho dynasty ended. He was never a part of the inner circle at Shuri Castle. He grew up in the modern world, not in the feudal Ryukyu kingdom.

If you search the Web for information on Funakoshi's boyhood, you may discover allegations that his father ruined the family by spending all their money on alcohol and dissipation. As we now know, every Shuri family was impoverished and destitute while Funakoshi was growing up. There is no need to blame Funakoshi's father for the ruinous edicts of the Meiji government. It was Emperor Meiji who destroyed the Funakoshi family fortune and left them starving. If Funakoshi's father became a drunk as a result, who can blame him? His entire world had collapsed.

The son, however, was made of sterner stuff.

²⁴⁰ Funakoshi, Gichin, *Karate-Do, My Way of Life*, Kodansha, 1975.



Figure 35: Gichin Funakoshi in maturity.

4.4.1 Funakoshi's Career

Funakoshi's autobiography describes how he grew up in Shuri under the instruction of Azato and his friend Itosu. Funakoshi hoped to become a physician but was excluded from medical school because he would not shave off his keimochi topknot. This was a hot political issue following the Meiji Restoration. He eventually cut his hair to get a position as an elementary school teacher, which stunned and shamed his family. He followed this career for 30 years. He turned down promotions so that he wouldn't have to leave Shuri and interrupt his karate training.

When Funakoshi married and had a family, his teachers Azato and Itosu behaved as *de facto* grandparents to the Funakoshi children. The masters spoiled the children with candy at a time when Funakoshi himself was so impoverished that he could barely put food on the table.²⁴¹ He mentions occasional training with a very elderly Bushi Matsumura, but Funakoshi has little to say about him except that the bushi had remarkable eyes.

One suspects that Funakoshi had some influence on Itosu's appearance at Okinawa's public elementary schools and colleges in the years 1902-1905. In some instances, Itosu presided while Funakoshi and others

²⁴¹ My own master, Hanshi Vincent Cruz of Madera, CA, spoiled my children by sending them cartons of Hostess bakery items. It may be a karate tradition.

did the actual teaching, but he did some of the teaching himself. Itosu was vigorous in 1905, in spite of his advanced age.

4.4.2 Karate Missionary

When Itosu passed away in 1915, Funakoshi was 47 and one of Itosu's senior students. At this point, something very remarkable happened.

Itosu's senior students felt an enormous debt to their teacher. They apparently formed a pact to dedicate the remainder of their lives to spreading karate. They made a conscious commitment to take Shuri-te karate out of Okinawa and introduce it to the world. A moment's reflection reminds us that middle-aged men generally do not uproot their comfortable lives in this fashion. They must have felt that they had learned something extraordinary that could not be allowed to languish quietly along the road from Naha to Shuri. Note that chuan fa, or kung fu, was already well-known throughout the Orient. There was something special about Shuri-te karate that made missionaries of these men. Shuri-te offered something that chuan fa did not.

So why choose karate as a life path? Why did Funakoshi and his classmates believe that karate was a special way to a better life?

Here it is in Itosu's own words:

"From the past there have been many karate masters who have enjoyed long lives. The reason for this is that [karate] develops the bones and muscles and aids in digestion and circulation."²⁴²

They believed that karate masters live remarkably long lives.

In a medieval agricultural society, the average life expectancy of a peasant farmer was as low as 22 years.²⁴³ Conditions were somewhat better in Okinawa in the 1800s, but the islanders suffered from repeated famines and epidemics of rubella, cholera and other diseases.²⁴⁴ At least they bathed regularly and practiced reasonable sanitation, which put them way ahead of medieval Europeans. (Perry's personal journal says that Shuri was the cleanest town he had ever seen in his worldwide travels.)

²⁴² Higaki, Gennosoke, *Hidden Karate II*, Taiyo Publishing, 2006, p. 11.

²⁴³ See the Wikipedia article on "Longevity." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_expectancy.

²⁴⁴ There is a timeline of Okinawan famines and epidemics at http://museum.mm.pref.okinawa.jp/web_e/history/story/hisindex3.html.

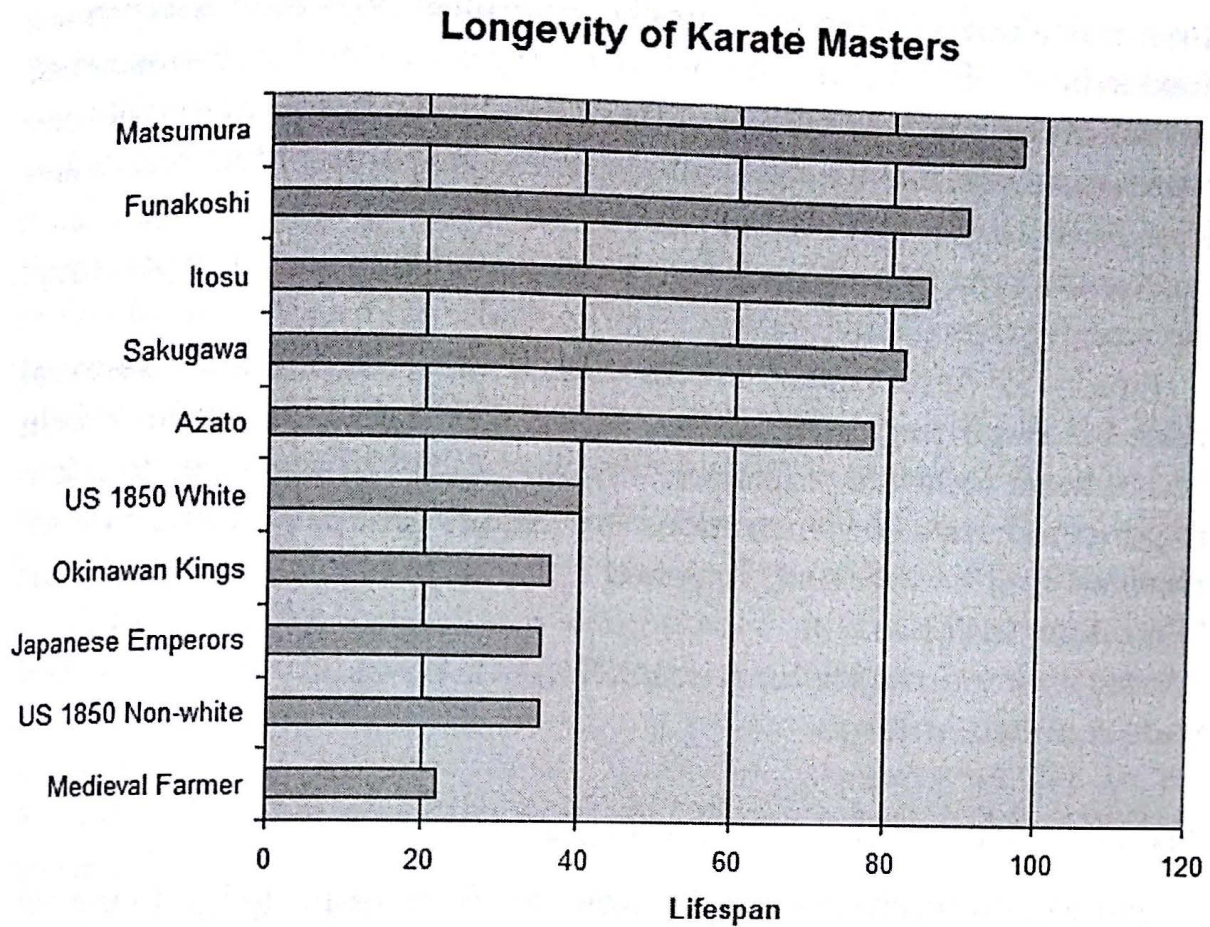


Figure 36: Longevity of Okinawan karate masters compared to other groups. Shuri masters lived remarkably long lives.

You might assume that the kings would have the highest standard of living, the best medical care and the longest life expectancy of anyone on the island. Including Sho Tai, the average lifespan of the last five Sho kings was only 36 years.²⁴⁵ Sho Tai was a standout at 60 years.

That average seemed very low to me, so I also looked up the lifespan of the five Japanese emperors whose reigns covered roughly the same historical period. Their average lifespan was only 35 years! I kept digging for comparable data. The expected lifespan of a white American in 1850 was only 40 years.²⁴⁶ European data is very similar.

Compared to this dismal record, what was the lifespan of the karate masters in our direct shotokan lineage? At a time when emperors lived to be 35, Peichin Azato lived to be 78. Tode Sakugawa lived 82 years.

²⁴⁵ I drew their birth and death dates from the table at <http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Japan.htm>.

²⁴⁶ <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0005140.html>

Itosu was 85 on his last day. Funakoshi himself was 89.²⁴⁷ Matsumura lived to be 97. Shosei Kina, the last surviving direct student of Itosu, died in 1981 at the age of 100.²⁴⁸ All of them lived to be twice the age of their contemporaries. Compared to the Japanese emperors, Matsumura and Kina lived almost three normal lifetimes.²⁴⁹

Wouldn't you follow a path that doubles or triples your life expectancy? No wonder they thought karate was special.

Fired with commitment, Itosu's students nevertheless waited several years before putting their plan into action. As the senior man, Funakoshi had both the right and obligation to go first. In 1922, he traveled to Tokyo to perform karate demonstrations for various groups and was so well-received that he eventually opened the first public karate school, the Shoto-kan, in Tokyo.

He never returned to his wife in Okinawa. It was 25 years before they were reunited in Tokyo.

4.4.3 Karate in Tokyo

Funakoshi received a special welcome from respected judo master Jigoro Kano at the Kodokan. Kano asked Funakoshi to teach some karate moves to the senior judo instructors, and judo's advanced *atemi waza* is the result. Funakoshi, in turn, adopted Kano's color-belt ranking system and had lightweight judo uniforms made for his karate students. This system was the origin of the white cotton gi and colorful belts we wear today.

The 1930s were the golden years of the Shoto-kan. It was during this time that the shotokan style matured and spread through the universities of Japan. Funakoshi became very well-known and widely respected. Then, World War II came. The war did not go well for the Japanese, and in 1945, the fire bombings began.

At the close of World War II, Japanese civilians suffered horribly from the B-29 aerial fire and atomic bombings. It is hard for modern Americans to imagine in this age of precision warfare, but in the summer of 1945,

²⁴⁷ Funakoshi states that he is 90 years old in his biography (Funakoshi, 1975, p. 96), and also that he changed the date of his birth certificate when applying for medical school (p. 1). This may account for varying estimates of his lifespan.

²⁴⁸ Sells, 2000, p. 310.

²⁴⁹ Apparently, one did not see this effect among the chuan fa masters, possibly because of the side effects of practicing sanchin.

our nation set fire to Japan's largest cities and burned them to the ground. There were 70 cities that were more than half destroyed, and scores more that suffered damage. Millions of Japanese civilians died in the flames, and millions more still carry scars from the burns. The appalling atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 amounted to only 3 percent of the total destruction.²⁵⁰ Funakoshi's biography describes trying to survive as a homeless refugee in Japan by foraging for scraps of seaweed on the beach. He was 78 years old at the time.

One of the buildings that burned to the ground in the Tokyo fires was the Shoto-kan. Fortunately, Master Funakoshi survived these events, but many of his friends and students did not. He lost his favorite son, Gigo Funakoshi, during this black year and his wife shortly afterward.

Unlike Chotoku Kyan, Funakoshi did not despair and turn to suicide. He somehow found the courage to start again. Before his death at the age of 89, Funakoshi saw his surviving students rebuild the Shoto-kan and set it on the path that spread his teachings internationally. Today it is estimated that over forty-million people practice shotokan karate around the world.²⁵¹

I like to imagine the spirit of Azato gazing critically at Funakoshi's achievements and finally muttering, "Good."

4.4.4 "Karate"

After he moved to Japan, Funakoshi changed the first kanji character of "kara te do" to mean "empty-hand way" instead of "Chinese-hand way."²⁵² This was part of his campaign to make karate seem more Japanese and less foreign. Pronounced in Korean, this new label came out "kong soo do," another early name for taekwondo.

"Karate" was not the only label Funakoshi changed. When karate invaded Japan, the old Okinawan/Chinese kata names were replaced by politically-correct Japanese names. Pinan became heian; naihanchi became tekki; patsai became bassai; kusanku became kanku; seisan became hangetsu; chinto became gankaku; and wansu became empi.

²⁵⁰ Caiden, Martin. *A Torch to the Enemy*, Ballantine, 1960, p. 158. Again, this was only 65 years ago. We have forgotten, but *they* have not.

²⁵¹ Higaki, Gennosuke, *Hidden Karate*, Champ, 2005, p. 3. Such estimates are impossible to verify but are fun to quote.

²⁵² Funakoshi, 1975, p. 33.

Karate's Okinawan labels were painted over to make the art more respectable in the eyes of mainstream Japanese bureaucrats.

KANJI	ON	KUN	Korean	Meaning
空	BU	KARA	KONG	Empty
手	SHU	TE	SU	Hand

Figure 37: Kanji for Karate, with on, kun and Korean readings.

Why bureaucrats? Funakoshi wanted karate to be accepted as an official martial art like kendo and judo. To accomplish this feat, he had to persuade the all-powerful Dai Nippon Butoku-ka, the bureaucracy that licensed and supported the legitimate martial arts.²⁵³ By this time, Funakoshi's tatemae had evolved. This time he convinced the ministers that Okinawan karate had been completely reorganized into a new Japanese martial art and was no longer Okinawan or Chinese at all. This pleased the bureaucrats but caused problems back home in Okinawa.

Funakoshi succeeded in making karate very popular in Tokyo. Within 10 years, there was a definite sense of envy growing among the old guard in Naha. Tokyo had become the world center of karate activity, and Okinawa was suddenly an unimportant backwater. Worse than that, it was Shuri-te that was popular, not Naha-te, Migwa-te or kenpo.

On October 25, 1936, the Okinawan masters met in Naha to discuss this problem.²⁵⁴ Masters in attendance included Chojun Miyagi, Chotoku Kyan, Choki Motobu and Shimpan Gusukuma (Shiroma), among others. They were quite concerned that karate had become so popular on the mainland and they were getting little credit for it.

After some discussion, the Okinawan masters decided to follow Funakoshi's lead and adopt "kara (empty) te" as the common name of

²⁵³ McCarthy, 1999b, p. 78-79.

²⁵⁴ McCarthy, 1999b, p. 57-69, for the transcript of the meeting. The meeting was sponsored by the local newspaper, and careful notes were taken for later publication.

all branches of Okinawan unarmed fighting (not just Shuri-te). They also resolved to adopt a standard uniform for all karate styles, which eventually turned out to be Funakoshi's uniform. They made a clear decision to capitalize on Funakoshi's success in every way they could. They did all of this without once mentioning Funakoshi's name—or so says the transcript.

The transcript is the *tatemaie*, the official record of the meeting taken down and transcribed by the staff of the local newspaper. The *honne* is more interesting. The moderators of the meeting respectfully addressed each master in rotation, seeking their views. The replies in the transcript are measured and polite, but there are several places where the subject changes abruptly, as if parts of the transcript have been deleted.

One of these abrupt changes occurs just as Choki Motobu begins to speak. Motobu was a vicious critic of Funakoshi. He is famous for publicly calling Funakoshi an "impostor" who taught false karate.²⁵⁵ If he said anything of substance at this meeting, it has been diplomatically edited from the official record.

Another attendee was Chotoku Kyan, who was also bitterly outspoken. Kyan's comments about the "Tokyo problem" are completely missing from the transcript, as if he were not there at all.

It is unlikely that the respectful moderators would have overlooked Kyan, and I don't believe Kyan would have been silent. This was a much more colorful meeting than we know.

4.4.5 "Shoto"

Funakoshi published poetry under the pen name "Shoto." He wrote "Shoto" using the kanji characters that mean "pine waves," which he explained as "waves of wind in pine trees." In English, we would say "whispering pines." At least, this is shotokan's official version of the story.

This is a very vivid and poetic image. The image of waving pine trees subtly acknowledges Funakoshi's connection with the bright forest style of his teacher, Itosu. There may also be a mischievous hidden meaning in "Shoto." When spoken aloud, "Shoto" can refer to the smaller of the two samurai swords in a *daisho* display (the *wakizashi* or even the *tanto*). There is no question in my mind that this was deliberate. Funakoshi

²⁵⁵ McCarthy, 1999b, p. 126.

the scholar, who was only five feet tall, was as short and sharp as they come.²⁵⁶

But even that isn't all. "Shoto" is the on reading of the kanji selected by Funakoshi for his pen name. The kun reading is "matsuto." That's matsu, pine tree, exactly the same kanji character as in Matsumura. Matsu is the first character of "shotokan." The name of the shotokan style points straight back to the man who invented linear karate. That is the hidden meaning of "shotokan."

Every time we say "shotokan," we acknowledge Matsumura.

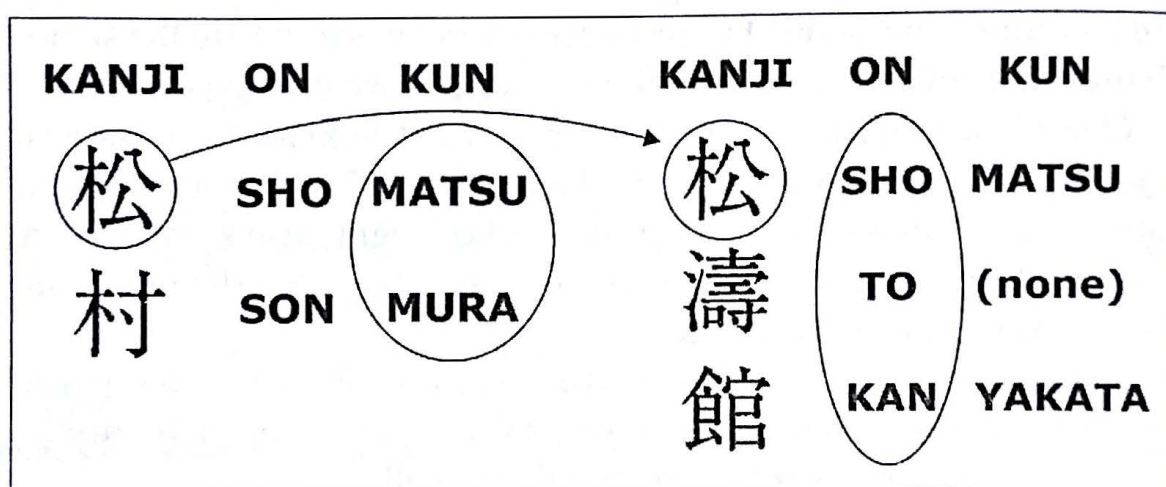


Figure 38: Kanji for Matsumura (left) and shotokan (right). The "sho" in "shotokan" is drawn directly from Matsumura's name.

4.4.6 "Taikyoku"

Some shotokan dojos use the taikyoku kata to teach basic skills to beginners. The taikyoku series is based on Funakoshi's H-shaped pattern and teaches the basic steps, turns, punches and blocks of shotokan.

Gigo (Yoshitaka) Funakoshi was Gichin Funakoshi's son and protégé. He was the creator of the taikyoku and *tenno* kata, and wankan. He invented and named most of the high kicks you see in modern karate. He died of tuberculosis at a young age. Had he not, modern shotokan might have turned out much differently.

Taikyoku shodan, nidan and sandan were created by Gigo Funakoshi around 1930 and were described in his father's master text, *Karate-Do*

²⁵⁶ Funakoshi, 1975, p. 46.

Kyohan.²⁵⁷ Other sensei picked them up and elaborated the series into as many as six variants.²⁵⁸

The phrase “taikyoku” has an interesting background. The Japanese “taikyoku” is also the familiar Mandarin term “tai chi,” as in *tai chi chuan*.

KANJI	Chinese (Cantonese)	Chinese (Mandarin)	Japanese (ON)	Meaning
太 極 拳	Taai	Tai	Tai	Supreme
	Gik	Chi	Kyoku	Ultimate
	Kyun	Chuan	Ken	Fist

Figure 39: Kanji for Taikyoku. *Taikyoku* in Mandarin is *tai chi*. (Courtesy of Philip Sneyd.)

Tai chi chuan is the well-known Chinese art which people practice around the world for health and longevity. Of course, Gigo’s “taikyoku” kata have nothing in common with actual tai chi chuan, just like “shorin” styles have nothing to do with the Shaolin Temple. There are certain labels that are just popular, and people recycle them freely. This is one.

4.4.7 Shotokan and Kobudo

If you have grown up with shotokan in the West, you are probably under the impression that shotokan is the art of the “empty hand” and does not involve weapons. Other shorin styles study tonfa and bo sticks, but not shotokan. That’s the tatemae. In fact, Shuri-te, Funakoshi and shotokan have strong connections to the modern art of kobudo.

Kobudo is a product of Shuri, just like Shuri-te, and comes from the same masters who created hard-style karate. Chinese chuan fa included both unarmed fighting and a wide selection of military weapons. These

²⁵⁷ Funakoshi, 1973, p. 42-48.

²⁵⁸ Patrick McDermott and Ferol Arce, *Karate’s Supreme Ultimate: The Taikyoku Kata in Five Rings*, iUniverse, 2004.

weapons were illegal in Okinawa, but the keimochi lords continued in the same tradition by substituting the kobudo weapons for the Chinese weapons. They did not view karate and kobudo as two separate arts but parts of the same art. Most karate styles derived from Shuri still study Okinawan weapons even today. Why not shotokan?

The prewar Shoto-kan dojo did contain kobudo weapons at one time, and certainly we have seen pictures of Gichin Funakoshi doing bo, sai and tonfa kata during that period.^{259,260} In postwar Japan, however, all martial arts were banned by the army of occupation. In order to re-open karate classes, Masatoshi Nakayama told the authorities that karate was a harmless form of Chinese boxing, like tai chi chuan on steroids.²⁶¹ The authorities demanded to know if karate students used swords or other banned weapons. Nakayama apparently assured them that shotokan students never play with weapons. From that moment on, shotokan students didn't touch weapons. This is a unique example of the official story becoming transformed into official policy. The tatemae became honne.

Shinken Taira was one of Funakoshi's early students at the Shoto-kan, long before the war. Taira studied for seven intense years (1922-1929) under Funakoshi's direct supervision. Apparently, Funakoshi's kobudo kata intrigued Taira, because he subsequently devoted his life to collecting and codifying the disappearing knowledge of Okinawan kobudo. Taira became known as "the father of modern kobudo."²⁶² Without his efforts, many rare forms might easily have died out.

Taira was one of the teachers of Fumio Demura, the well-known shito-ryu and kobudo master. This explains why my shotokan students seem so comfortable learning kobudo kata at Demura's seminars. The kata not only came from a long line of Shuri-te masters, just like the shotokan kata, but the "Father of Modern Kobudo" was a shotokan black belt who learned his first kobudo moves from Funakoshi himself. No wonder kobudo seems so natural to us!

Only an accident of history removed kobudo from shotokan. A strong

²⁵⁹ Hokama, 2000, p. 43.

²⁶⁰ See the back of the dust jacket of *Karate-Do, My Way of Life*, (Funakoshi, 1975.)

²⁶¹ Hassell, 1991, p. 83.

²⁶² McCarthy, 1999a, p. 101-113.

case could be made that traditional shotokan is incomplete without it. Warriors need to understand weapons.

4.4.8 Funakoshi's Tabu Precept

If you have studied shotokan for any length of time, you have certainly encountered Funakoshi's *Twenty Precepts for the Trainee* (the *niju kun*). This is a list of helpful aphorisms for the karate student to integrate into his life. There is a hidden surprise in this list. Japanese sensei have great difficulty with precept number 20, which is "*tsune ni shinen kufuu seyo.*"

This is the final precept, and perhaps the most important one. If we translate it literally, it says something like, "At all times construct thoughts." According to *Shihan* Eri Takase, a master calligrapher and translator, the true translation is:

*"Always be creative."*²⁶³

This may be surprising because "always be creative" does not appear in any of the published lists of Funakoshi's precepts. Instead of telling us the real precept, the Japan Karate Association published this one:

*"Always be good at the application of everything that you have learned."*²⁶⁴

As a translation, that's pretty wide of the mark. The original precept (*honne*) has been screened from view by a new one (*tatema*).

It isn't just the JKA. Here are other versions of the 20th precept from published translations of the *niju kun*:

*"Be constantly mindful, diligent, and resourceful, in your pursuit of the way."*²⁶⁵

*"Always think and devise ways to live the precepts every day."*²⁶⁶

²⁶³ Shihan Eri Takase on her calligraphy Web site: <http://www.stockkanji.com/Karate%20Principles/>. Also see the parallel translation at <http://www.24fightingchickens.com/2007/04/18/nijukun-2/>.

²⁶⁴ Japan Karate Association (JKA) Web site, <http://www.jka.or.jp/english/karate/precepts.html>.

²⁶⁵ Jotaro, Takagi (author) and John Teramoto (translator), *The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate*, Kodansha, 2003.

²⁶⁶ Hassell, Randall, *Shotokan Karate: Its History and Evolution*, Focus, 1995, p. 195.

*"Continually polish your mind."*²⁶⁷

*"Never forget - Strength & weakness of Power. - Expansion & contraction of body. - Fast & slow techniques."*²⁶⁸

Japanese instructors didn't want to tell us about this precept, so they replaced it with sayings they liked better. They rewrote Funakoshi.

"Always be creative" is the one idea a Japanese instructor can never endorse. It undermines his authority, which is based on the militant defense of the status quo. It is important to remember that Funakoshi was not Japanese and did not grow up in their culture of rigid conformity.

Neither did we.

If you are not being creative with your karate, you are not following in the footsteps of the master.

4.5 Typhoon of Steel

Imagine an affluent middle-class neighborhood overlooking a beautiful tropical valley. The houses have white stucco walls, red tile roofs and lush gardens. Flowering trees peek over tall rock walls. Children run happily in the streets.

Now imagine that some natural disaster has overtaken this neighborhood, knocking down the beautiful homes and turning the gardens to mud. You see broken trees, tumbled walls and jumbles of roofing tiles where the houses once stood. The surviving residents are shocked and silent. Paradise should not look like this. Can you picture that?

Now take it up a level. Imagine a disaster so profound that there are no piles of wreckage. There are no trees. There are no walls. There are no people. You can't even tell where the streets used to be.

That was Okinawa in 1945. Naha was burned to the ground. Shuri was scraped off the face of the earth.

They called it the "Typhoon of Steel."

By 1945, the original Shuri masters were all deceased and the next generation after them had grown elderly. The third generation were young enough to fight in World War II and were already deeply involved in it. The war did not go well for them.

²⁶⁷ Stevens, John, *Three Budo Masters*, Kodansha, 1995, p. 85.

²⁶⁸ Web site of the JKA of South Australia, <http://www.jkasa-honbu.com.au/FAQ%27s/funakoshi.htm>.

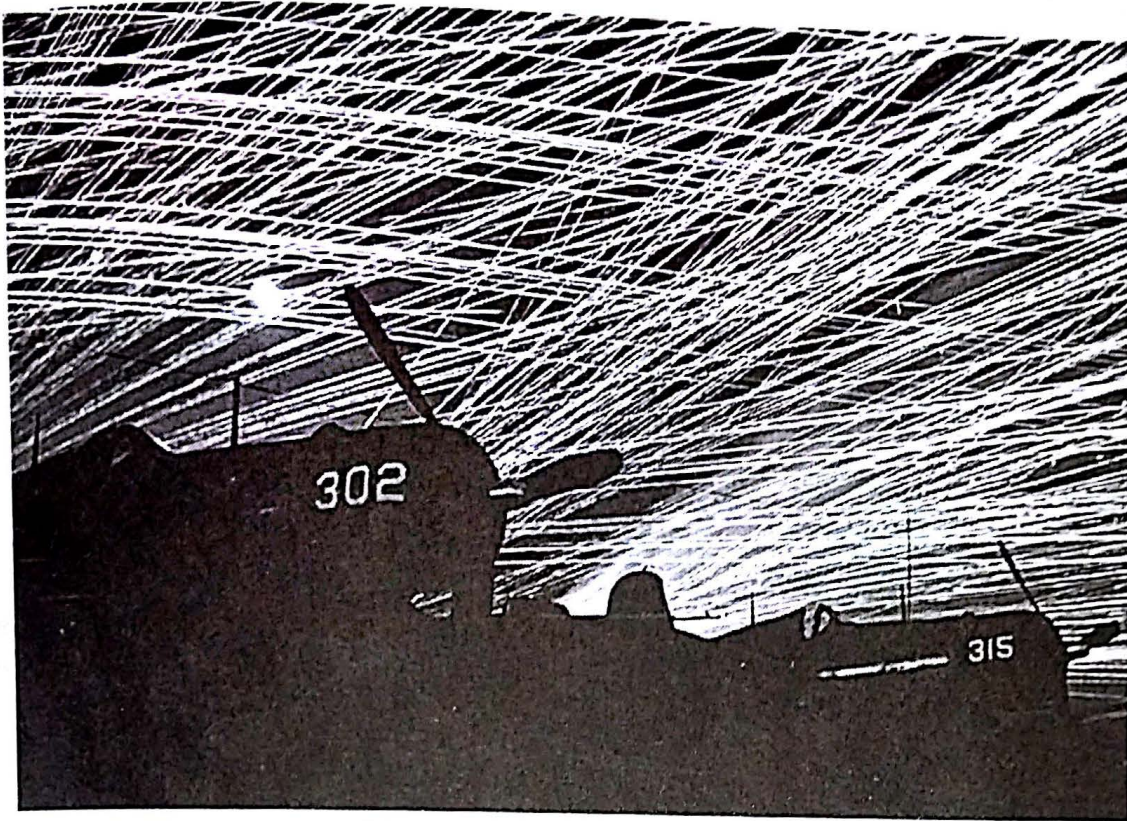


Figure 40: The Typhoon of Steel. Anti-aircraft tracer rounds lace the sky over Yontan Airfield, Okinawa. May 1945. (U.S. Marine Corps photo.)

When U.S. forces closed on Japan in 1945, they needed a secure base for the expected invasion. Once again, the unfortunate geography of the island made Okinawa a battle zone. The Americans thought Okinawa was the perfect place to stage an invasion of Japan. The Japanese thought so, too, and defended the island at all costs.

The Battle of Okinawa in April 1945 was incredibly destructive. The Japanese forces used Shuri Castle to anchor their defensive line, and fought so stubbornly that the Americans had to bring the battleship U.S.S. Mississippi close to shore to reduce the castle with her 14-inch guns.

The bombardment lasted for 10 days, and in the end, Sho Shin's ancient and beautiful castle was a pile of smoldering rubble. The Japanese commander had to evacuate his headquarters from the caves beneath the ruins.²⁶⁹ He made his last stand in the highlands to the south. He finally killed himself when he reached the ocean cliffs and could retreat no farther. Thousands of people, soldiers and civilians alike, threw themselves off those cliffs.

The Japanese forces made no provision for the evacuation or safety

²⁶⁹ Kerr, 2000, p. 470.

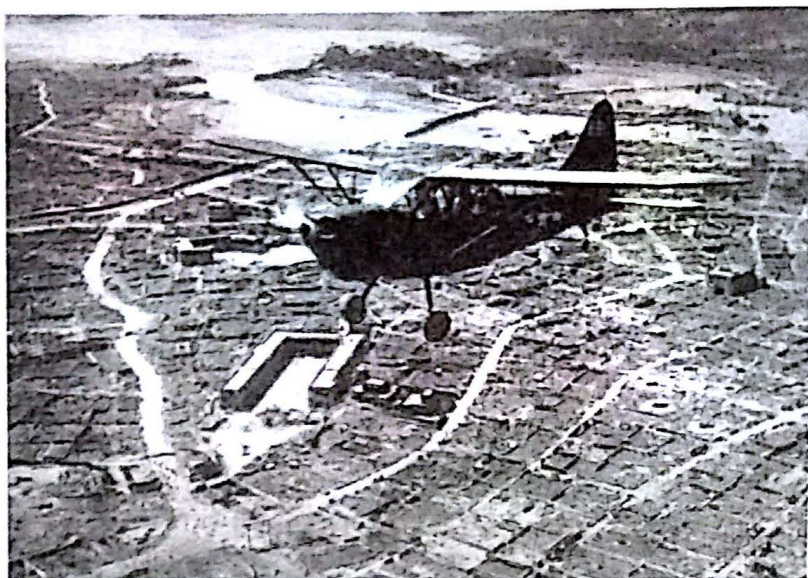


Figure 41: Naha after the Typhoon of Steel. The city of Naha burned to the ground. Any written records of karate history that might have existed were lost in the fire. (U.S. Marine Corps photo.)



Figure 42: Shuri Castle, after the Typhoon of Steel. Nothing was left but churned earth. Even the streets were gone. Shuri was destroyed more completely than Hiroshima or Nagasaki. (U.S. Marine Corps photo.)

of the Okinawan people, who were caught between two implacable war machines and received no mercy. Every building between Shuri Castle and the Naha coastline was destroyed by bombardment or fire.

Shuri, the second town of Okinawa, lay in utter ruin. There was no other city, town, or village in the Ryukyus that had been destroyed so completely [...] It was estimated that about 200,000 rounds of artillery and naval gunfire had struck Shuri. Numerous air strikes had dropped 1,000-pound bombs on it. Mortar shells by the thousands had arched their way into the town area. Only two structures... had enough of their walls standing to form silhouettes on the skyline. The rest was flattened rubble. The narrow paved and dirt streets, churned by high explosives and pitted with shell craters, were impassable to any vehicle. The stone walls of the numerous little terraces were battered down. The rubble and broken red tile of the houses lay in heaps. The frame portion of buildings had been reduced to kindling wood. Tattered bits of Japanese military clothing, gas masks, and tropical helmets—the most frequently seen items—and the dark-colored Okinawan civilian dress lay about in wild confusion. Over all this crater-of-the-moon landscape hung the unforgettable stench of rotting human flesh.²⁷⁰



Figure 43: Suicide cliffs, nine years later.²⁷¹ A close examination shows spiral-fracture fragments from shattered legs, a common result of jumping from a cliff.

²⁷⁰ Appleman, Roy, et al., *United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific, Okinawa: The Last Battle*, Center Of Military History, United States Army, Washington, D. C., 2000. Chapter 15: The Fall of Shuri, p. 401-402.

²⁷¹ Courtesy of Dom Grisanzio, who took this photo in 1954.



Figure 44: Shuri Castle falls. The U.S. Marines returned to Shuri Castle on May 29, 1945, 92 years after Perry's visit. This time they had to fight their way in against 100,000 Japanese soldiers. This is Lieutenant Colonel R.P. Ross, Jr., planting the American flag on the ruins of the castle.²⁷²

The homes of the great masters burned, along with all their possessions. Official and personal documents, letters, journals and diaries were forever lost. Nearly all the local residents, including the relatives, friends and students of the great masters, were killed in the conflict. It is impossible to know how many Okinawan civilians died in the battle and its aftermath, but local estimates put the number around 200,000.²⁷³ This was only 65 years ago! There are many people still living who remember the Typhoon of Steel.

The destruction of Okinawa is the reason there is so little known about the history of karate. The Shuri masters were not paranoid and secretive. The witnesses, the records, the buildings—in fact the very streets where the karate masters walked—were obliterated in the spring of 1945. Nothing was left. The history of karate was erased.

²⁷² This public-domain image is from the National Park Service Archives via the Wikimedia Commons.

²⁷³ Kerr, 2000, p. 472. McCarthy, 1999b, p. 92, says 200,000 civilian deaths.

4.6 Conclusion

The Shuri masters kept the new art, linear karate, out of sight of the Japanese overlords by practicing in secret. They had to keep it secret because martial arts were forbidden by the Satsuma edicts. They did not keep the art secret from one another, however. They were all on the same team, and the team was in danger.

Any actual documentation that might have existed about the beginnings of Shuri-te was shredded by the Typhoon of Steel. We are left with some broad historical realities, a few facts, some colorful stories and the art itself.

Chapter 5



Defending Shuri Castle

In the previous chapters, we have examined Okinawan history and the role of the Shuri masters in protecting their unarmed king. The Shuri Crucible was the political trap they were in, caught between implacable Satsuma overlords on the one hand and armed Western visitors on the other.

In this chapter, we will ask how a man like Bushi Matsumura would have organized the defense of the Sho family using, literally, his own bare hands.

We have no direct evidence of Matsumura's battle plan because of his own gift for secrecy and the damage done by the Typhoon of Steel. We are forced to analyze the problem as he did. What is the standard close-protection strategy to apply in this situation? How did the Shuri Crucible force Matsumura to modify the standard solution?

The shotokan kata teach combative techniques, but they don't stop there. They also contain tactics, and a commander's tactics are shaped by the ground he defends. We need to get our feet on the ground at Shuri Castle to see the castle from Matsumura's point of view. Shuri must come to life in our imaginations.

As we study Matsumura's tactics, we draw ever closer to the applications he drilled with Azato and Itosu in the Shuri Crucible.

5.1 Enemies

As the defenders of the royal family, Matsumura would have prepared to fight three types of state enemies:

- Satsuma samurai, with whom they were in daily contact.
- Samurai soldiers, who could be summoned from their barracks in Naha.
- "Modern" soldiers, equipped like Perry's marines.

Any of these enemies might suddenly try to arrest or kill the Sho family. The bodyguards had to be ready for them.

In addition to these "enemies of state," the Shuri bodyguards had police duties. They had frequent encounters with:

- Local criminals, who had to be tracked down and arrested.
- Visiting sailors, who had to be escorted back to their ships.
- Local rivals, who challenged them on the streets of Naha.

For our immediate purposes, it is the “enemies of state” who are interesting. We’ll leave the thieves, drunks and ambitious rivals for later.

5.2 Threat Analysis

Matsumura must have done what every close-protection officer does. He would have assessed the various threats to his protectees (the royal family and their aides). Then he would have provided defenses against each of these threats. He was a man who attacked problems, and this was the central problem of his life.

There are three classic threats to the life of a monarch. The first is assassination by a trusted member of the king’s own family. The second is assassination by an outsider, such as a *ninja*, who must penetrate the fortress by stealth. The third threat is conquest by a warlike neighbor who attacks the castle and captures the king. Let’s look at each threat to see how Matsumura might have planned his defense.

5.2.1 Assassination

The Sho kings were not in an enviable position. They had been figure-heads in their own country for most of the history of the Second Sho Dynasty. They lived at the sufferance of their strict Satsuma masters, and were often deposed and carried off to Tokyo when their masters were displeased. It’s hard to imagine an ambitious relative plotting to kill the king and seize the throne under these circumstances. Only a fool would envy a Sho king. The throne of Okinawa was the family curse.

Would anyone have tried to assassinate Sho Tai by stealth? Okinawa had been united under one government for almost 300 years. There were no neighboring warlords and no local revolutionary movement. Sho Tai was not a despotic king, even though his subjects were poor and often hungry. He wasn’t a key player in any strategic intrigues. He had no real power. The Chinese and Japanese governments both wanted him left in place. When he was eventually deposed by the Japanese, they simply sent him a letter telling him to pack a bag and report to his new home in Tokyo. When he didn’t respond to the letter, Tokyo sent a boatload of soldiers to read it to him.²⁷⁴ There was never any need for stealthy assassins in black pajamas to creep into the palace.

²⁷⁴ Kerr, 2000, p. 379-383.

Even so, there was one serious threat to the king's life. There must have been very difficult meetings with the Satsuma overlords, and the threat of sudden death was the backbone of samurai power. Matsumura must have prepared for a fight to the death against the Satsuma overlords and their garrison of soldiers.

As it happens, we know a little about Matsumura's strategy for this lethal confrontation. You may recall that Matsumura once took a leave of absence to study at the jigen ryu school in Kagoshima. This was the same samurai-training school the Satsuma overlords had attended as teenagers. Matsumura returned a few months later with a menkyo kaiden (a certificate of absolute mastery) from this famous sword school.²⁷⁵

From that moment on, the Satsuma overlords were on notice: Matsumura was a better swordsman than they were. He entered the meetings unarmed, but they knew how easily he could snatch one of their swords from its sheath. They also knew what would happen to them if he did. The threat of sudden death can cut both ways.

5.2.2 Conquest

Was Sho Tai in any danger of military conquest? You would not think so until you look at the context of the times. Matsumura served at Shuri Castle from the mid-1820s until 1879. Britain and China went to war in 1839-42 over China's refusal to open its ports to British trade. Matsumura watched from the ramparts of Shuri Castle as the unthinkable happened: China lost. Five ports were opened to British commerce, and China was forced to give Britain the island of Hong Kong. Matsumura received veiled threats from English and French naval captains that Shuri could easily be brought to heel in the same manner.²⁷⁶ Military invasion was a real possibility. After all, how many troops does it take to subjugate a disarmed nation?

Then, the United States sent Matthew Perry and his Marines to the very doors of Sho Tai's throne room in 1853. The Okinawans clearly expected Perry to seize the castle and declare himself military governor of Okinawa. At a later date, Perry grew weary of Okinawan diplomatic delays and bluntly threatened to seize Shuri Castle if he didn't get better

²⁷⁵ McCarthy, 1995, p. 51.

²⁷⁶ Kerr, 2000, p. 249.

cooperation. The Okinawans decided to cooperate.²⁷⁷

Matsumura was intelligent and thorough, and would have made a plan for defending his protectees in the event of a frontal assault on the castle. He had little hope of defending the battlements with his bare hands. If attacked, the castle would certainly fall, so the plan must have involved removing or concealing the protectees instead of defending the walls. It is significant that Perry found the castle deserted on the day he came to visit. He also never saw the child king, nor the real regent and only saw one woman the entire time he was on the island. (Perry said she was exceedingly ugly.) Sometimes, the things the visitor didn't see tell us more than the things he did see.²⁷⁸

5.2.3 Battery and Abduction

Finally, we come to the key problem Matsumura repeatedly faced: The Shuri officials often confronted angry and dangerous barbarians. The danger was not assassination but battery or abduction during an angry confrontation.

When negotiations fail for no good reason, one feels a temptation to seize the uncooperative negotiators and beat some sense into them. If you throw the first negotiator in jail, the next negotiator is likely to be more respectful and cooperative. For instance, Commodore Perry might well have thrown Regent Sho Taimu in the brig and tried his luck with the next regent. What could the Okinawans do about it, anyway? Fight back? Without any army or navy? Without so much as a police constable that anyone could see? Without any weapons more formidable than a stick? Against U.S. Marines and a flotilla of modern steam warships! Perry didn't have any doubts about who was actually in charge. *He* was.

Turn back to Figure 27, which shows Perry's naval officers confronting 20 unarmed ministers in the Shuri Castle reception hall. Had Perry given the word, 50 men would have pounced on the Okinawans, bound them hand and foot and carried them away as prisoners. We can be confident that Perry would never have tortured or murdered these ministers as a Japanese daimyo would have done, but he might have put them in irons until they decided to cooperate. Perry had very broad discretionary

²⁷⁷ Kerr, 2000, p. 325.

²⁷⁸ Preble, 1962, p. 93, Perry reports encountering women and children during his solitary walks around the island, but they were always fleeing in alarm.

powers, and there was no one within 8,000 miles who could countermand his orders.

Desperately outnumbered and unarmed, what would Matsumura have done if Perry had tried to arrest Sho Taimu? It's difficult to imagine him standing aside without a fight. He would have anticipated this situation, planned for it and trained to meet it. Matsumura was a genius. He would have had a plan.

Our challenge is to reimagine this plan. Understanding the plan and the tactics helps us understand Matsumura's choice of weapons. We have inherited the weapons through Itosu and Funakoshi, but somehow the user's manual got lost. It's time to recreate it.

5.3 Military Resources

What do we have to work with? A military officer doesn't make a plan out of thin air. A plan is shaped by knowledge of the enemy and is assembled out of men, supplies and equipment.

What were Matsumura's resources? What did he have up his sleeve?

5.3.1 Intelligence

The first layer of defense is pure intelligence. Both Matsumura and Azato were in the habit of repeating Sun Tzu's advice about intelligence: "The secret of victory is to know both yourself and your enemy." In pursuit of this goal, Azato kept a private diary of the skills and weaknesses of all martial artists in the Shuri/Naha area.²⁷⁹ He knew exactly how he would fight each one of them if they challenged him in the street.

Knowing this principle, Matsumura would certainly have set up surveillance on Perry and his men. Perry's narrative makes frequent mention of the quiet Okinawan officials who followed the Americans everywhere they went on the island. Everything the Americans did was observed and reported in detail. One witness wrote:

"Nothing could have exceeded the vigilance with which they watched us. We might separate into as many divisions as there were men, and yet each of us would still retain his native convoy. We could

²⁷⁹ Funakoshi, 1975, p. 15.

neither tire them down nor run away from them. When, by chance, we suddenly changed our course, we still found them before us."²⁸⁰

The Americans at first found this amusing, but were later astonished to discover that some of their quaint guardians could understand English.²⁸¹ Matsumura enjoyed a great deal of intelligence on both the actions and conversations of these visiting barbarians.

Matsumura would also have taken pains to make himself invisible to his enemy. Several times Perry's men were face-to-face with palace security agents but didn't realize that they were in the presence of trained warriors. How did Matsumura accomplish that? How did he make his men so invisible to Perry that the admiral barely mentioned them in his reports?

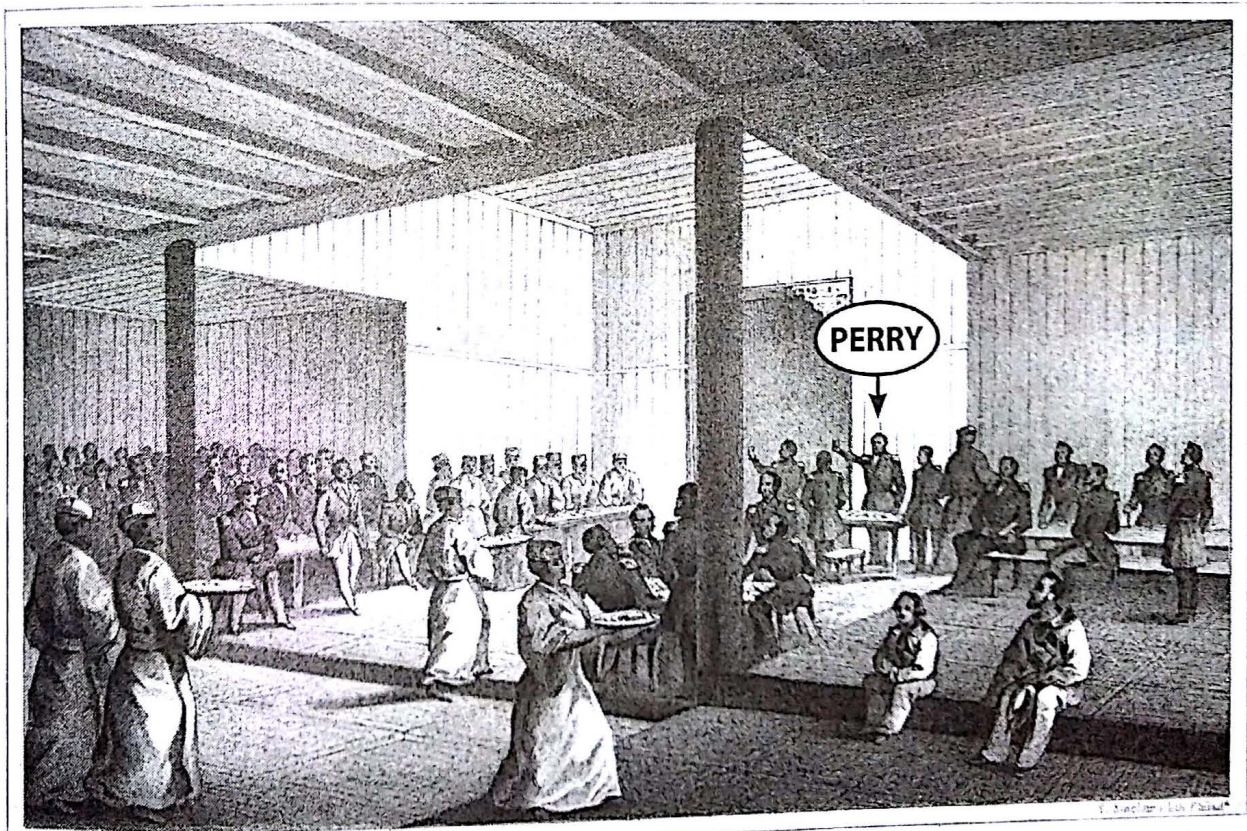


Figure 45: Keimochi bodyguards serving food at the regent's lunch. Perry is the figure making a toast on the right. Sho Taimu and the ministers are seated in the center of the picture. Note that one of the keimochi "stewards" stands almost unnoticed in the shadow five feet to Perry's left.²⁸² Incidentally, there are no women in this picture. The women were hiding.

²⁸⁰ Walworth, 1946, p. 56.

²⁸¹ Perry, 2000, p. 159.

²⁸² Perry, 2000, p. 191.

The solution was laughably simple. He had the warriors serve tea. He turned the warriors into waiters.

Remember that Matsumura was a master of psychology and disguise. Keimochi men of that time observed certain taboos, one of which was that men don't belong in the kitchen. (Apparently, Funakoshi himself never entered his family's kitchen.²⁸³) The Perry narrative contains a picture of keimochi knights in hachimaki hats humbly serving trays of food to American naval officers, just like the naval stewards Matsumura observed on Perry's flagship. American naval officers don't look twice at a steward unless he spills the coffee. Matsumura may have come within inches of Commodore Perry without alerting him to his danger. The bushi would have enjoyed that. (Turn back to Figure 30, too. There are seven keimochi knights within striking distance of the admiral, who is completely unaware of them.)

Intelligence is best when it is timely. In this regard, you can stand on the battlements of Shuri Castle and look directly into Naha harbor only three miles away. Matsumura would have created a forward observation post at the shoreline, equipped with a nautical telescope to monitor the American warships. When Perry hoisted the first cannon off the deck of the U.S.S. *Susquehanna* for the march on Shuri Castle, we can be confident that Matsumura knew about it within minutes.

5.3.2 Bushi Bureaucrats

The clerks and ministers who ran the Okinawan government were all recruited from the families of the keimochi class. They had the warrior heritage and a liege obligation to defend the Sho family. Many of them were proud of their family ties to the dynasty. The warrior heritage was part of their manhood and identity. These men formed an extensive pool of ever-present keimochi soldiers if Matsumura needed help in a crisis. They were unarmed, but they were on-site and available during daylight hours. They weren't far away at night, either, since they all lived within walking distance of the castle.

The keimochi bureaucrats were scattered in offices all over the grounds of Shuri Castle and certainly kept an eye on strangers. To draw on this

²⁸³ Funakoshi, 1975, p. x.

invisible fighting force, all Matsumura needed was an alarm of some kind, like a fire bell. Every castle in the world has a fire bell.²⁸⁴

5.3.3 Special Agents

I think it is reasonable to conclude that Matsumura recruited and trained a team of formidable martial artists to be the “close protection” team around the king. There is no question that Itosu was part of this team. Matsumura and Itosu worked on opposite sides of the throne for 30 years. Azato was also part of this inner circle and was frequently in the throne room conversing with the king. Chofu Kyan worked in the same room as the chief of staff. Seisho Arakaki was their Japanese interpreter. Peichin Kiyuna was one of Matsumura’s guards inside the castle. Sanda Kinjo was Matsumura’s man in charge of the Shuri police. Kokan Oyadomari and Kosaku Matsumora were part of this group. After the Shuri government was dissolved in 1879, all of these men became legendary karate teachers. They had the same alma mater: the Shuri Crucible.

We remember these men because they were teachers. There could have been many others who trained but did not teach. For example, at the official coronation of Sho Tai in 1866, there were 10 martial arts demonstrations given by peichin knights whose names are not immediately recognizable in the lore of karate.²⁸⁵

We can assume that many of the people in daily contact with the king were handpicked by Matsumura for their fighting ability. The fact that they were highly educated in Confucian classics, and had good penmanship, helped to camouflage them to visitors. “There goes Itosusan. He’s a clerk who writes letters for the king.” (And crushes bamboo stalks with his bare hands.)

Note that modern police departments need a staff of at least 12 officers to provide 24-hour response in a small town. Matsumura probably discovered the same geometry. I believe there must have been at least a dozen trained close-protection agents. When looking at Figure 27, we see 55 Americans confronting about 20 Okinawan men in an otherwise

²⁸⁴ Appleman, 2000. In fact, a giant bronze bell was one of the only castle artifacts to survive the bombardment of World War II.

²⁸⁵ Cook, p. 10-11. Pechin Chiku Maeda, Pechin Tsuji Aragaki, Pechin Chikudan Tomura, among others.

deserted castle. This is a portrait of Shuri's department heads backed up by Matsumura's unsmiling security force. Matsumura and Itosu must be two of the figures in this picture.

5.3.4 Female Servants

The royal residence behind the Seiden was a highly restricted space, similar to a *harem* in the Middle East. Access was restricted to the royal family members and the all-female staff. This creates an inner defense zone that no assassin can penetrate without detection. (The second floor of the White House, where the president lives with his family, is a similar zone.) This females-only tradition created an area that even the Satsuma overlords could not enter and inspect—a rather clever move on the part of the Okinawans.

The females-only space creates an interesting problem, too. Matsumura could not enter the king's residence except in a life-and-death emergency. As far as we know, Matsumura, Azato, Itosu, Kyan and the other Matsumura agents were all men.

How, then, could he send a bodyguard into the royal household in an emergency? There was only one solution. We can imagine Matsumura looking around for a truly formidable female warrior. Where would he find such an Amazon?

The story of Matsumura's marriage to Tsuru Yonamine suddenly makes a new kind of sense. The legend that Matsumura mugged his own wife because he was jealous of her reputation doesn't ring true. If he tested Yonamine in such a dangerous way, then we can conclude he had a serious reason. There was something he had to know. Could she really defeat a trained attacker in an unfair fight in the dark? Yonamine passed the test beyond all expectations, proving herself a capable bodyguard.

Did Yonamine actually serve as a palace guard? There is one tantalizing story. John Sells reports that Matsumura once sent Yonamine to deal with a gang of drunken "hooligans" who had invaded the castle grounds.²⁸⁶

Matsumura could certainly have handled the situation himself. He could have ordered the Shuri constables into action. He could have

²⁸⁶ Sells, 2000, p. 33.

sent Itosu or Azato. Why did he interrupt Yonamine in the middle of her domestic routine? It seems likely that this disturbance was in the females-only section of the castle. He sent Yonamine because she was the only one he could send.

Kipling warned us that the female is the more deadly sex.²⁸⁷ Yonamine made no effort to subdue or evict the noisy drunks. She simply killed them and then strode back down the hill to finish her chores.

Perhaps this is the explanation of Matsumura's extraordinary taste in women.

5.3.5 Matsumura and Itosu

I always picture Matsumura and Itosu standing to the right and left sides of the king, exactly as we saw them in Figure 29.

There are faint indications that Itosu might have been left-handed. I can't prove it, but if true, it would make him the perfect agent for the left side of the throne. There are two versions of the *naihanchi kata* (*tekki shodan*), credited to Matsumura and to Itosu, respectively. Itosu's version opens by stepping to the right, as if stepping in front of the king from his left side. Matsumura's version of the *kata* opens by stepping to the left, as if protecting the king from his right side.²⁸⁸

This might have been the one situation where left-handedness would not have been a social handicap.²⁸⁹

5.3.6 Sho Tai Himself

Logically, there was only one trained warrior who was always near the king, every minute of every day without fail. This was the king himself.

This is why the king's personal bodyguard also had to be the king's personal karate teacher. Part of protecting the king was teaching him to protect himself. Sho Tai was one of his own bodyguards.

²⁸⁷ Kipling, Rudyard. "The Female of the Species," *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Inclusive Edition, 1885-1918*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919.

²⁸⁸ Shotokan practices Itosu's version; *isshinryu* does Matsumura's version.

²⁸⁹ Even in modern Japan, a left-handed child is forced to learn calligraphy with his right hand, according to our translator, Eri Takase.

5.4 Shuri Castle Architecture

Shuri Castle was Matsumura's home territory. Sometimes, you can see a commander's defensive plan simply by looking at his earthworks. What can we observe or deduce from Shuri Castle itself?

5.4.1 Concentric Architecture

How would Matsumura have protected his charges? We can start by asking how we perform that role today.

The U.S. Secret Service uses a system of concentric perimeters to provide security for the president. The outer ring is composed of police officers manning barricades, keeping the public at a safe distance. The second ring is police and Secret Service agents standing guard at doorways, in hallways and around the outside of the building. The third perimeter is the close-protection team immediately surrounding the president, whose unenviable job is to *stand up under fire* and form a living wall around the president.²⁹⁰

You can see the Shuri security perimeters just by looking at the map of the castle. Shuri Castle is a maze of concentric walls and gates. This concentric design is classic castle architecture designed to force an attacker to mount a series of battles in order to penetrate the central keep.

In peacetime, these concentric walls not only channeled traffic through checkpoints on the castle grounds, but they created zones where the rules of access could be clearly defined. Tradesmen were allowed to enter the outer bailey to make deliveries. From the outer bailey, visitors had to pass through four guarded gates before reaching the Houshinmon, which is a guardhouse on the west side of the central courtyard. To cross the courtyard and enter the Seiden, you would need a royal invitation and probably an escort. A person trying to sneak into the royal living quarters behind the Seiden was committing suicide.

In contrast to the multiple-gate path for entry, the evacuation path from the Seiden to the castle's back gate is straight and clear.

5.4.2 Escaping the Castle

We say that "discretion is the better part of valor," meaning it is sometimes better to avoid a fight than to stubbornly insist on losing it.

²⁹⁰ Petro, Joseph, *Standing Next to History*, St. Martin's Press, 2005, p. 18-19.

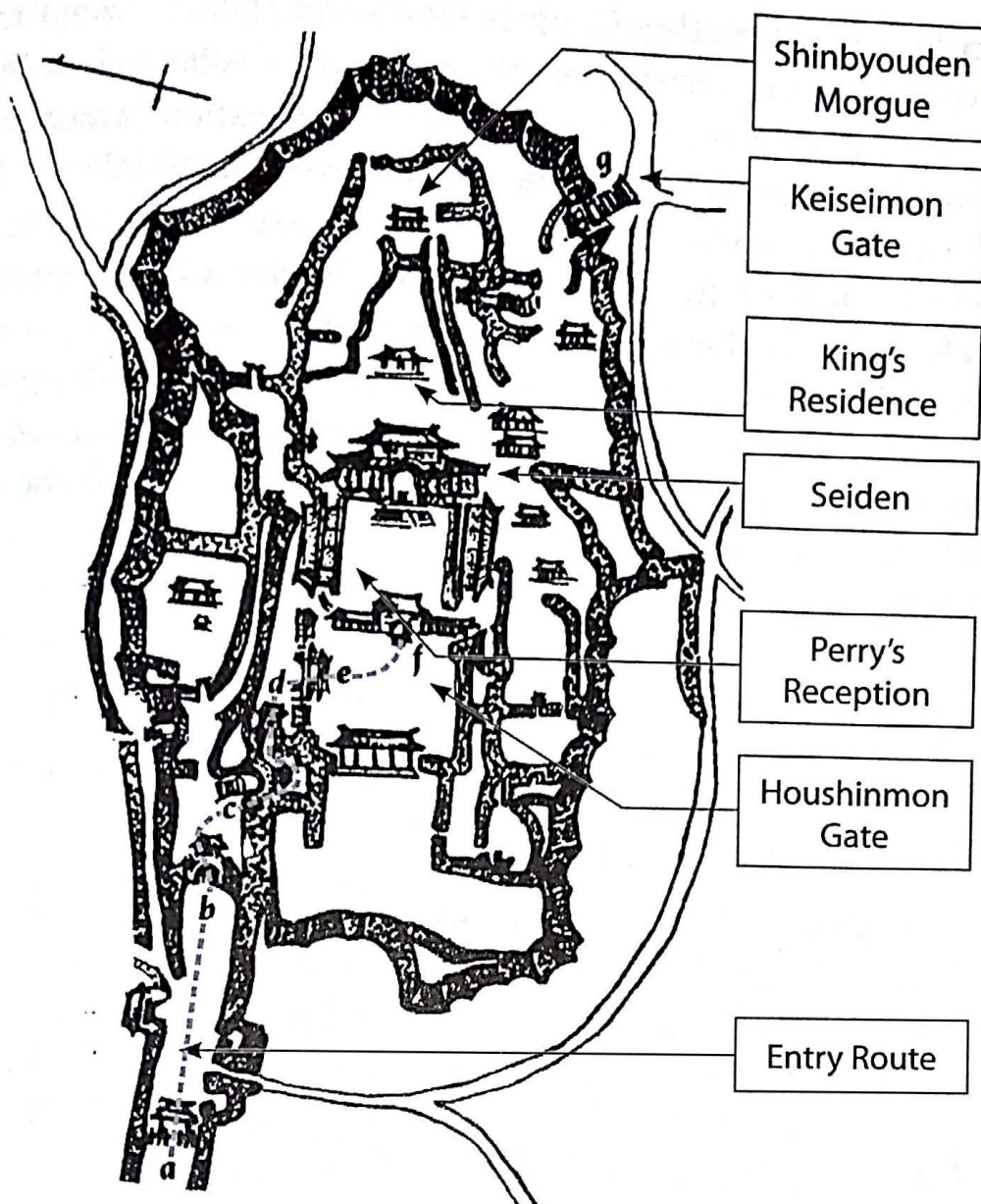


Figure 46: Concentric architecture of Shuri Castle. This is a map of Shuri Castle in the 1700s.²⁹¹ East is at the top. To reach the Seiden, a visitor had to pass through six gates (dotted paths, gates labeled “a” through “f”). The king’s private gate is “g.” Note that the Shinbyouden morgue is the best-protected site in the castle.

When the enemy has you outnumbered 10 to 1, it is probably better to avoid the fight. I’m sure you agree.

Every rabbit warren has a back door. Most castles do, too. It is no surprise that there is a back door to Shuri Castle, called the Keiseimon gate. It opens on the opposite side of the ridge from the front entrance. This little gate is conspicuously near the king’s bedroom, and was used only by the royal family.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Based on Kerr, 2000, p. 113.

²⁹² Web site of “Shurijo Castle Park” [sic], http://web.archive.org/web/20031211160622/www.shurijo-park.go.jp/syuri_e/frame3.html

When danger appeared suddenly in the forecourt, Matsumura's agents needed only a few minutes to rush the royals out the back door into the countryside where they could vanish into the population. American and European adversaries could not have recognized the child king or his mother in a crowd of Shuri residents. In fact, Matsumura could have set them in plain sight on the main road to Shuri with a basket of fruit to sell, and Perry would have marched right past them.

Notice that the Okinawans tried to turn Perry away at the gate but finally let him in after a short delay. The Americans were puzzled that the castle seemed deserted. I suspect that Matsumura used those few minutes to send noncombatants down the back stairs. He wasn't ready to surrender the castle outright, but he "cleared for action" in case of a fight. This was a concept his American naval guests would have understood all too well if they had not been so completely secure in their own superiority.

5.4.3 *Secret Passage*

A back-door escape strategy works against an opponent like Perry, but it would not have succeeded against more subtle enemies from Satsuma. What if someone had attacked the castle who had reconnoitered first? They would have blocked all the gates, bottling up the royals before they could escape. What then?

There is, again, a classic medieval solution to this problem. The solution is an underground passage reached through a hidden door. The gallery emerges in the basement of an outbuilding, often a tomb, far enough away to outflank the attackers. Such structures were common in England during the Middle Ages.²⁹³

It turns out that southern Okinawa is riddled with natural limestone caves, such as the five-kilometer Gyokusendo Cave that is part of a modern theme park near Naha.²⁹⁴ It would be unthinkable that the Sho kings, after four centuries of residence, didn't have access to either natural or man-made tunnels beneath the castle. This was their hidden escape route.

²⁹³ Fea, Allan, *Secret Chambers and Hiding Places*, BiblioBazaar, 2006.

²⁹⁴ Okinawa World theme park. <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e7106.html>

During the Battle of Okinawa, the Japanese commander set up his headquarters in a system of tunnels bored through the limestone under the castle. The Shuri Castle tunnels housed 1,000 soldiers and had five entrances. One entrance was a tunnel leading up into the castle grounds.²⁹⁵

If the Sho kings created an underground hiding place or escape route for the royal family, its existence would have been a jealously guarded secret. Both ends of the escape route would have been concealed in locations with very limited access to prevent discovery. What location might that have been?

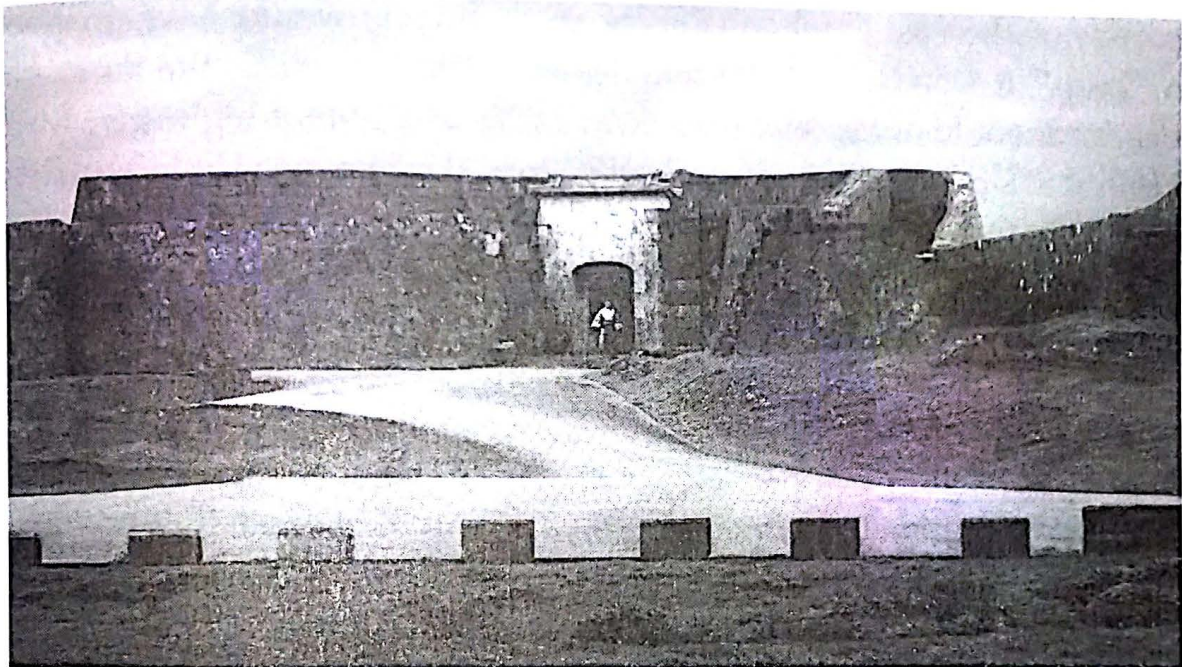


Figure 47: Shinbyouden. According to tradition, this massive fort behind the king's residence in Shuri Castle was a morgue where the bodies of dead kings were left to decompose. *Keimochi* figure added for scale. (Artwork courtesy of Philip Sneyd.)²⁹⁶

The more I studied Shuri Castle, the more my attention was drawn to the Shinbyouden, which was a peculiar little area in the east end of the castle near the king's living quarters. The Shinbyouden was allegedly

²⁹⁵ Hubner, Thomas, *Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945*, Leavenworth Papers #18, Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1990.

²⁹⁶ Philip Sneyd is a *kyokushin* black belt and graphic artist living in Tokyo who visited Shuri and sent me many photos. He removed 11 cars and a house trailer from the foreground of this picture! Although edited, the picture accurately portrays the massive defenses the keimochi built around the "morgue."

a “morgue.” It was a place for the flesh of dead kings to decompose so that their bones could be extracted for “proper” interment elsewhere.

Would you build an open-air morgue outside your bedroom window? Doesn't that sound odd to you? Perhaps we have just encountered another instance of *tatema*.

Okinawan nobility had a quaint custom in which they personally cared for the bones of their ancestors by taking them out and washing them three years and again seven years after interment.²⁹⁷ This was the sacred duty of the head of the household, so it makes perfect sense that only the king could enter the royal morgue.

The Shinbyouden morgue was located in absolutely the most secure corner of the castle, where European architects would have erected a “keep.” It was behind the females-only section where the Satsuma overlords could not snoop. There was a massive, 10-foot-high stone wall around it. During certain periods of history, the gate to the Shinbouyden was not only locked but carefully guarded. In terms of layered security, this little “morgue” was buttoned up like a bank vault. It was more carefully protected than the king himself.

Why all that security? What was really in there? Even Japanese daimyos with their subtle intrigues wouldn't try to steal a decomposing body!

One interesting idea is that the Shinbyouden contained the secret door to the caves under the castle. If so, then we should view it as a possible entrance to the castle, too. Enemies might sneak in there. No wonder they walled it off and put guards around it!

The Typhoon of Steel obliterated the historical castle, sealing off any secret passages that might have existed. If the Sho Dynasty had a deadly secret, however, this was the place they hid it. The location of the Shinbyouden, right behind the king's living quarters, is perfect for either an escape route or a secret vault.

5.4.4 Hidden Armory

There is one last layer to this onion. Imagine that the barbarians have breached the castle gates and escape is impossible. The escape paths and passages are blocked. The slaving hordes have set fire to the buildings around the great square and are cutting the throats of everyone they can

²⁹⁷ Nagamine, 2000, p. 10.

catch. Your back is literally against the very last wall. The royals will be killed within minutes unless you can turn the tide of the battle. You look down at that little iron fan in your hand ...

Wouldn't it be better if you had a nice katana instead?

Matsumura and Azato, as we know, were expert swordsmen. Okinawans were allowed to study swordsmanship when they were in foreign countries. They just couldn't own a sword at home. Azato was quite confident that he could win a sword duel with any Japanese warrior on the island.²⁹⁸ Matsumura, of course, was a bona fide katana master.

Using swords would be a last-stand strategy for Matsumura. It would be suicidal even if successful because it would call down the wrath of Satsuma on the survivors. At the time of Perry's visit, Okinawa had been officially swordless for 240 years, under penalty of death.

And yet, can we really believe that there was no secret cache of swords in Shuri Castle? Wouldn't the ancient Sho kings have kept something hidden when they surrendered their weapons to Satsuma? Knowing human nature, I feel certain that the Second Sho Dynasty kept a hidden cache of swords somewhere. If they didn't, Matsumura would have arranged it himself.

If there was a secret cache of swords, I would look again in that little morgue behind the king's residence. The cache would have been the Sho family's most deadly secret. They would have guarded it with their lives and kept it in close reach.

How many swords might they have hidden? How many swords could one pack into a large stone coffin? It would be easy to conceal 200 swords in a small space—enough blades to equip quite a few keimochi bureaucrats in an emergency.

5.5 Tactics

In karate we use our strength, greatly augmented by the biomechanical advantages of our training. In jujutsu, we use the enemy's strength, greatly assisted by his struggles to resist. Sometimes we push. Sometimes we pull. Often we do both at once.

When someone attacks our protectee, is it better to fight or to run? The best answer is to do both.

²⁹⁸ Funakoshi, 1988, p. 31.

5.5.1 Close Protection: The Extraction Team

One threat scenario is that violence erupts against the king, or the ministers, in a meeting inside the Seiden. The ground floor of the Seiden was largely devoted to an audience chamber where the king and the department heads would meet "the public." This would include the more important visiting Westerners.

Suppose tempers were to flare, and it became necessary to get the king out of the room? What would Matsumura have done?

Imagine the president of the United States in a similar situation. Suddenly somebody throws a brick, or a shot rings out, and the U.S. Secret Service leaps into action.

What does the Secret Service do in this situation? Some of the agents, the close-protection team, grab the president and hustle him out of the room through the nearest door. They stay with him, shielding him with their bodies until he is out of danger. They are the "extraction" team.

5.5.2 Counter Assault: The Reaction Team

But that's not the whole story. It isn't enough to get the protectee under cover. Somebody has to neutralize the threat. In the U.S. Secret Service, this role is played by the Counter Assault Team who are "a group of men so heavily armed with automatic weapons and other arms that they could just about take over a small country."²⁹⁹

The CAT is a pocket SWAT team that rides in the car behind the presidential limosine. Their job is to prevent the attackers from pursuing the fleeing president. It is difficult to press your advantage when five commandos are returning fire right in your face. They are the "reaction" team.

These extraction/reaction tactics are based on centuries of combat experience. An assassination, or abduction, is simply an ambush. The only viable response to an ambush is an aggressive counterattack. Otherwise, all you can do is scramble for cover in exactly the place where the enemy wants you to go. That is usually a very bad idea.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ Petro, 2005, p. 19.

³⁰⁰ U.S. Army Field Manual 7-8, *Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, Department of the Army, 1992.

For example, if a fight had broken out during Perry's visit to Shuri Castle, the extraction team would have had about 30 seconds to get the regent under cover before the surprised U.S. Marines had time to load their Springfield rifle-muskets and fire.³⁰¹ The mission of the reaction team, therefore, was to disrupt the attackers for 30 seconds and then run for cover.

5.5.3 Tactical Reserve

Matsumura's battle plan must have had a tactical reserve force. No military officer would overlook this element. Where was Matsumura's reserve force, and how would he have employed it?

Shuri Castle is an open cluster of buildings among courtyards, gardens and wide walkways. After extracting their protectees, Matsumura's agents would have had to flee in the open, running to more defensible positions within or behind the Seiden. They could easily have been pursued by Perry's men.

Matsumura must have imagined this same scene. His goal may have been to run for the Keiseimon gate behind the Seiden, and escape into the countryside. Alternately, he might have planned to run to the Shinbyouden morgue or wherever the entrance to the underground passage was concealed. Either way, he would have laid an ambush for the pursuers at the southeast corner of the Seiden to block pursuit. This is where the keimochi bureaucrats would have hidden with their rusty swords.

Imagine the surprise on the faces of the Americans as they round the corner of the Seiden and skid to a stop in confusion. Two hundred antique blades flash in the sun. The heavy rifles were difficult to wield at such close range. This was one of the lessons of Saigo Takamori's last stand on Mount Shiroyama. When the Japanese Imperial Army riflemen tried to fight the samurai at hand-to-hand distance, Saigo's swordsmen cut them to shreds.³⁰² A katana is a fearsome close-quarters weapon. (See Figure 48.)

³⁰¹ The standard wisdom says a well-drilled musket squad can fire three shots per minute. The first shot, however, takes longer. We have to assume that Matsumura had about 30 seconds before the first shots were fired. We know for a fact that Perry's Marines were issued cartridges (13 for each soldier), but even the most hostile witnesses didn't mention any order to preload the rifles.

³⁰² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Shiroyama



Figure 48: Katana attack. The body of Lt. J.J.H. Camus, murdered in Yokohama by an unknown samurai in 1863.³⁰³ Camus's right arm was found dangling from his horse's bridle. He had taken two horizontal cuts that carved a wedge from his face and another cut to the neck that almost decapitated him. The wide black stripe from his neck to his elbow is a gaping wound that opened his chest cavity to the heart and nearly severed his left shoulder. (Photo courtesy of the Old Japan Picture Library.)

5.6 Tactical Themes in the Kata

No one would suggest that any hard-style kata is a literal battle plan for a real fight. Itosu's kata are too symmetrical and artistic to be taken literally. Even so, you can see the shadow of the Shuri battle plan in Itosu's H-shaped kata. Itosu's organized mind forced a certain imprint on the kata, presenting the Shuri battle plan in a series of distorted images, like snapshots that are slightly out of focus.

Remember that Itosu was 23 years old when he confronted Perry and all those Marines. He thought about that experience for 50 years before releasing the heian kata. We should not be surprised that Perry's visit had an impact on Itosu's kata.

Our shotokan kata begin with the karateka stepping warily up to a mark on the floor, as if stepping through a door into a hostile arena. (Where are we? Where is this door?) There is a feeling that there are many enemies in front of the fighter, but few behind him. (Why would that be?) He seems to be facing a hostile gang or mob. (Who are these people? Why are they angry?)

³⁰³ Bennett, 1996, p. 123 and 142.

There is a tradition in karate that the kata begin with defensive moves, symbolizing that karate is nonaggressive. The karateka stands still with hands extended or clasped in front of his body, gathering his resolve. Then, he launches a series of moves against nearby opponents to the left, right, back and front. These opening moves look like blocks to beginners, but advanced students can see very effective jujutsu wrist-release and escape techniques here.

It looks as if the karateka has been grabbed and held by the mob. (Why would they restrain him instead of beat him?) He spends several seconds breaking these holds and clearing some space to move in.

Then, a very odd thing happens. If karate is truly nonaggressive, the kata might start at the front of the room and work backward in a series of morally correct evasions and counters. This isn't what we see.

Instead of defending or escaping, the hero of our kata *attacks the crowd*. (Why would he do that?) He plunges headlong into the gang of enemies, applying crippling punches and joint breaks in all directions for about 15 seconds.

In the first half of the kata, these techniques are relatively conservative and offer few openings to opponents. Most of the time, the karateka keeps his feet on the ground and fights with his hands. The karateka darts rapidly from one target to another in an apparently pointless campaign to stun multiple opponents rapidly. It is as if he is trying to panic the crowd. (Why panic the crowd?)

About halfway through the kata, the performer suddenly shouts. We all know that this is the *kiai* that helps focus a finishing blow. There is no mystery about why he shouts. The mystery is, why doesn't he shout sooner? Why doesn't he shout on every move? Why use focused blows on multiple parties for 15 seconds and *then* shout? If this happened in real life, we might assume that the shout was a signal. The first phase of the fight is over. Responding to this signal, the karateka suddenly turns and fights his way out of the crowd again.

To me, the second half of Itosu's kata seems much more deadly than the first half. During this exit phase, the karateka uses his most powerful weapons to clear a path back to the door. He stomps legs and feet. He sweeps, leaps, ducks and kicks. He throws opponents into the crowd—always in the direction of his goal—as he fights his way home. He snatches weapons from his enemies and strikes them down. He takes

desperate chances, as if the exit door is about to close. There is another shout as he applies a finishing blow to the last enemy who blocks his way. Is it another signal?

The kata ends with the karateka turning to face the bruised and battered mob as he brushes off the last attackers. At this point, there is a feeling that the enemies are all in front of him again and none are behind. He steps backwards, away from the mob, as if backing warily through a door, and the kata comes to a close.

I'm sure you recognize this pattern. It is visible in all of the beginning and intermediate shotokan kata: the taikyoku kata, the heians, bassai dai, empi, kanku dai and the temple kata (jion, jiin and jitte). Most of Itosu's kata last about 45 seconds when performed aesthetically. At combat speed, however, they can be completed in about 30 seconds.

Tekki shodan is the exception to this pattern. The tekki artist seems to step through the door and face that same mob, but he doesn't plunge into it. Why would it be important to keep the wall behind you when performing tekki? At this point, it seems the answer should be clear: The tekki performer is shielding the protectee with his body. Tekki is the kata for the extraction team.

The basic kata of shotokan, hammered into the Shuri-te mold by Itosu, are quite consistent with the tactical goals of the Shuri battle plan. It is as if Itosu had a bigger picture in mind when he crafted these mini-battles for us to practice. You don't have to twist or distort the kata in order to see the Shuri extraction/reaction missions in them. The kata fit the plan.

5.7 Firearm Techniques

In 1853, when Perry's marines marched into Shuri Castle, military firearms had been present in Okinawa for about 300 years.³⁰⁴ Gunpowder itself was invented in China and is almost as old as Shaolin boxing. Our modern idea that karate arose before the advent of firearms is completely wrong. Matsumura certainly studied how to shoot rifles and pistols during his trips outside of Okinawa, just like he studied sword fighting. This was an obvious requirement of his position.

³⁰⁴ Henshall, 1999, p. 46. Ieyasu Tokugawa used a company of musketeers when he took over Japan in 1600. The Satsumas used guns when they took over Okinawa in 1609.

One thing that caught me by surprise was John Sells' revelation that Azato was a jukendo expert.³⁰⁵ Jukendo is a sport like kendo, but it simulates bayonet fencing instead of sword fencing. The jukendo bayonet (the *mokujyo*) is a six-foot bo carved in the shape of a long-barreled rifle.³⁰⁶ Knowing Azato's obsession with disarming a swordsman, we might suspect that he studied jukendo to learn how to disarm a rifleman. That would be a very useful skill in a reception hall fight.

We might even find the bodyguards leveling a gun at someone in a kata.³⁰⁷ Most karateka will find that idea quite astonishing. It isn't. Shuri's enemies carried firearms. The bodyguards trained to meet this challenge.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter gives us a better image of the situation at Shuri Castle and the defensive options that Matsumura might have entertained. For me, this discussion of security perimeters and escape routes brings the castle to life. It was a real castle, staffed by real people who were often in real danger. We can be confident that they responded to the danger according to their nature, and in much the same way that other people in other castles have met the same challenges.

I have not gazed into a crystal ball and conversed with the spirit of Matsumura personally, as Gogen Yamaguchi claimed to have done.³⁰⁸ Given the time, the place, the unique circumstances, the known realities of combat and the exceptional people involved in this situation, Matsumura's tactical plan and training program must have had many of the elements I have outlined. The tactical problem is quite clear. If we can agree on the broad outlines of the solution, then we may be on Matsumura's trail.

I used Commodore Perry's invasion as the base of this analysis for two reasons. First, it is the best-documented confrontation between Matsumura and a superior military force. There were other confrontations, however. In the 50 years that Matsumura guarded Shuri Castle,

³⁰⁵ Sells, 2000, p. 58.

³⁰⁶ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C5%ABkend%C5%8D>.

³⁰⁷ *Bassai sho*, step 3, resembles sighting down the barrel of a rifle.

³⁰⁸ Noble, Graham, "The Life Story of Karate Master Gogen Yamaguchi," *Dragon Times*, no date, <http://www.dragon-tsunami.org/Dtimes/Pages/articlej.htm>.

there were many confrontations with foreign visitors.³⁰⁹ Some of them were naval captains with scores of seamen and marines under their command. Some were pirates. Many were whalers. All of them were armed. Considering that karate folklore is completely silent about a major event like Commodore Perry's invasion of Shuri Castle, it is no surprise that we don't know much about the other incidents.

Second, it is significant that Azato and Itosu faced Perry's marines when they were very young. For 23-year-old bodyguards, standing toe-to-toe with 250 armed Americans must have been the experience of a lifetime. Early combat experiences tend to color a person's life and become a focus of self-esteem in old age. Azato's response was to specialize in bayonet fighting and disarming techniques. Itosu spent his golden years creating kata that train us to fight Perry and his men. Perry was Itosu's "worst-case scenario."

By the way, the tunnels under Shuri Castle are sometimes referred to as "Matsumura's Revenge."³¹⁰ In World War II, the Japanese Imperial Army enlarged the original Shuri tunnels into a massive underground fort. Digging the Japanese out of those tunnels cost the U.S. Marine Corps 12,000 dead and 50,000 wounded. Virtually all of the 120,000 Japanese defenders died in the process. The appalling casualties in the hills around Shuri convinced President Truman that the Allied invasion of Japan would kill a million American soldiers – so he approved the use of atomic bombs on Japan. This is the only time these weapons have ever been used on living cities. So far.

The bombings, in turn, forced Japan into unconditional surrender. The surrender documents were signed on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay, under a tattered U.S. flag that had only thirty-one stars—Commodore Perry's own flag that he carried into Shuri Castle in 1853. This is cited as an example of karma.

³⁰⁹ Kerr, 2000, Chapter 6.

³¹⁰ This is a favorite theme of Shihan Tom Froebel of Vermont.

Chapter 6



Researching Bodyguard Bunkai

We are about to cross into unexplored territory. The sweeping plains of history are behind us. Ahead lies a dark and dangerous jungle. It will take some effort to hack our way through it. With any luck, we will find a lost city and a sparkling treasure.

Hard-style karate has a built-in paradox. Hard stylists spend their lives drilling, teaching and redrilling 30 (or so) kata. These exhausting drills are used to build fitness and to hone the body as a weapon. Karate students compete with one another to see who can perform the kata with the greatest power and precision. Kata lies at the heart of everything we do.

Amazingly, the historical explanation of these kata is entirely missing. We lack even the most rudimentary clues of the purpose of the hard-style kata and the techniques portrayed in them. We spend our lives doing dances we cannot explain.

For example, many branches of karate train their beginners in the heian (pinan) kata. Everybody knows that there are five of these kata. Nobody knows *why*.

The heian kata are strikingly different from one another. They appear to be lessons in different styles of fighting. When we ask what lesson a specific kata teaches, no one can answer.

Within a kata there are a few movements whose purpose seems self-evident. They are surrounded by gestures that are never seen in sport karate. For these gestures, our explanations are ragged and piecemeal. These explanations are often unconvincing, even to beginners.

This is why there are dozens of books and videos “explaining” the shotokan kata. We don’t know what we are dealing with here. The hunger to understand the kata is a primal force in karate schools around the world.

Up to this point, *Shotokan's Secret* has been a history book. We have sought the roots of shotokan and the historical context of the kata. We have met Itosu, who created the heians. We understand Itosu’s bodyguard duties at the Shuri court. We have seen the enemies he was obliged to face. We have viewed their weapons and their skills.

We have also met Itosu’s friends, some of whom had very special abilities. Matsumura harnessed momentum as a weapon for karate and was also a highly-trained sword fighter. Azato was a fanatic about sword and bayonet disarming skills. Higaonna was famous for his attacks to the legs and feet. Their history gives us a new way to look at Itosu’s kata. From this point on we’ll turn our attention to this task.

But how did this paradox arise? How could the kata applications have been so utterly lost?

Itosu must have known the meaning of his own kata. His Meiji-era students, who founded the shorin family of karate styles, did *not* understand the kata.³¹¹ We know this is true because masters in every branch of Shuri-te fight the same battle to explain their kata. If they had all been taught the same applications by Itosu, there would be some similarity among the applications they teach. This is simply not the case.

There is only one conclusion to reach: After the fall of the keimochi class in the 1870s, Itosu stopped teaching the applications.

Why? I think I know the answer at last. It will take the next six chapters to show it to you. Once you have seen what he hid, you will know why he hid it.

6.1 Methodology

Every sensei has a list of “rules” about interpreting kata. These lists are called “methodologies.” For instance, Master Elmar Schmeisser (as cited by Rob Redmond) teaches 11 rules of thumb about interpreting karate kata, ending in:

*There is no single, original intent behind any technique.*³¹²

Many sensei have similar lists, and most emphasize the idea that the original applications are unknowable. All we can do, they advise, is to catalog multiple interpretations and leave it at that. We’ll never know what the kata is really trying to teach.

I have to disagree. The historical applications did once exist, and in my opinion they can be discovered again. There is a path we can follow to discover them.

This chapter explains a methodology for discovering historical kata applications. This system has been very successful at assigning chains of applications to the heian kata, to the point that each kata came into focus as a practical lesson appropriate to the Shuri bodyguards.

³¹¹ McCarthy, 1999b, p. 126. Choki Motobu publicly derided Funakoshi for being unable to explain the bunkai of Itosu’s kata. (Of course, Motobu didn’t know the bunkai of Itosu’s kata, either.)

³¹² Redmond, Rob, *Kata: The Folk Dances of Shotokan*, 2006, p. 65.

The methodology is based on these principles:

- Keeping It Real
- Other Mountains
- Lesson Plan
- Occam's Razor
- Crabtree's Bludgeon
- Dinglehoppers
- Hand Grenades
- Waldow Principle
- Shadow Principle
- Shadowboxing Principle
- Symbolism Rule
- Last Move Rule
- Shotoism (Anachronism) Rule
- Dunning-Kruger Effect

Each of these principles is a lesson in kata analysis. Some of them are lessons in how to think clearly. Some are lessons about how people behave. All of them are worth studying.

6.1.1 Keeping It Real

How can we recognize "historical" kata applications?

Keeping It Real: The historical applications were techniques that were taught in historical martial arts.

"Real" applications are techniques that are practiced in real martial arts. They have names, pedigrees and histories.

The original heian applications did not come out of thin air. They were based on techniques that were widely known in Okinawa, Japan and China in the 1800s. Therefore, it should be possible to find heian applications by looking in the combat arts that were practiced at that time. In fact, since the heians are beginner-level lessons, we should

find many of the applications among the *beginner-level techniques* of historical martial arts.

I have been very successful by following this strategy. My proposed applications are “real” techniques drawn from living or historical martial arts. If many arts share the same technique, then it is credible that Itosu knew the technique and might have included it in the heians.

6.1.2 Other Mountains

The samurai training schools (the *bugei ryuha*) all had a foundation myth. The founder of the school retreats into the mountains and becomes a *yamabushi*, a warrior hermit. He devotes himself to his training, forsaking all worldly interests, while praying for inspiration.

After years of training, a *tengu* (a flying demon) takes pity on him. (In Japanese art, the *tengu* look a lot like the Flying Monkeys from *The Wizard of Oz*.) The demon comes in the dead of night to whisper secrets in the master’s ear. These secrets become the foundation of the new martial art.³¹³



Figure 49: Mountain demon. This is a *tengu*, a mountain demon, teaching swordsmanship to a young *yamabushi*.³¹⁴ (Courtesy of Don Cunningham)

³¹³ Mol, 2001, p. 82.

³¹⁴ From the collection of Don Cunningham, author of *Secret Weapons of Jujutsu*, Tuttle, 2002.

I identify with those ancient yamabushi with their terrifying nightmares. I live in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California. I do kata in my sleep, much to the annoyance of my wife. I often awaken in the middle of the night with some new inspiration hot on my mind. Was my subconscious at work on the problem as I slept? Or was I visited by a tengu who whispered a secret in my ear? I don't believe in demons, but that doesn't seem to matter. They talk to me anyway!

We can't just "figure out" the meaning of a kata by standing up a student and using a kata gesture to knock him down. To find historical karate applications, we have to study other martial arts. We must learn the combative techniques elsewhere and then recognize them in karate kata. This is the path that produces powerful insights.

The discussion of heian kata in the following chapters is based on standard military combatives systems, plus hundreds of techniques from aikido, aikijutsu, hakkoryu jujutsu, *budoshin* jujutsu, kobudo, judo and kendo. On the Chinese side, I have borrowed from arts such as wing chun. The Korean heritage was represented by *hapkido*.³¹⁵ This quest has been my obsession for many years. I have experimented with hundreds of techniques to see how each one might fit into the kata.

Although it is laborious, this method works. When you have used a *te kagami* (hand mirror) wrist lock a few thousand times, you recognize it when you see the same gestures in a kata.³¹⁶ We have to study other arts in order to understand karate.

The Other Mountains: We must climb other mountains in order to see our own.

The tengu don't live on our mountain. We have to go to them.

6.1.3 Lesson Plan

A kata is not just a folk dance. A kata is a lesson plan, designed to teach a set of skills that have a common theme. For instance, empi kata is one of the few that has a clear theme and purpose. It has been known for more than 300 years that empi kata teaches throws and

³¹⁵ The Japanese "ai" is pronounced "hap" in Korean according to correspondent Philip Sneyd. "Hapkido" is the Korean voicing of "aikido."

³¹⁶ Empi kata, step 14 where you "look into your palm."

counterthrows. Every move in *empi* corresponds to a well-known jujutsu technique.³¹⁷

It is rare that we know the purpose of a kata. If the historical purpose is not known, we can sometimes deduce it from the kata's applications. The first step is to collect a variety of applications that might match different parts of the kata. This process can take a very long time. There are many mountains to climb and many paths to explore. The quest becomes a way of life. The quest is the *do*.

Once we have a library of 50 or 60 applications that fit the kata, we can look for common ideas among the applications. The secret is to notice applications that teach the same lesson or exploit the same weakness or meet the same challenge. The kata eventually comes into focus as the syllabus of a single lesson plan. If that lesson fits the historical context of the kata's creators, then we have picked the lock. We have discovered the original purpose of the kata.

Lesson Plan: A kata is a lesson plan, with a specific goal. When you discover that goal, you can explain the kata.

By the way, the "goal" of a kata will be something like "defeat a samurai swordsman." It won't be something like "improve your sense of balance." Katas are about the enemy, not about us.

6.1.4 Occam's Razor

Karate students have different levels of skill. Some can jump higher. Some can move faster. Some have precise control. We train hard to make ourselves into more skillful fighters.

There are also people who train to be skillful *thinkers*. Among these people, Occam's Razor is a weapon that separates good theories from poor ones. The razor slices through conspiracy theories, old wives' tales and improbable excuses. It cuts the world down to size.

Occam's Razor: The simple explanation is usually the right one.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ *Empi* is beyond the scope of the current volume but my notes are at www.ShotokansSecret.com.

³¹⁸ Strictly speaking, "*Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem.*"

From William of Ockham in the 14th century, there is a principle that says it is a mistake to add complications to your theory when you don't need them, because they make the theory less likely to be true. (There's a mathematical proof.) When you have two competing theories, the simpler one is more likely to be true.

For instance, in Gennosuke Hidari's book on shotokan kata applications, *Hidden Karate*, he advanced the theory that Gichin Funakoshi, Kenwa Mabuni, Kentsu Yabu, Chomo Hanashiro, Chosin Chibana, Anbun Tokuda, Shinpan Gusukuma, Chozo Oshiro, Masusumi Tokumura, Takayuki Ishikawa, Chogun Miyagi and all of the Okinawan karate masters of that generation entered into a "secret pact" conspiracy to keep the heian applications hidden from the Japanese.³¹⁹

My theory is that their teacher, Itosu, never taught them the applications and they didn't want to admit it.

Which theory is more likely to be true? Would it be the theory that rests on one stubborn man, or the competing theory that assumes a lifetime conspiracy among 20 men? The simpler explanation is probably the right one.

Occam's Razor advises us to "keep the explanation simple." We can apply this rule everywhere in life.

6.1.5 Crabtree's Bludgeon

"Crabtree's Bludgeon" hammers down our sense of pride and puts us back in touch with our humility. Sometimes, we karate teachers need some help in that department.

Do you remember the Macarena dance? It was very popular in the 1990s.

I showed my students a series of hand motions from this dance. I asked the class to work out the corresponding karate and jujutsu applications for each hand gesture. After a few minutes they showed me a variety of nerve strikes, wrist locks and throws that gave martial meaning to the sexy Spanish dance. Every move of the dance reminded the students of a well-known jujutsu technique!

This should be a sharp warning to us.

³¹⁹ Higaki, 2005, p. 65-66.

Crabtree's Bludgeon: People can concoct explanations for anything.³²⁰

At one time, I was very proud of my ability to think up applications to match kata gestures. I later realized that this is a dead end. Many sensei get stuck at that level and never advance beyond it.

We must not fall into this trap. The Macarena experiment shows us why. If we can force inappropriate locks and throws on the Macarena dance, then we can force inappropriate techniques on the kata, too. In fact, people do it all the time.

If we can generate six applications for a kata move, then at least five of them are wrong. Suddenly this doesn't seem like a skill to boast about.

To find historical applications, we have to set a higher standard than that. An application isn't "real" just because we thought of it.

6.1.6 Dinglehoppers

You are aware of "bunkai," and may have heard of "henka" or "oyo." I want to call your attention to another term that should be as well-known as the others: "Dinglehopper."

Dinglehopper: An embarrassingly poor kata application.

A "dinglehopper" is a kata application that is pathetically wrong. The word comes from the Disney movie *The Little Mermaid*. In this movie, Ariel, the mermaid, brings a fork to Scuttle, the seagull, and asks him to explain it. Scuttle, full of false wisdom, says the fork is a "dinglehopper" and is used to comb and curl your hair.

Well, you could use a fork to comb your hair, but in fact Scuttle's explanation is horribly wrong. Similarly, many of the applications we see demonstrated for shotokan kata are just embarrassing to witness.

The most obvious dinglehopper in shotokan is the first move of empi kata. In this move, we kneel on the right knee and make a gesture that looks like a down block. In his *Best Karate* series, Masatoshi Nakayama gave us his explanation of this move. He advised us to disrupt a punch to the head by dropping down on one knee and blocking the side of the

³²⁰ "No set of mutually inconsistent observations can exist for which some human intellect cannot conceive a coherent explanation, however complicated."

attacker's leg!³²¹

If we respond to a real attack by getting down on our knees, we'll be beaten unconscious in seconds. In spite of this, traditional sensei teach this horrifying application every day. Why? Because empi is all about grappling, and most hard-style teachers have never studied grappling. Karate's tournament rules prohibit grasping the opponent so they just don't go there.

The one-knee-down stance at the beginning of empi is called *handachi*. (The stance is also known as "Buddha sitting on a lotus" according to the *Bubishi*, an anthology of martial-arts lore that was popular in 19th-century Okinawa.)³²²

Handachi is a very common posture in jujutsu and aikido. For instance, in George Kirby's beginning³²³ and intermediate³²⁴ jujutsu textbooks, there are 36 throws that finish in handachi. Many of them end in arm-bar submissions that exactly match the hand positions we see at the beginning of empi kata. Empi opens with one of these throws.

Dinglehoppers embarrass both the students and the teacher. Our goal should be to eliminate them by providing applications that really work.

6.1.7 Hand Grenades

When someone tells me that there is no single, correct explanation of a kata gesture, I reply that he just hasn't found it yet. When he finds it, he will know it.

Here's a strange object from the shelf of my office. I use it as a vase to display a sprig of wildflowers. The object is round, hard, hollow and surprisingly heavy. (See Figure 50.)

Ask yourself this question: If you were in a fight, and you had this flowerpot in your hand, how could you use it as a weapon?

After some thought, you might suggest these possibilities:

- Smite the opponent in the forehead with it.

³²¹ Nakayama, M., *Best Karate 7: Jitte, Hangetsu, Empi*, Kodansha, 1981, p. 138.

³²² McCarthy, 1995, p. 185.

³²³ Kirby, George, *Jujitsu, Basic Techniques of the Gentle Art*, Black Belt Books, 1983.

³²⁴ Kirby, George, *Jujitsu: Intermediate Techniques of the Gentle Art*, Black Belt Books, 1985.

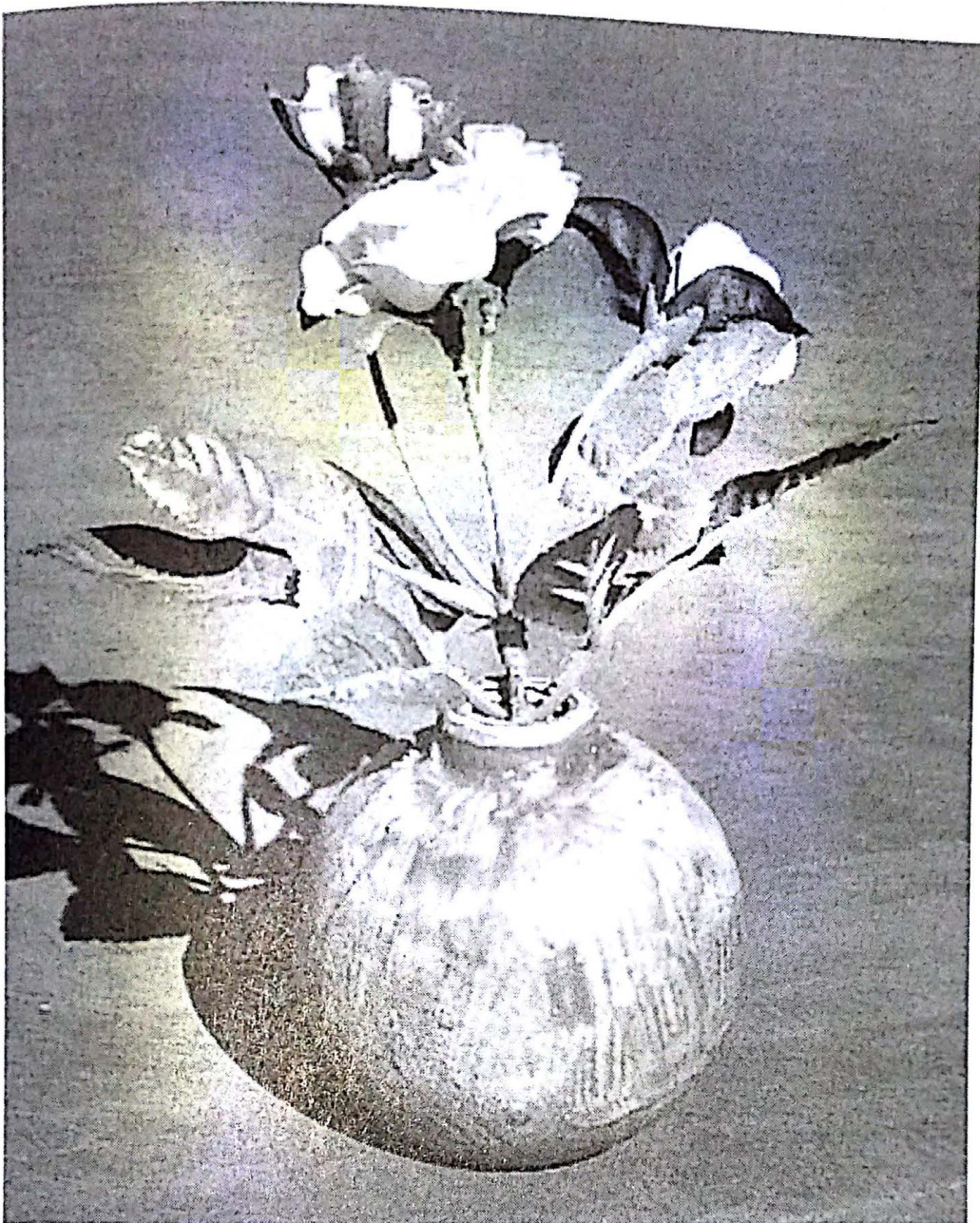


Figure 50: What is this object? How would you use it as a weapon?

- Slip it into a sock and use it as a blackjack.
- String two of them together with clothesline and make a *bola*!

These would be very effective, lethal applications for this heavy, hard ball.

Now that we have found some applications for this object, let's see what it looked like before I painted it red and stuck flowers in it. (See Figure 51.)

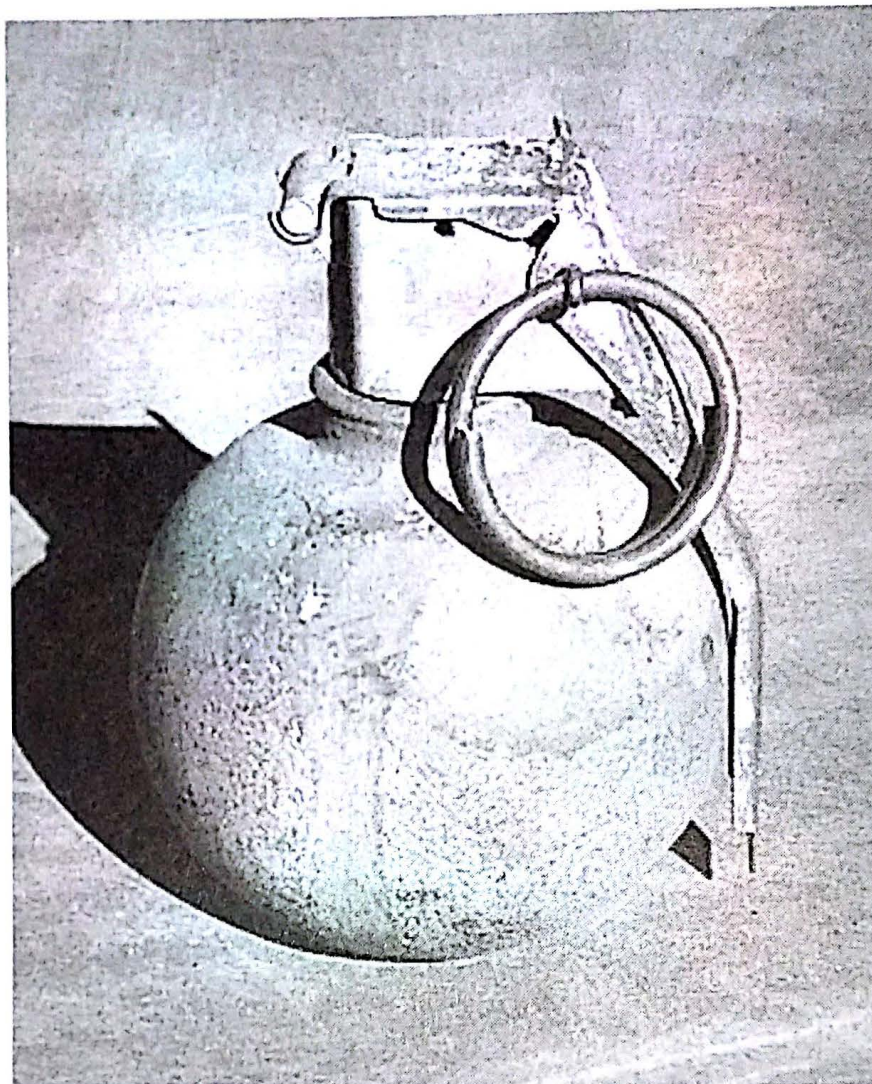


Figure 51: What is this object? This is what it looked like before I turned it into a flowerpot.

When you realize that the flowerpot is really a hand grenade, you'll feel your attitude toward it start to change. Suddenly you can imagine only one application for it. When I ask you how to use this weapon, you're going to tell me to pull the pin and throw it at the enemy. You're not going to tell me to drop it in a sock and swing it. That idea is suddenly just wrong.

Hand grenade: A kata application that blows away competing interpretations.

Every kata gesture has *one correct application*. This explanation will not be easy to find, but when you find it you will know it. It will explode in your mind. That's what we call a "hand grenade."

6.1.8 Waldow Principle

How can we tell how credible an application is, viewed from a historical perspective? One way is to apply the Waldow Principle.

The unarmed Shuri bodyguards often faced numerous armed opponents. To survive, they had to be absolutely ruthless. Hence the Waldow Principle, a rule of thumb coined by Shihan Beth Waldow:

The Waldow Principle: Itosu's applications are never benign.

If a proposed application produces a knockout, a mutilation, or some other severe orthopedic injury, then it satisfies the Waldow Principle. It is not harmless. If the application does no injury, then it violates the Waldow Principle. Itosu did not waste his time on harmless techniques.

The Waldow Principle is one of the tests we apply to proposed applications. If the application fails the Waldow test, then we need to keep looking. It isn't good enough.

6.1.9 Shadow Principle

The Shadow Principle is one of the most important rules of kata interpretation. We should invoke it frequently.

Hold your hand in a shaft of sunlight and look at the shadow. Seeing just the shadow, a viewer would instantly know that the shadow was cast by a hand. However, the viewer cannot tell whether it is the shadow of a left hand or a right hand. A shadow conveys a wealth of information but critical details are lost.

The Shadow Principle: An application is a good fit to the kata if the kata and the application have the same shadow.

The kata is only the shadow of the application. It hints at the real thing the way a shadow hints at the object that casts it. Critical details are missing.

The most common error we make when learning a new kata is to get the wrong foot forward or to gesture with the wrong hand. We see beginners do that all the time. Sometimes masters do it, too, and the beginners copy them. These mistakes get chiseled in stone.

The most glaring example of this is *tekki sandan*. Three quarters of the

way through this kata, its inherent symmetry is disrupted by a missing move. After a few faltering steps, the performer abandons tekki sandan and reverts to the ending of tekki nidan instead! We don't know who broke this kata, but the wreckage is plainly evident.

There are many places in our kata where the jujutsu or combatives application is plain to see, except that one of the kata gestures uses the wrong hand or turns in the wrong direction. The Shadow Principle gives us the freedom to substitute the other hand or the opposite turn when we run into one of these copying errors. If the shadow looks the same, we're close enough.

The Shadow Principle keeps us honest while helping us cope with copying errors. It opens many doors that would otherwise be locked.

6.1.10 Shadowboxing Principle

The Shadow Principle has a corollary, which we call the Shadowboxing Principle.³²⁵ It explains why we have to make adjustments when fitting applications to kata.

Shadowboxing Principle: A one-person kata is like a two-sided triangle.

According to the Shadowboxing Principle, a two-person form inevitably changes when performed by only one player. Attacks, defenses and timing patterns are easy to see when two people act out the battle. The reality of the enactment is in plain view.

When only one person performs the same kata, this connection with reality vanishes. A one-person kata is a form of shadowboxing. When we teach those shadowboxing motions to a class, the students start to optimize the gestures for more powerful and dramatic shadowboxing. The practical utility of the form erodes. The shadowboxing inevitably corrupts our understanding of the kata.

In karate jutsu, we are trying to add the invisible person back into the kata. Naturally, there will be a gulf between the single-performer motions and the combat applications. We must bridge this gap and not blindly insist that the shadowboxing gestures be respected in every detail. The shadowboxing only *suggests* the applications. It does not define them.

³²⁵ Courtesy of Shihan David LaVerne.

6.1.11 Symbolism Rule

Some of the kata gestures seem inexplicable. It is very tempting to conclude that they are symbolic and have no practical meaning. This is another place where we have to take a dose of humility and admit that we don't know all the answers.

Karate kata are combatives manuals, which contain no poetry. Matsumura and Itosu didn't indulge in symbolism any more than U.S. Army drill instructors do. If we study our jujutsu and combative measures, we'll find applications for every move in every kata. There is never need to hide behind an appeal to symbolism.

For instance, kanku dai kata opens with a two-handed gesture where you raise your hands over your head, separate them, and then swing them back down to a position in front of your belt. When I first learned this kata, my teacher said this was a symbolic gesture with no practical meaning. The arm motion was just "the crane spreading its wings."

There is no need to resort to symbolism here. In George Kirby's encyclopedic concordance of budoshin jujutsu, technique 552 is the "elbow lock rear throw."^{326,327} The attacker grabs your right shoulder with his left hand. You swing your arm up, back, down and forward exactly as in kanku dai. The move entangles the attacker's arm, pulling his elbow forward into a shoulder lock. It wrenches the attacker's shoulder and spills him on his back.

It is perfectly possible to throw two attackers (one on each side) at the same time. The technique is ruthlessly practical.

The Symbolism Rule: It isn't symbolic just because we can't explain it. We just need to dig a little deeper for the explanation.

6.1.12 Last Move Rule

All shotokan kata begin and end at the same position. In fact, we can diagnose problems with a student's technique by their distance and direction from the starting point when they end their kata.

³²⁶ Kirby, George, *Budoshin Ju-Jitsu*, Sixth Edition, self-published, 2002, p. 138. He calls this "the big book."

³²⁷ Kirby, George, *Black Belt Budoshin Ju-Jitsu*, eight DVDs approximately 60 minutes each, Panther Productions, 1992. Kirby's Web site is www.budoshin.com. "Hiji waza" technique 4-12 is a video of the same throw.

This is useful but artificial. Most of our kata did not originally start and end at the same point. According to Master Teruyuki Okazaki, the shotokan kata were deliberately changed to achieve this effect. Why? It provided an easy way to judge the student's performance in tournaments! According to Okazaki:

Originally when kata were performed you did not return to the starting position, but finished some way away from it, but in a tournament you had to return to your same starting position or you would lose a point. Sensei Nakayama asked Sensei Funakoshi, "What shall we do?" Master Funakoshi said, "Change—but don't change the original meaning or principle of the kata!" Master Nakayama stayed with Master Funakoshi for one week at his house studying the kata, which is when the changes were made to the kata to bring you back to the starting position.³²⁸

Funakoshi and Nakayama did not understand the combat applications of the kata, yet they felt free to change them to make kata contests easier to judge. When I learned this, I felt dismayed and betrayed. To Funakoshi and Nakayama, the kata were just dance contests.

The last one or two (or few) moves in each shotokan kata have been added, or altered, to achieve this effect. This gives us another rule of thumb in interpreting kata applications:

Last Move Rule: The last move of the kata may have no combative explanation. If we can't find a good application for that move, we may ignore it.

Anyone who has tried to figure out the "bunny hop" moves at the end of chinte kata will be grateful for this rule.

6.1.13 Shotoism (Anachronism) Rule

An "anachronism" is something that is misplaced in time. For instance, the Hollywood epic *Spartacus* contains a scene of a Roman soldier wearing a modern Rolex wristwatch, which is about 20 centuries out of place in that movie. That's an anachronism.

³²⁸ Butler, Rod, "Master Teruyuki Okazaki 9th Dan," *Shotokan Karate Magazine*, issue 91, April 2007, p. 8. Thanks to Soke Justin Butler for this citation.

Our kata have passed through many hands in the last century, and some of the moves we study today were not present in the original kata. These unique moves were introduced by Gichin and Gigo Funakoshi, and sometimes by Nakayama. There have also been changes by later shotokan masters. People refer to these changes as "*shotoisms*."³²⁹

Shotoism Rule: Recent changes don't have historical explanations.

There is no need to provide our students with historical interpretations of moves introduced by modern teachers. Modern teachers don't understand the historical kata, so their changes disrupt the historical interpretations.

This rule isn't just an escape clause. It places us under an obligation. It requires us to identify the shotoisms and to discover the original techniques of the historical kata. That's why we have to study many different versions of the same kata, from different styles and different time periods. The similarities and differences among the kata point out the anachronisms.

If we know only one version of a kata, we have not studied it. The path is broader than the narrow line we have been walking.

6.1.14 Dunning-Kruger Effect

Before closing this discussion let's briefly discuss the Dunning-Kruger effect.³³⁰ We all need to understand this. It has application in karate and in life.

Dunning-Kruger Effect: *Incompetent people have great confidence in their own opinions.*

Psychologists have been studying competence and incompetence. They have learned a lot about incompetent people. For instance:

- Incompetent people overestimate their own knowledge and skill.
- Incompetent people cannot recognize competence in other people.
- Incompetent people cannot recognize their own inadequacy.

³²⁹ Thomas, 1988.

³³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning-Kruger_Effect

These statements are not opinions. They are scientific facts based on extensive research. In any field of expertise, psychologists can devise a standard examination to measure a person's level of competence. At the end of the test, they ask the examinee to rate his own ability compared to his peers in the field. Invariably, the people who perform poorly on the test think they are *more skilled* than their coworkers. Truly competent people are more modest.

Doesn't this remind you of someone you know at work? We also meet these people in the dojo. They are assertive, outspoken and opinionated. Their misplaced self-confidence makes them "natural leaders."

The Dunning-Kruger effect will help you understand many of the people you see around you every day. This is why karate has always been such a hotbed of hotheads. In politics, it is the reason our elected representatives always make things worse instead of better. The Dunning-Kruger effect is the root cause of most wars.

The teacher whose outspoken personality dominates the bunkai seminar is usually the one who knows the least about it. Distract him with another task and let the quiet people teach. You'll be surprised at what they know.

6.2 Setting a Higher Standard

I have said in this chapter that we can't just believe whatever applications we happen to invent for a kata. We have to set a "higher standard." What does that mean in practice?

Since a kata is a syllabus of an important lesson, the "real" historical applications will have certain characteristics that a well-organized syllabus usually has:

- A well-organized syllabus has a theme. The theme of the kata will concern one of Shuri's enemies, a class of techniques or a tactical situation. If we cannot see a theme in the kata, we have not picked the lock.
- A well-organized syllabus presents ideas in a logical sequence. When we find the "real" applications, they will appear in a logical order. We'll take a weapon away from someone before we start to use it, for instance. We might find tightly-linked chains of applications showing an escalation of techniques. The kata application will *not* be a disorganized bag of unrelated skills.

- The techniques in the kata will exploit an enemy's weakness. Matsumura and Azato, in particular, sought out weakness and made plans to exploit it. We should see that theme in Shuri's applications.
- The techniques in the kata will play to our own strengths. Things the Shuri bodyguards did particularly well should be somewhere in the katas. We should see Matsumura's momentum, Itosu's great strength, Azato's disarming skills and perhaps even Higaonna's leg attacks.
- It is worth reiterating that the techniques we find in the kata will be historically appropriate to the time and place. They might use guns, but they won't be using machine guns. They might use swords, but they won't be fencing with rapiers. The techniques will fit the setting.
- And finally, when we find the "real" applications, we should find the answers to some of our perennial questions. Why are there five heians and not six? Why did Itosu bury the bunkai?

The proof of the kata lies in these characteristics. When we unravel the historical applications, we'll see people we know teaching well-organized lessons about skills they were famous for. That's how we'll know that we have succeeded. That's the "higher standard."

6.3 Conclusion

The biggest fool is the man who thinks he is wise. I've known that man and from time to time I've *been* that man. Humility is a safer path.

If you find any wisdom in this book, I hope it will be in this chapter. The methodology in this chapter was my focus for kata analysis, but the lessons have a broader application. Ideas like Occam's Razor have shaped the world we live in, and I know my own life is better because of them.

This chapter summarized the rules I have followed in my research. Ideas like the Shadow Rule, the Waldow Principle and the Last Move Rule give structure to our efforts. Our students should know the difference between "dinglehoppers" and "hand grenades."

At a higher level, we all need to understand Occam's Razor, Crabtree's

Bludgeon and the Dunning-Kruger effect. These are tools that help us distinguish between reality and delusion. They are the weapons that strike down magical thinking. Without them, people go on witch hunts, both figurative and literal, and innocent people get hurt.

We should carry these ideas with us everywhere, not just to karate class.

Chapter 7



Skin Against Steel

Welcome to the heian applications.

This is the first of five chapters that describe the applications of the heian kata. This is where the history teacher sits down and the karate teacher stands up. In fact, it is the shihan (a teacher of karate teachers) whose voice is heard in the following chapters. The shihan is accustomed to giving orders and tends to sound a bit imperative at times. This is just the nature of shihans.

The discussion of each heian application begins in the context of historical events but rapidly changes focus to describe specific, detailed martial techniques. Real applications cannot be dismissed by saying, "this is a punch," or "this is a block." They have to be described in detail so you can try them out and learn from them. At times, the detail becomes pretty dense. It is okay to skim the text, look at the pictures and skip ahead. The details will still be there when you need them.

That said the first kata in this sequence is heian nidan, which might surprise you. Heian nidan was originally pinan shodan, the first kata in the pinan series. It was taught first because it contained the first essential skill a Shuri bodyguard needed to learn: how to disarm a samurai swordsman.

The Satsuma overlords held life-and-death authority over the keimochi officials at Okinawa. History does not record any incident where a Sho king was killed by a samurai lord, unless it was Sho Taimu, but the threat was always there. Matsumura must have trained his students to fight barehanded against the sword. That sounds suicidal, but a little research cuts the problem down to size.

Our image of the noble and lethal samurai warrior is a bit too romantic. By 1853, when Perry visited Shuri, the samurai were in serious decay. They had not been called into the field in two and a half centuries. No living samurai had faced anyone in battle. They maintained the façade of the samurai tradition, but the substance was in some doubt.

"Keep in mind that a samurai was not necessarily the expert swordsman we see portrayed in the movies. Especially during the Tokugawa period (the late 1800s), a lot of men were samurai in name only. You could be born a samurai, you could be adopted by a samurai family, and—believe it or not—by this time you could even purchase a samurai title. So in a lot of circumstances, the

confrontation was between a very professional policeman and an unprofessional samurai."³³¹

A historian of Japan expressed the same thought, writing about the sudden appearance of Commodore Perry in Tokyo Bay:

*"The military class had during a long peace neglected the military arts; they had given themselves up to pleasure and luxury, and there were very few who had put on armor in many years. So that they were greatly alarmed at the prospect that war might break out at a moment's notice, and began to run hither and thither in search of arms."*³³²

Contemporary Japanese cartoons depict fat samurai trying to squeeze into armor that is too small.³³³ To put it in modern terms, these were "wannabe" samurai, not the real thing.

Even though inexperienced in battle, the Satsuma overlords were certainly dangerous. These men were trained in jigen ryu, which had a ferocious reputation. A bit of research places this in perspective, too. Jigen ryu stressed overwhelming power in the cutting stroke (*shomen uchi*). Jigen ryu students struck a post representing the enemy's neck *several thousand times a day* until their *shomen uchi* attack became extremely strong. This made them formidable when facing another samurai in a duel, but it also made them very predictable. When murdering an unarmed Okinawan, these fighters would always raise the sword over the right shoulder, charge forward and cut down with all their might.³³⁴ This attack was their signature. Their predictability made them vulnerable.

This chapter presents the bodyguard applications of pinan shodan (*heian nidan*), which was the first kata on Itosu's agenda for new recruits. Pinan shodan teaches us how to survive a fight with a Satsuma swordsman.

³³¹ Craig, Darrell Max, *Japan's Ultimate Martial Art: Jujitsu before 1882*, Tuttle, 1995, p. 99-100.

³³² Statler, 1963, p. 10.

³³³ Walworth, 1946, p. 84-85.

³³⁴ Miyazaki, Makoto, "Powerful 1st Strike of Jigen Ryu," *Daily Yomiuri Online*, no date, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/columns/0005/lens236.htm>.

7.1 Sugiyama's 25 Kata

Gichin Funakoshi documented the heians in *To-te Jutsu* in 1922,³³⁵ and since that time, many young karate teachers have written their own books covering exactly the same material. This appears to be a stage that developing sensei go through. I don't have the space or the hubris to photograph all those moves again. I'll just assume that you already know the heian kata, or the similar pinan forms, and there is no need to teach them to you.

That said, if I refer to "heian shodan step 17," are you sure you know which move that is? Is that the second kiai? Or is it the move just before the kiai? We need a standard numbering system we can all refer to.

In San Ten, we have solved this problem by adopting Sensei Sugiyama's 25 *Shoto-Kan Kata* as our standard reference on kata.³³⁶ This book is simply the best job anyone has done on documenting kata. The book contains hundreds of line drawings, as if each move were drafted perfectly by a mechanical engineer. It also contains parallel explanations in English, Spanish and Japanese. It is small enough to carry in your gym bag.

There are a few references that are equally authoritative, but they are not as convenient, not as useful, and not as economical as Sugiyama's. For instance, the official Japan Karate Association kata manuals cost twice as much, are too bulky to carry conveniently and contain no pictures.³³⁷ Instead, they contain hundreds of footprint diagrams, like a ballroom-dancing textbook.

You should own Sugiyama's book.³³⁸

7.2 Variations on Heian Nidan

Welcome to the first of the "Variations" sections, which will begin each of the heian application chapters. Before interpreting the kata, we must first scan for shotoisms and to do that we have to survey many versions of the kata from multiple styles. The "Variations" sections summarize the most significant and most interesting differences among different versions of the kata. I have cut deeply to keep these discussions brief.³³⁹

³³⁵ Funakoshi, 1994.

³³⁶ Sugiyama, 1989.

³³⁷ Japan Karate Association, *Karate-Do Kata, Volumes 1 and 2*, 1994.

³³⁸ Sugiyama's book is not widely available in the karate marketplace, but you can usually find it at Amazon.com.

³³⁹ The full-length analysis of each kata is available at my Web site, www.ShotokansSecret.com.

I have collected versions of the heian kata from multiple branches of shotokan as well as from other Okinawan and Japanese systems. I looked for kata techniques that were performed the same way in several styles because those moves must be from Itosu's original kata. I also looked for techniques that are only found in shotokan, because those moves would certainly not be original. I can say with authority that the heian kata contain alterations, copying errors and omissions. The kata are not pure. The discrepancies are not all small.

I did the step-by-step comparison of heian nidan within the shotokan family and in related shorin and shito-ryu styles. Within shotokan, I examined Sugiyama's and Nakayama's books;³⁴⁰ the official JKA kata manuals³⁴¹ video performances by Ertl and Bendickson,³⁴² Hirokazu Kanazawa³⁴³ and Kenneth Funakoshi;³⁴⁴ films of Gichin Funakoshi's students in 1924;³⁴⁵ and films of the JKA in 1955.³⁴⁶ I examined kata performances from shotokan's close relatives in *wado ryu*³⁴⁷ and shotokai styles.³⁴⁸ Finally, I compared heian nidan to the pinan shodan kata of *seito shito-ryu*,³⁴⁹ *tani-ha shito-ryu*,³⁵⁰ *robukai*,³⁵¹ *matsubayashi (shorin) ryu*³⁵² and *seito shorin-ryu*.³⁵³ These were frame-by-frame video comparisons that took months to complete.

³⁴⁰ Nakayama, Masatoshi, *Best Karate* (series of 11 volumes), Kodansha, 1977 to 1989.

³⁴¹ Japan Karate Association, 1994.

³⁴² Joel Ertl and Anita Bendickson, 19 DVD titles from 1991 to 2006, at www.karatevid.com. Each DVD is approximately 50 minutes.

³⁴³ Kanazawa, Hirokazu, *Karate Kata*, VHS 95 minutes, Centered-Mind Films, 1986.

³⁴⁴ Funakoshi, Kenneth, *Mastering Shotokan Karate* (series of 10 volumes), VHS 50 minutes per tape, Panther, 1986.

³⁴⁵ Warrenner, Don and others, *Gichin Funakoshi, 1924 Vintage Footage*, DVD 25 minutes, Rising Sun Productions, 2003.

³⁴⁶ The infamous "blue videos" that are all over the Internet.

³⁴⁷ Abernethy, 2006.

³⁴⁸ Videos at the shotokai.com Web site <http://www.shotokai.com/ingles/filosofia/kataeng.html>

³⁴⁹ McGuinness, Gary, *The Itosu Kata of Seito Shito Ryu*, DVD 60 minutes, The Martial Source, 2000.

³⁵⁰ Tomiyama, Keiji, *Karate: Pi'nan Kata in Depth*, Empire Books, 2006.

³⁵¹ Yamazaki, Kiyoshi, *The Masters Series, Karate Do* (series of 5 volumes), VHS 60 minutes per tape, Black Belt, 1996.

³⁵² Nagamine, Tayayoshi and others, *Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu, Volume 2*, VHS 50 minutes, Tsunami, 2002.

³⁵³ Gillespie, Toshiaki, *Matsumura Seito Shorin Ryu* (series of 8 volumes), VHS 50 minutes per tape, Panther, 1991.

There are many small differences in heian nidan, even within traditional branches of shotokan, but the glaring difference is in steps 7-8 where shotokan students perform a backfist strike and side-snap kick to the south. This is a well-known shotoism. Every other shorin and shitoryu school does a front-snap kick here. That was the original technique.

There is a lot of variation in the hand technique for step 7, too. It can be a *uraken uchi*, a hammerfist, a down block, or an inside block, depending on the style. It looks like Itosu originally used some hand gesture that people had trouble interpreting. Every style settled on a different interpretation. It is possible that none of them is the original technique.

Most of this kata is about the knife-hand block or strike, *shutō uke* or *shutō uchi*. That would be steps 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15.

Step 16 is a sweeping right inside block in *gyaku hamni* stance. Even within traditional shotokan, there is disagreement about how to execute this technique. The stackup for the block may be a circular sweep across the lower level (Kanazawa, and films from 1924); a horizontal sweep (Ertl and Bendickson, JKA, shotokai, and Kenneth Funakoshi); or a tight, minimal stackup with no sweeping gesture (Sugiyama, matsubayashi ryu, seito shito-ryu, wado ryu, robukai). Seito shorin-ryu does the sweeping inside block but with the wrong hand (a nice example of the Shadow Principle at work.)

I think the films from 1924 are the best guide this time. The original gesture was a circular sweep, like a reverse down block. People have been gradually minimizing this gesture over the intervening decades.

7.3 Historical Applications of Heian Nidan

The *sine qua non* of bodyguard skill in the Shuri Crucible was the ability to disarm a samurai overlord. If you couldn't disarm a samurai, you would never get a chance to do anything else.

This kata teaches us how to disarm an overlord and how to use his swords to fulfill the reaction mission against other samurai:

- Steps 1-6 of this kata resemble *tachi dori* (sword disarming) techniques from aikido, kendo and jujutsu. You end up holding two swords, as in Musashi's nito-ryu style of sword fighting.

- Step 7, the front kick and backfist, may have been used to push the opponent away while pulling a sword out of his body. Swords get stuck.
- Steps 8-15 are a two-sword assault on the opposing force, buying time for the protectee to escape. This sequence is a frenzy of parry, slash and stab. Its purpose is to create panic among the opposing fighters.
- Steps 16-21 look like kendo's *maki waza*, where you beat down the opponent's sword to create an opening or to flip his sword out of his hands. Using nito-ryu technique, we can use one sword to disarm while the other attacks. It is a deadly combination.
- Steps 22, the reinforced block, resembles the nito-ryu version *tsuba zeriai*, the face-to-face clinch where the swords are trapped between the bodies of the fighters. The exit from the clinch slashes the opponent's neck to the bone.
- Steps 23-26 implement Musashi's ruthless maiming techniques as described in the *The Book of Five Rings*.

Viewed in this way, heian nidan is a lesson in survival sword fighting. The style of fighting, using two swords, gives the recruit the tools he needs to parry and counter powerful shomen uchi sword attacks. The techniques at the end of the kata (step 22 onward) seem especially relevant to an enemy who repeatedly cuts downward, as Matsumura's jigen ryu enemies tended to do.

The kata is only 26 steps long, and it was the first lesson for the new recruit. Within those limitations, it contains all the basic skills a Shuri bodyguard needed to win a fight with one or more samurai overlords.

Remember that both Azato and Kosaku Matsumora actually participated in such fights, barehanded against jigen ryu swordsmen, and won them. Shotokan's ancestors were experts at these skills.

7.3.1 Live Blades

When you practice gun-disarming techniques, do you use a real, loaded gun? Most people would be shocked at the idea. Many of these same people, however, will take out a razor-sharp sword for practice. Shihan Tom Frobel told me about a sensei who hacked through his own Achilles tendon while doing a sword demonstration. That's a high price

to pay for the thrill of applause.

Do not practice the heian sword applications using live blades. Use *shinai* or *bokken*. We used *iaito* blades in our photos. An *iaito* sword looks like the real thing but has no edge and cannot cut.

Leave the sharp swords on the rack at home.

7.3.2 Steps 1-3: Tachi Dori, Makikomi

The first cluster of heian *nidan* introduces the recruit to *tachi dori*, or “sword disarming.” In the historical context, the weapon would have been the *katana*, and the enemy would have been the samurai overlord who was dressed in daily clothing (not armed for battle).

In the following discussion, let's assume that you are playing the part of the intrepid bodyguard, and your partner is the samurai attacker. He holds the *katana* in the classic two-hand grip, with the right hand high next to the guard (*tsuba*) and the left hand barely encircling the pommel. On a typical *katana*, this leaves a four-inch or five-inch gap between the hands.³⁵⁴ (A sword is not a baseball bat!) He lifts the sword over his head and attacks (*shomen uchi*, Figure 52). Now what do you do?

Shift in next to the attacker's right arm to get inside the sweep of the blade. In step 1 of the *kata*, your vertical left forearm deflects his hands away from you, to his left. Your bent right arm scoops *under* the attacker's forearms and encircles them.

Your left arm passes over the attacker's arms. Cross your arms (as in step 2 of the *kata*) to clamp his forearms to your chest. Your left hand takes a grip on the handle of the sword. A sharp hip rotation to your right dislocates his right elbow and the *katana* comes free in your left hand.

Now you have a sword in your left hand. While still trapping his broken arm with your right hand, slash the *katana* back to the left, cutting his throat.

Jujutsu, *aikido*, and *taiho jutsu* students will recognize this technique

³⁵⁴ Most commercial *bokken* (wooden practice swords) don't have a full-sized handle, so you'll have to push the plastic *tsuba* up the “blade” until the handle is about a foot long. Secure the *tsuba* with *gamu tepu* (duct tape).

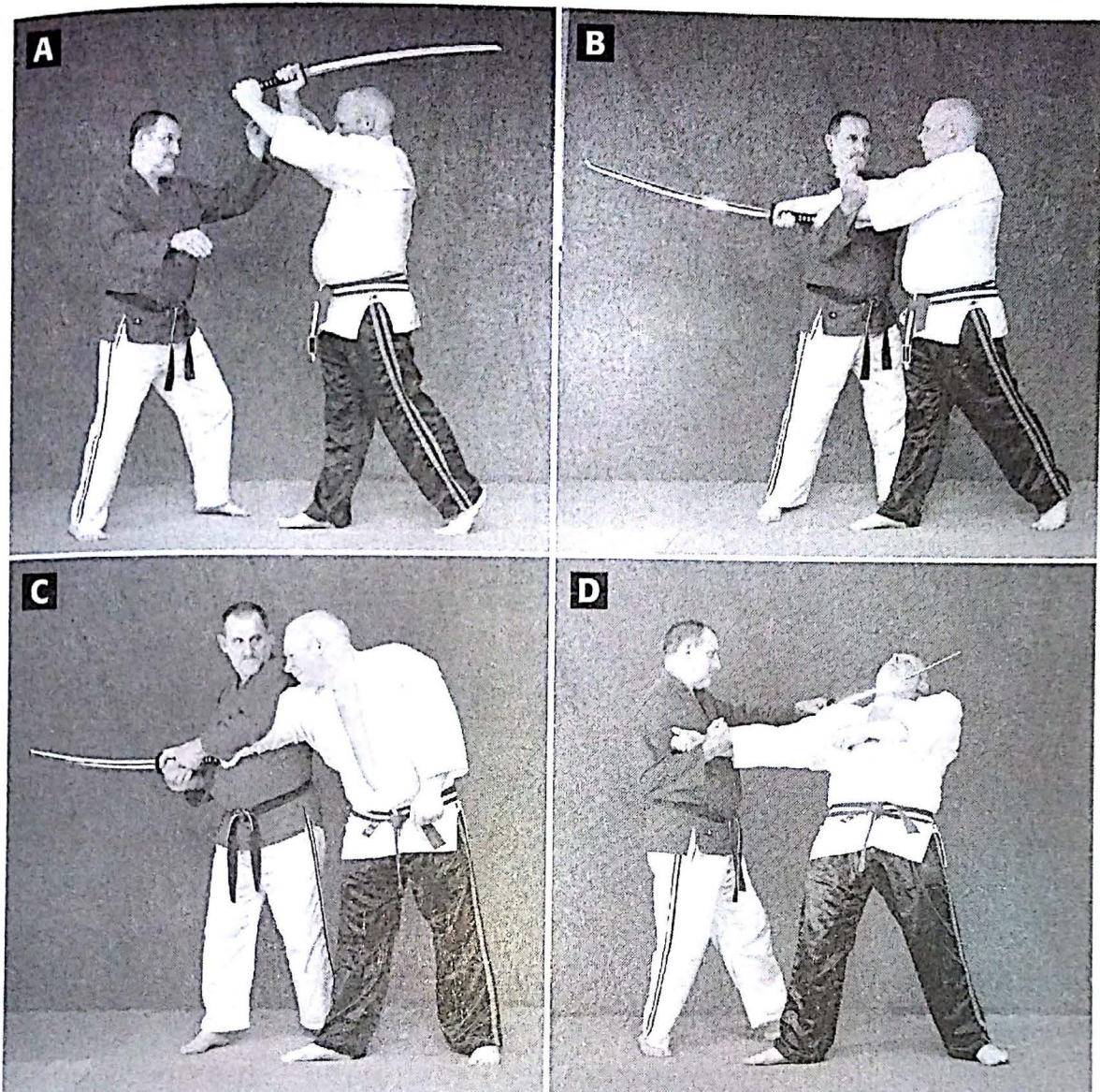


Figure 52: Tachi dori, heian nidan, steps 1-3. Use your left arm to deflect the *shomen uchi* attack (A). Slip under and “hug” his arms as in step 2 of the kata (B). A sharp turn to the right dislocates his right elbow, freeing the sword (C). Step 3 of the kata sweeps the sword back across his throat (D).

as a variation on *hidari makikomi*, which is a classic winding throw.^{355,356} The attempt to dislocate the attacker’s elbow in step 2, often results in the attacker sprawling face-down on the ground. If that happens, you can use your knee to pin his arm to the ground and pry the sword out of his hands. Then cut back to the left to finish him.

The kata shows only one path through the possible disarming

³⁵⁵ Kirby, 1992, technique 7-1, “*Hidari makikomi* gun disarm.”

³⁵⁶ Kubota, Takayuki, *Close Encounters, The Arresting Art of Taiho Jutsu*, Dragon Books, 1987, p. 124-125.

techniques, but it is an exact path and it satisfies the Waldow Principle. There is no doubt that the first cluster of this kata was a katana defense. We find similar sword-disarming moves in the first clusters of heian yondan and godan, too. That makes perfect sense, given the presence of hostile samurai who threatened the Shuri bodyguards every day of their lives.

7.3.3 Steps 4-6: Tachi Dori, Nito-Ryu

Steps 4, 5 and 6 of heian nidan are the mirror image of the first three steps, and represent a tachi dori sequence similar to the initial one. This time, however, the feat is simplified by the fact that you have a sword in your left hand (Figure 53).

The first samurai attacker is down. On your right, another attacker has raised his katana overhead for a vertical cut at your head. For step 4 (the second "double block"), shift in to get inside the sweep of his sword. Use your vertical right forearm to deflect his hands away from you (to his right). Your left hand runs the point of your sword into his abdomen. You want a quick kill here, so probe for the major blood vessels that lie against the backbone. Once the steel is in him, it won't be difficult to use your right hand to snatch his sword away (step 5). Once you have control of his sword, you can slash back to the right and cut his throat with it (step 6).

Now you have two swords, one in each hand. This opens up the possibility that we are about to explore nito-ryu, Musashi's two-sword variant of *kenjutsu*.

7.3.4 Step 7: Mae Geri Keage

Step 7 of heian nidan is the side-snap kick and uraken uchi. There are many useful interpretations of this move, but for our current purposes let's point out the simplest ones.

Suppose that in step 4 of the kata, when you stabbed the second samurai in the abdomen, the blade got stuck in his spine or between his ribs. This kind of thing happens frequently in blade combat (Figure 54).

To free the sword, push the opponent away with your foot while you pull the sword out. This explains most of step 7 of the kata.

There's another interpretation that is as valid as the first and is a bit

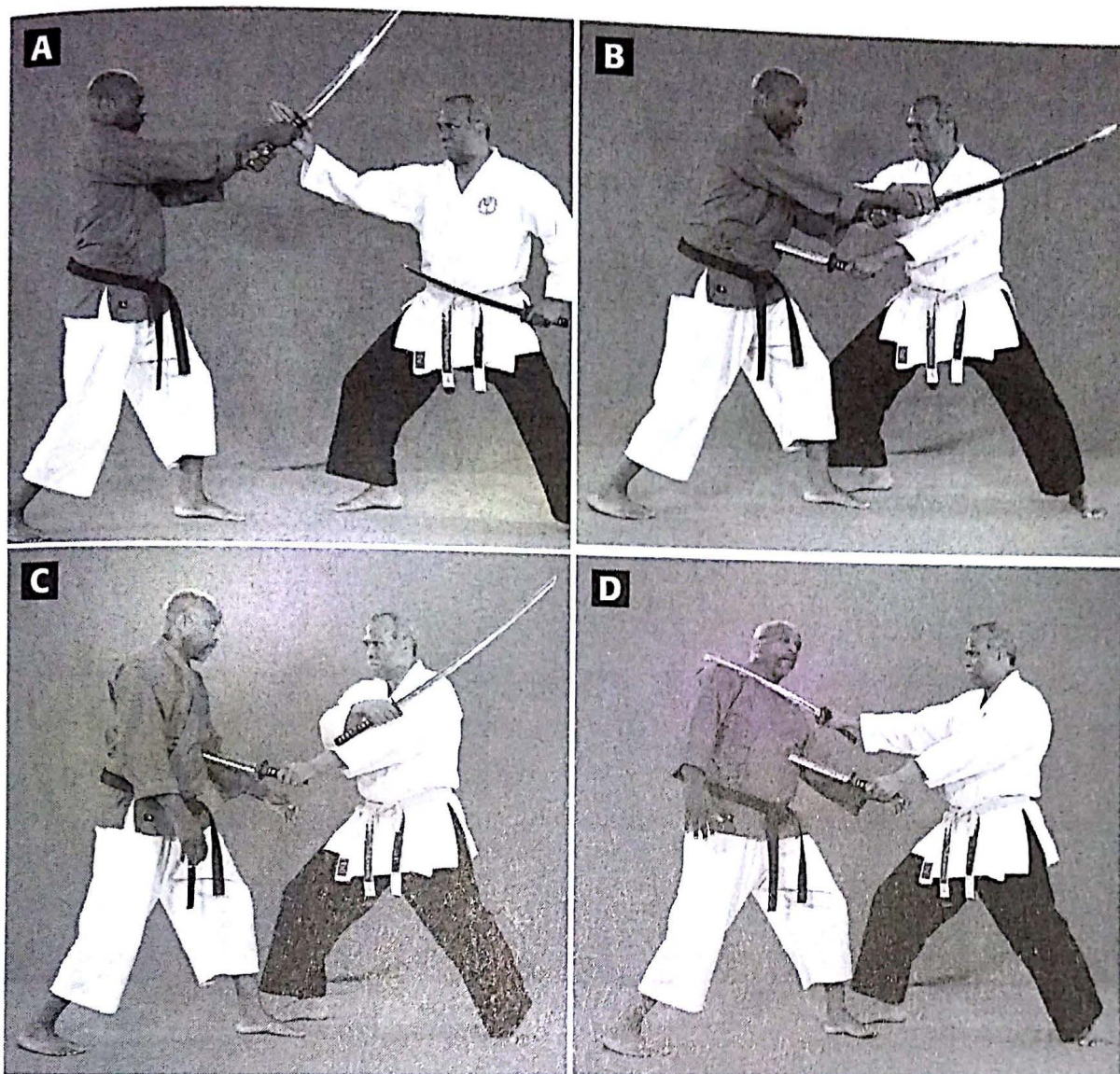
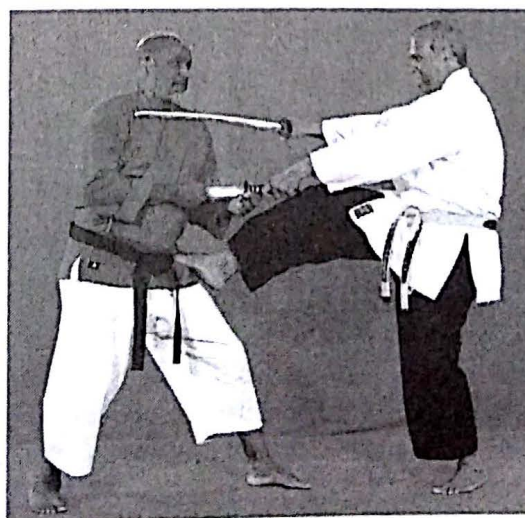


Figure 53: Tachi dori, heian nidan, steps 4-7. The first image is step 4 of heian nidan. Use your right hand to deflect the shomen uchi attack (A). In step 5, you can use the sword in your left hand either to parry or to stab as shown here (B). Both the elbow lock and the stab will release the sword into your hand (C). Step 6 of the kata sweeps the sword back across his throat (D).

Figure 54: Hiki ken, heian nidan, step 7. The simplest explanation of step 7 of the kata is that the sword is stuck and you have to pull it out. You never see this in the movies, but it often happens in real life.



more palatable for beginners (Figure 55). While you are coping with the samurai official you just stabbed, a third one enters the room from the south. He is reaching for his sword when you snap-kick his groin and slash his throat with your right hand.



Figure 55: *Debana kube*, heian nidan, step 7. An alternate interpretation of step 7 is that an enemy bursts in who has not yet drawn his sword. As he reaches for his sword, snap-kick his groin to disrupt him. At the same time, back-slash at neck level.

As you turn to the north, leaving two or three dead bodies behind you, there is a razor-sharp samurai sword in each hand. What are you going to do with them?

7.3.5 Steps 8-10, 12-15: *Kesa Kiri*

Nito-ryu teaches us how to fight with one sword in each hand.³⁵⁷ This technique is allegedly based on Musashi's two-sword style of fighting, although modern nito-ryu is extremely limited compared to the real thing. For instance, thrusting attacks (*tsuki*) are confined to the throat, and only senior teachers are allowed to attempt them. Musashi, Matsumura and Azato would have found that very perplexing.

In his novel about the life of Musashi, author Eiji Yoshikawa described the two-sword fighting style in these terms:

³⁵⁷ Raymond, Matthew, *Kendo Principles IV: Nito-Ryu (Two Swords)*, DVD 60 minutes, e-bogu.com, 2005.

When not actually striking, he held the left sword so that it was pointed directly at his opponent's eyes. The right sword extended out to the side, forming a broad horizontal arc with his elbow and shoulder, and was largely outside the enemy's field of vision. If the opponent moved to Musashi's right, he could bring the right sword into play. If the opponent moved the other way, Musashi could shift the small sword in to his left [sic] and trap him between two swords. By thrusting forward, he could pin the man in one place with the smaller sword and, before there was time to dodge, attack with the large sword.³⁵⁸

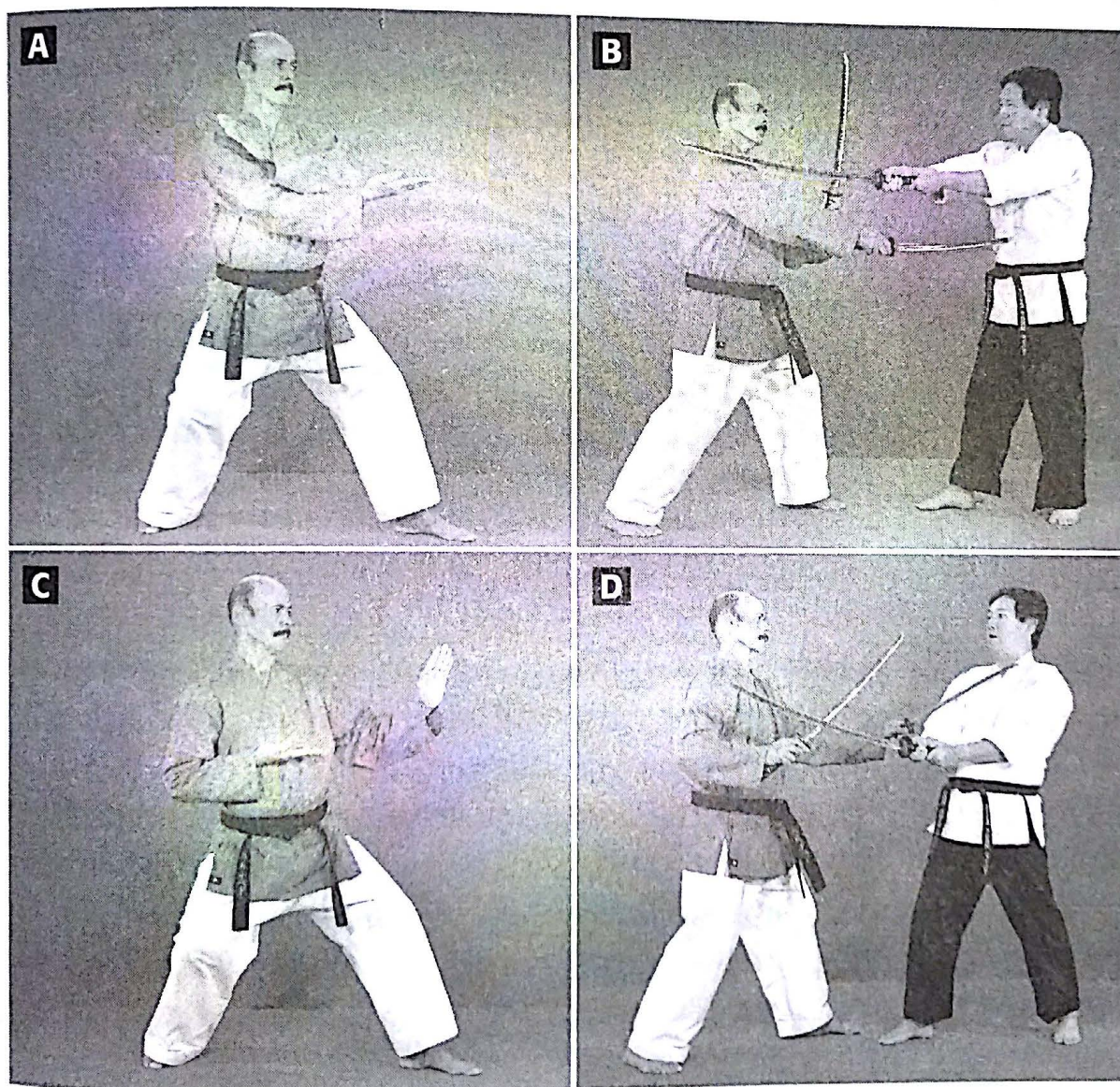


Figure 56: Nito-ryu, heian nidan, steps 8-10, 12-15. The stackup for the knife-hand block (A) deflects the opponent's *shomen uchi* attack and runs him through the abdomen (B). The "block" (C) parries the lower blade while making a monk's-robe cut to the neck (D).

³⁵⁸ Yoshikawa, 1981, p. 529.

The basic strategy of the nito-ryu style of sword fighting is to “fence” with the smaller sword (which modern players hold in the right hand) while holding the larger sword overhead in the left hand, ready to slash down like a whip. This can be a deadly combination against a fighter who has only one sword.

Try walking through the knife-hand blocks of this kata while holding a pair of short bokken (Figure 56). The shutō-uke stackup lets you sweep the opponent’s sword aside while stabbing at his chest with your other sword. The “shutō block” pulls the stabbing sword free as your other sword slashes at his neck in a monk’s-robe cut (*kesa kiri*). Take the next step in and perform the actions on the opposite side.

Couldn’t a *kaiden* sword master sow panic in a crowd of samurai bureaucrats by leaping at them with two bloody swords flashing in the air? Remember that these were “wannabe” samurai. They hadn’t seen a bloody sword in living memory.

That’s what this part of the kata is all about. We’re executing the reaction mission, buying time for the king to get out of the room.

7.3.6 Step 11: Tsuki Uchi

You have a blade in each hand. You’ve been rapidly parrying and slashing your way into the crowd. Your next enemy is a samurai with his sword at the middle-level guard position. He is alert and ready.

One of the standard nito-ryu attacks is *tsuki uchi*, where you use one sword to beat down the opponent’s guard while attacking with the other. This attack looks exactly like step 11 of heian nidan, which is the pressing-block (*osae uke*) and spear-hand attack (*nukite*) that accompanies the first kiai (Figure 57).

Tsuki uchi is very simple. Knock the enemy’s blade down with your left sword, and run him through the heart with the right one. This is a standard kenjutsu tactic. (The traditional shotokan explanation is that you stab his chest with your *fingers*. Once you try it with steel, you’ll never go back to fingers.) For an unarmed interpretation of *osae-uke* and *nukite*, see section 9.2.3.

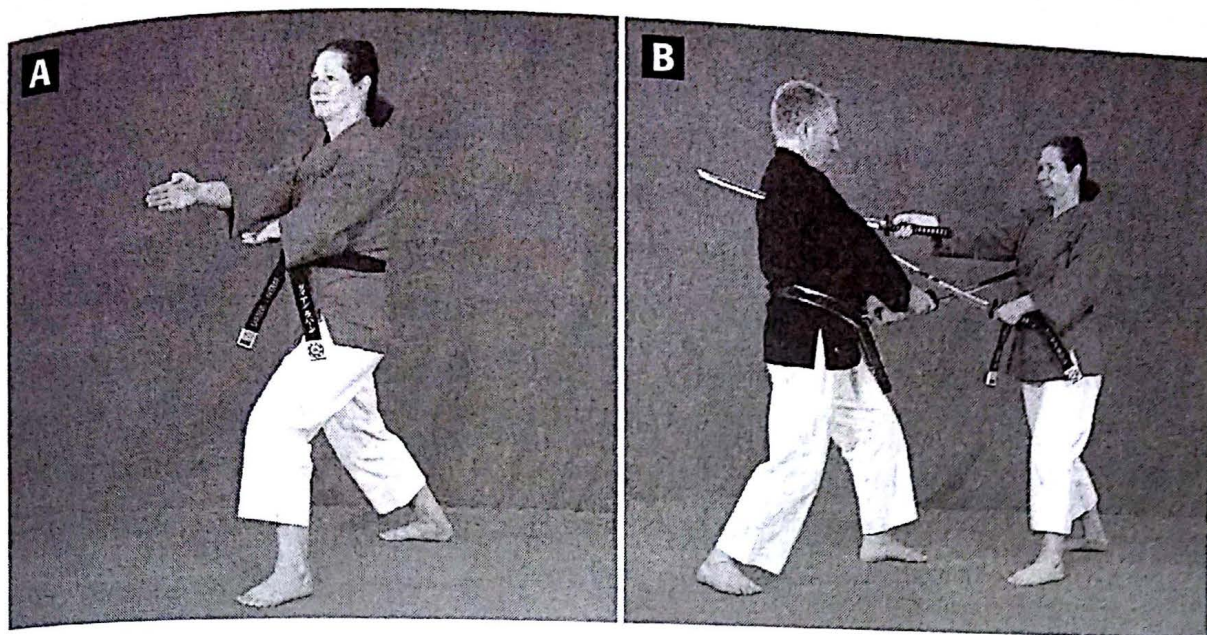


Figure 57: Tsuki uchi, heian nidan, step 11. The pressing-block and spear-hand attack (A) make a lot more sense when interpreted as a tsuki uchi deflection from nito-ryu (B). It is much more satisfying to stab with a razor-sharp blade rather than with your fingers.

7.3.7 Steps 16–21: Maki Waza

At this point, we have stabbed and slashed through the crowd, and are about to turn south and start back toward the origin. In move 16, we make a sweeping reverse downblock that rolls up into an inside block. When do kendo practitioners make a circular, sweeping gesture similar to this?

Some kendo schools practice a family of techniques called maki waza³⁵⁹ in which the opponent's blade is scooped out of position (or out of his hands entirely) by "wrapping" your sword around his in a circular motion.³⁶⁰ Other schools have stopped teaching maki waza because the rules of kendo apparently don't reward you for stealing your opponent's sword. In my opinion, that is an example of sacrificing the martial art to narrowly pursue the sport.

The technique we see in the kata is *maki age*, meaning to flip the opponent's sword up and away (Figure 58). Have senpai hold a bokken in the classic two-handed grip: Right hand up against the tsuba (guard) and left hand lightly holding the *kashira* (pommel), usually with a significant gap between the two hands. Use your bokken to engage his. Push the blade

³⁵⁹ "Maki" means to "roll" or "wrap." You've seen it on sushi menus.

³⁶⁰ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-iLxf6MzPk> for an example of this technique in competition.

of his sword rapidly in a clockwise circle. If you take him by surprise, he may lose control of the weapon, which will fly out of his hands. (Be careful of hitting mirrors, windows or bystanders. The bokken flies a long way.)

That's step 16, the "scooping inside block" motion of the kata. Maki age twirls his sword out of his hands and drops it on the floor.

When the sword hits the floor, his natural reaction will be to reach for it. As he bends over, you can kick him in the face to stop him (step 17). The *gyaku-zuki* (step 18) runs him through with your second sword.

Steps 19-21 are the same techniques executed on the opposite side. The maki age "wrap up" works in both the clockwise and counterclockwise directions and against a one-handed or two-handed grip.

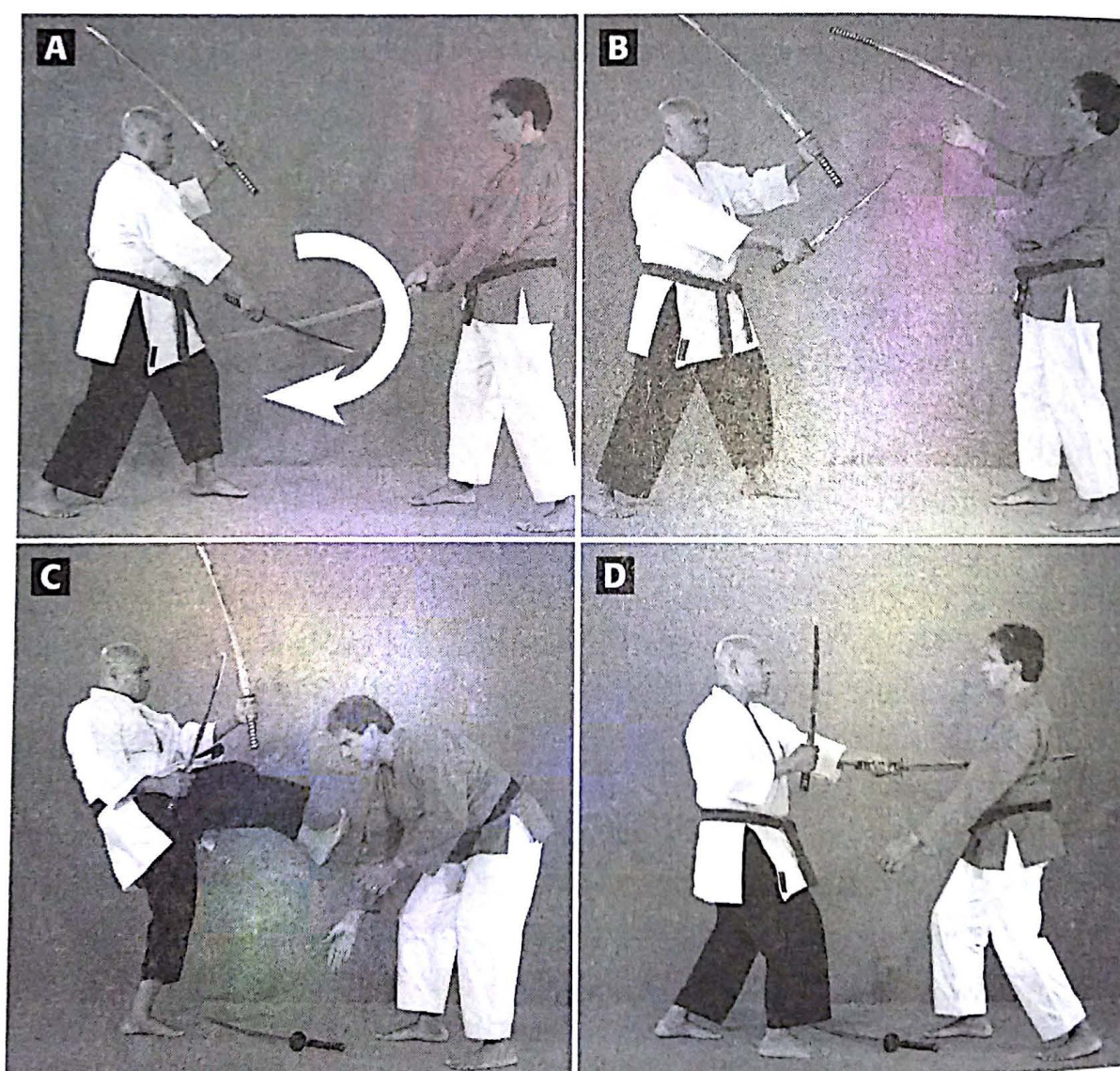


Figure 58: Maki waza, heian nidan, steps 16-18. The "inside block" flips the sword out of his hands (A, B). Kick him in the face when he tries to pick it up (C). Skewer him with the *gyaku-zuki* of step 18 (D).

Maki age is only one of several similar techniques taught in maki waza and its neighbor *uchi waza*. In *uchi waza*, you beat the opponent's sword away to create an opening. In heian nidan, Matsumura offers only the first lesson in the series, as is appropriate to beginners.

7.3.8 Step 22: Tsuba Zeriai

In step 22 of heian nidan, shotokan students step to the south and do *morote uke*, the reinforced block. (The right arm performs a typical inside block while the left fist presses against the inside of the right forearm.) This is a rather awkward block, and it has always been a puzzle to find it at step 22 where a kata would normally showcase a killing technique.

In the nito-ryu interpretation of heian nidan, this "block" becomes one of the most interesting techniques in the kata.

It is unusual for the two-sword (nito-ryu) warrior to hold both swords close together in front of his body. Usually the smaller sword is held in the right hand, and is directed forward at middle level as a fencing foil. The larger sword is held overhead in the left hand where it can be whipped down on the opponent's head and hands.

There is one exception, however. Kendo artists shift forward aggressively when attacking, intending to exchange blows as they pass each other, rather like knights jousting. Sometimes, they collide chest to chest with their weapons pressed between. This is called *tsuba zeriai*.³⁶¹ "Tsuba" is the guard of the sword. "Zeriai" means "competition," and in the case of kendo it is written using a kanji symbol that means "to draw near, or press." *Tsuba zeriai* is a "clinch" where you immobilize the opponent's sword by pressing his hands against his chest.

I have a video of a nito-ryu player doing *tsuba zeriai* using two swords against one. He crossed his swords, catching the opponent's blade in the "V." The defender's neck was three inches from a razor's edge on both sides (Figure 59). In this posture, the nito-ryu player's hand position resembles *morote uke*. It is not an exact match, but by the Shadow Principle it is close enough to be considered. This could be step 22 of the kata.

The rules of kendo are designed for safety and, therefore, depart from real-world combat in significant ways. To score a point from *tsuba zeriai*, the kendo practitioner must break away, deflect the opponent's sword

³⁶¹ The proper term appears to be *zeriai*, not *zerai*. It is often misspelled on kendo Web sites.

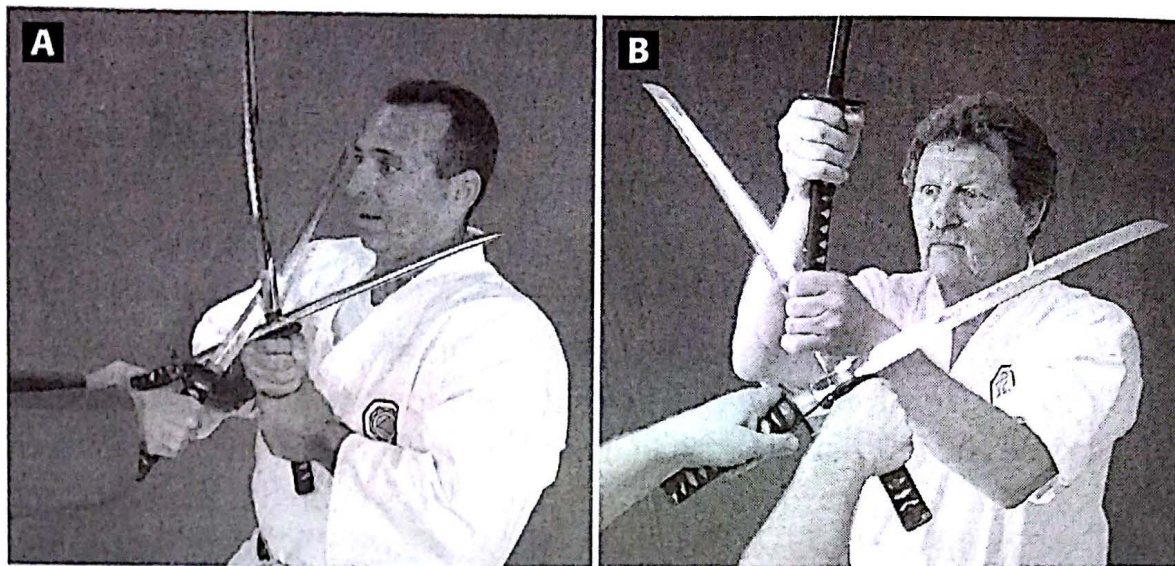


Figure 59: Tsuba zeriai, heian nidan, step 22. Nito-ryu's tsuba zeriai lets you catch the opponent's blade in the "V" of your two blades (A). Note the close proximity of your blades to the opponent's throat. It is even more vicious if you catch his wrists in the "V" instead of his blade (B).

and make a full-power strike against the head, ribs or right hand. In real life, the lightest touch of the blade will wound, and a shallow wound to the side of the throat can kill. The carotid artery is right beneath the skin.

If you set up a two-sword tsuba zeriai similar to step 22 of heian nidan, you'll find that it isn't difficult to rotate your weapons around the opponent's sword to reach his neck. In fact, when you perform that 270-degree turn on the way to step 23, the blade in your left hand quite naturally slices the opponent's throat as you turn. Remember, the opponent is not wearing armor in this kata. His throat is bare. The turn cuts his throat. As we step away from the turn, we are leaving his collapsing body behind.

This technique would never score under the rules of kendo, but Matsumura was showing a nonswordsman how to play a different game. This is a finishing technique that satisfies the Waldow Principle. Tsuba zeriai with two crossed swords is a deathtrap.

7.3.9 Steps 23-26: Debana Ude, Kote Chudan, Kote Jodan

In the last few moves of heian nidan, we see gestures borrowed from Musashi Miyamoto, one of the greatest swordsmen of all time.

In addition to his fighting accomplishments, Musashi was the author

of *The Book of Five Rings*, which he finished in 1645.³⁶² This is considered to be the bible of Japanese sword fighting, in spite of the fact that it contains only five detailed descriptions of winning techniques, most of which are illegal in modern kendo! For our purposes, it is significant that four of these five techniques achieve victory by slicing the opponent's upraised arms from below. That isn't the image we carry away from the samurai movies.

In step 23 of heian nidan, we turn to the west and perform a left down block, but is it really a down block? In nito-ryu your left hand holds a katana. This means that hand can be quite low while the blade angles upward to cover your whole left side (Figure 60). The down block becomes a sweeping parry to the left. The enemy has slashed down at you, and you have struck his blade aside. There is also a nice opportunity to slash his left wrist with this move (*kote chudan*), which we should not overlook.³⁶³

Musashi says our opponent will raise his sword and try again, and this is especially true of jigen ryu fighters. As his hands go up, maintain the pressure against his blade. Follow his sword upward with your own so that he cannot slash down again. This is step 24, the "shutō up block" of the kata. It is sufficient to maintain blade-to-blade pressure, but I prefer the interpretation where I dig the razor edge of my sword into the underside of his wrists instead. This gives the up block a great deal more authority.

At this point, you could run him through with the wakizashi in your right hand, but what does that achieve? He'll die but not right away. When you turn your back, he will still cut down on you. This is why the kata does the second up block as you step forward. As you step past him at an angle, use the blade in your right hand to slash the tricep muscles in the back of his raised arms, like Musashi would have done. Slice the arms to the bone as you step through. This step-and-slice motion strongly resembles *dehana do*, a kendo drill where you drag your sword across the opponent's abdomen as you charge past him. Slicing the arms as you step past would be *dehana ude*, if the kendo rules allowed such a thing. In *aikibatto*, cutting the arms from below is called *kote jodan*.³⁶⁴

Slashing the triceps leaves the opponent helpless, unable to wield

³⁶² Musashi, 2005.

³⁶³ Stenudd, Stefan, *Aikibatto: Sword Exercises for Aikido Students*, BookSurge, 2007, p. 131.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

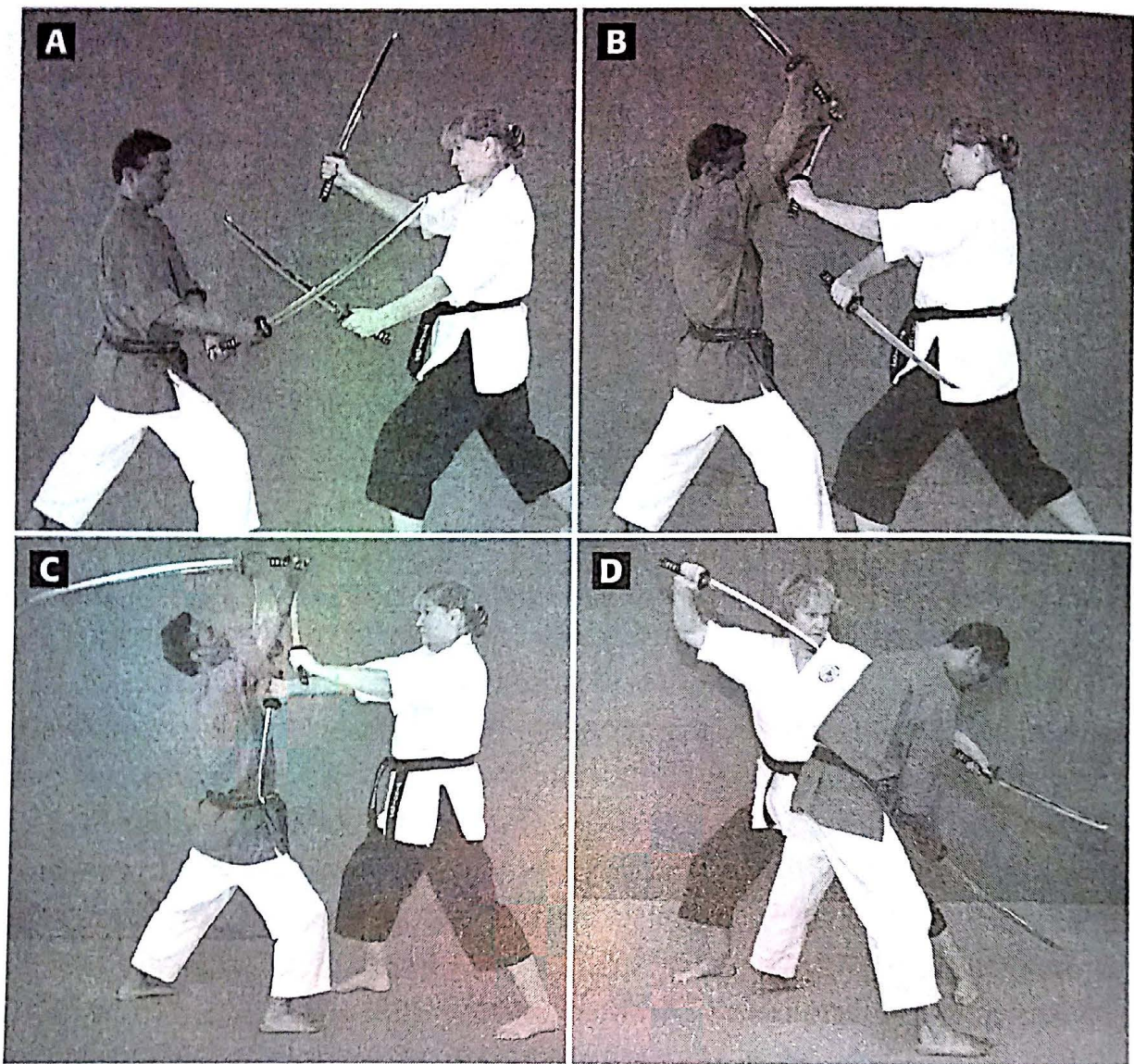


Figure 60: *Debana ude, heian nidan*, steps 23-26. The “down block” parries his first attack to the side (A). The first “up block” catches his second attempt, holding his arms up by bracing the sword against his wrists from below (B). The stepping “up block” slashes his triceps muscles to the bone, ending the fight (C, D).

the sword. This satisfies the Waldow Principle. We can turn our back on this enemy, even though he is still standing. He has been neutralized.

Steps 25 and 26 are the mirror image, with the same interpretation.

By now, the king is out of the room, headed for safety. We can back away from the carnage and exit. This fight is over.

7.4 Conclusion

Are these the “real” heian nidan applications? Let’s consider the evidence.

- The theme of the kata is “survival swordfighting.” Is that appropriate to the Shuri bodyguards? It would be hard to think of anything that would be more appropriate.
- Can we recognize one of Shuri’s enemies here? He is a swordsman who insists on using shomen uchi attacks. This is the samurai bureaucrat in his arrogant glory.
- Does the kata exploit the enemy’s weakness? The two-sword style gives the bodyguards advantages in both attack and defense. These advantages play to the rigid training and inexperience of their samurai opponents.
- Can we see one of our masters teaching the lesson? The kata has “Matsumura” written all over it. He was a sword-fighting master and was the original author of the kata.
- Are the techniques in a logical sequence? The disarming techniques come before the actual sword-fighting techniques, which makes perfect sense.
- Are the techniques historically appropriate? These are real techniques that are known from history and still visible in modern jujutsu, aikido and kendo.
- Does the kata form a complete lesson? The lesson includes how to obtain the swords (tachi dori), how to panic the opponents to keep them disorganized, how to beat down the opponent’s guard and stab through the opening, how to trap him in tsuba zeriai and cut his throat and how to employ upward-slashing techniques to defend against the shomen uchi attack. That’s an impressive set of skills to find in a 26-move kata.

Looking back on these applications of heian nidán, one can’t help but feel the unity of the explanation. From a historical perspective, this interpretation is not just plausible but compelling. This is the sword master’s lesson on disarming and killing swordsmen. This is what Matsumura went to Kagoshima to learn.

Imagine what it would have been like to receive this lesson at the hands of the Shuri bodyguards. You would have been trained in Itosu’s or Azato’s courtyard, silently in the dead of night to preserve secrecy. If you had been discovered with swords, you would have been put to death, probably by crucifixion. Imagine what it would be like to live and train in such a world.

Chapter 8



Fighting by the Roadside

The Shuri bodyguards had well-known fights with other martial artists on the streets of Naha. Some of these fights were life-and-death bouts, but usually they were contests where no fatal or maiming injury was contemplated. Their challengers were fighting for reputation, like the teenage boys who challenged famous gunfighters in the Old West.

The old strategy was strength and toughness. The Chinese approach encouraged toe-to-toe slugfests where the fighters stood in relatively upright stances with the knees turned in to protect the legs and groin.³⁶⁵ They exchanged a rapid series of blows to vital points that gradually wore the opponent down. To prepare for these fights, the Chinese artists beat their own bodies with split-bamboo clubs until they could no longer feel the pain of impact. They performed sanchin kata for hours at a time while holding weighted jars by their fingertips to develop shoulder muscles and a strong grip. People still undergo this kind of training in old-fashioned styles like uechi ryu.

The essence of Shuri-te was Matsumura's discovery of momentum power. He charged in at high speed, using his body momentum to knock the opponent off his feet. From that point on, you didn't need big chest muscles to win at karate.

No more weight lifting! Instead, we do deep stances to develop our leg muscles. No more short, mincing steps! Instead, we leap forward on the attack. No more standing still like a tree! Instead, we charge at the enemy and use the kinetic energy of the collision as our power source. Oi-zuki, with body momentum behind it, can literally make a man airborne. When I was a white belt, Sensei Ken Osborne proved this to me more than once. His front punch could lift me off the ground and throw me several feet backward to hit a wall. I felt like a bug on a windshield.³⁶⁶

If we believe the legends, Matsumura used his new technical invention to overwhelm and humiliate his traditional (Chinese-trained) rivals. A linear punch or kick has enough impact to knock a fighter out of his rooted stance and throw him to the ground. In this kind of "friendly" fighting, the goal is to roll the opponent in the mud. He'll have to walk home covered in his loss, and all his friends will know. After repeated loss of face, Matsumura's rivals refused to fight him anymore.

³⁶⁵ Think of shotokan's *sanchin dachi* and *hangetsu dachi*.

³⁶⁶ Thank you, Sensei Osborne.

This is the kata about fighting the weight lifters from Naha. The kata shows us Matsumura's secret weapon: momentum. Matsumura and Itosu wanted us to understand this principle.

8.1 Heian Shodan was Revolutionary

Shotokan students learn heian shodan as their first kata, or possibly the first "real" kata after the taikyoku kata. Either way, their introduction to karate is based on front stance, front punch and high-speed stepping around the room. We do one-step sprints all over this kata. Since it is our first kata, it never occurs to us that this is bizarre.

To gain some perspective, have a look at George Alexander's *Hakutsuru, Secret of the White Crane*,³⁶⁷ or the similar hakutsuru video by John Sells.³⁶⁸ The white crane kata is thought to be ancestral to shotokan. Compared to Matsumura's dynamic karate, hakutsuru performers are standing still. Each dignified step introduces multiple hand techniques, as many as 20 per step. In comparison, shotokan white belts charge around the room like a pack of howling jackals.

To determine how heian shodan differs from earlier forms, I collected 121 videos of kata performances from multiple Okinawan karate styles. I also added a few forms from white crane and wing chun. I studied the videos frame-by-frame, over and over, looking for an objective way to measure the difference between "hard" systems and "soft" ones.

After weeks of experiments, I discovered a simple way to do this. I ranked the kata performances by the number of linear-impact techniques (techniques where the body moves rapidly forward at the moment of impact) and divided by *the total number of moves* (mostly hand techniques). I called this the "linear ratio." This ratio crudely estimates how much the kata relies on Shuri momentum instead of Chinese strength.

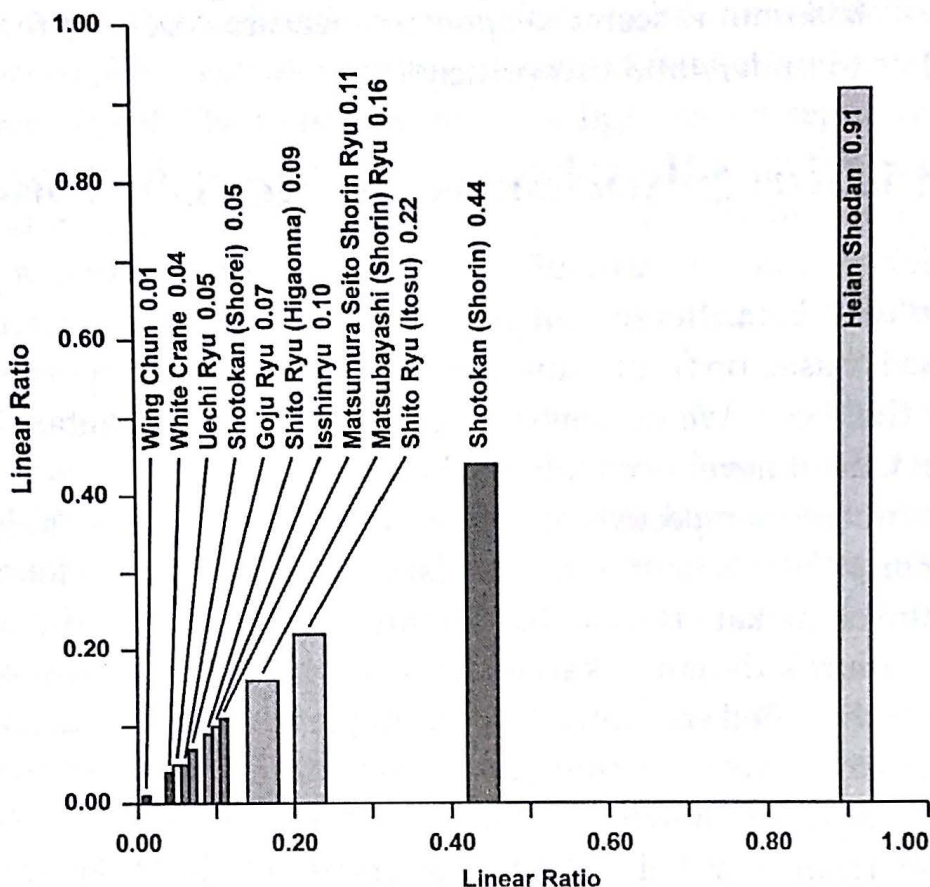
Every style had a few outliers, but there was a visible trend. If you apply the linear ratio to all the kata of a style and then plot the median (average) score for that style, you get an interesting bar graph.

A plot like Figure 61 conceals a multitude of statistical sins, and yet there is no doubt that the linear ratio sorted the Chinese styles to the left

³⁶⁷ Alexander, George, *Hakutsuru, Secret of the White Crane*, Yamazato Videos, 2002.

³⁶⁸ Sells, John, *Secrets of the White Crane*, The Martial Source, 1996.

Styles Ranked by Linear Ratio



Styles: Soft (left) to Hard (right)

Figure 61: Ranking of Karate Styles, median kata of each style ranked by the linear ratio. The linear ratio ranks the styles in an intuitive sequence from soft Chinese styles (left) to hard Shuri-te styles (right). Heian shodan (far right) is the “hardest” kata in any of these systems by a wide margin. (Chart design by David LaVerne.)

and the hard-style Shuri styles to the right. When we add heian shodan to the graph, it stands alone at the extreme right.

Heian shodan is a very different kata. That’s the key to understanding why hard-style, “linear” karate was such a departure from traditional chuan fa. Naha’s Chinese teachers must have been astonished to see people performing heian shodan. They had never seen anything like it.

8.2 Variations in Heian Shodan (Pinan Nidan)

Now let’s look inside heian shodan to see where people have been tampering with it. The comparisons described here are based on the same text and video resources cited in section 7.2.

Comparing shotokan's heian shodan to its counterparts in other styles, we note immediately that the *enbusen* (floor plan) of the kata is different. Shotokan, and styles derived from shotokan, use an H-shaped pattern.³⁶⁹ Other styles use Itosu's original *enbusen*, which looks more like a double-headed arrow (\leftrightarrow). The "wings" of the kata were originally performed at a steep angle.

The branches of heian shodan all look a lot alike, except in a few places where someone has meddled. For instance, some groups begin the kata by turning to the left and shifting backward on step 1, *recoiling* from the threat instead of leaping toward it. You can see that in matsubayashi ryu and in seito shito-ryu. This is because of revisions by Chotoku Kyan.

There are changes visible in step 4 of the kata, too, where we pull back, swing our fist in a circle, and then attack with a hammerfist. All branches of karate begin this sequence in a front stance and down-block posture, and then pull back to a semi-upright stance. Some branches remain in the upright stance while executing the hammerfist; other branches give power to the hammerfist by dropping the hips into front stance again. Dropping down is a *shotoism* added after 1924. Non-shotokan styles don't drop back into front stance, and early shotokans didn't, either.

Another place where the kata differ is in the three up blocks (steps 7-9). Some shotokan groups do normal beginner up blocks here (fist closed). Other groups do an up block, and then open the hand into shutō position at the top of the block before stepping forward. The shotokai group does shutō up blocks *only*. The 1924 shotokan students did normal up blocks that opened into shutos. That appears to be the original technique.

Matsubayashi ryu³⁷⁰ and seito shito-ryu do their front punches in a stiff, upright stance that kills the forward momentum. (That's Kyan again.) All shotokan groups, and near relations like robukai, use the deep front stance we would normally expect.

The 1924 video of a Funakoshi student demonstrating heian shodan has a curious oddity at step 17: the punch at the second kiai. We would

³⁶⁹ Thomas, 1988. As mentioned in section 2.3, some of *taekwondo's* forms are based on the heians. Their H-shaped pattern and numerous other *shotoisms* demonstrate that they were derived from shotokan's heians.

³⁷⁰ Nagamine, 2002.

expect a front stance and oi-zuki here, but this student delivered the third punch in *shiko dachi*, punching to the side!³⁷¹

The modern shutō uke technique, where you pull one hand back to your chest while striking with the other, was introduced very early in shotokan's history. One of the 1924 videos shows a student doing the older, swinging type of shutō uke. In that version, both hands swing forward at the same time.

Most groups do mid-level, knife-hand blocks at the end of the kata, but matsubayashi ryu, seito shito-ryu and *wado ryu* do knife-hand down blocks instead.

Even noting these discrepancies, heian shodan (pinan nidan) is pretty much the same kata everywhere you see it. It is all about charging around the room doing front punches.

8.3 Historical Applications of Heian Shodan

It is clear that heian shodan is mainly about using body momentum to knock people over with oi-zuki, the "pursuing" punch. Shotokan teachers are well-versed in teaching that kind of application. That doesn't mean that there's nothing more to say, however. When you add some jujutsu to the kata, heian shodan takes on some startling new qualities.

- Steps 1-2 (down block, front punch) exactly match a well-known throw from aikido.
- Step 3 (the first turn) can be used to teach a wrist lock, a hair throw and a neck crank.
- Steps 4-6 demonstrate three deadly combinations of jujutsu and karate techniques.
- Steps 7-10 (up blocks, kiai, turn) exactly match the *tai otoshi* throw. There is not much doubt that this is the original application for this sequence.
- Steps 11-14 repeat steps 2-5 (hair throw, neck crank).
- Steps 15-17 are the core lesson in how to use oi-zuki. A successful

³⁷¹ Warrener, 2003. Credit to David LaVerne for noticing that detail.

attack requires a timing change.

- Step 18 repeats steps 9-10 (tai otoshi throw).
- Steps 18-21 demonstrate the true use of shutō uke, ending with *ami uchi*, a very useful throw from aikido.

8.3.1 Steps 1-2: Ikkajo and Hiji Ate

In traditional shotokan, they tell you that step 1 (*gedan barai*) blocks a kick, and step 2 (*oi-zuki*) knocks the enemy over on his back. This is an example of restating the obvious (“this is a block; this is a punch”) as if that explained the application. We need to rise above that level. We can use the block and punch to teach a very important lesson about karate jutsu.

The first two moves of heian shodan can be explained as a subtle but very effective throw (Figure 63). Aikido students know it as *hiji ate kokyu nage*, the “elbow-pressure breathing throw.” It looks exactly like a down block and front punch.³⁷²

Begin the kata with your partner standing in front of you, holding your wrists. As you stack up for the down block, reach across with your left hand to grasp his left hand in the jujutsu “pistol grip” (*tanjū nigiru*, with your middle, ring and little fingers wrapped around the little-finger side of his palm). As you start the down block, peel his hand off your right wrist and push it out ahead of you as you step to the left. This rolls his arm into an *ikkajo* arm bar and wrist lock. It also forces him to stagger an awkward step to the west with you.

As you begin the second step (the front punch), his arm is stretched across your path. “Punch” through the space below his arm, and use the fold of your elbow to put pressure against his elbow joint as you step through. Maintain your grip on his hand as you rotate your punching wrist and straighten your elbow for full extension on the punch. This rotation puts sudden, painful pressure on his elbow joint. Done with shotokan power, this will dislocate the elbow and sprawl your partner on his face. Aikido students do it more gently, giving the partner an opportunity to do a forward roll and save his arm.

In *Total Aikido*, Sensei Gozo Shioda points out that forearm rotation

³⁷² Combes, Sam and others, *Aiki-do, Volume 3*, DVD 54 minutes, Black Belt Video, 1999.

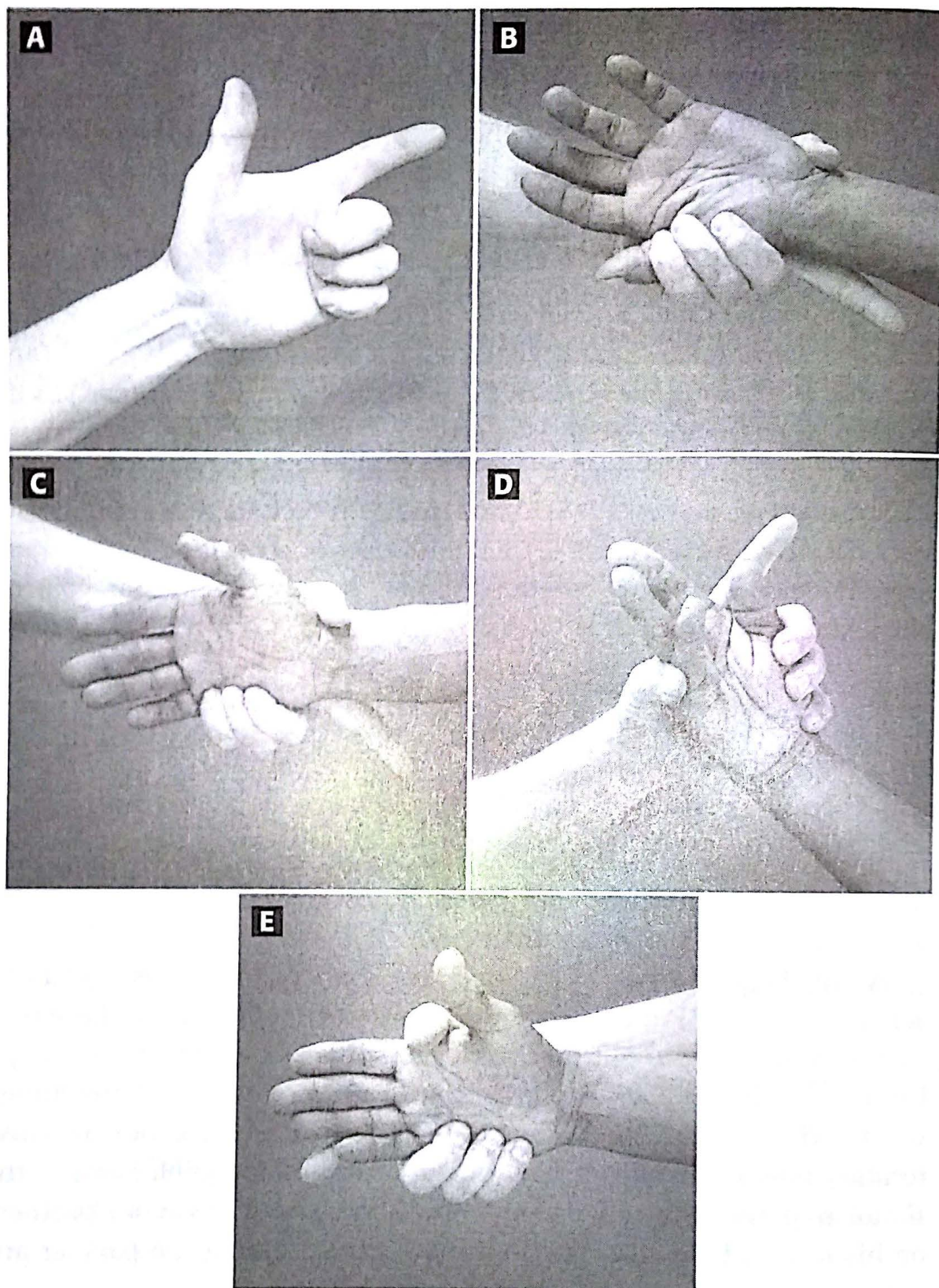


Figure 62: *Tanjuu nigiru*, the “pistol grip.” This grip is the generic tool for applying various types of wrist locks (A). Wrap the middle, ring and little fingers around the edge of the opponent’s hand, gripping either the first or fifth metacarpal bone (B, C). Use your thumb to secure the other edge of his hand. Keep your index finger extended. This grip can be applied to the hand in multiple ways, as seen here (D, E).

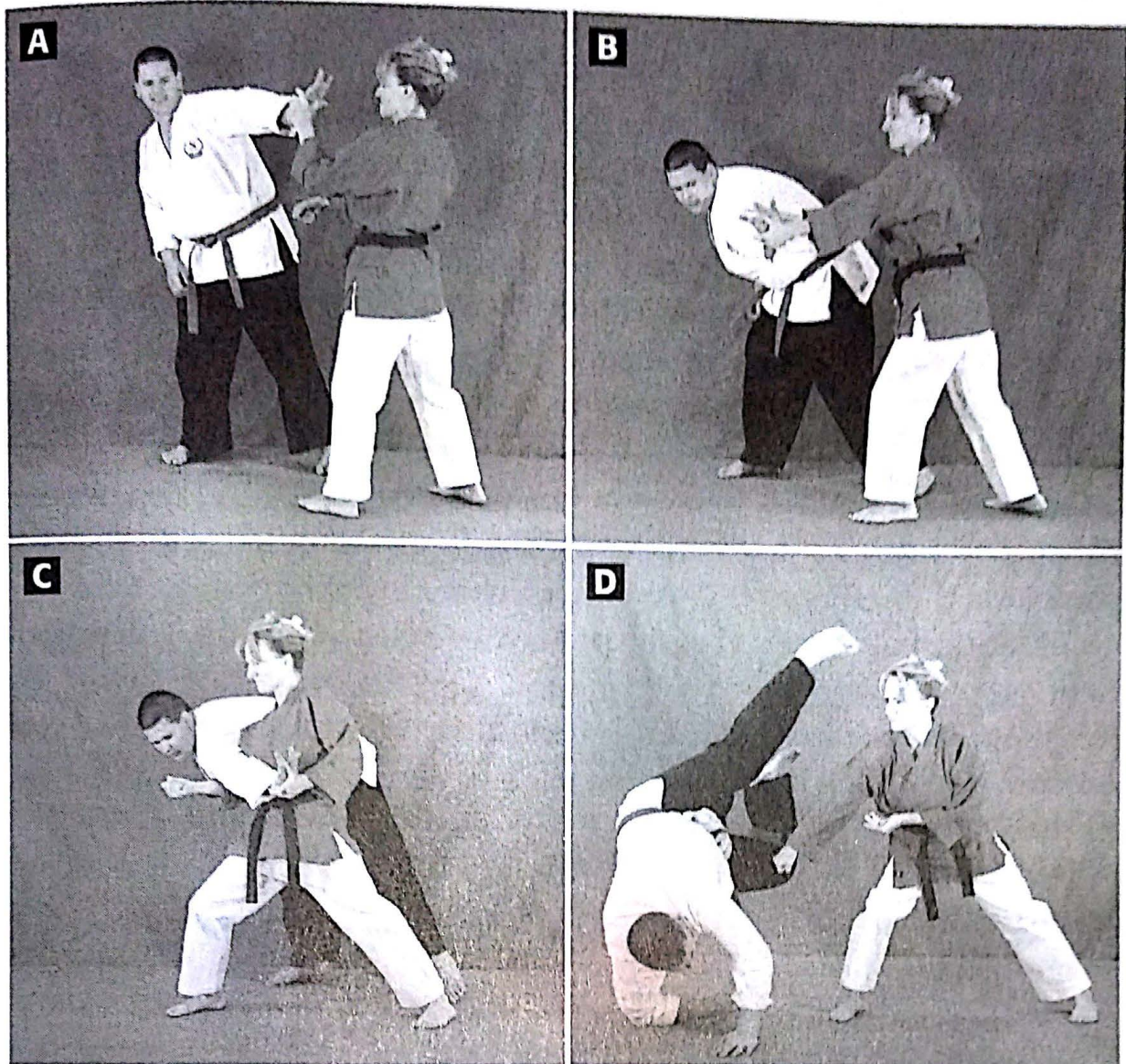


Figure 63: Hiji ate, heian shodan, steps 1-2. The “down block” uses an *ikkajo* wrist lock to lock the opponent’s wrist and elbow, forcing him into a vulnerable position (A, B). The “punch” hyperextends his elbow, either breaking it or throwing him on the floor (C, D).

and elbow-snap are the ingredients that make this throw work.³⁷³ This is exactly what we mean by *futi* in shotokan. Wrist-rotation and elbow-snap are the elements that make the front punch work, too. This is true in both arts because they use the skeleton for biomechanical advantage. What works for one art works for the other.

This throw isn’t the historical application, but it is important that we learn it and teach it. Why? Because if the front punch can be a throw, then *anything* can be a throw. I use this as a tool for prying open closed minds.

If you still hunger for the “real” application of steps 1 and 2, consider

³⁷³ Shioda, Gozo, *Total Aikido: The Master Course*, Kodansha, 1996, p. 154-155.

this. The opponent isn't kicking. He's punching at your face with his right hand. The "stack up" before the "down block" is really the outside forearm block that defends your face. The downward swinging gesture sweeps his arm down and out to the side, leaving his center open and vulnerable. You lance through the opening with oi-zuki.

It seems so obvious once someone points it out.

8.3.2 Step 3: Kami Nage, Atama Makikomi

In the third move of heian shodan, we make a long step to the rear, turning 180 degrees to the right, ending in gedan barai. In traditional shotokan, they tell you that you are blocking a kick.

Imagine that at the end of the previous move (the punch), your opponent successfully avoided your attack. Your right fist sailed over his left shoulder next to his head. Grab the hair at the back of his head and execute step 3. Step back, turn around and down block. He'll sprawl on his back at your feet (Figure 64).

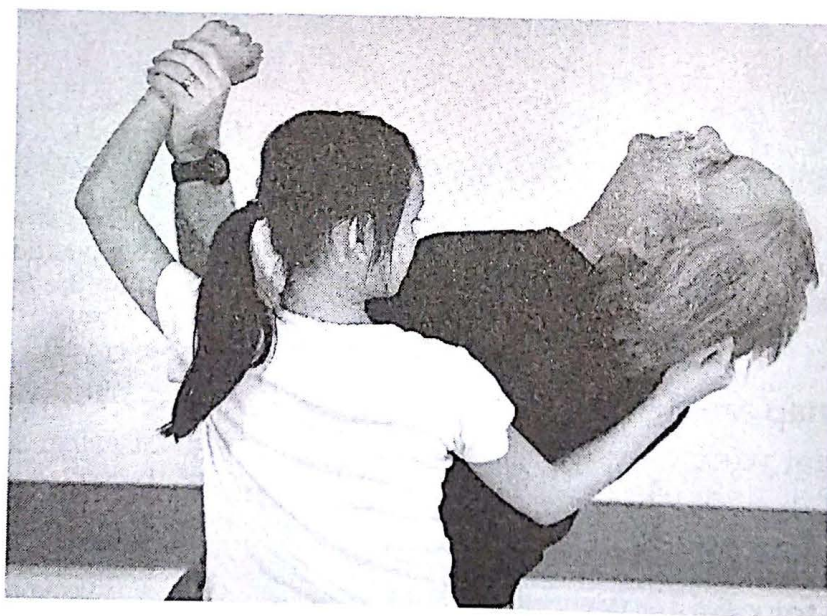


Figure 64: Kami nage, heian shodan, step 3. The down block while stepping to the rear is perfect for teaching the hair throw. You don't have to be big and strong to make it work.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴ The photo is from *Jein Do: Self-Defense for Young People of All Ages, Teacher's Guide*, by Bruce Clayton, Jein Do LLC, 2010. Used with permission.

This is *kami nage*, hair throw, which I learned from Briggs Hunt at UCLA in 1972. Probably every street fighter in the world knows this move, which is why they shave their heads. You can see Iain Abernethy demonstrate it in the second cluster of pinan nidan in his *Bunkai Jutsu* DVD.³⁷⁵ George Kirby uses one hand in the hair and the other on the opponent's chin to execute *atama makikomi*, the head winding throw.³⁷⁶ The *Bubishi*, the ancient text of Okinawan karate, calls this technique "a general holding a seal/stamp," and then shows the same technique a few pages later as "beautiful woman wearing makeup."³⁷⁷ (Sometimes there is a narrow line between ancient wisdom and ancient senility.)

There are multiple variations on the simple idea of grabbing the enemy's hair and taking his head around and down. The technique is very appropriate to beginners.

8.3.3 Steps 4-5: Ikkajo, Nikajo, Te Kagami, Tetsui Uchi

Steps 4-5 of heian shodan find us pulling back from a down-block posture, swinging the right arm in a large circle, and dropping down into a *tetsui uchi* hammerfist strike. After the strike we step forward and execute a left front punch.

In traditional shotokan, they tell us this is a wrist release followed by a hammerfist strike to the collarbone, arm or head. This explanation frees your hand, but it is a tactical blunder. It returns you to a neutral position against an alert, upright enemy. We pretend that the hammerfist attack would be effective, but any black belt would block it, dodge it or preempt it. There has to be more to this story.

In fact, step 4 of heian shodan can be used to teach three devastating wrist locks, each of which sets up a crippling or killing blow. That's the kind of fighting we would expect to find in the Shuri Crucible.

Te kagami: You did a right down block, and your opponent has caught your right wrist with his left hand. Pull your arm gracefully (no jerking) back toward your left hip and swing it up until you can look into the

³⁷⁵ Abernethy, 2006. See *pinan nidan* (second cluster).

³⁷⁶ Kirby, 1983, p 57.

³⁷⁷ McCarthy, 1995, p. 169 and 175.

palm of your open right hand. This is the setup for the *te kagami* (hand mirror) throw as practiced in aikijutsu, aikido, and hakkoryu jujutsu.³⁷⁸ (Te kagami is a variant on the *te nage* hand throw. See Figure 65.)

This move inverts his left hand so that you can reach under it with your left hand and secure the jujutsu “pistol grip” on the back of his hand. Your middle, ring and little fingers clamp around the base of his thumb so you can apply a very painful wrist lock. Once you have the grip, it is trivial to pull your right wrist free of his grip.

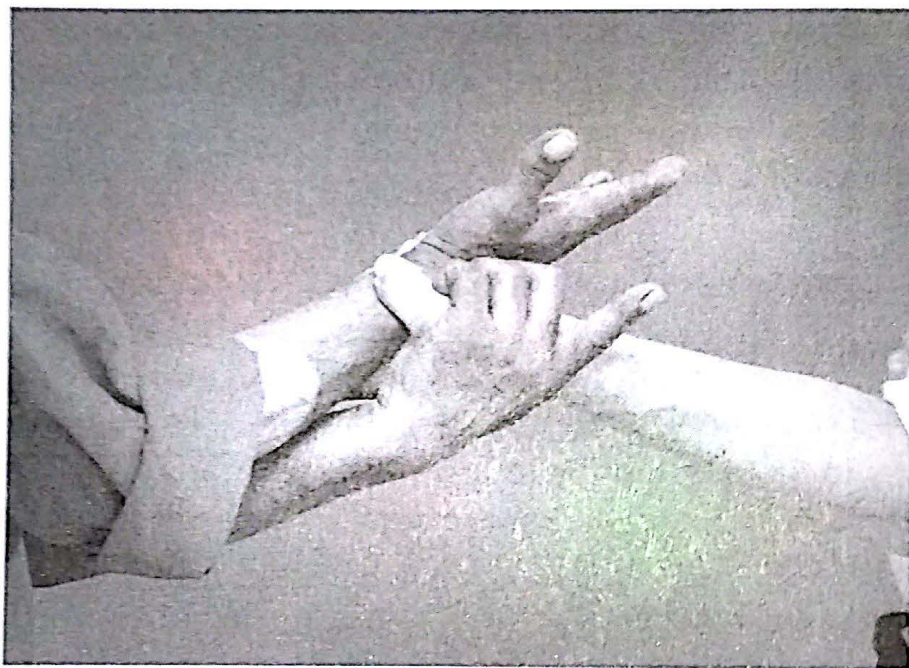


Figure 65: *Te kagami*, the “hand mirror.” The opponent is on the right. He grabs your wrist. Turn your hand up so you can look into the palm like a mirror. Reach under and secure his hand in the “pistol grip.”

Do not throw your opponent over! Simply apply pressure with the wrist lock to break his posture. You can “dial in” increments of pain to twist him into more and more awkward postures (Figure 66). In one of those awkward postures, he exposes the right side of his neck to your downward *tettsui* strike. It’s a lethal strike. The *tettsui* will shear his neck vertebrae.

Twist his wrist to make him helpless and vulnerable; then unload the full power of your shotokan training against a vulnerable point. He can’t dodge, block or counter. This isn’t just an “effective” self-defense

³⁷⁸ Palumbo, Dennis, *The Secrets of Hakkoryu Jujutsu, Shodan Tactics*, Paladin Press, 1987, p. 80-85.

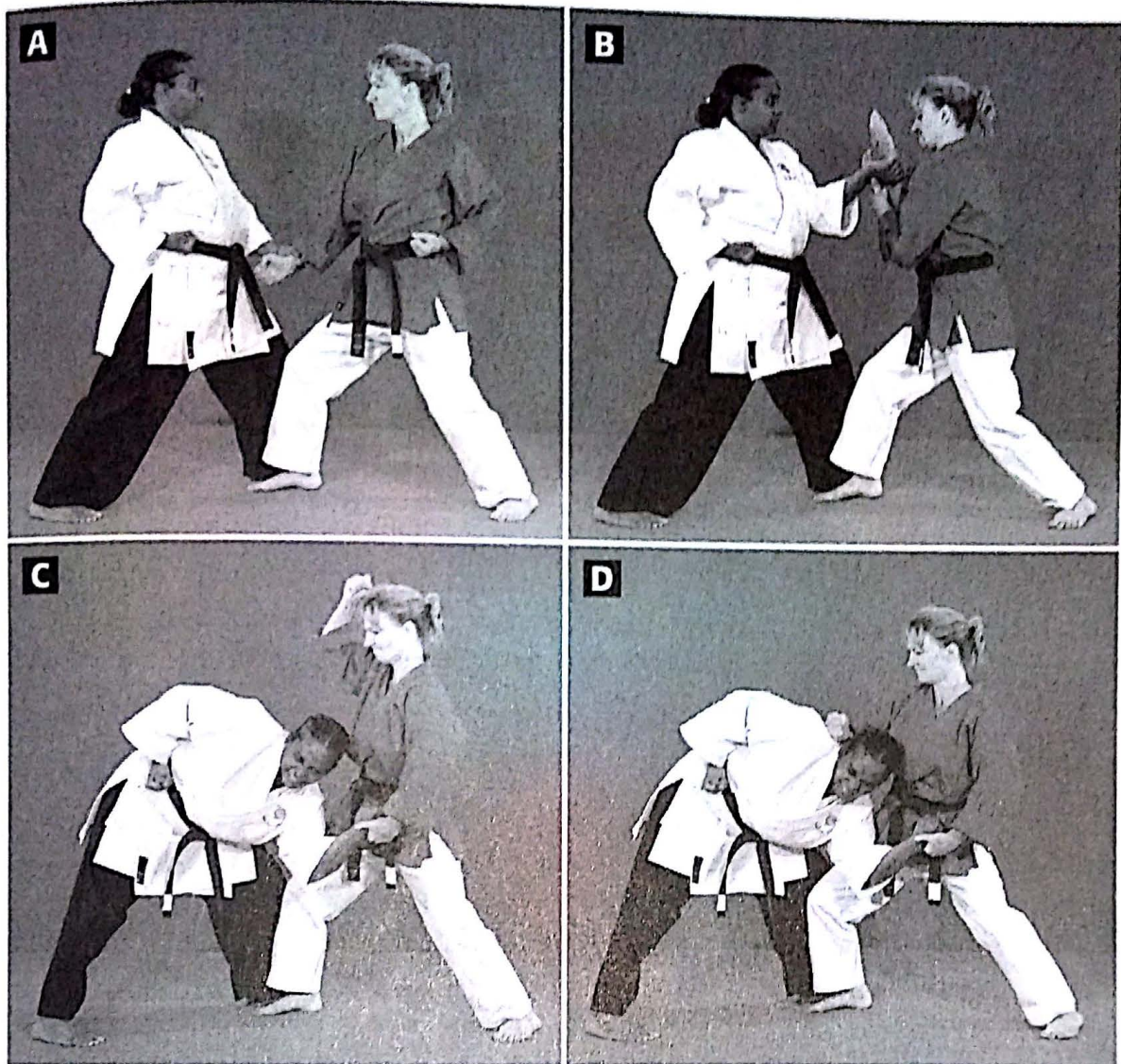


Figure 66: *Te kagami*, heian shodan, step 4. The opponent is on the left. She grabs your right wrist in her left hand (A). Use *te kagami* to free your hand and apply a wrist lock (B). Tighten the wrist lock to distort the opponent's posture (C), until you can use the hammerfist against the right side of her neck, killing her (D).³⁷⁹ You can "dial in" the posture you want by adjusting the wrist lock.

technique. It would be murder to do this in real life.

Matsumura took every advantage. If you grabbed his wrist, you died.

Ikkajo: The opponent has your right wrist grasped in his left hand, as before. Bring the fingers of your right hand up to the outside of his wrist so you can grasp his left forearm just above the wrist (Figure 67). Now make the sweeping pull back to your left hip, as prescribed by the kata. Use your left hand to join your right in capturing his left arm in

³⁷⁹ San Ten is an equal-opportunity mayhem environment without regard to age, race, creed or sexual orientation.

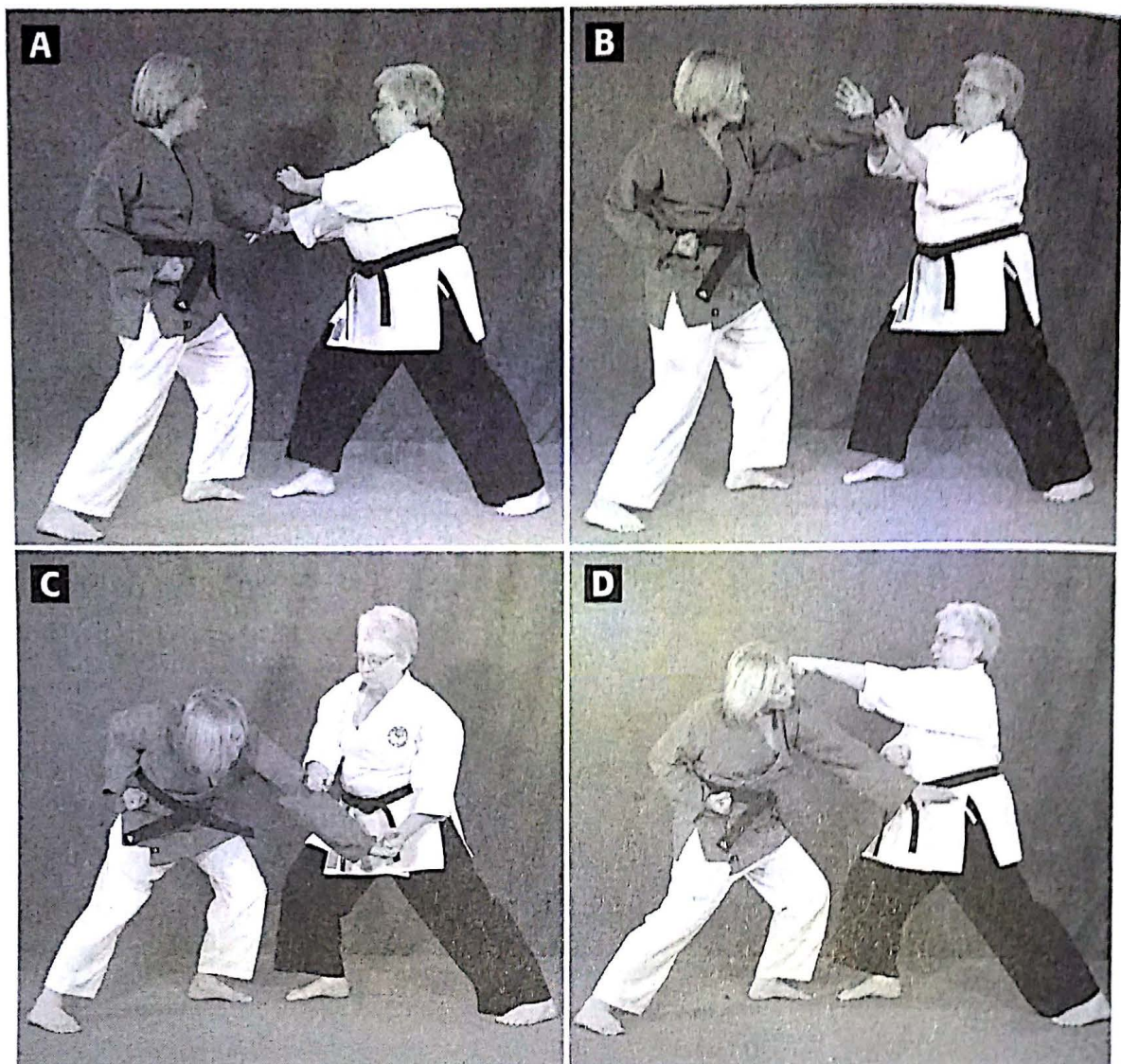


Figure 67: Ikkajo, ude osae dori, heian shodan, steps 4-5. The opponent is on the left. She grabs your right wrist in her left hand (A). Use ude osae dori to apply an arm bar (B). Break her elbow (C). Aim the stepping punch at the thin bones in the side of her skull (D).

the classic ikkajo straight-arm bar and wrist lock. This is the first thing you learn in most aikido classes.³⁸⁰ In hakkoryu jujutsu, it is known as *ude osae dori*,³⁸¹ the arm-pressure technique.

Once you have his hand and arm in ikkajo, secured with your left hand, it is trivial to pull your right arm free of what remains of his grip. Your right fist arcs upward and starts down, aimed at his exposed elbow. The hammerstrike comes down on the elbow joint, dislocating it and probably breaking the proximal end of the ulna (the olecranon process).

³⁸⁰ Combes, Sam, *Aiki-do*, Volume 1, DVD 60 minutes, Black Belt Video, 1999.

³⁸¹ Palumbo, 1987, p. 95-97.

Note that he is bent over in a helpless posture when you launch the *oi-zuki* in step 5. It hits him in the left temple, potentially cracking his skull.

Nikajo: This time, have your opponent grasp your right wrist using his right hand instead of his left (Figure 68).

Swing your arm back toward your left hip (as required by the kata), then up, over and down as if reaching toward his face. As the hand is on the upward curve of the circle, reach in with your left hand and press his fingers tightly against your right wrist so he can't let go. This is called the *nikajo* lock in aikijutsu and aikido, and is known as *matsubadori* (pine-needle lock) in hakkoryu jujutsu. The lock is vicious. Done

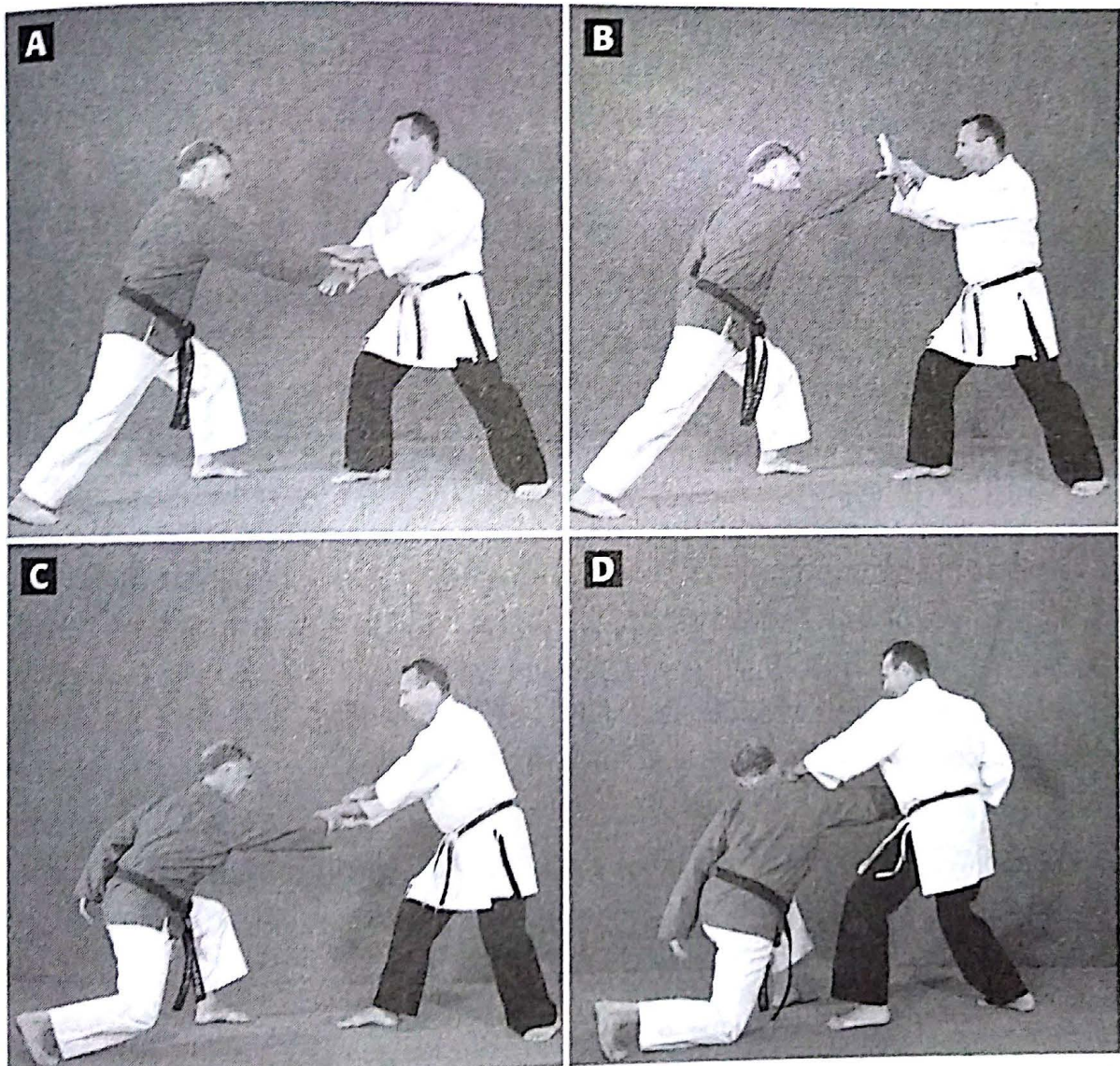


Figure 68: *Nikajo*, heian shodan, steps 4-5. The opponent is on the left. He grabs your right wrist in his right hand (A). Use the circular movement to apply the *nikajo* wrist lock, forcing him to his knees (B, C). Aim the stepping punch at the thin bones in the side of his skull (D).

slowly, it forces the opponent down to his knees, turning his body slightly toward your right. Done quickly, it tears his wrist apart. This puts the right side of his head squarely in the maximum-impact zone for your upcoming front punch. The punch will do vicious damage to the opponent's right temple because he has no way to dodge or block. He's going to get hit in the temple with all the power you care to use.

These are the beginner wrist locks that everyone learns in the first few days of a jujutsu or aikido class. It is appropriate to study them as part of heian shodan. In addition, these wrist locks teach a vital lesson about karate jutsu. The combined techniques (jujutsu plus karate) are vicious beyond anything seen in a normal karate class. This makes us reflect on the kind of fighting the Shuri bodyguards prepared for.

8.3.4 Step 6: Gedan Barai Nage

In step 6 of this kata we turn 90 degrees to the left with a sweeping down block. Consider that the opponent is on his knees right in front of you and has just been punched in the side of the head.

- If you manage to hit him squarely in the temple, he'll fall unconscious on his left side, sprawled away from you.
- If the hit isn't solid, your fist will glance off his head and pass by, either grazing his face or passing behind the back of his head.

If your fist grazes his face, this is your chance to stack up for the down block and use it as a *tettsui* strike in the face or throat, taking him down decisively to his rear. If your fist passes behind his head, you can stack up for the same down block, grab his hair in your fist and take him down with a *kami nage* (hair throw).³⁸²

8.3.5 Steps 7-10: Tai Otoshi, Kube Shioku Yoko Nage

Shotokan teachers have some difficulty explaining the driving sequence of three up blocks in steps 7, 8 and 9 of this kata. Why would you block three times when you are obviously on the attack? The answer is very

³⁸² Abernethy, 2006. Credit goes to Iain Abernethy for suggesting those two ideas.

simple. We're driving forward, deflecting a flurry of flailing punches, because we're trying to close in for a throw.

Catching a flying arm in a flurry of punches requires multiple attempts. In this situation, driving forward to push the enemy off his base is a well-known tactic.³⁸³ This series of powerful up blocks seizes the initiative and gives us a chance to land an elbow blow or to catch an arm. We succeed in catching the arm in step 8 of the kata and the elbow blow under the chin is step 9.

Let's assume that we are back in step 8. Step in and use your left up block to catch his swinging right-hand punch. Capture his arm by grasping his right wrist or sleeve in your left hand. Then, in step 9, rush in and strike him under the jaw with your right up block. Everybody loves that tooth-shattering interpretation, and it sets up a whole family of throws.³⁸⁴ The best fit is tai otoshi, which exactly matches the movements of the kata.^{385,386} The version of tai otoshi that appears in the kata is also one of the easiest to perform. It is appropriate to a beginner of this kata.

Tai otoshi: You just slammed your elbow under the opponent's chin (Figure 69). You have his right wrist tightly gripped in your left hand. Grasp the cloth at the opponent's right shoulder using your right hand, but keep your forearm pressed against his throat under his chin. The position looks just like the up block of step 9.

Turn to the left as you step in deeply with your right foot. Place the toes of your right foot on the ground just outside of the toes of his right foot. (Only the ball of your foot will be on the ground, not the whole foot.) Now pull his arm around to your left as you use your elbow to push his head around in the same circular motion. He spills over your outstretched leg and falls heavily on his left side.

In the combat version of this throw, you would keep your forearm under his chin and drop on top of him, driving the back of his head into the ground and crushing his throat with your elbow. That technique satisfies the Waldow Principle. In jujutsu classes, this part of the throw is not

³⁸³ Abernethy, 2006b.

³⁸⁴ Morris, Vince, *Karate's Secret Throws*, DVD 60 minutes, Kissaki-Kai, 2009. See the section on "Mawate—Gedan Barai."

³⁸⁵ Kirby, 1992, techniques 1-4.

³⁸⁶ Mifune, Kyuzo, *The Canon of Judo: Classic Teachings on Principles and Techniques*, Kodansha, 1960, p. 56.

performed. We remain upright instead of riding the opponent down. The elbow is removed from the chin early to allow your partner to land safely.

This is a very solid, no-nonsense throw that exactly fits the kata. This technique is also pictured in FM 21-150 (1992) as a rifle-disarming move. Your left hand has a grip on his weapon instead of his arm as you execute the throw.³⁸⁷

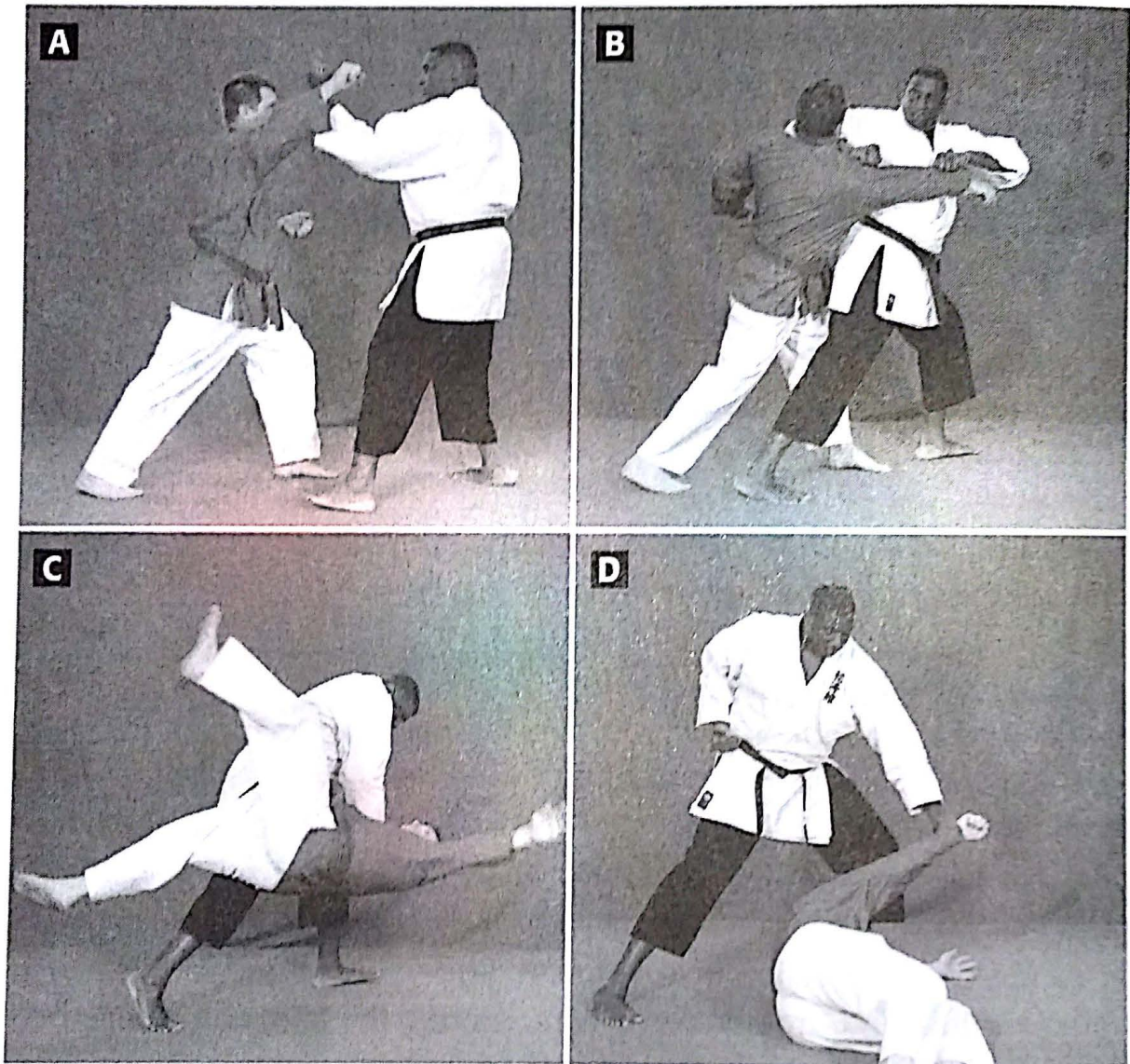


Figure 69: *Tai otoshi*, heian shodan, steps 8-10. The left up block in step 8 catches the opponent's right wrist (A). The right up block in step 9 strikes under the chin (B), stunning the opponent. Then, grab the cloth at his right shoulder with your right hand. Turn to position your right foot next to his, and *using your elbow under his chin for leverage*, throw him to the ground (C, D).

³⁸⁷ US Army, *Combatives Hand to Hand Combat*, FM 21-150, 1992, figure 5-23.

Kube Shioku Yoko Nage: It is much easier to throw a person than you might think. I teach a second throw for step 10 just to make this point (Figure 70). This is *kube shioku yoko nage* (neck pain side throw) from budoshin jujutsu and taiho jutsu.^{388, 389}

After the up block and kiai, take the opponent's right wrist in your left hand. Use your right hand to apply atemi pressure beneath his left ear (on the neck muscles about two inches below the ear lobe). Use just the tip of your thumb to dig into the muscle there. Pull on the sleeve and push on the atemi point as you execute the turn. He collapses and lands on his back.³⁹⁰

This attack is trivially easy to do. People are astonished by how easily it works. We should teach every student to do it.

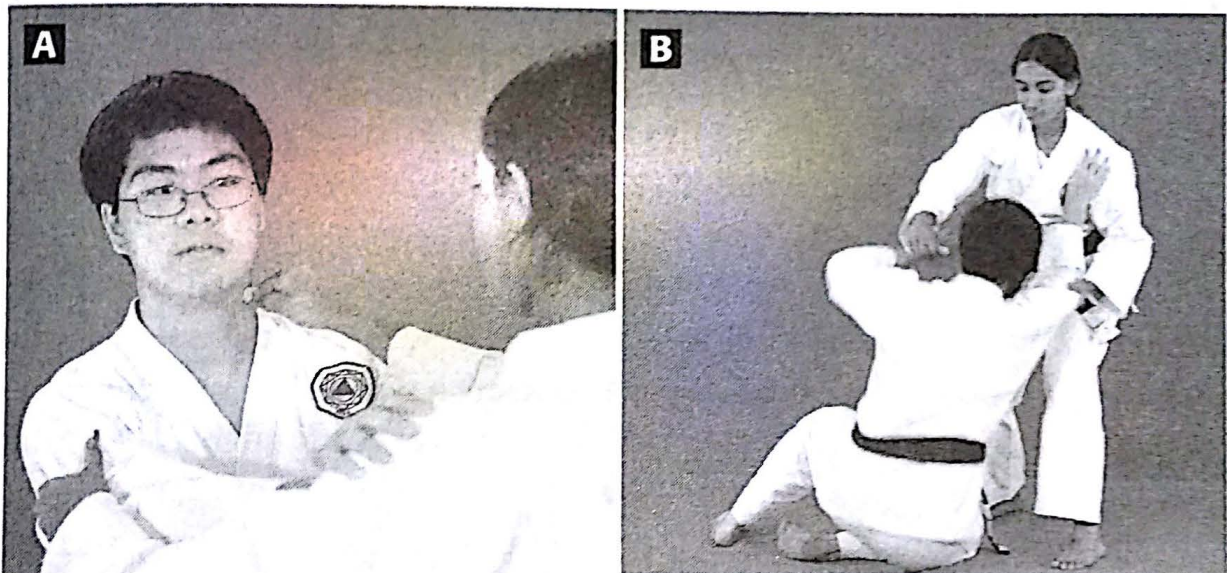


Figure 70: *Kube shioku yoko nage*, heian shodan, steps 9-10. A gentle tug on the sleeve and thumb pressure in the side of the neck will put an opponent on the deck. The thumb gouge collapses his posture (A). The pull on the sleeve just shows him where to fall (B). This is a good application to teach beginners.

³⁸⁸ Kirby, George, *Jujitsu Nerve Techniques: The Invisible Weapon of Self-Defense*, Black Belt Books, 2001, p. 130-131.

³⁸⁹ Kubota, 1987, p. 18-19, for the *taiho jutsu* version.

³⁹⁰ Various sources erroneously identify this pressure point as the vagus nerve or the carotid artery. It is simply a spot where neck muscles can be pinched against the underlying neck bones.

8.3.6 Steps 11-14: Replay Steps 2-5

Steps 11-14 of heian shodan are the “top” of the kata. We step in to punch to the east, then spin around and attack to the west. In step 14, we turn south and down block. The potential applications for this cluster are exactly the same as for the first few steps of the kata, except that we don't get to repeat the wrist locks of step 4.

If we interpret this kata in the context of bodyguard tactics, this is the part of the reaction mission where we sow panic in the mob of attackers by driving into the center of the group and knocking people down one after another. The whole point of this kata is to get the enemies to focus on the protector instead of the protectee. This berserk attack on the crowd buys a few seconds for the extraction team to whisk the king out of sight.

8.3.7 Steps 15-17: Oi-zuki!

Steps 15-17 of heian shodan are a short course in oi-zuki. There is more here than meets the eye.

Oi-zuki delivers a powerful blow and was so significant to Matsumura and Itosu that they devoted most of a kata to it. So what's the downside? If this is such a powerful technique, why doesn't it win all the tournaments?

It should be said that karate is all about power, and tournament rules don't let us use any power. This says a lot about the value of tournaments.

“Pursuing punch” implies that the target is backpedaling and we catch him in a state of *kyo* (unreadiness). Compared to the lightning punches and blocks of wing chun, oi-zuki is glacially slow. It is easy to block and easy to dodge. It works best against a retreating opponent who can be tricked by a change in timing. You use two standard punches to set the defender's expectations, then you double the speed of the third punch to drive through his defense before he is ready. A change in tempo is a classic martial-arts technique. European sword masters call it *mezzo tempo*.³⁹¹

In a mob, a crumpled body on the ground creates a momentary “safe zone.” The crumpled man isn't necessarily harmless, but the other fighters generally won't step over him or stand on him. This lets us put our back to a zone of reduced risk as we turn our attention

³⁹¹ Fick, Steaphen, *The Beginner's Guide to the Long Sword*, Black Belt, 2009, p. 37-38.

elsewhere. It isn't a coincidence that this "finishing blow" comes just before a turn in the kata.

8.3.8 Steps 18-21: Shutō Uke, Shutō Uchi, Ami Uchi

Steps 18-21 are the four knife-hand techniques at the end of heian shodan. "Shutō uke" is the knife-hand *block*. "Shutō uchi" is the knife-hand *strike*.

Shotokan beginners are told to "stack up" by putting the blocking hand next to the ear, then to "block" by striking forward with the edge of the knife hand. This block is so difficult to apply to an incoming punch that shotokan Master Masatoshi Nakayama said, "If you step straight backward, or block without stepping backward, this technique has little chance of success."³⁹² He advised stepping back at an angle so that the block could be applied more easily to the side of the arm.

In fact, this technique has a rich heritage of applications that are widely taught in combatives schools. You have to realize two things about it. One, the so-called "stack up" is the block. Two, the alleged "block" is really an attack. You step forward, not backward, to apply it, just like in the katas.

There are at least three versions of the knife-hand block to choose from. In matsubayashi ryu, there is *sagurite no kamae*, "searching hand fighting posture" from patsai (bassai) kata.³⁹³ It is very close to shutō uke and is used when groping for enemies in the dark. Then there is the "swinging" version of the technique, wherein you swing both hands in the same direction, using hip rotation in the same direction as the sweep of the hands. Both hands strike the punching arm, one at the wrist and one at the bicep/deltoid notch. This is a circular (soft-style) technique that deflects the opponent's arm to the side and stuns the nerves of the arm. You see this in very early shotokan films and in some present-day Okinawan styles.

The shotokan technique has been recently modified by the addition of hiki te (pullback hand) dynamics. The hands move in opposite directions,

³⁹² Nakayama, Masatoshi, *Dynamic Karate*, Kodansha, 1966, p. 208.

³⁹³ Nagamine, 2000, p. 90.

linked by contracting muscles across the shoulder blades. The power of the “block” is directed straight ahead and comes from the hind foot through a focused rotation of the hips at the moment of impact. (Most students I have seen have never mastered this hip rotation and, therefore, have weak blocks.) This is linear technique, driving power directly into the opponent’s body. The point of contact is still the bicep/deltoid notch of the upper arm, where a sensitive nerve is exposed against the bone.

For kata testing, we must demonstrate the “traditional” version of shutō uke. For applications, however, I think students are better off with the swinging version. It is much easier to do and is very practical. The two-handed block makes it easy to stun the punching arm and capture it.

The applications of shutō uke/uchi are shown in Figure 71.

Stand in “yoi” stance (*shizen tai* or *hachiji dachi*). Your opponent takes a left front stance at a distance that will force him to step in deeply to reach your face. (All *ippon kumite* begins this way.)

Have your opponent step in (right foot) and perform a wide, swinging punch to the face. Use the punch you are likely to meet on the street, not the linear *oi-zuki*.

Step forward with your right foot, turn into the punch and block with two shutos. Your left hand strikes his wrist, holding it away from your face. Your right hand cuts into the bicep/deltoid notch, which is the dip in the muscles about halfway down the upper arm. (You’ll know when you have hit the right spot because your opponent will start to complain.)

After stopping the punch, close your left hand around his wrist. Use your right hand to deliver a sharp shutō uchi to the side of his neck, about two inches below the earlobe.³⁹⁴ The shutō to the side of the neck is painful and disorienting, so we don’t really strike our practice partner.

With the opponent stunned by the neck blow, it is relatively easy to throw him on his back in the mud. The technique is *ami uchi*³⁹⁵ or *kaiten nage*³⁹⁶ from aikido, and is included in Iain Abernethy’s list of combat drills.³⁹⁷ It involves gestures that are exactly like stepping in and stacking up for the “next” knife-hand block.

³⁹⁴ Kirby, 2001, p. 130-131.

³⁹⁵ Combes, Sam, *Aiki-do*, Volume 5, DVD 50 minutes, Black Belt Video, 1999.

³⁹⁶ Westbrook, A. and O. Rati, *Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere: An Illustrated Introduction*, Tuttle, 1970, p. 250-255.

³⁹⁷ Abernethy, Iain, *Combat Drills*, DVD 70 minutes, Summersdale, 2007, drill #1.

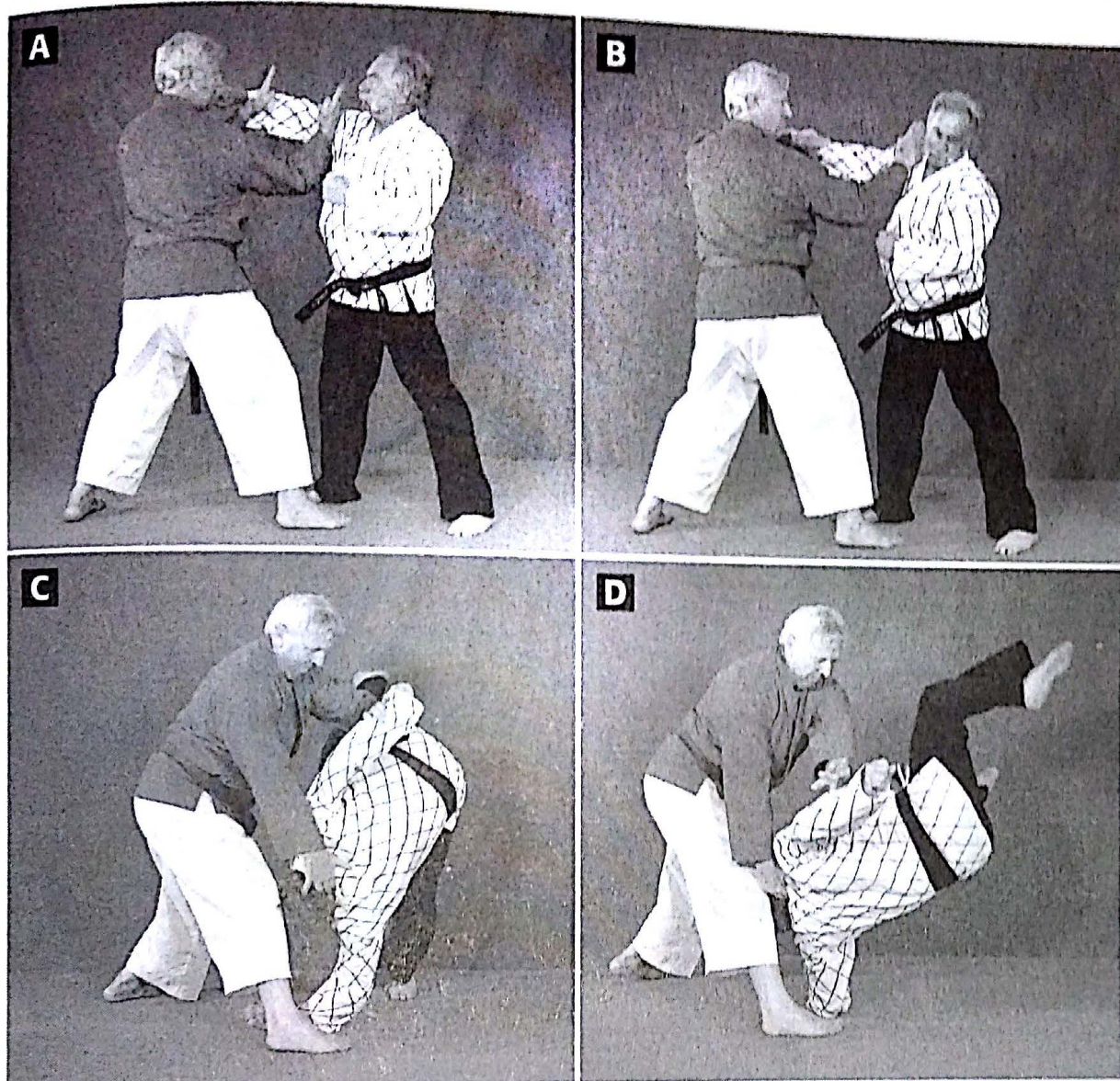


Figure 71: Shutō uke, shutō uchi, ami uchi, steps 18-21. The opponent is on the right. For best results, use the original, two-handed swinging block to stop the punch and stun the arm (A). Strike the side of the neck to disorient the opponent (B). Then, apply ami uchi to flip him on his back (C, D).

After striking the opponent's neck, let your right hand grasp his neck. (Your palm is on the side of his neck below his right ear, so your fingers hook around to the nape of the neck.) Use your left hand, still gripping his wrist, to push his arm down and to his rear, just touching his right hip in passing. Continue to move his arm back and up like a pump handle, locking the shoulder. At the same time, push down on his neck with your right hand, forcing him to bow. By pushing down on his neck and levering up on his arm, you can flip him into a forward roll. He ends up on the floor and you still have his right wrist. You can proceed to a submission hold from there.

To teach that drill using the modern shutō-ude/uchi technique, simply change the initial block (Figure 72). Instead of using the two-hand shutō uke, have the student stack up for a right shutō uke. The student's right hand sweeps across his face to the left side to intercept and deflect the incoming punch.³⁹⁸ The stack up is the real block.

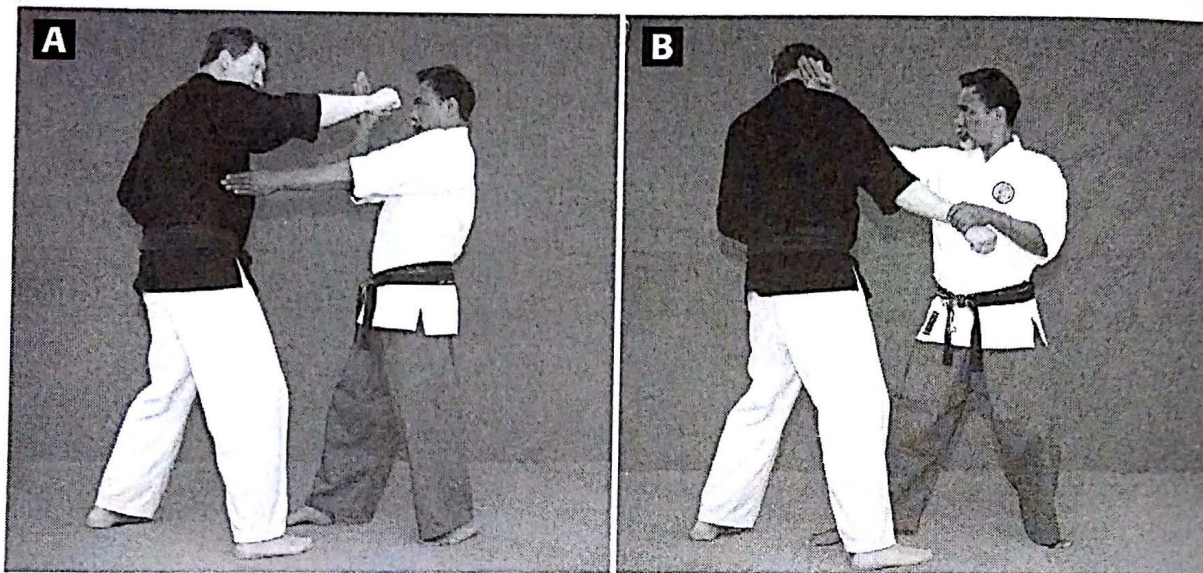


Figure 72: Brush, hold, strike, heian shodan steps 18-21. The opponent is on the left. In this interpretation, use your right hand to brush the punch aside while probing for nerve centers with your left fingertips (A). Then, switch hands very rapidly. Hold his wrist with your left hand while striking shutō-uchi to the side of the neck with your right hand (B).

The student's left hand reaches toward the opponent to work some nerve mischief. For instance, the student can jab his fingertips into any number of nerve pressure points exposed in the opponent's face, throat or shoulder. Jamming the fingertips into the armpit is very effective. (This technique is called "monkey threading a needle" in the *Bubishi*, the ancient textbook of Okinawan karate.)³⁹⁹ The purpose of these finger jabs is to make the opponent flinch out of posture, which disrupts and delays his next technique.

That was just the stack up! The student now completes the shutō-uke by stepping in with the right foot, drawing the left hand back to trap the opponent's right wrist and striking shutō uchi to the side of the neck with the right hand. Then, execute the ami uchi throw as before.

This interpretation of shutō uke/uchi is a classic that is widely taught

³⁹⁸ Higaki, 2005, p. 110, shows the "cross counter," which is Higaki's name for blocking with the stackup hand.

³⁹⁹ McCarthy, 1995, p. 169.

outside of karate. Peyton Quinn called it “brush, hold, strike” in his classic video on *Barroom Brawling* in 1991.⁴⁰⁰ The *ami uchi* throw appears as “spinning the mark” in Quinn’s textbook on the same subject.⁴⁰¹ In combat hapkido, they call it the “brush-trap strike” and do it exactly the same way.⁴⁰² I’ve seen instructors drilling it at the annual UKAI applications seminars in New Jersey.⁴⁰³ I’ve been drilling it with my students for years.

8.4 Conclusion

How do we know that these are the “real” applications of heian shodan? In one sense, we could hardly go wrong because the kata is so simple. *Oi-zuki* is for knocking people down. On the other hand, the very simplicity of the kata robs us of the internal evidence that we are on the right path. It is hard to show a progression of techniques when half the kata just repeats the same technique.

Even so, if we step back and look at the kata as a whole, there are significant points to make:

- The theme of the kata seems to be “fighting for reputation.” There are many stories of such fights in medieval Okinawa, and our shotokan ancestors participated in them. Matsumura met his wife, Yonamine, in one such match.
- Can we recognize the enemy? He does not appear to be armed. He uses flurries of rapid hand techniques. He grabs our arms when he can. We can charge into him and knock him over. This sounds like one of our Naha-te rivals, doesn’t it?
- Does the kata exploit the enemy’s weakness? The Naha-te champions liked to stand up to each other and slug it out. They could be knocked over by a high-impact attack. Half of the kata frames that exact attack.

⁴⁰⁰ Quinn, Peyton, et al, *Barroom Brawling, The Art of Staying Alive in Beer Joints, Biker Bars, and Other Fun Places*, VHS 45 minutes, Paladin Press, 1991.

⁴⁰¹ Quinn, Peyton, *A Bouncer’s Guide to Barroom Brawling*, Paladin Press, 1990, p. 47-54.

⁴⁰² Pellegrini, John, *Combat Hapkido*, Black Belt Press, 2009, p. 55.

⁴⁰³ United Karate Associations International Training Camp in Atlantic City, New Jersey, annually in March. It is largely devoted to shotokan applications. <http://www.unitedkai.com/>.

- Can we see one of our masters teaching the lesson? We easily recognize Matsumura showing us a technique for which he was famous. This kata led the karate world in a new direction.
- Are the techniques in a logical sequence? The kata is too simple to support a deep sequential interpretation, except for the three up blocks that set up the tai otoshi throw. That sequence shows a first technique that sets up a second one.
- Are the techniques historically appropriate? Some of these techniques are so universal that they are practiced by bouncers in biker bars. Certainly they were within the experience of the Shuri fighters.
- Does the kata form a complete lesson? The kata teaches us how to knock the opponent over backwards, throw him over our hip or roll him head-first to the ground. If the point was to coat him in mud, then the kata gives us adequate tools to the task.

Heian shodan doesn't give us very much to work with, but what is there fits the profile.

In the next chapter, we'll be dealing with a gang of petty criminals. We'll get to see the Shuri bodyguards in their other role as police on the waterfront of Naha.

Chapter 9



Policing the Floating World

Ukiyo means the “floating world” of pleasure and entertainment, including theater, music, restaurants, bars, geisha, brothels, gambling and drugs. This was another play on words in Japanese. The same voicing (using different kanji) can also mean “sorrowful world.” In Naha, the red-light district was on the waterfront, which is another kind of floating world, replete with drunken sailors from foreign nations. The Shuri bodyguards were sometimes called on to police this area.

In the first edition of *Shotokan's Secret*, I focused on the bodyguard duties of the Shuri lords and overlooked their duties as the civil police and shore patrol. They had to arrest criminals and escort drunken sailors back to their boats. Bodyguards don't take prisoners, but policemen do.

Taiho is the Japanese word for “arrest.” It is composed of two kanji characters meaning “to chase” and “to catch.” As a police officer, you can't just kill the drunks. You have to subdue them. The criminals don't come to you. You have to track them down. They don't invade your stronghold. You invade theirs. It's a completely different game.

An arrest usually takes place at some location frequented by the criminal, such as a bar or brothel. The easiest way to catch your man is to wait patiently by his favorite watering hole. Certainly that is where we would find the visiting sailors in Naha. What skills would the Shuri policeman need in order to survive and succeed in this situation?

At a minimum, the policeman must be able to stun and subdue the criminal, either by placing him in a submission hold or by striking him with sufficient force to make him compliant. Grappling techniques have a clear role here. Techniques to bodily lift and carry a stunned opponent would be useful, too.

Once the miscreant is compliant, the policeman has the problem of getting out of the bar with his prisoner. The criminal's friends may be cowed at first, but they are likely to attack the officer now that his hands are full. The techniques of chi geru, “sticky foot” fighting, would be a big asset in this phase of the arrest. When your hands are busy, use your feet.

One important skill would be shaking off or countering grappling attacks without using your hands. In the tight confines of a bar, throws that send one attacker flying into another attacker deliver a two-for-one payoff (Figure 73).

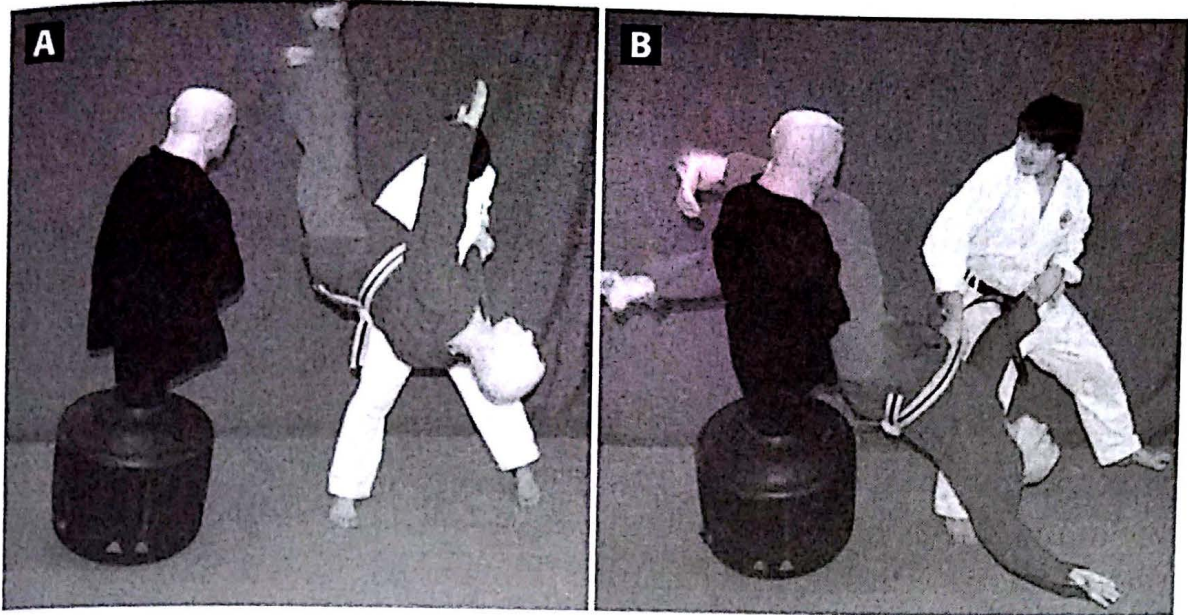


Figure 73: The hip throw in combat. A throw lets you pick up a person and use him as a weapon. Here we used dummies to portray what happens when you swing one person's legs at another person's head. The impact is so great that one of our experiments actually tore a foot off the dummy.

Heian sandan is a most peculiar kata. It is full of unusual hand motions that violate the principle of hiki te (pullback hand). It contains a sequence where the hands are held immobile at the hips, which is unique among the many kata I have examined.

There is also a sense of confinement in the kata. This isn't an expansive fight by the roadside. We fight our way down a narrow path and then turn around and come right back out. Most of the kata seems to be about brushing off inept or drunken fighters who are no serious threat.

Welcome to the floating world.

9.1 Variations on Heian Sandan

The first step in analyzing any kata is to view as many versions of the kata as possible. For heian sandan, I analyzed performances from all the text and video sources cited in section 7.2.

The kata opens (steps 1-6) with an inside block in back stance followed by two "double blocks." Allowing for stylistic differences, most branches of Shuri-te do this cluster essentially the same way.

The next cluster is steps 7-8 in which shotokan students do a reinforced block (morote uke), a pressing block (osae-uke) and a spearhand (nukite). Most branches do these techniques the same way, but matsubayashi ryu,

seito shito-ryu and wado ryu do an inside block followed by nukite. They don't do the pressing block.

In steps 9-10, we spin around counterclockwise and lash out with a left hammerfist (tettsui) while taking a long step forward (north). Then we step in and punch (kiaï). Shotokai, seito shito-ryu, tani-ha shito-ryu, seito shorin-ryu and wado ryu all introduce an additional step between the nukite and the tettsui. After the nukite, they pivot to the south in front stance and do an open-hand down block to the north, arm parallel to the rear leg as if someone has hold of their hand.⁴⁰⁴ The extra move is there in each of these styles, although it looks a little different in each one. Apparently it was in the original kata, but has been lost in shotokan. (Sometimes a "shotoism" refers to a move that is missing rather than one that was added.)

In step 11, we slowly pivot to the left (counterclockwise) and rise into an upright stance with fists on hips. Everybody does this move the same way except for seito shorin-ryu in which they turn in the opposite direction. This is another example of the Shadow Principle at work.

We see a lot of variation in steps 12-14 (fists on hips, elbows akimbo, side stance, uraken uchi):

- In shotokan, the most common approach is to raise the stepping knee very high, keeping the shin vertical and then turn the hips and stamp down as if crushing someone's foot. The uraken uchi is performed in the vertical plane.
- Sugiyama's group seems to do almost the same thing, but with a foot motion as if hooking the opponent's knee to the side before stepping down.
- Kanazawa's group and Yamazaki's robukai turn the "flip" into a crescent kick. The leg reaches out so that the shin becomes horizontal, parallel to the floor.
- In seito shorin-ryu, the stepping foot performs a sweep, but never lifts off the floor.
- Matsubayashi ryu, seito shito-ryu, tani-ha shito-ryu and wado ryu step from side stance to side stance without lifting the stepping foot. No kick, no sweep.

⁴⁰⁴ The original "back stance" was a front stance where you twist your torso around and look to the rear. This is an example of it, as is the "swallow block" we see in empi kata. The modern "back stance" is a shotoism.

- Seito shito-ryu and wado ryu also do an exaggerated elbow swing on each step (“elbow blocks”) before doing a *horizontal* uraken uchi at waist level.

In the final cluster of the kata (steps 20-21), we turn around into side stance. There’s a left “elbow strike” to the rear, and a right “punch” over the left shoulder. Most branches of the shotokan family do this move identically. Matsubayashi ryu uses cat stances instead of side stances. Seito shito-ryu, tani-ha shito-ryu, and wado ryu use upright stances (knees straight).

Most of this kata is pretty standard, meaning that people all do it the same way. The exception is the sequence of side stances with elbows akimbo. Karate masters seem to be tugging at that sequence, trying to twist it into something that makes more sense to them. There is a good reason for that. The sequence uses *legs to attack legs*, and modern teachers know very little about that subject. It isn’t legal in tournaments, so they don’t study it and don’t recognize it.

9.2 Historical Applications of Heian Sandan

Let’s imagine that we’ve entered a waterfront bar full of Chinese and Okinawan sailors in search of a criminal. His name is Shan Yu, and he’s the leader of a local gang. We’re going to take him under control and leave with him. We can expect some drunken resistance from members of his crew.

- Steps 1-6 strongly resemble Chinese “sticky-hand” fighting as seen in wing chun.
- Step 7 is the classic aikido nikajo wrist lock.
- Step 8 is probably an eye gouge.
- Steps 9-10 are a jujutsu counter to the ikkajo wrist lock.
- Steps 11-17 demonstrate a no-hands jujutsu throw plus an arsenal of Chinese “sticky-foot” attacks.
- Steps 18-21 present a hip wheel throw, the counter to it and the counter to the counter.

9.2.1 Steps 1-6: Ude Guruma Ushiro, Chi Sao

Steps 1-6 of heian sandan include the two “double blocking” clusters. Except for some variations in stance, and seito shorin-ryu’s substitution of a hammer strike for the initial inside block, everyone who studies heian sandan performs this sequence the same way.

In the context of the kata, the first opponent is one of Shan Yu’s minions. We’ll meet the gang leader in a minute.

In shotokan, teachers explain the double block by surmising that the enemy must be doing double punches. This is a dinglehopper. The consensus among experienced fighters is that it is very hard to block two punches at the same time unless the attack is prearranged. Therefore, we need to look for applications that deal with one punch at a time or perhaps with individual attacks in rapid sequence.

Ude guruma ushiro: In *Karate’s Grappling Methods*, Iain Abernethy presented his interpretation of this cluster, showing that it can be used to teach the *ude guruma ushiro* shoulder lock and throw.⁴⁰⁵

Abernethy’s applications are all worthy of study. The initial inside block is used to catch the opponent’s right wrist (Figure 74). As you step in for the “double block,” grasp the sleeve of his right elbow with your right hand. Rotate his arm back into the ude guruma shoulder lock (elbow straight up) and continue the rotation to drop him on his back. If you want to see how to pin him on the floor as a continuation of this same technique, see George Kirby’s treatment of ude guruma ushiro on his DVD home study course.⁴⁰⁶ Kirby is a virtuoso of pain.

This interpretation uses multiple “blocks” and both hands to deal with a single incoming punch. Three apparent “blocks” do not necessarily mean there are three punches, let alone the five that are usually mentioned in this cluster.

Chi sao: If you want to look a little deeper, however, you should investigate the chi sao drills of wing chun (and of similar southern Chinese schools of chuan fa). Chi sao is the legendary “sticky hands” infighting of kung fu, in which the fighters exchange simultaneous blocks and

⁴⁰⁵ Abernethy, Iain, *Karate’s Grappling Methods*, NETH Publishing in association with Summersdale Publishers LTD, England, 2000, p. 76.

⁴⁰⁶ Kirby, 1992, disk 1, techniques 1-11, “*ude guruma ushiro*.”

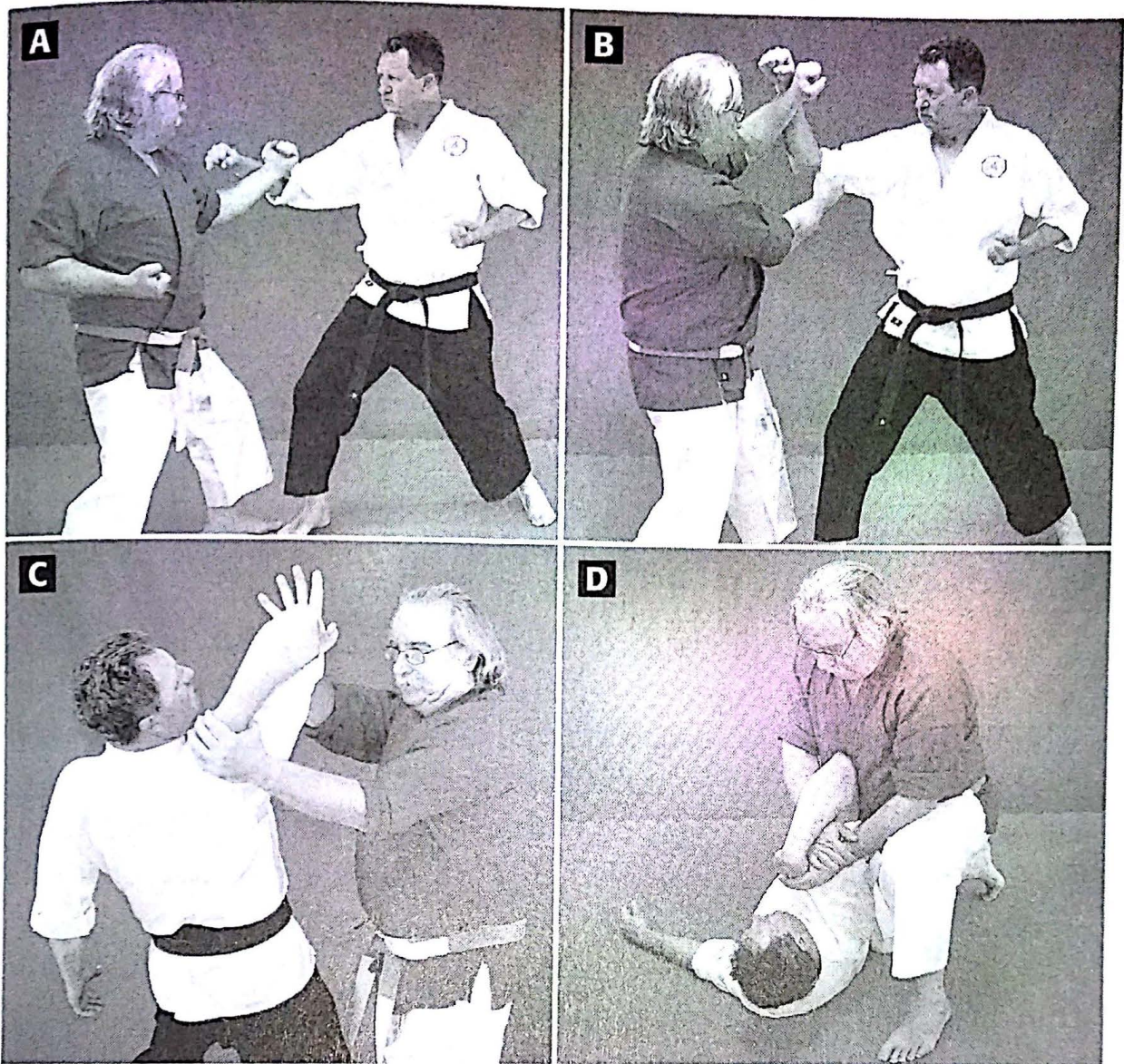


Figure 74: *Ude guruma ushiro, heian sandan steps 1-3.* This is the application for beginners. The “double block” gestures of steps 1-3 remind karate-jutsu teachers of the ude guruma shoulder lock and throw. The kata doesn’t go to the ground for the pin, but don’t let that stop you from teaching the whole technique to your students.

strikes at lightning speed. Many of the two-armed “blocking” techniques in the shotokan kata look like frozen snapshots taken from high-speed chi sao training films.

Wing chun “soft” punches and blocks aren’t as powerful as those in linear karate, but they are about 10 times faster. When you spar with a chi-sao fighter, you feel like the opponent has too many hands, and they are coming like hail from too many directions.

Chi sao fighters achieve this effect through simultaneous blocking and striking. There is also an emphasis on tangling the opponent’s arms

so that he gets in his own way, which leaves gaping holes in his defense.

Let's envision Shan Yu's minion attacking from our left with a flurry of hand techniques. An untrained person often flails at the opponent with a flurry of fast, swinging punches. We'll use the initial inside block of heian sandan to deflect a right-hand strike to the head (Figure 75). What will happen next? Almost certainly, the minion will launch a left-hand punch. Untrained people *rain* punches on their adversaries.

As the left punch comes in toward your face, use your left hand to slap it away and down, and push it against the opponent's body at waist level. At the same time, cross your right hand to your left side, as if stacking up for an inside block.

You *know* he's going to try the right fist again. Continue to hold his left hand down. Use your right hand to deflect his next punch, sweeping it across his chest and down to cross wrists with his other hand at the waist. Keep your right hand there, pressing his arms against his belly, as you bring your left hand up to strike his face. The exchange of hands, where your right hand takes over for your left, is blindingly fast.

The uppercut is a stunning blow that will put the minion out of the fight for a few moments. He might recover in time to give us some more trouble as we try to exit.

This technique has an alternate ending that is a throw. After catching both wrists, you can cross his arms at the elbow and use the resulting arm bar to roll him over on to the floor. This is aikido's *jūji nage* (cross throw),⁴⁰⁷ which Higaki calls *karami nage* (hand net throw).⁴⁰⁸

In this application, the "three blocks" actually deflect three punches, but there are no "double punches." This would be a very simple expression of chi sao technique, suitable to beginners learning their third kata.

9.2.2 Step 7: Hiji Mochi Nikajo

The "reinforced block" (morote uke) is a mystery. It isn't useful. Karateka are quick to point out that it *can* be used, in the sense that a rolling pin can be used as a nightstick, but the fact is that very few policemen actually carry rolling pins. The only time you see morote uke demonstrated in the

⁴⁰⁷ Shioda, 1996, p. 183.

⁴⁰⁸ Higaki, 2005, p. 154-155.

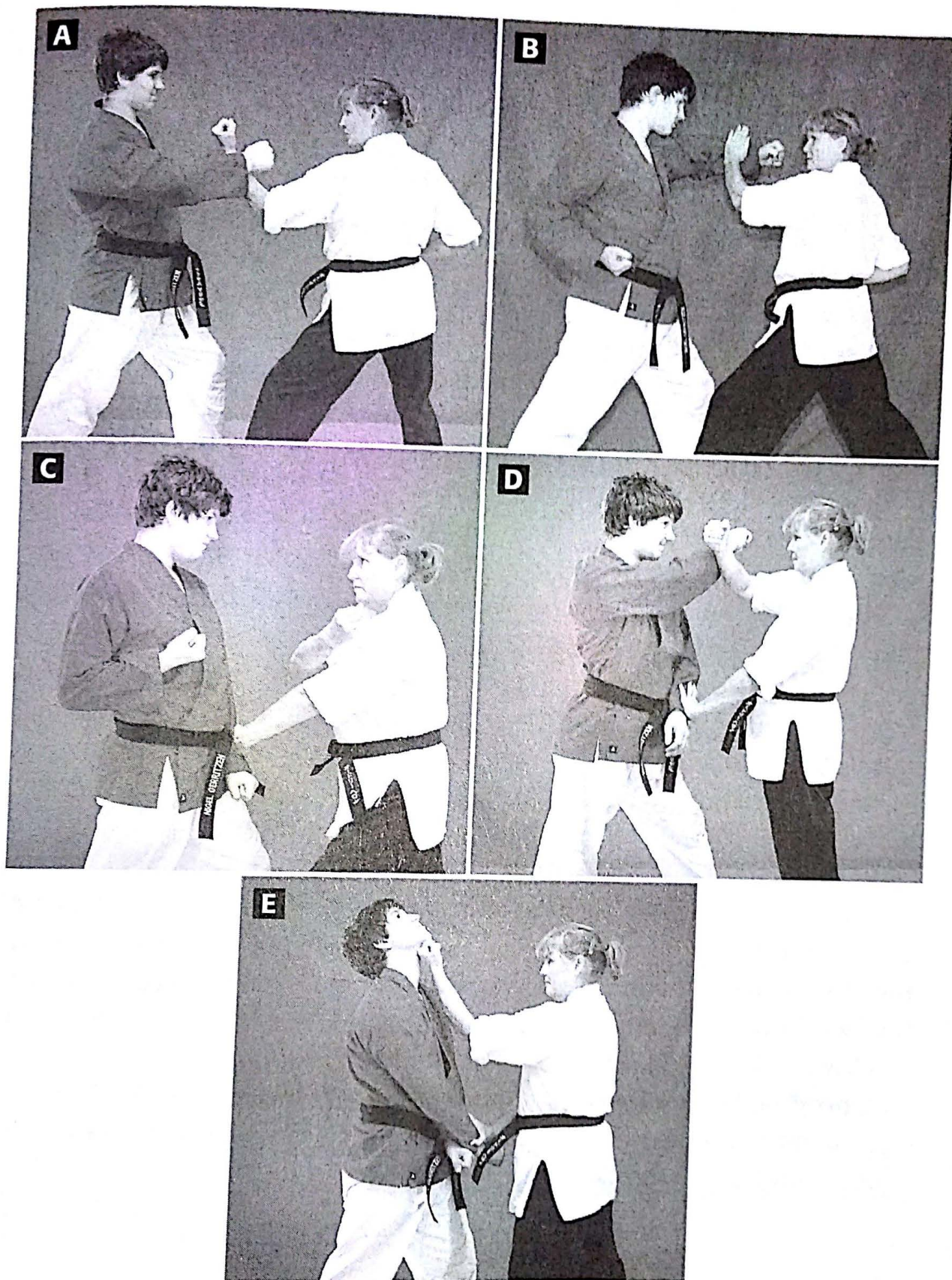


Figure 75: *Chi sao*, heian sandan steps 1-3. The minion is on the left. Your first block deflects a swinging punch (A). This positions your left hand to slap down the second punch and trap it against his body (B). Simultaneously, stack up your right hand to intercept his third punch (C). Sweep it around and down, trapping both of the opponent's arms (D). This leaves his face undefended against your uppercut (E).

traditional literature is when someone tries to block a roundhouse kick to the head. Historical karateka didn't do high kicks, so this probably wasn't the historical application of morote uke.

The reinforced block lends itself to a demonstration of the nikajo wrist lock.⁴⁰⁹ This is the Z-shaped wrist lock that is the second submission technique taught to jujutsu and aikido students. It is far more useful than anything I've seen a sensei do with a reinforced block in the dojo.

Go back and apply the chi sao drill to steps 4-6, which is the mirror image of steps 1-3. This is our first engagement with Shan Yu, the Chinese criminal we are here to arrest. In step 5, your right hand slaps his right fist downward in an attempt to trap his arm against his body. This time you can catch his hand in the jujutsu "pistol grip." (Your right palm is on the back of his right fist, and your fingers curl around the little-finger edge of his palm.) Roll his arm over into an ikkajo arm bar (Figure 76), which is a gesture similar to step 6.

Shan Yu is wise in the ways of barroom fighting. When he sees the arm bar coming, he tries to frustrate it by bending his elbow. That's when you place your left forearm against his forearm and shift in, forcing his elbow to bend further so his hand goes back toward his face. His arm bends into a "Z." Now let your left elbow ride up on top of his forearm. Twist his wrist away from you, at the same time press strongly downward on his arm with your elbow. This is the augmented nikajo wrist lock, called *hiji mochi nikajo* in aikido.^{410,411}

Shan Yu crashes to his knees to save his arm. The final position of your hands is exactly the same reinforced-block posture that we mimic in the kata. Your left arm is in "inside block" position with your fist near his face. Your right hand is about a foot from his face, twisting his wrist clockwise. It would be hard to find a better fit to morote uke.

Considering that this technique is both a wrist-breaker and the entry to a takedown-and-submit waza, it was a very practical thing for the Shuri bodyguards to practice.

⁴⁰⁹ Combes, 1999, Volume 1, "nikajo wrist lock."

⁴¹⁰ Abernethy, Iain, *Karate's Joint Locks, Volume 3*, DVD 60 minutes, 2005, wrist lock #3.

⁴¹¹ Shioda, 1996, p. 105.

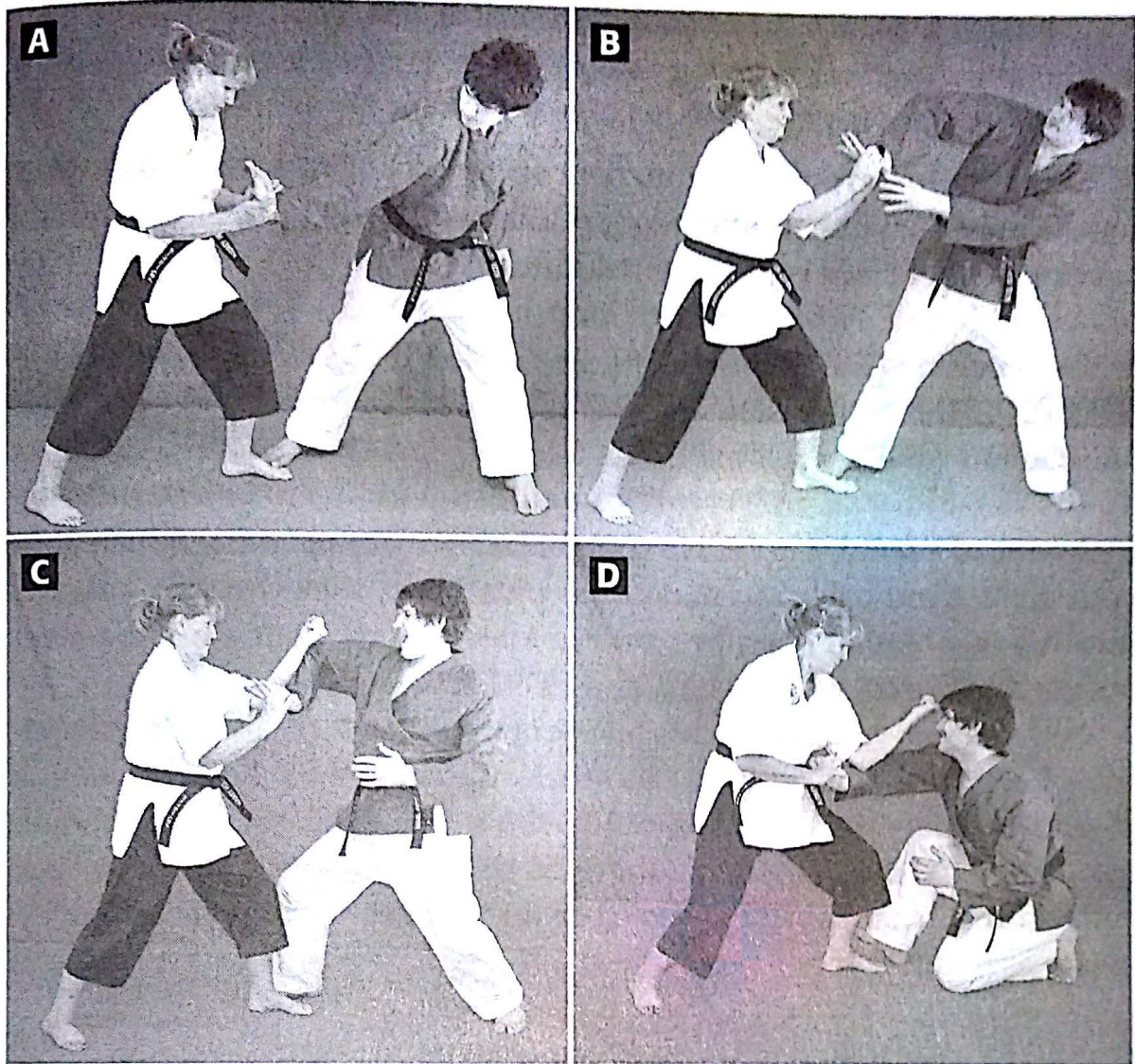


Figure 76: *Hiji mochi nikajo*, *heian sandan* step 7. Shan Yu is on the right. You attempt to apply an *ikkajo* arm bar to the opponent's right arm (A), but he resists by raising his elbow (B). Use your left forearm to shove his forearm back near his face, so his arm bends into a "Z" position (C). Then, use your left elbow to force his forearm straight down. The intense pain will force him to his knees (D). (*Morote uke* is not a block.)

9.2.3 Step 8: *Nukite*, *Teisho*, *Chi Sao*

There has always been some difficulty interpreting the *osae-uke* (pressing-block) and *nukite* (spear hand) attack at step 8. Gennosuke Higaki summed it up nicely in *Hidden Karate*:

"There are stories that tell of such things as executing a spear hand to the opponent's abdomen and reaching in to their spine and pulling it out. Master Funakoshi, in his writings, however denied such stories.

It might be possible to execute a spear hand to the opponent's abdomen if one strengthens their fingers enough, but it seems impossible that one would actually be able to use it to the chest."⁴¹²

Using shotokan power to ram your stiffened fingers into a man's chest results in broken fingers and no real damage to the enemy. But the nukite is not a mistake, nor is it a recent adulteration; it appears in all versions of heian sandan. How might we interpret it, then?

Let's begin with our friend, Shan Yu, down on his knees where we left him at the end of step 7 (Figure 76). You have his right arm in an augmented nikajo wrist lock. Sensible people would submit, but Shan Yu decides to try again. He throws a punch with his free (left) hand.

Use your left hand to deflect and press down his incoming punch. Pull your right hand back and make the spear hand, then thrust it forward into his face. Remember, he's on his knees, so the kata's middle-level nukite hits him at head level (Figure 77).

You could jab your fingers into his eye or throat but there are better alternatives. Let your thumb open up a little from the usual shutō hand position as you do this move. Instead of attacking with your fingers, gouge your thumb into his eye. This is a finishing move, as required by the kata. If you stick your thumb in a man's eye, he won't be doing much fighting afterward.⁴¹³

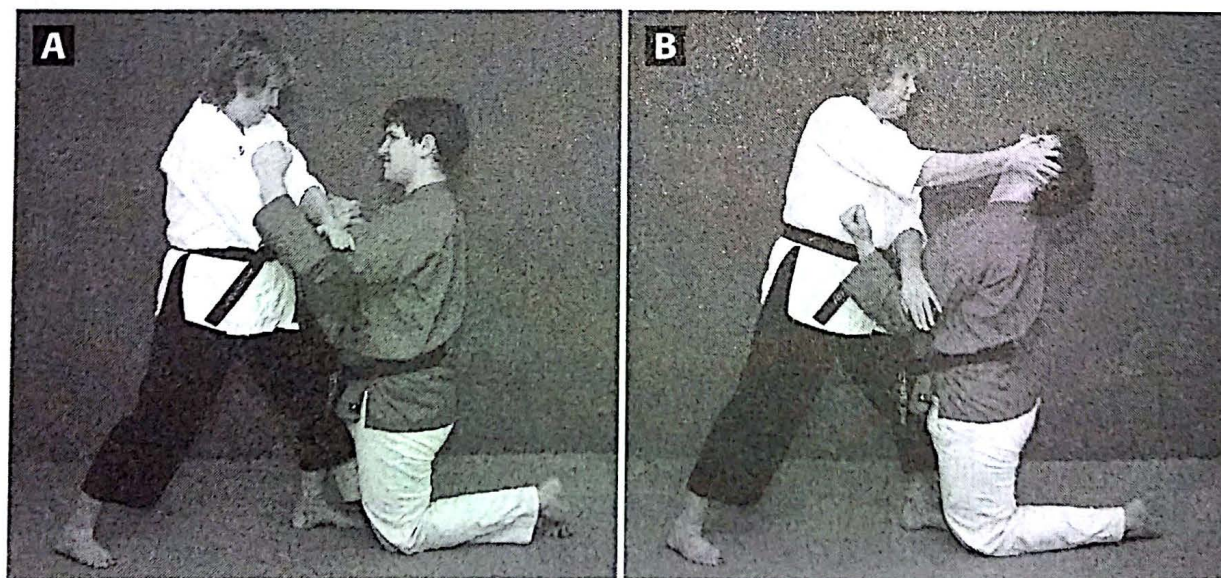


Figure 77: Nukite eye gouge, heian sandan step 8. Picking up after Figure 76, the enemy is still on his knees from step 7. Use the *osae uke* to deflect his left-hand punch and hold it down (A). Then drive your thumb into his eye (B). This is one of the eye gouges that Itosu disguised as a nukite.

⁴¹² Higaki, 2006, p. 134.

⁴¹³ Abernethy, 2005, wrist lock #3 again.

This position, with the thumb in the eye and the fingers gripping the side of his head, is the classic bar-fight eye gouge. There is a legend that Itosu removed the eye gouges from the heians before teaching them to children in Shuri's school system. I think he "removed" the eye gouges by disguising them as nukite attacks.

Iain Abernethy suggests in his videos that the nukite is really a *taisho uchi* (palm heel strike).⁴¹⁴ You just extend the wrist slightly to get the fingers out of the way and strike with the heel of the hand. Chinese stylists practicing *chi sao* technique often trap the opponent's hands with a pressing block and then drive in over it with a palm-heel strike to the jaw. This is common enough that we see it pictured on the cover of William Cheung's DVD on *chi sao*.⁴¹⁵ If you don't want to teach the eye gouge, you can use the palm heel instead.

9.2.4 Steps 9-10: Escape From Ikkajo Wrist Lock

Step 9 of heian sandan is the counterclockwise spin and step to the north that ends in a side stance with *tettsui uchi* (hammer strike). Step 10 is the *oi-zuki* step and *kiai*.

The eye gouge in step 8 isn't usually successful in real life. If Shan Yu sees it coming, he will duck his head and swat at your hand. In this case, he has grabbed your right hand with his right, and suddenly, you find yourself twisted into the *ikkajo* arm bar! He knows some *jujutsu*, too.

Itosu shows us how to apply a technique, then he shows us how to escape from it. What else would you expect from a good teacher?

Most people interpret this part of the kata as a hammer lock where your arm gets twisted up behind your back. Given the context, however, we should emphasize the *ikkajo* wrist lock and arm bar, which would be the choice of a trained Japanese or Chinese fighter. The *ikkajo* lock can easily collapse into a hammer lock so, from the defender's point of view, it is much the same thing.

Perform the pressing block and the nukite. Have your opponent slap-block the nukite aside with his right hand (Figure 78). He should apply

⁴¹⁴ Abernethy, 2006, "*pinan sandan*, cluster 2."

⁴¹⁵ Cheung, William, *Finer Points of Chi Sao*, DVD 60 minutes, Unique Publications, 2007.

the jujutsu "pistol grip" to your hand, placing his right palm against the back of your hand with his fingers wrapped around the little-finger edge and his thumb on your index-finger knuckle. Have him rotate your hand clockwise (from his point of view) until your fingers point up toward the ceiling. This applies the ikkajo arm bar. You are headed to the floor unless you do something fast.

Execute step 9. Spin counterclockwise, wrapping your captured arm around your back. This relieves the pain of the ikkajo lock. Use your *koshi waza* (hip rotation) to yank your hand out of his grip. As you finish the spin, use the hip rotation to power the hammerfist strike. You can aim at his head, neck, left elbow or ribs, depending on the position and vulnerability of his left arm. Yanking the hand free from ikkajo is a well-known escape that is widely practiced.⁴¹⁶ The kata puts a spin on it to give you hip power to free your hand.

You may have noticed a problem with step 9 of this kata. In all branches of Shuri-te that I have observed, the "spin" includes a long step to the north. The opponent must retreat a full step during your spin or you'll step right past him and the *tettsui* will miss. Every branch of Shuri-te assumes that Shan Yu is leaping backward to avoid that fist, and that's why we have to step in instead of just spinning in place. In real life, of course, you would adjust the length of the step to create the proper distance for an effective strike.

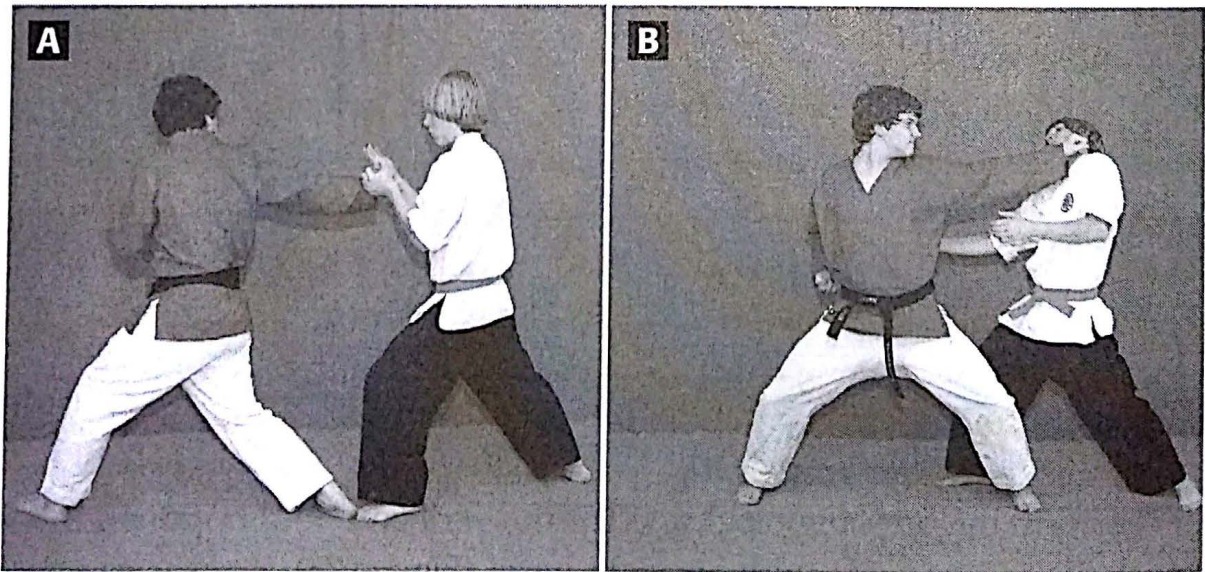


Figure 78: Escape from ikkajo, heian sandan steps 9-10. Spin (A) and strike (B). (The actor on the right is playing Shan Yu in this figure.)

⁴¹⁶ Soke Justin Butler, in personal, and somewhat painful, communication.

It is unlikely that the hammer fist will be enough to take Shan Yu out of the fight, so the kata expects us to finish him off with a “pursuing punch” (oi-zuki, step 10).

How do we know that Matsumura and Itosu used the basic wrist locks of oriental fighting? They put the wrist locks and the counters in the kata for us to learn. (Other common wrist-lock escapes are visible in kanku dai, empi and nijushiho kata.)

Shan Yu is not at his best. He is reeling from a hammerfist to the head and a midsection punch that threw him against the back wall of the bar. He is almost in the bag.

9.2.5 Steps 11-17: Ushiro Zeme Otoshi, Chi Geru, Kata Guruma

Step 11 of heian sandan is the upright position with fists on hips. Steps 12-17 are the series of three stomping side-stances. During the side stances, we keep our fists on our hips with our elbows stuck out sideways, and there is a vertical backfist attack (uraken uchi) after each step.

It is important to note that Itosu put this same sequence in multiple kata, varying only the accompanying hand technique:

- In heian sandan, we have uraken uchi or tettsui uchi, depending on the style of karate you are viewing.
- In jitte and jion, we have teisho uchi (heel of hand strike, usually taught as a “block”).
- In jion, we also have *gaiwan otoshi uchi uke* (forearm dropping striking “block”).
- In jiin, we find shutō uchi and tettsui uchi.

In all cases, the hand strike is delivered at shoulder or waist level—midbody height—except for Kanazawa’s instructional video where the uraken uchi is delivered well above head level.⁴¹⁷ It should be clear that Itosu was exploring variations on the same basic scenario (Figure 80).

Ushiro Zeme Otoshi: This sequence gives us a splendid opportunity to teach our students *ushiro zeme otoshi* from hakkoryu

⁴¹⁷ Kanazawa, 1986, “heian sandan.”

jujutsu.^{418,419} Stand upright in a position like step 11 of the kata. The opponent hugs you from behind, pinning your arms (Figure 79). Force your arms out from your sides, so your arms point downward at a 45-degree angle. This breaks the opponent's tight grip and pulls him off-balance. (Bracing your fists on your hips, like the kata, achieves the same effect.)

Step forward with your right foot into side stance, like step 11 of the kata. As you plant your foot, turn your hips strongly to the left, exactly like the kata. Your opponent flies forward and lands heavily on his back. His body becomes a projectile for bowling down other enemies. Everyone should know this throw. It is easy and very effective.



Figure 79: Ushiro zeme otoshi, heian sandan steps 11-12. This is the beginner application. The opponent hugs you, trapping your arms from behind. Force your fists up to your hips to spread his grip (A). Step forward into side stance with a strong hip rotation and watch him fly (B).

While ushiro zeme otoshi is an excellent technique, it doesn't explain the backfist attacks that follow each step. For that we need to look at what our feet are doing.

Chi Geru and Ashi Garami: The knee is the most vulnerable target in self-defense, but traditional karate students do not study how to attack or defend at that level. Tournament rules protect the knees, so why study

⁴¹⁸ Palumbo, 1987, p. 112-115.

⁴¹⁹ Westbrook and Ratti, 1970, p. 292-293.

knee attacks? They just get you thrown out of the tournament! This is a gaping hole in our self-defense training.

It isn't an easy hole to fill. There are dozens of knee-level attacks scattered throughout the literature, but no one source that collects them all. This is what the sport mentality has done to the martial arts. Fortunately, there are still a few people paying attention to this subject.

Chi gerk is the Chinese system of "sticky leg" techniques, which Joseph Wayne Smith calls "the jewel of the wing chun system."⁴²⁰ The chi gerk techniques illustrated by Smith include foot stomps, knee displacements and various hooks and sweeps. "*Ashi garami*" is the corresponding jujutsu term for "leg entanglement" techniques.⁴²¹ "*Ashi waza*" is George Kirby's name for an entanglement technique where you use your knee in side stance to break the opponent's stance and drop him on the ground.⁴²² Gennosuke Higaki shows techniques for stomping or kneeling into the opponent's thigh to break his stance.⁴²³ Lawrence Kane demonstrates multiple knee and leg entanglement techniques based on *sanchin dachi* from goju-ryu.⁴²⁴ Takayuki Kubota uses knee pressure against the side of the opponent's thigh to break his stance.⁴²⁵ Funakoshi said that the high-stepping side stances of heian sandan were attempts to stamp on and break the opponent's thighbone.⁴²⁶ Marc MacYoung went a long way toward reinventing the whole system in one of his books on barroom brawling.⁴²⁷ John Pellegrini demonstrated several unusual attacks on knees and feet in his text on combat hapkido.⁴²⁸ Several of our common stances, such as *hangetsu dachi*, *sanchin dachi*, and *fudo dachi*, lend themselves to leg-entanglement applications.⁴²⁹ For the current discussion,

⁴²⁰ Smith, Joseph Wayne, *Wing Chun Kung-fu Volume 2: Fighting & Grappling*, Tuttle, 1992, p. 27-36.

⁴²¹ Mol, 2001, p. 27-36.

⁴²² Kirby, 1992, technique 2-3.

⁴²³ Higaki, 2005, p. 213-215.

⁴²⁴ Kane, 2005, p. 120, 121, 134, and 186.

⁴²⁵ Kubota, 1987, p. 85.

⁴²⁶ Funakoshi, 1973, p. 66.

⁴²⁷ MacYoung, Marc, *A Professional's Guide to Ending Violence Quickly: How Bouncers, Bodyguards, and Other Security Professionals Handle Ugly Situations*, Paladin Press, 1993, chapter 8.

⁴²⁸ Pellegrini, 2009, p. 51-53, 61-62.

⁴²⁹ Gary Simpson and David LaVerne have both made contributions on this topic.

I'll just lump them all together and refer to them as "chi gerk." These techniques are cataloged in Figure 80 to Figure 84.

Lest anyone overlook the lesson, the point is that *kiba dachi* is the platform that launches *all* of these chi gerk techniques. Even though we can identify about 15 different leg attacks, it is the opponent's leg position that varies in each one, not our own. We can practice all of them simply by making big, powerful steps in side stance!

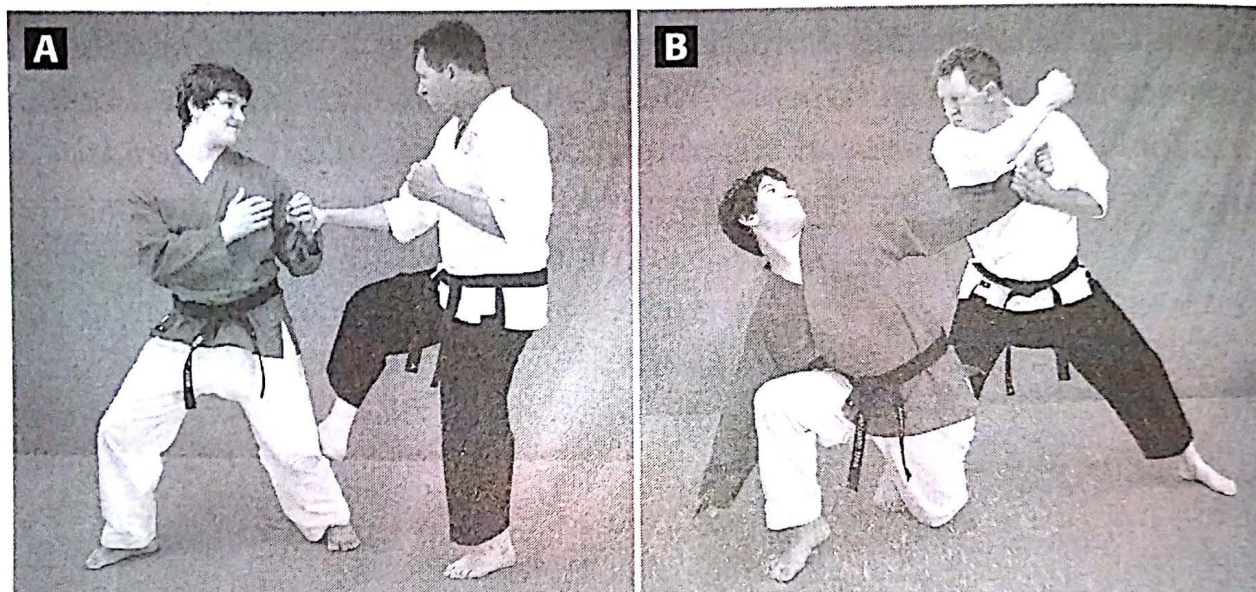


Figure 80: Chi gerk, backfist strikes, heian sandan steps 12-17. Whenever Itosu shows us three side stances with midlevel hand techniques, this is the basic scenario. A leg attack collapses the opponent's stance (A), and then the hand technique to the head finishes him (B). Itosu put variations of this drill in heian sandan, *jion*, *jitte*, and *jiin kata*.

Additional *ashi garami* techniques, not visible in this kata, can be applied when you are lying on the ground and the opponent is standing. You use your feet to catch his knee and ankle, to throw him on his face or on his back.⁴³⁰ Mayberry illustrates chi gerk drills for *no-hands grappling* when standing, when one opponent is standing but the other is on the ground, and when both opponents are on the ground.⁴³¹

Collectively, the *ashi garami* and chi gerk techniques, combined with *ushiro zeme otoshi*, give us a toolkit for forcing our way through a crowd without using our hands. If a person tries to grab us from the rear, we can throw him off. Meantime, we can keep stepping forward, using

⁴³⁰ Kirby, 1992, technique 7-6.

⁴³¹ Mayberry, Jonathan, *Ultimate Sparring: Principles & Practices*, Strider Nolan Publishing, 2003, p. 211-213.

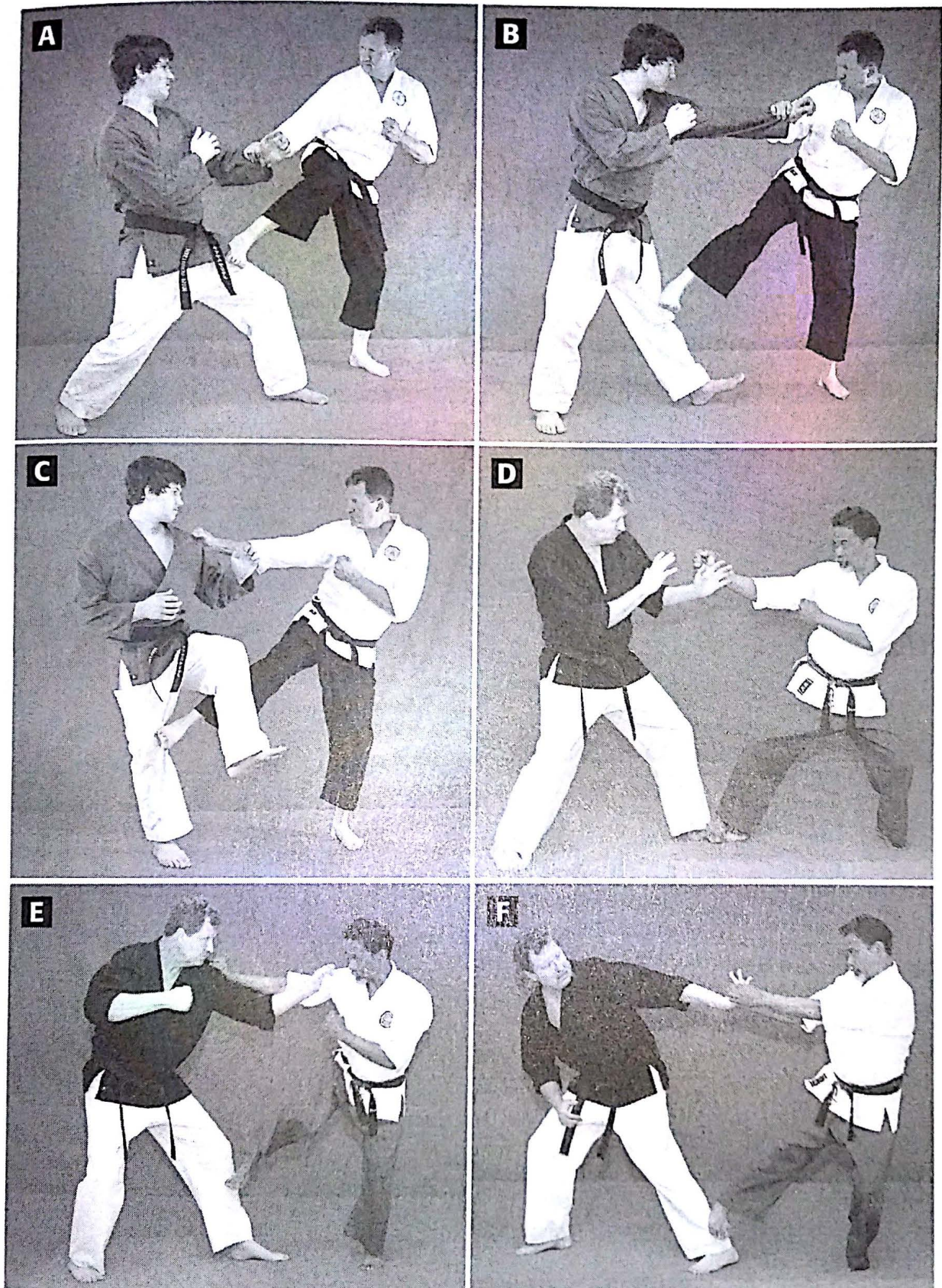


Figure 81: *Chi gerk* thrust kicks, *heian sandan* steps 12-17. High-stepping side stances offer multiple ways to attack the opponent's leg. Stomping down near the opponent's hip socket collapses his stance (A). Stomping near the knee breaks the joint (B, C). Stomping the metatarsal arch breaks the foot (D). A raking attack down his shin (with shoes on) can temporarily paralyze the leg (E). Stomping the Achilles tendon is extremely painful (F).

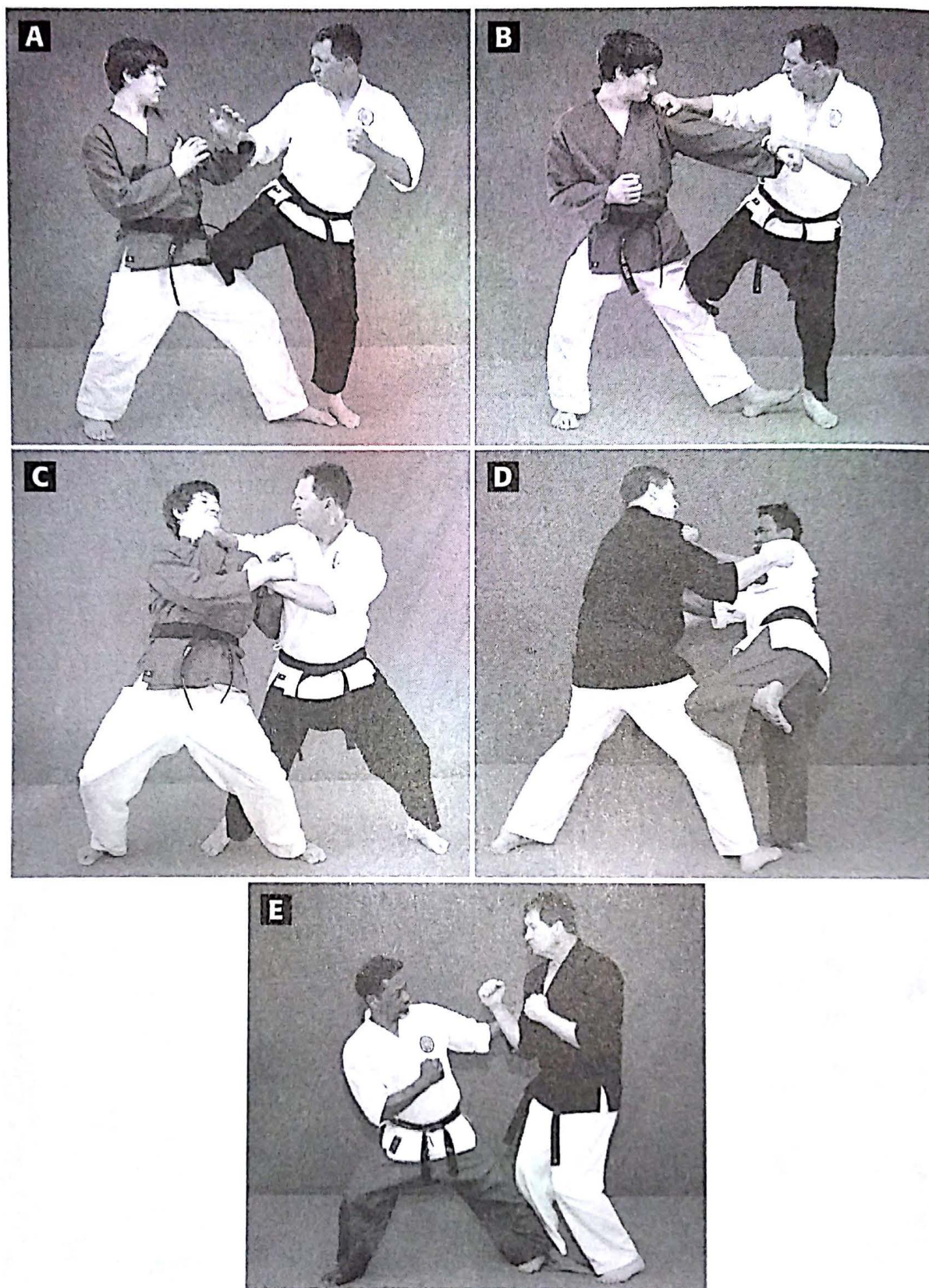


Figure 82: *Chi gerk* knee strikes, heian sandan steps 12-17. When stepping in side stance, you can drive your knee into the opponent's upper thigh to collapse his stance (A). Attacking the lower thigh locks the knee joint (B). You can bring your knee in behind his knee to collapse his leg (C). You can ram your knee into the side of his thigh to cramp the muscles (D). In sanchin dachi, your twisted front leg is a tool for locking the enemy's knee joint (E).

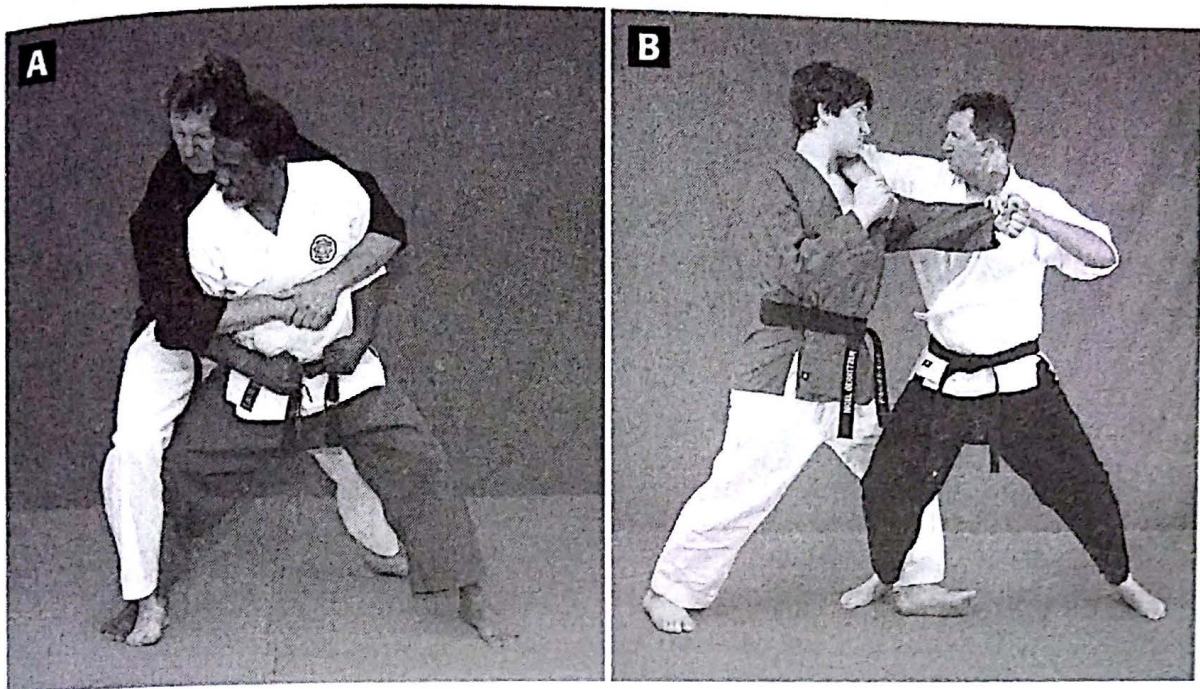


Figure 83: Chi gerk ashi garami, heian sandan steps 12-17. On the left is a *kiba dachi* entanglement, as we see in the kata. The opponent pins your arms from behind. Hook your foot around the back of his ankle, then push your knee into the side of his knee. His stance collapses (A). On the right is a *hangetsu* entanglement while facing the enemy. Step forward in *hangetsu dachi* or *kiba dachi* and wrap your front heel around the enemy's ankle. Simply turn your hips from side-stance position to front-stance position to collapse his stance (B).

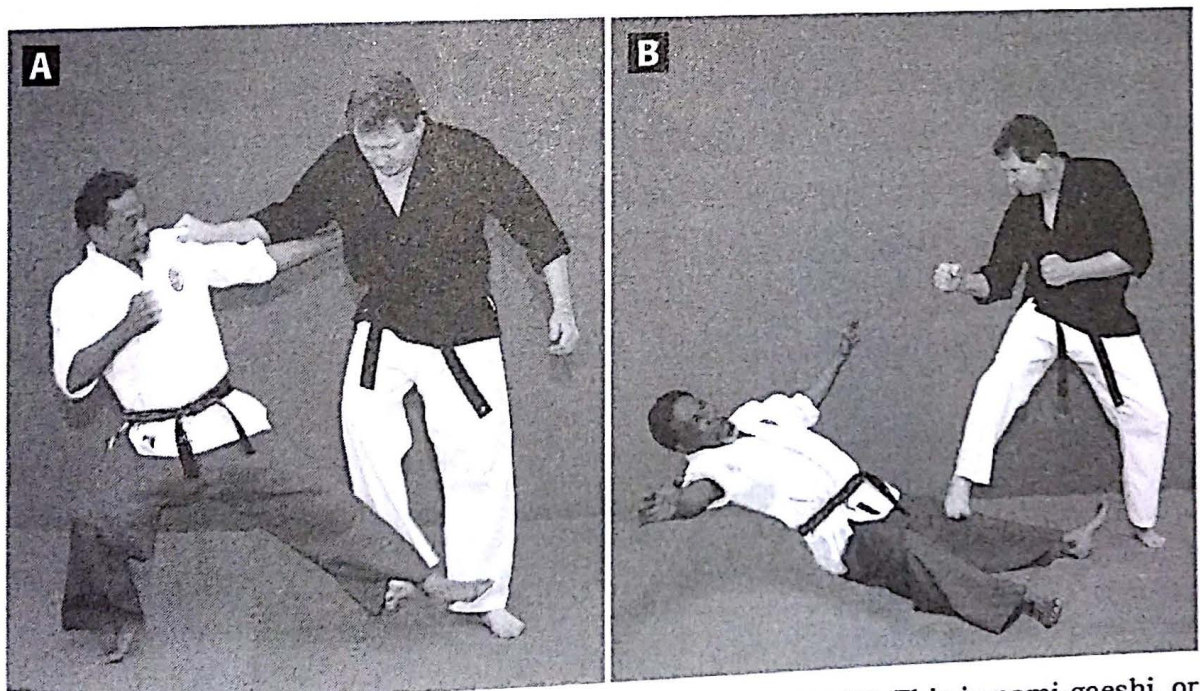


Figure 84: Chi gerk nami-gaeshi, heian sandan steps 12-17. This is *nami-gaeshi*, or the returning wave kick, from *tekki shodan*. The initial motion sweeps the opponent's lead foot, straightening his knee (A). The "returning" motion stomps on the straight knee, destroying the knee joint (B). The token "sweeps" before slamming the foot down in side stance in *heian sandan* hint at the same technique.

the foot throws and knee locks to break our way through the mob. If a person is still in the way, kneeling in front of us, we can knock him out of the fight with a mid-level hand technique. This is a formidable arsenal.

Kata Guruma: But why aren't we using our hands? It's fine to say that we can fight effectively with our feet alone, but *why* are our fists on our hips like that? For that we must return to the story of Shan Yu.

Our prisoner has collapsed, gasping for breath, against the back wall of the bar.

The fists-on-hips posture of step 11 is very similar to the "fireman's carry," in which we drape a person across our shoulders, holding one of his arms on one side and one of his legs on the other side (Figure 85). This position, with a person across your shoulders, is also the middle phase of kata guruma (the shoulder wheel throw).^{432,433,434} The slow, powerful turn in step 11 has much the same feeling as rotating Shan Yu up on your shoulders in kata guruma. From that point the powerful stepping turns (steps 12, 14 and 16) sling his legs like clubs into the faces of his scurrying minions (Figure 86).

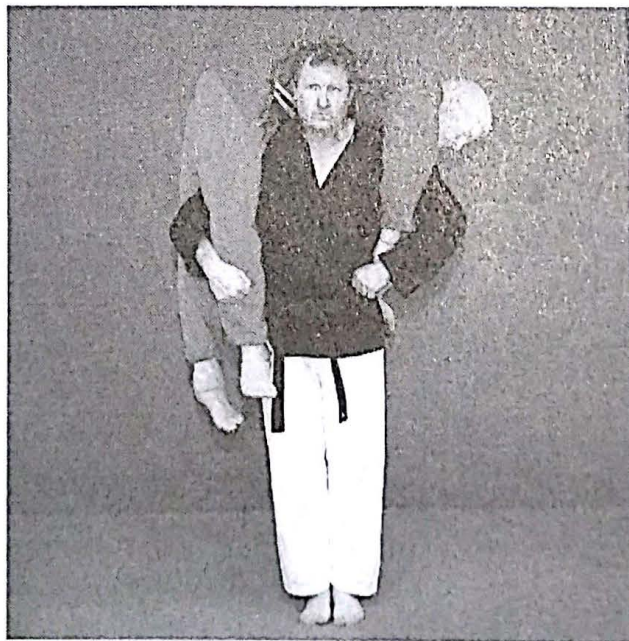


Figure 85: Kata guruma as a Fireman's Carry, heian sandan step 11. When you hoist a person on your shoulders using the Fireman's Carry, you re-enact both kata guruma and step 11 of heian sandan.

⁴³² Otaki, Tadao and Donn Draeger, *Judo Formal Techniques: A Complete Guide to Kodokan Randori No Kata*, Tuttle, 1983, p. 157-164.

⁴³³ Nakayama, 1981, p. 141.

⁴³⁴ Mifune, 1956, p. 112-113.

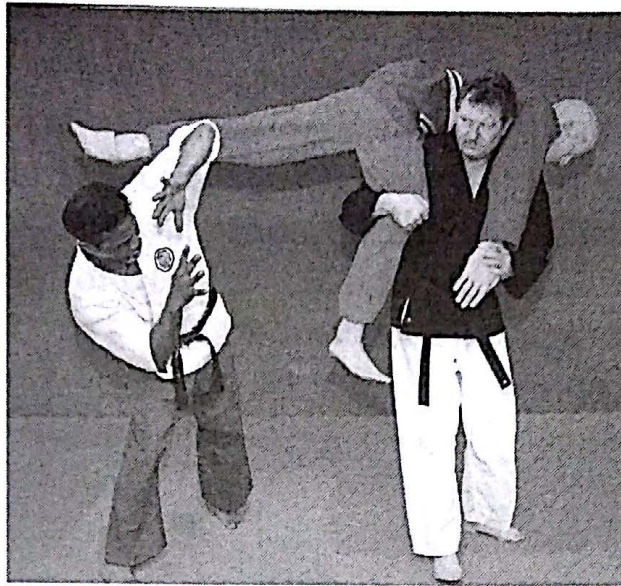


Figure 86: Using the enemy's body as a weapon, heian sandan steps 12-13. With the prisoner hoisted on your shoulders, hip rotation lets you use his legs to club his friends.

Kata guruma gives you the freedom to let go momentarily, on one side at a time, to lash out with backfist attacks. If hard-pressed, you can always drop the criminal on his head, completing the throw. This will also take the remaining fight out of the criminal.

This could be either a rescue of a helpless friend or an abduction (an arrest) of a stunned criminal. The only difference is the attitude of the person on your shoulders. Your hands are occupied with carrying the person, so you fight with your feet using *chi gerk*.

Notice that you're carrying him *out* of the bar and not into it. You went in to get him, and now you're taking him back to a safer area. Shan Yu is on his way to the Shuri magistrate for trial. This is not good news for Shan Yu, since under Japanese feudal law the usual sentence was death by crucifixion.

But we have to get past that minion by the door. He's on his feet again.

9.2.6 Steps 18-21: Koshi Guruma, Ushiro Koshi Nage

Steps 18-19 of heian sandan are the *kake te* block and the front punch that bridge the gap between the triple side-stance sequence and the final cluster. Steps 20-21 are the side stances where you appear to be punching backward over your shoulder. It would be safe to say that all karate-jutsu teachers immediately recognize this cluster as a hip throw.

The upcoming applications for the final cluster of the kata cannot be done with a person draped over your shoulders. If that inconsistency bothers you, note that the slow *kake te* gesture in step 18 is exactly what you would do to shrug off the rider and drop him harmlessly on the ground behind you. Then you proceed to deal with the minion who is blocking your way out of the bar. (Knowing how to jettison your prisoner would be another important survival skill.)⁴³⁵

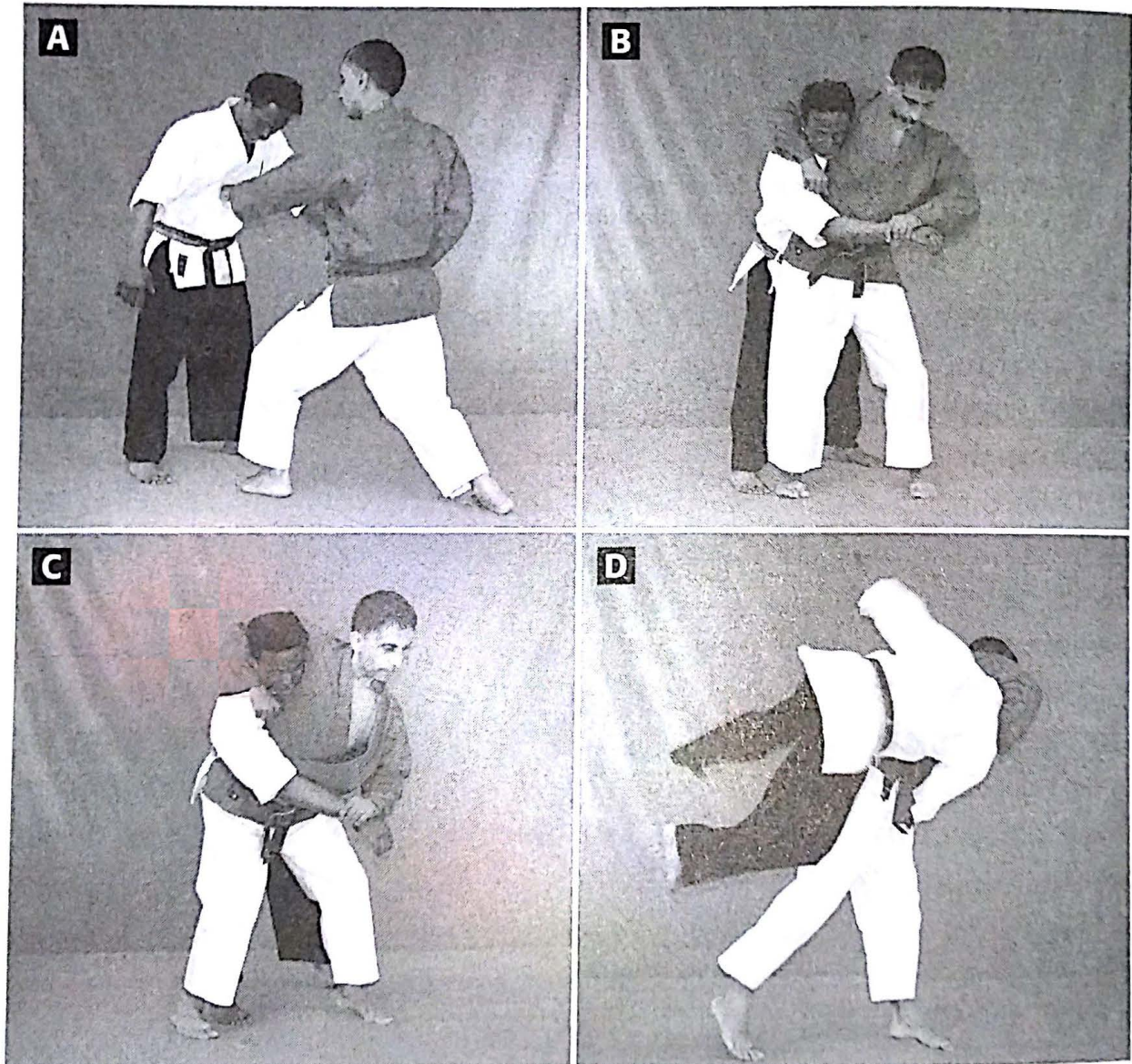


Figure 87: *Koshi guruma*, heian sandan steps 19-20. The punch breaks the opponent's posture (A), making him vulnerable to the hip throw. Rotate in, slipping your arm around his neck (B). Crouch enough to get your tailbone against his right hip bone (C). Sweep your arms around to your left (like the kata) to execute the throw (D).

⁴³⁵ See the Wikipedia article on "Professional Wrestling Throws" for a long list of ways to jettison your prisoner from the Fireman's Carry using various body slams and brain-buster throws. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_wrestling_throws

Koshi Guruma: Taken together, steps 18-21 are a sophisticated lesson in the combat use of judo's *koshi guruma* (hip wheel) throw. Koshi guruma requires that the opponent bend toward you slightly so you can wrap an arm around his neck. The punch in step 19 breaks the opponent's posture to make him vulnerable to this throw (Figure 87).

The throw is very simple. Take the opponent's right sleeve in your left hand. Pivot in and crouch down to place your tailbone against his right hip bone (turning a little past his center to line this up). Be sure to bend your knees so that your hips are lower than his. As you pivot, wrap your right arm around his neck. Continue pulling horizontally around to your left to pull him over your hip and down on his left side. (This is step 20, which is usually described as "a punch over the shoulder.")

If you are not fast enough, the opponent may stiffen his back and refuse to be thrown. In that case, quickly shift to your left and then step back in behind him with your right leg (Figure 88). Get your right hip behind his pelvis and then use your arms to sweep his torso to the rear. This is step 21. Most opponents will flip backwards across your hip. I learned this reversal in a beginning judo class in 1970.⁴³⁶

Kyuzo Mifune's *Canon of Judo* contains a chapter on resisting common throws (the *nage waza ura no kata*.) Many of these reversal techniques involve shifting out to the side and then stepping in again, either slipping in front of the opponent or slipping in behind him as the occasion requires. It is not surprising to find this lesson in heian sandan.

This accounts for steps 19-21, but what about the kake te in step 18? There's a vicious interpretation that goes beyond the idea that we're just "shrugging off" the man we carried through the middle of the kata.

Ushiro Koshi Nage: The kake te (hooking hand) gesture optionally turns the upcoming hip wheel into one of several lethal techniques.

In this version of the throw, use the kake te to block and catch the opponent's right arm (Figure 89). As you step in, push his arm across his body to spin him counterclockwise. When his back is exposed, put the punch (step 19) into his kidney while wrapping your right arm around his neck. This makes him arch his back. Then pivot in for the hip wheel throw.

⁴³⁶ Higaki, 2005, p. 174-175 shows this same interpretation for this cluster. It is just about the only point where our interpretations agree.

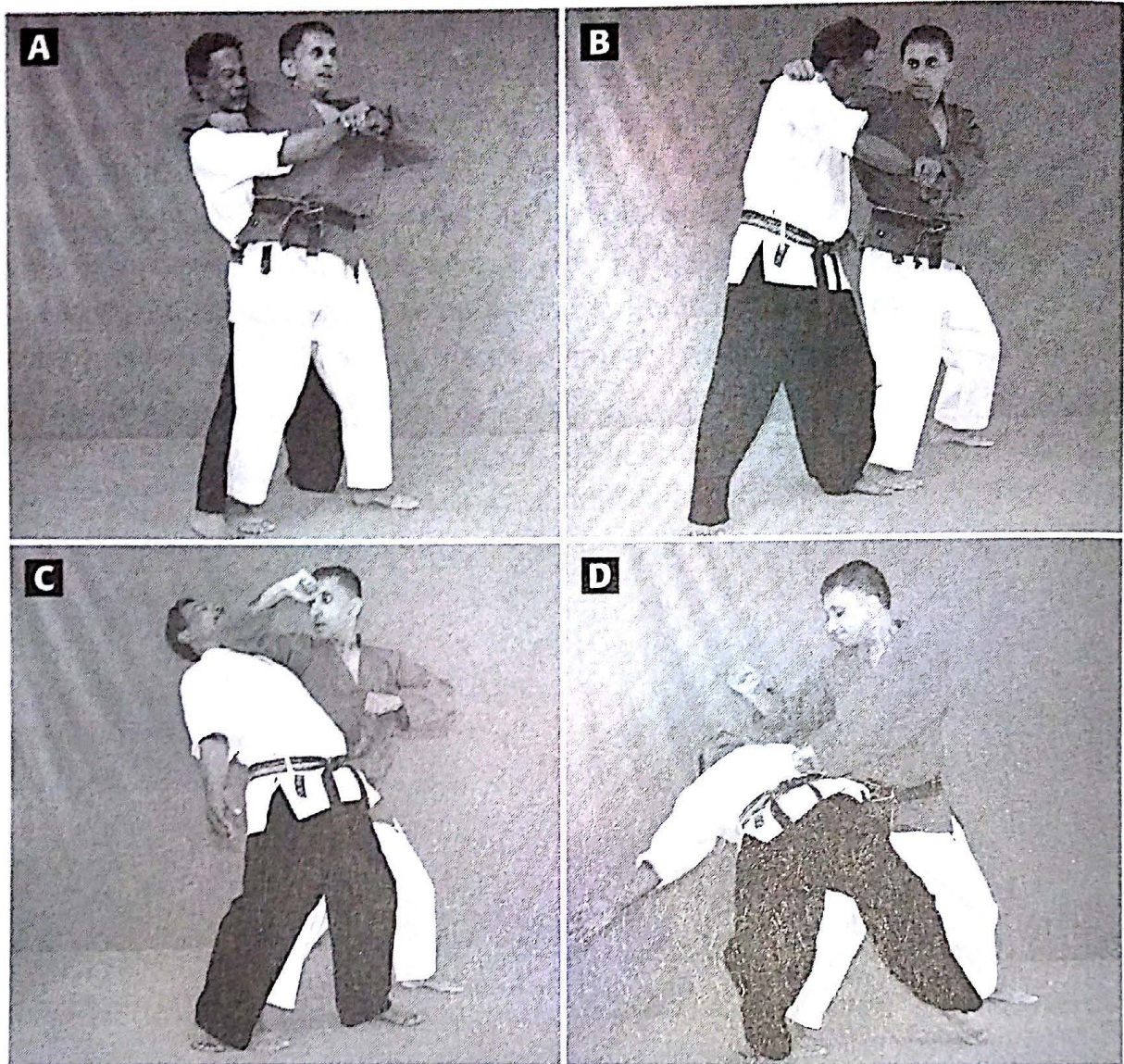


Figure 88: Koshi guruma, heian sandan steps 20-21. Every class on koshi guruma shows you what to do if the opponent stiffens up and won't be thrown (A). Step out to the left (B). Slip your hips in behind his pelvis (C), and swing your arms into his upper body to knock him backwards across your hip (D). This counter is taught to white belts in judo.

This time your right arm circles his throat, bending his neck far to the rear, as if "hanging" him. This is a neck-breaker. Your right hand pulls his left arm back in an arm bar, dislocating his locked shoulder and possibly his elbow. He flips over your hip upside down and hits the pavement on his kneecaps and his chin.

In my opinion, this technique is too dangerous for karate students to practice. It is designed to cause severe orthopedic and neurological injuries. This throw is so vicious that it is demonstrated in the U.S. Army Field Manual 21-150 (1954 edition) as a technique to use to kill

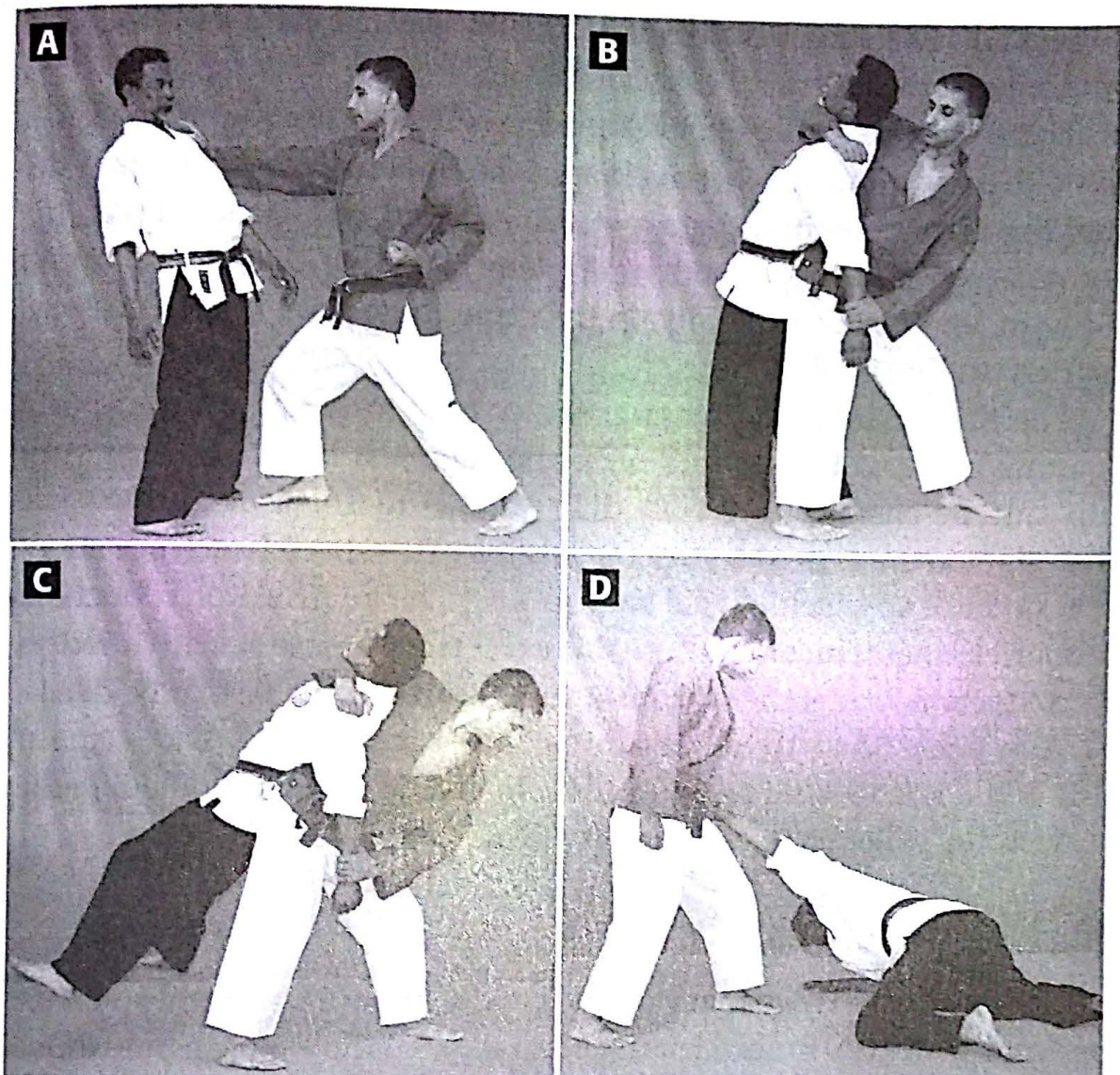


Figure 89: Ushiro koshi guruma, heian sandan steps 19-20. To make koshi guruma lethal, use the kake te in step 19 to spin him around with his back to you (A, B). Then execute the hip throw with your arm around his neck (C, D). If his neck doesn't break, he still lands on his knees. **WARNING:** This throw should not be practiced. The danger to the receiver is high.

enemy soldiers.⁴³⁷ When my students practice this technique, we use a throwing dummy.

George Kirby demonstrates a "less lethal" version of this throw to his jujutsu students as ushiro koshi nage.⁴³⁸ He grasps the shoulders of the opponent's jacket instead of yanking on his arm and neck. This removes the threat to the neck and gives your partner free use of his hands for

⁴³⁷ U.S. Army, FM 21-150, *Combatives*, 1954, p. 70. Reproduced in facsimile as *Hand to Hand Combat*, Paladin Press, 2005.

⁴³⁸ Kirby, 1992, technique 4-20.

a breakfall. Even so, it is difficult to avoid landing on your knees and spraining your toes.

There are also “more lethal” versions of this technique. In *aiki tessen jutsu*, there is a throw where you spin the opponent around, place the iron fan across his throat, grasp it at both ends and use it to crush his throat as you hoist him on your hip.⁴³⁹ Remember that Matsumura carried a tessen, and one could easily do the same thing with the sai that was carried by Shuri policemen.

The KGB kidnapping manual shows how to wrap your arm, or a “garotte” around the victim’s neck and then just hang him over your hip until he passes out.⁴⁴⁰ They didn’t bother to finish the throw since they wanted the man unconscious but alive. This should catch our attention because so much of this kata seems to be an arrest or abduction. Modern kidnapping experts use this exact technique to subdue a victim for abduction. Under the circumstances, that might not be a coincidence.

I’d say that Shan Yu and his minion are both in pretty bad shape at this point. Itosu would just take them by the hair and drag them to the magistrate. What an ignoble end for Shan Yu!

9.3 Conclusion

Shotokan sensei say that you don’t really know a kata until you have performed it 10,000 times. Heian sandan shows us how foolish this is. One week in a wing chun class will teach you more about heian sandan than you can learn from any number of grim repetitions. Until you discover chi sao and chi gerk, this kata will always be an empty dance. This is why we have to “climb other mountains” (section 6.1.2).

But are these the “real” techniques of heian sandan? Let’s see how the kata fits the profile:

- The theme of the kata seems to be “bring them back alive.” When Matsumura and Itosu were bodyguards, they gave their enemies no mercy. As policemen, however, they had to subdue and arrest their opponents without killing them. That’s a very different kind of fighting.

⁴³⁹ Mizukoshi, Hiro, *Aiki Tessenjutsu*, Airyudo, 1997, p. 77.

⁴⁴⁰ KGB, *Alpha Team Training Manual: How the Soviets Trained for Personal Combat, Assassination, and Subversion*, Paladin Press, 1993, p. 150 and 165.

- Can we recognize the enemy? Legends from medieval Okinawa describe street gangs and their violent leaders. An American crew and their captain fit the same general profile. Lawless men were common around the harbors of Naha and Tomari.
- Does the kata exploit the enemy's weakness? Shan Yu and his men can't resist strong drink. The Shuri police might have let the criminals get drunk before moving in to arrest them. That would explain why Shan Yu and his minion were so easy to manhandle in the kata.
- Can we see one of our masters teaching the lesson? Shotokan historians don't usually single out Kanryu Higaonna as one of our karate ancestors, but the skills on display here are exactly the ones he for which was famous. He was good friends with Itosu, and may well have had an influence on heian sandan. If so, then shotokan just became part of the "shito-ryu" family of styles, preserving the teachings of both Itosu and Higaonna at the same time. Many people have thought that this was a good idea, and perhaps Itosu thought so, too.
- Are the techniques in a logical sequence? We fight our way into the bar, grapple with the suspect, subdue him and carry him out again. In particular, the applications for steps 6-10 form a very tight sequence of escalating techniques. That kind of thing doesn't happen by accident.
- Are the techniques historically appropriate? Every one of these techniques were known and practiced in the appropriate place and time.
- Does the kata form a complete lesson? To place a suspect under arrest, it is very useful to catch an arm, lock a wrist and force a submission. That's the first half of the kata. In the second half we carry him out while repelling enemies with our feet. Techniques near the end can be interpreted as choking the man unconscious until he can be dragged away. It looks like a police raid from beginning to end.

This interpretation of heian sandan offers us an amazingly rich collection of fighting skills. This is a toolkit that our students can use in

real life. The throws (at the first and second kiai) are easy, practical and effective. The wrist lock sequence offers practical arrest (and escape) skills. Chi sao works well against the typical drunken puncher. Chi gerk shows us a complete fighting art at the level of the knees.

But would this kind of fighting really be appropriate to shotokan students? Here's a quote from Gichin Funakoshi, the founder of our sect:

"I believe there are many who value hand techniques over secret leg techniques, but sometimes leg techniques can be more valuable. In actual fighting, one must not forget that when in hand-to-hand combat, there are always the legs." ⁴⁴¹

The "secret leg techniques" are not a secret any more.

⁴⁴¹ Higaki, 2005, p. 59.

Chapter 10



Wrestling Over the Sword

In the case of heian yondan, I really must give credit to the tengu, the flying demons who come in the middle of the night to whisper secrets in your ear. I was stumped until they took pity on me. I collected applications for heian yondan for years, but the insight didn't come. Who were we fighting? Why fight him this way?

I gradually isolated a set of applications that all seemed to be teaching the same lesson. The lesson surrounded an odd kick, which I call *nihou geri* or the "two treasures" kick. To use this kick, you must seize the opponent's head and pull it down to waist level. Then do a *mae geri keage* (front-snap kick) that knees him in the face and strikes his testicles at the same time. The face and groin are the two treasures.

There are six clusters in heian yondan where *nihou geri* was one of the potential applications. But *why*? Why would Itosu build a kata around different approaches to this kick? I just couldn't see it.

One night, I woke up with a wild beating heart. I had been fighting phantoms in my sleep. In the dream, I tore the helmet off a samurai warrior and beat him unconscious with it. His armor had not saved him. As my mind cleared, I realized that my heian yondan applications would all work against an armored warrior. The applications systematically targeted gaps in the armor where the warrior was vulnerable! *Nihou geri*, in particular, strikes directly at two weak points, the face and the groin.

There were armored samurai soldiers at a garrison at Naha. These were warriors dressed for battle, not bureaucrats in cotton robes. Grappling with an armored warrior is called *kumiuchi kenden*, "wrestling over a sword."⁴⁴² This type of fighting has a documented history going back at least to the 1600's. The *kumiuchi* techniques are not widely practiced anymore, but you can glimpse them in judo's *koshiki no kata* in which the performers step slowly and ponderously, pretending to be weighed down by their armor.⁴⁴³ As a graduate of a samurai sword academy, Matsumura would have studied this art. It was part of the curriculum of all such schools.

⁴⁴² Mol, 2001, p. 27-32.

⁴⁴³ Sharp, Hal, *Classic Judo Kata*, DVD 30 minutes, Rising Sun Productions, 2006.

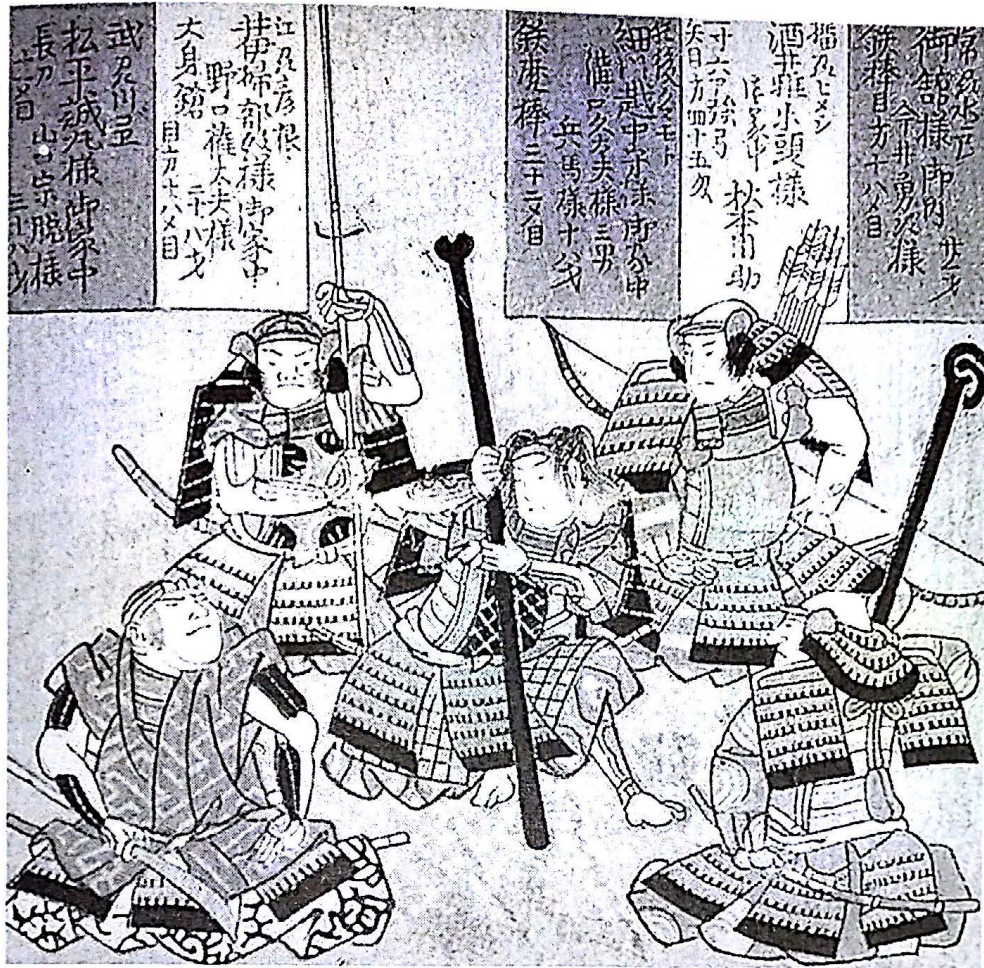


Figure 90: Samurai soldiers in 1853. The soldiers are wearing typical samurai armor and are armed with swords, a bow and arrows, a *naginata* (halberd), *yari* (spear) and two examples of the *tetsubo* or *kanabo*, which was an iron staff used for crushing helmets. (Courtesy of the Ryosenji Treasure Museum.)

10.1 Vulnerability of Samurai Armor

Armor doesn't make you invulnerable. Anything that "protects" you always has a downside. Throughout history, men in armor have all had the same problems with their protective clothing:

- The protection is always incomplete.
- The armor is very heavy. It slows you down and tires you out.
- The helmet restricts your field of view and reduces the mobility of your head and neck.
- Above all, armor requires layers of padded clothing that overheat the wearer. In tropical sunshine, a person in armor will die of heat stroke in as little as half an hour if he doesn't find ways to expose a significant amount of bare skin to cooling air.

Japanese warriors had to compromise between protection and cooling. Surviving examples of Japanese battlefield armor vividly illustrate this painful compromise (Figure 91):

- The iron helmet (*kabuto*) deflected downward-slashing sword cuts. It was held in place by a cotton rope under the chin. It usually had a lamellar skirt of curved plates (*shikoro*) that screened the sides and back of the neck. The neck, under the *shikoro*, was left bare to keep the body from overheating.
- The face guard (*menpo*) was worn like a Halloween mask. The mask covered the face below the eyes, and extended down to cover the front of the throat. It could deflect a slash or stab at the throat, but offered no resistance to impact.
- There is light armor on the back of the hand (*tekko*), the upper side of the forearms (*kote*), and the upper arms (*sode*). The under side of the arm from wrist to armpit was unprotected.
- The torso was covered by a cuirass, consisting of a breastplate and backplate. The breastplate often left a surprising amount of the upper chest uncovered and provided no protection to the top of the shoulders. The *kesa kiri*, or monk's-robe cut, takes advantage of this weakness. The sword enters at the top of one shoulder and cuts diagonally through to the opposite armpit.
- The backplate of the cuirass left the shoulders and upper back bare, exposing several inches of neck and spine.
- The lamellar skirts (tassets, called *kusazuri* and *haidate* in Japan) deflected downward-slashing attacks to the groin or thighs. There was often a two to four-inch gap between the bottom edge of the breastplate and the top of the tassets, making a disembowling cut possible. The belt was tied in this gap to support the warrior's swords.
- There is no armor protecting the groin or thighs from below. A kick directed upward into the groin simply folds up the tassets like Venetian blinds, leaving the testicles undefended. This is another region that would be left bare, or only lightly covered, to keep the body cool.

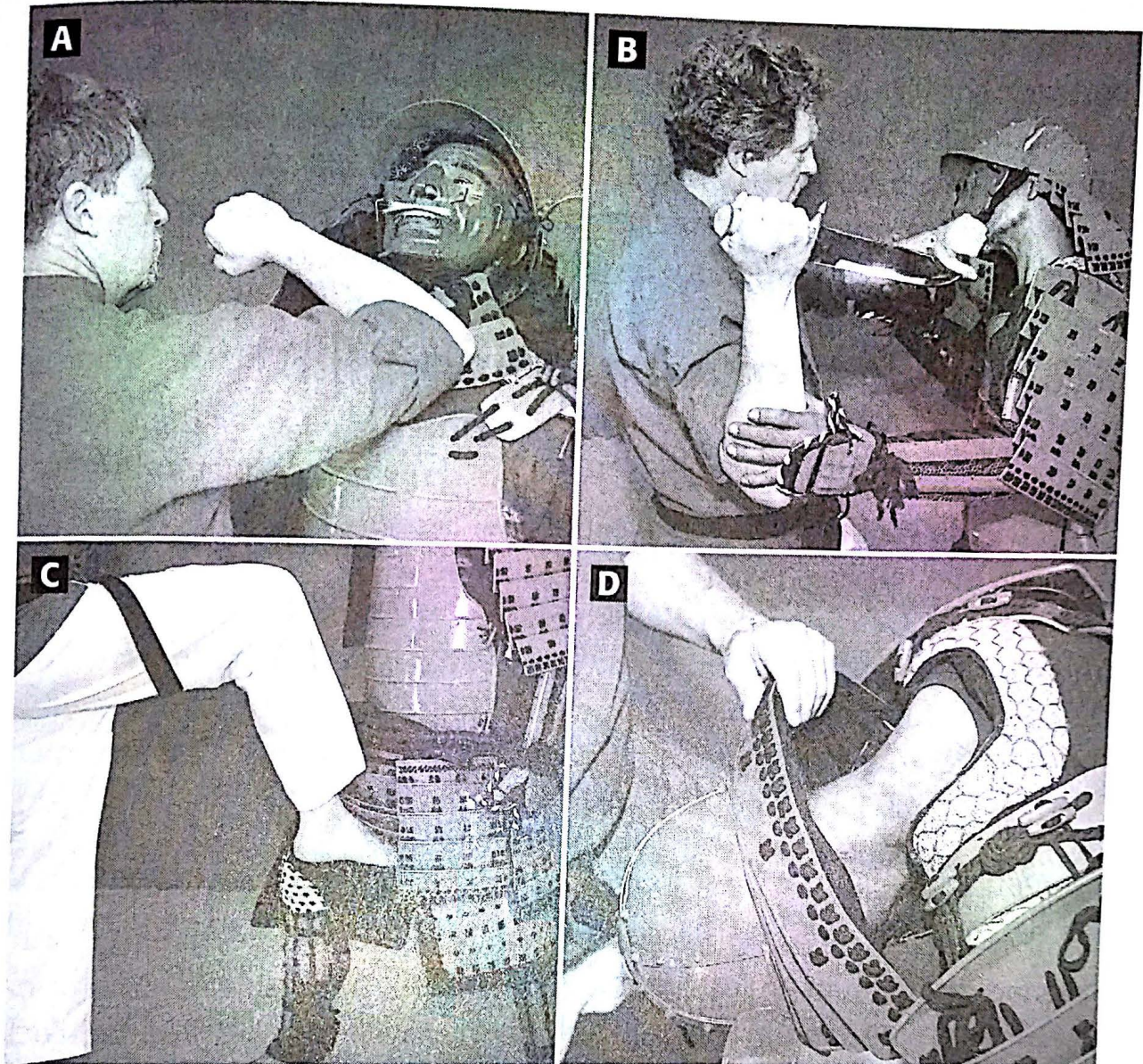


Figure 91: Gaps in samurai armor. Compared to European armor, the armor of the samurai had some surprising gaps. The face mask does not protect against impact, such as an elbow blow to the chin (A). If you drag the mask aside, the neck is wide open (B). The tasset skirt offers no protection against kicks that sweep up from below (C). About 10 inches of the spine are vulnerable if you pull the rear edge of the helmet forward (D).

- There is light armor on the shins (*suniata*). The legs are not protected from behind. The feet are not protected.
- Sometimes you see light armor added over the top of the shoulders, or circling the base of the neck. In most 19th-century photographs and drawings, these accessories are missing.
- The armor leaves large gaps at all joints to allow free movement.
- A typical set of soldier armor weighed about 60 pounds (30 kilograms).

Can an unarmed fighter defeat a man in armor? Once we take away his sword, this is a man trapped in a turtle suit. The weight of the armor slows him down and tires him out. In the tropical sun, the armor heats up like an oven. A warrior in armor is not at his best.

And he just marched three miles uphill from the Naha garrison to Shuri Castle! If we keep our wits about us, we can *take* this guy.

10.2 Variations on Heian Yondan

For heian yondan, I analyzed performances from all of the text and video sources cited in section 7.2. This kata shows tremendous variation, both within shotokan and between styles. Sensei didn't understand the kata, so they changed it in every imaginable way.

Steps 1-2 are the opening "double-block" postures. Within shotokan there is some variation in the following *shutō koshi kamae* posture, when the two hands come down to the hip before rising again in the second double block. According to Sugiyama's book, this *koshi kamae* is performed with the *shutō* hands crossed, one lying in the palm of the other with *palms up* in front of the hip! Sugiyama calls this *jūji ji uke*, crossed wrist block. This posture appears to be unique to Sugiyama.⁴⁴⁴

It is much more significant that the non-shotokan styles have no *koshi kamae* at all (*matsubayashi*, *seito shorin-ryu*, *seito shito-ryu*, *tani-ha shito-ryu*, *wado ryu*). Their arms move into the second double block directly "across the top" from the first one. This is likely to be the original technique because it exactly mimics sword-disarming drills taught every day in aikido and jujutsu. The *koshi kamae* is probably a shotoism.

Step 5-8 are the two side-snap kicks with backfist strikes that are followed by elbow strikes. Non-shotokan styles all do a front-snap kick instead of a side-snap kick (*matsubayashi*, *seito shito-ryu*, *wado ryu*). They do a hammerfist strike instead of a backfist strike. The front-snap kick is certainly the original technique.

In the first half of step 9, shotokan students do a left *shutō gedan barai* and right *shutō age-uke*. In the second half, they do a left *shutō age-uke* and a right *shutō uchi* to the neck.

The first half of step 9 appears to be a shotoism because styles that were not influenced by Funakoshi skip that step (*matsubayashi*, *seito*

⁴⁴⁴ Sugiyama, 1989, p. 38-39.

shorin-ryu, seito shito-ryu). From the second elbow strike, non-shotokans step directly to the shutō strike to the neck in front stance. Oddly, shotokai performers also skip this move.

In steps 23-24, you reach up as if to grab the opponent's hair or ears. Pull your fists down as you do a knee kick to the face (*hiza geri*).

There is a sharp difference of opinion about reaching for the opponent's head. Some shotokan groups shift into front stance and pause for a moment with the hands extended (Sugiyama, Ertl and Bendickson, films from 1924, Kanazawa, robukai, wado ryu). Other groups hold the back stance while reaching for the head, and they admonish students *never* to use the front stance at this point (old and new JKA, Kenneth Funakoshi's group, seito shito-ryu). I'd be inclined to follow the early films.

Among shotokan groups, there is some variation in foot position during the *hiza geri*, although, frankly, it is often difficult to see the foot position in the videos. Some groups keep the foot in a horizontal position—toes pointing forward (JKA, 1924 films, shotokai, Kenneth Funakoshi, robukai, seito shorin-ryu, wado ryu). Others point the toes straight down during the *hiza geri* (Sugiyama, Ertl and Bendickson, Kanazawa, matsubayashi, seito shito-ryu). It is worth noting that the toe-pointing gesture flattens the top of the foot for a shovel kick to the groin, which is the "hidden" half of *nihou geri*. I suspect this was the original technique.

I have greatly simplified this discussion because of space limitations. There are many anachronistic moves in the various versions of *heian yondan*, indicating that Shuri-te sensei have been very puzzled by this kata.⁴⁴⁵

10.3 Historical Applications of Heian Yondan

Heian yondan contains a lesson on fighting a samurai in armor. Many parts of it apply to modern self-defense, so the lesson is as practical as it is exotic. Students enjoy the novelty of the applications and carry away some solid grappling and striking skills.

- Steps 1-4 continue the sword-disarming lesson begun in *heian nidan*.

⁴⁴⁵ For a complete listing of the "flaws" in the kata visit www.ShotokansSecret.com.

- Steps 5-8 begin to explore the kicks and blows that work around samurai armor or that use the armor against the wearer, such as tearing off his helmet and clubbing him with it.
- Steps 9-11 show how to bend the soldier at the waist so you can attack the unprotected spine at the back of the neck.
- Steps 12-19 exploit a double wrist lock that lets you break a choke hold, kick the soldier in the face and groin, break both of his wrists and flip him over like a turtle on its back. An alternate ending twists his helmet to break his neck.
- Steps 20-22 show how this same double wrist lock can be used to make a shield of the soldier's body to fend off his friend.
- Steps 23-26 show how to reverse our positions so we can back out the door with the human shield still between us and the opposition.

To illustrate some of these techniques, you will need a samurai helmet. Kabuto helmets are expensive, so for everyday teaching you might want to invest in a \$10 hard hat with a chin strap. Get the kind that has a brim all around the edge. A "Darth Vader" helmet is even better.

You'll also need a sword. Be sure to heed the warnings in section 7.3.1. Don't bring a live sword into the same room as your students.

10.3.1 Steps 1-4: Uchi Komi Dori, Shomen Uchi Ikkajo, Ken Dori

Steps 1-4 of heian yondan include the two open-hand double blocks plus the following *jūji uke* ("X" block) and *morote uke* (reinforced block).

As you might expect, the applications for the opening of heian yondan augment those presented for steps 1-3 of heian nidan in section 7.3.2. It is a continuation of the same lesson in *tachi dori* (sword disarming). This was a vital skill for a new bodyguard. Since this kata is about fighting a soldier in armor, we really need to do something about his sword before we wrestle with him.

There are at least two directions we can go with this interpretation. One uses the across-the-top gestures seen in nonshotokan styles. The other uses the up-down-up gestures associated with shotokan's heian yondan. Those are two different traditional sword-disarming techniques with the same entry and the same result.

Hidari makikomi: Nonshotokan styles take the hands up on the left to the double-shutō block position (step 1), then transition *across the top* to the right side (step 2), before bringing the hands down into a jūji uke (“X” block). Kata in multiple styles use these gestures.

This is the signature of a budoshin jujutsu technique called *hidari makikomi*, the outside winding takedown (Figure 92).⁴⁴⁶ It is also a *hakkoryu jujutsu* technique called *uchi komi dori*,⁴⁴⁷ and aikido students will recognize it as *shomen uchi ikkajo*.⁴⁴⁸

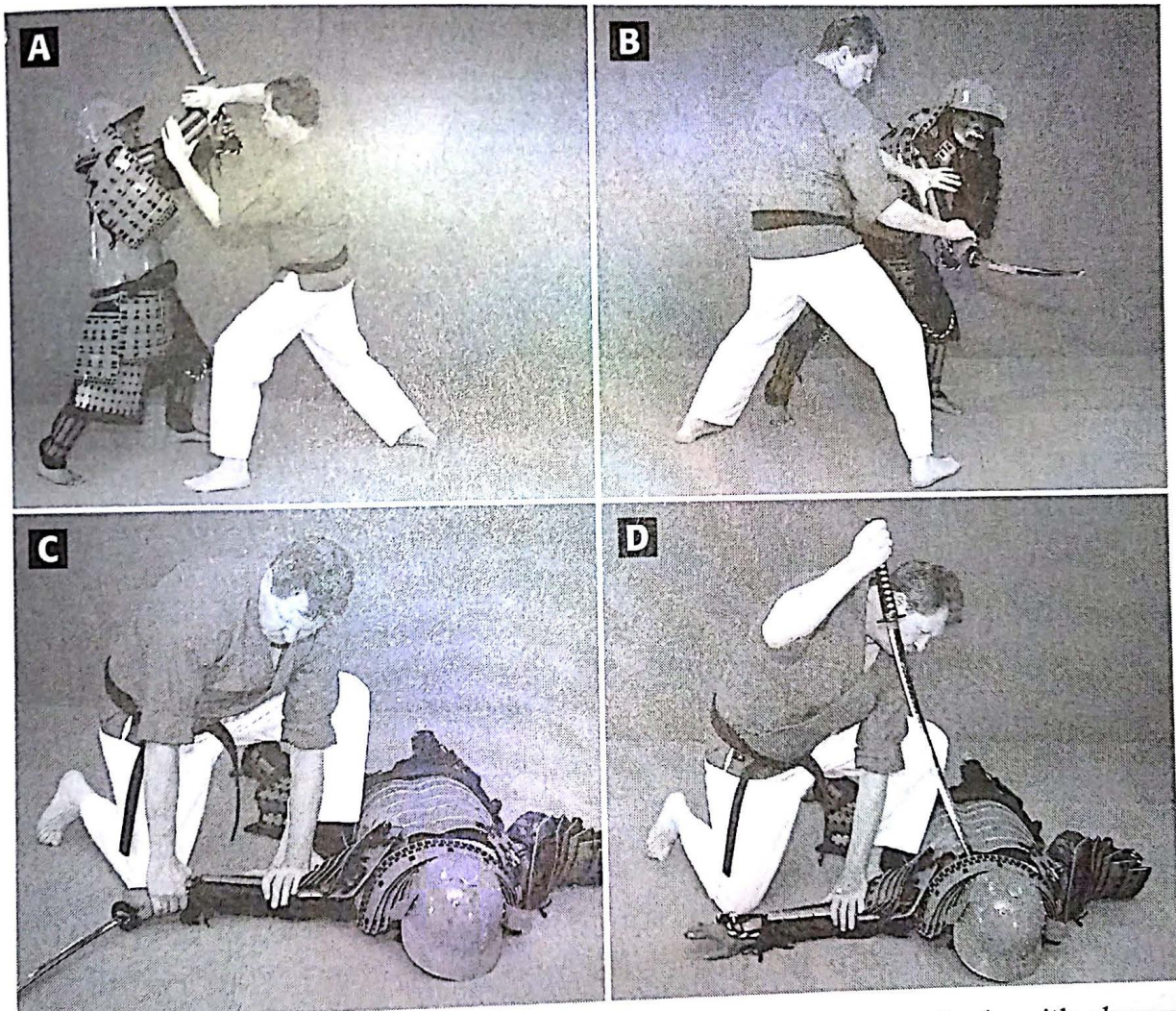


Figure 92: *Hidari makikomi*, heian yondan steps 1-2. The enemy attacks with *shomen uchi*, trying to split your head with his sword (A). Slap his arms away and down (B), spinning into an arm-bar takedown and disarm (C). In the fourth photo, the point of the sword is about two inches above the samurai's heart, with no armor in between (D). The upper back over the heart was not defended. There are many variations of this technique. One of them was the original application for steps 1-2.

⁴⁴⁶ Kirby, 1992, technique 7-1.

⁴⁴⁷ Palumbo, 1987, p. 123-127.

⁴⁴⁸ Combes, Volume 2, 1999.

The opponent attacks from your left in step 1. He attempts a shomen uchi, a vertical cut at your head with his sword. Shift toward his right shoulder (tai sabaki), because you need to get inside the sweep of the blade and engage his arms. Push his descending hands away from you and down with both hands (step 1). Your right hand closes over the top of his right hand where it grips the handle of the sword.

Don't try to stop his swing. Just guide it across and down, locking his right elbow in an ikkajo arm bar against the front of your body. Crank his arm around to your right to spin him down to the ground. Twist the sword out of his hand. If you can't break his grip, kneel on his arm with your shins and use both hands to take the sword.

Once you have the sword, you can decide whether to kill him or take him prisoner. The backplate of the cuirass leaves his upper back undefended. His heart is barely two inches below the fourth rib.

Ken dori 1: These tachi-dori techniques are all very similar and have overlapping names in various disciplines. Let's call the next one *ken dori*, which still refers to sword disarming. I've seen it in multiple versions of aikido. This technique doesn't make much sense against a man in armor, but it is lethal against a man in a kimono. The same technique works for baseball bats and golf clubs, so it has some utility in the modern era.

In step 1, the opponent attacks with shomen uchi, as before. Step in and to his right side and knock his hands away with your open palms (Figure 93). Continue the motion to guide the sword down to waist level. This is similar to step 2. Your left hand now grasps the middle of the sword handle. Your right hand slides down the back of the blade about two feet. Take a step back (to the east) with your left foot, ending in right kokutsu dachi facing the opponent.

As you settle into the stance, rotate the sword like a lever to break his grip. Your left hand is the pivot (fulcrum) of the lever. Your right hand presses the blade down toward the ground and rotates it up again so that the razor-sharp tip slices him from groin to chin. He'll let go. In fact, he'll throw himself backwards trying to get out of reach of the blade.

The armored warrior's cuirass protects his abdomen, which takes some of the sting out of this technique. No matter. Bring the razor-sharp sword up under his unprotected armpit instead. Slice it to the bone. This will cut the nerves of the brachial plexus, paralyzing his arm, while also severing the axillary artery. According to combatives expert W.E.

Fairbairn, the enemy will drop unconscious in a little over two seconds when this artery is opened.⁴⁴⁹

This technique and the kata both use a turn after step 2 but in opposite directions. I'll invoke the Shadow Principle here. The kata remembers that we are supposed to turn but not in which direction.

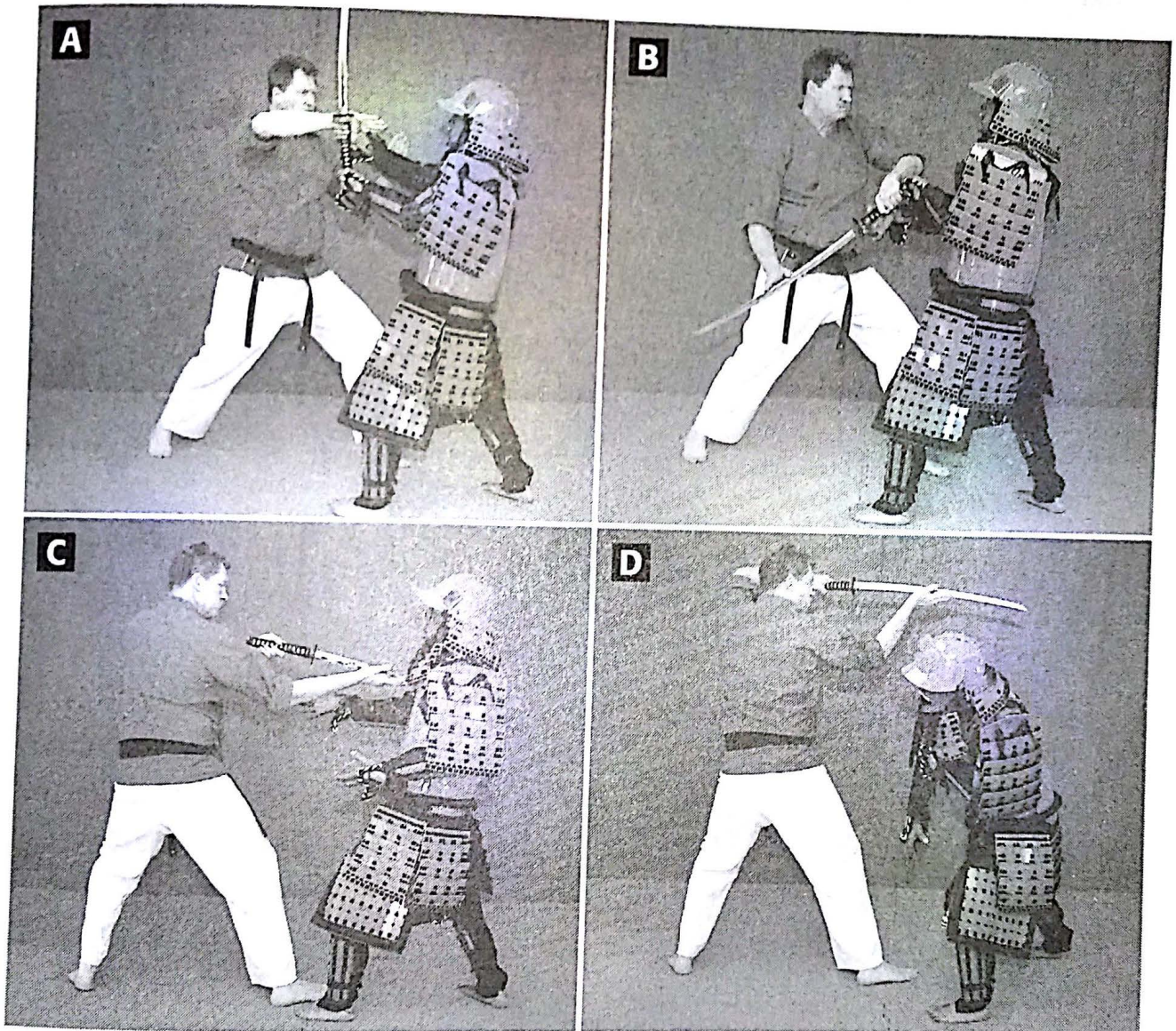


Figure 93: Uchi komi dori, ken dori 1, heian yondan steps 1-2. The enemy attacks with *shomen uchi*, trying to split your head with his sword. Slap his arms away and capture his hands and the handle of the sword (A, B). Then take a step away to the east and reverse the sword, cutting him from pelvis to throat (C, D). If he's in armor, as pictured here, slice his unprotected armpit to the bone. The follow-through leaves you posed like step 2 of the kata.

⁴⁴⁹ Fairbairn, W.E., *Get Tough! How to Win in Hand-to-Hand Fighting*, unknown publisher, 1942; reprinted by Paladin Press, 1996, p. 99. Fairbairn states that cutting the subclavian artery results in unconsciousness in two seconds. The axillary cut severs the same tube, two inches farther from the heart.

Ken dori 2: The advanced explanation for steps 2-4 of heian yondan comes from Shihan Steve Chriscole over in England. Steve's expertise combines karate and kendo. He spends a lot of time taking swords away from people.

This time the swordsman attacks from the right (step 2 of the kata), cutting at your head. Shift in and block as before (Figure 94). Your left hand grips his right hand, up against the tsuba. Your right hand reaches up *from below* to seize the sword handle in the gap between the opponent's hands.

Sweep the sword down to waist level with the point toward the ground. Now, use your right hand to push the handle away and down, crossing your wrists with the same feeling as a jūji uke ("X" block, step 3). This flips the razor-sharp blade up between the swordsman's legs, which will get his attention. The skirtlike tassets fall off the blade to either side. The sword just slides up between them. When the steel reaches his groin, his hips will flinch back and his head will come forward, sticking out his chin.

Now do step 4 of the kata, the "reinforced block." Turn toward the swordsman and drive the pommel of the sword up under his chin. The mask offers no protection from this blow.

That's as far as the kata goes but there's an obvious finishing blow to include here. After the chin blow, continue to lift your hands so that the blade slides up between his right arm and body. Cut the brachial plexus and axillary artery in the armpit. That would be the end of the story for this samurai but for some reason the kata doesn't finish him off.

There is a discontinuity at this point in the kata. The sword seems to vanish. Apparently, both fighters have lost control over the sword, or maybe the sword has broken. The rest of the kata presents lessons in battlefield wrestling without picking the sword up again.

10.3.2 Steps 5-8: Ikkajo, Nihou Geri, Kabuto Uchi

Steps 5-8 of heian yondan are the side snap-kick with uraken, followed by an elbow strike to the palm of the hand. Note that the yoko geri keage (side-snap kick) is unique to shotokan. Other styles all use mae geri keage

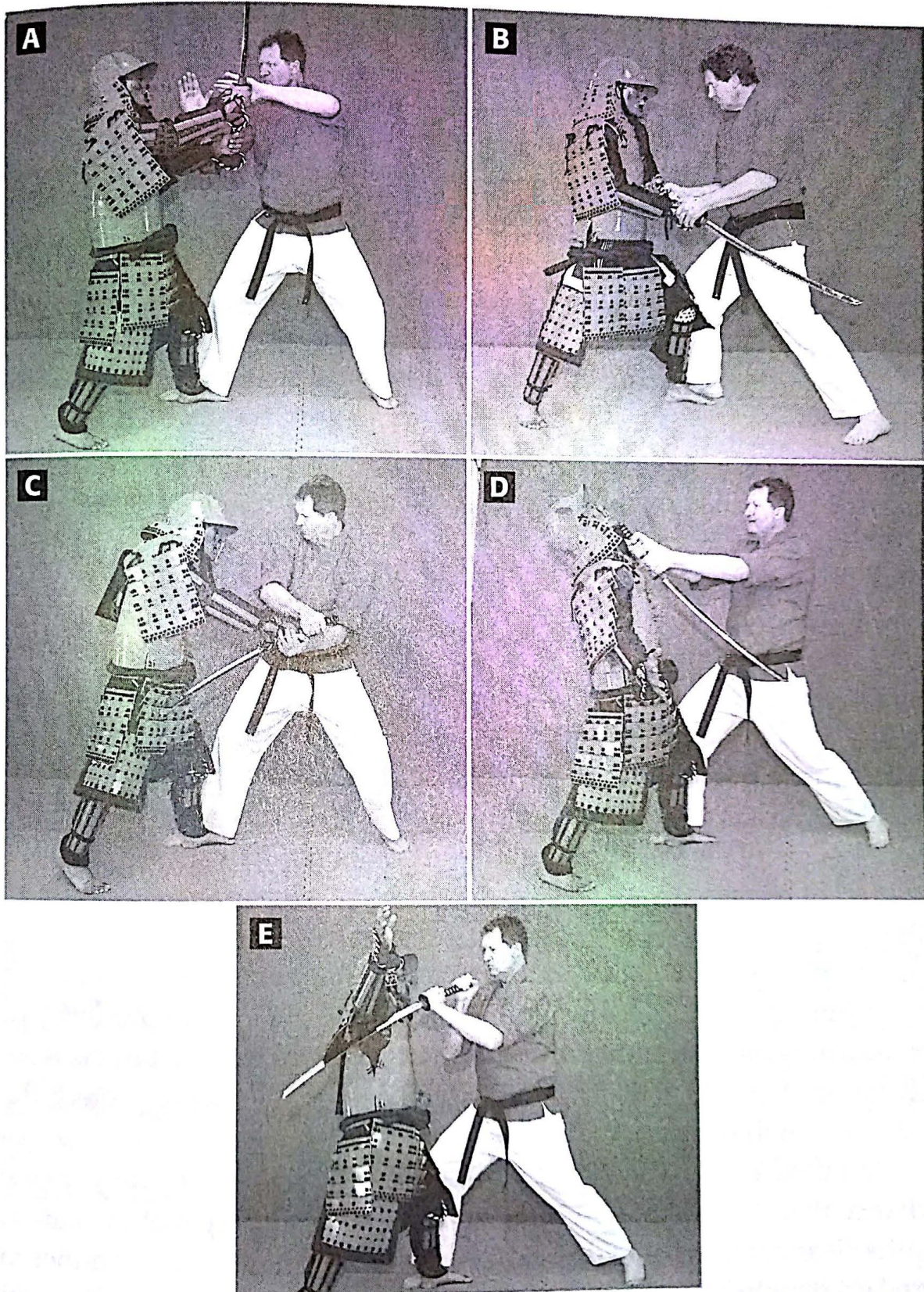


Figure 94: *Uchi komi dori, ken dori 2, heian yondan steps 2-4.* The enemy attacks with *shomen uchi*. Slap his arms away and capture his hands and the handle of the sword (A). Your right hand grasps the sword handle *from below* (B). The “X” block rotates the blade up between the tassets into his groin (C). The “reinforced block” drives the pommel up under his chin (D). Flip the blade forward to slice through the nerves and arteries at the unprotected armpit (E).

(front-snap kick) instead. We don't know why Funakoshi substituted the side kick in shotokan.

I must credit Iain Abernethy for some inspiration relative to steps 5-8. He had the insight that this move involves an ikkajo arm lock, a hair grab and a kick.⁴⁵⁰ I can also give some credit to the U.S. Army Field Manual 21-150, which long ago taught me how to use a soldier's own helmet against him. You can grab the helmet and wrench it back to break the soldier's neck. If the helmet isn't fastened securely, it can come off in your hand. In that case, you crack his skull with it.⁴⁵¹

We seem to still be struggling with the second samurai warrior as this cluster begins. At the opening of step 5, you have the soldier's left arm in an ikkajo arm bar. His left hand is captured by both of your hands, symbolized by the cup-and-saucer koshi kamae at the opening of step 5. Your left elbow applies pressure to his locked elbow as your hands apply painful torsion to his wrist.

By twisting his straightened arm counterclockwise and leaning on his locked elbow, you can force him to bend over to your left. The simple ending is to snap-kick his face with your left foot, as we did in heian nidan. However, this kata builds on that elementary lesson.

Maintain the wrist lock with your right hand (Figure 95). Using your left hand, reach for the back edge of his helmet and get a strong grip there. (This is the backfist strike, or Abernethy's hair grab.) Use your control of his head and arm to turn him about 45 degrees to your right, lining up his face for a knee strike (*hiza geri*) from your left knee. If you line it up correctly, you can perform the devastating *nihou geri*. Your left knee impacts his face, while at the same time, the top of your left foot strikes his groin. Samurai armor does not protect these two targets from this type of impact. It doesn't matter which target he tries to protect, the other one will be hit.

As noted above, when you grab a soldier's helmet, there is always the chance that the helmet will come off in your hand. Step 6 of the kata is quite clear about what to do next: use the helmet like Thor's hammer to make a dent in his head (*kabuto uchi*). Catch his head between the iron helmet and the anvil provided by your right elbow. The elbow braces

⁴⁵⁰ Abernethy, 2006, *pinan yondan*, fourth cluster.

⁴⁵¹ U.S. Army Field Manual, 1954, p. 46-48.

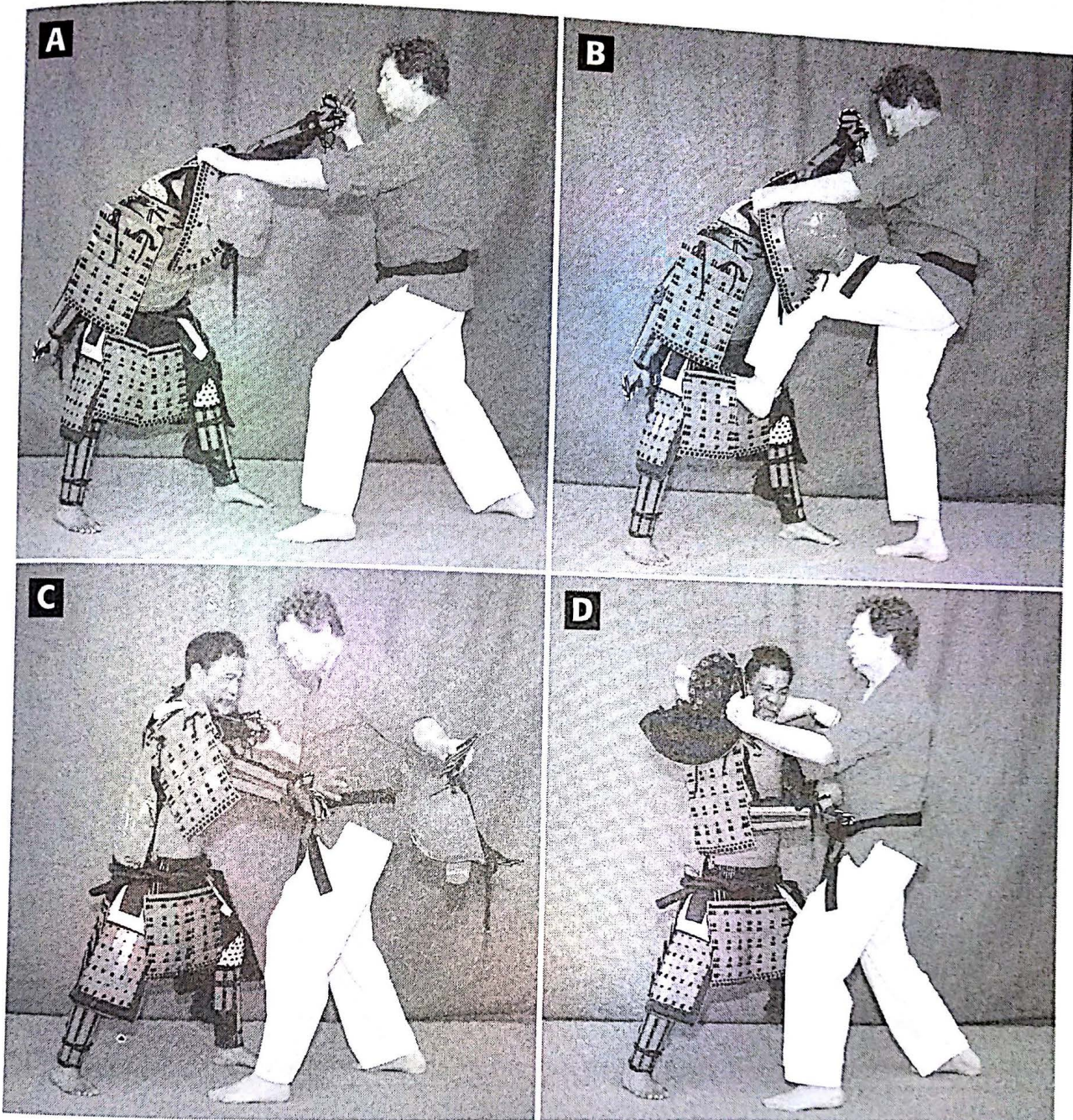


Figure 95: *Ikkajo*, *nihou geri*, *kabuto uchi*, *heian yondan* steps 5-6. From a standard *ikkajo* wrist lock, grasp the opponent's helmet and steer him into position for the *nihou geri* kick to the face and groin (A). The knee smashes into the face. The rising kick lifts the tassets, opening a path to the groin (B). This attack can easily pull the helmet off (C), so the kata shows us what to do if that happens. We brace the head solidly with our right elbow and crack the other side of his skull with the heavy iron helmet (D). *Kabuto uchi*, the helmet strike, was well-known in ancient jujutsu and is still taught in modern armies.

his skull against the impact of the iron pot on the opposite side. This satisfies the Waldow Principle much more convincingly than the elbow attack alone. That helmet is heavy, hard and covered with protruding rivets. It will crack a skull. This samurai is finished.

Steps 7-8 are the mirror image of these techniques.

10.3.3 Steps 9-11: Kumiuchi, Nihou Geri, Empi Uchi

Steps 9-11 of heian yondan are the moves leading up to the first kiai. There are open-hand blocks, a shutō uchi to the neck, a kick and a complex “swimming” gesture where we seem to grab something with the left hand while executing a right uraken uchi, apparently to the face.

There is an issue with part of this sequence. The left shutō down block and right shutō up block at the beginning of step 9 are missing from most non-shotokan styles. It is likely that this is a shotoism, probably added in a misplaced desire for symmetry. We can ignore this move by invoking the Shotoism Rule (section 6.1.13).

In the second half of step 9, we sweep the left hand up in a shutō age-uke (Figure 96). This isn't a block. We use this gesture to knock the opponent's helmet askew and open a gap between the skirt of the helmet and the top of his left shoulder. Your right-hand shutō uchi slices into this gap to strike the exposed side of his neck. This is a stunning blow that weakens the enemy and makes him easier to manipulate in the upcoming moments. (Jujutsu combat techniques almost always begin with a “blinding” or distracting atemi strike.)

At this point, you have both hands on his helmet. This time the chin cord is firmly tied and does not break when you yank the helmet down to waist level. Your right leg provides the nihou geri, which impacts his faceplate (with your knee) and his groin (with your instep). That is the kick in step 10. After the kick, reach over his head with your left hand and grasp the skirt of his helmet at the rear. Pull it toward you, exposing the back of his neck. (This is the “swimming” gesture of step 11.) Step in and drop your right elbow down against the vertebrae in the neck or upper back. (This part of step 11 is usually taught as an uraken uchi.) This attack can easily result in a fatal spinal injury.⁴⁵² The kiai at this point means Itosu thought so, too.

My interpretation of this cluster is very similar to Iain Abernethy's. Abernethy didn't envision the armored opponent, but he recognized the nihou geri kick, and he pointed out that the “backfist strike” is really a downward elbow strike into the opponent's neck or back.⁴⁵³ That put me on the right path and the tengu did the rest.

⁴⁵² KBG, 1993, p. 198.

⁴⁵³ Abernethy, 2006, pinan yondan, fifth cluster.

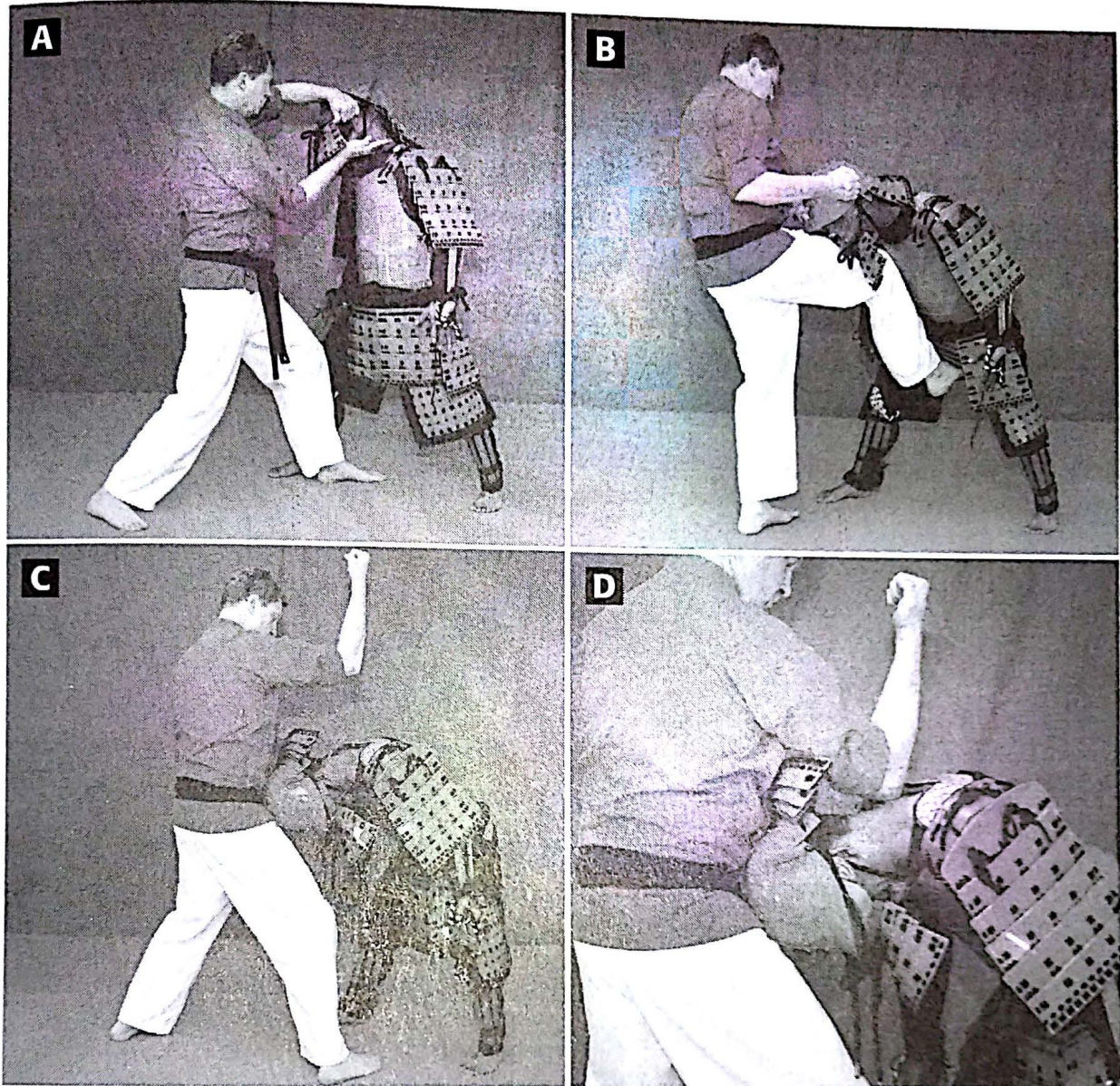


Figure 96: *Kumiuchi, nihou geri, empi uchi, heian yondan steps 9-11.* In step 9, yank his helmet askew and strike to the side of the unprotected neck (A). Using both hands, pull the helmet down into the nihou geri (B). Pull the skirt of the helmet toward you to expose the bare back of the neck (C). Drive your elbow down to break the neck (D).

10.3.4 Steps 12-19: Riote Kanoha Gaeshi, Nihou Geri, Kabuto Gaeshi

Steps 12-19 of heian yondan includes the “wedge block” clusters with their associated front kicks, front punches and reverse punches.

Shotokan instructors explain the “wedge block” as a defense against a hand choke from the front, which is true. Then they say that the “block” must be used to deflect his hands before he gets a grip, because otherwise you won’t be able to break his grip on your neck. This part is nonsense. A hand choke is a very weak grip. To break it, just plant your hand on the

attacker's chest and push yourself away from him. Rotate your shoulder into the push to increase reach and leverage. Your neck pulls out through his clutching fingers, leaving him grasping air.⁴⁵⁴ That move isn't in the kata, but you should teach it to all of your students.

Riote kanoha gaeshi. The opponent stands in front of you and grabs your throat to choke you (Figure 97). His thumbs are on the front of your throat. (Caution your students to keep the thumb pressure light or serious injury may result.) Reach up and apply the jujutsu "pistol grip" to each of his hands. Your fingers wrap around the base of his thumbs. It is not difficult to peel his hands off of your neck using the "spreading" motions of the kata (steps 12 and 16). This places the opponent in a painful predicament because his wrists are locked in opposite directions. Most people in this situation bow at the waist to take some of the pressure off the wrist joints. That's when you kick him in the face and groin with nihou geri (steps 13 and 17).

The krav maga people call this technique the "two-handed pluck."⁴⁵⁵ The technique is the same as *riote kanoha gaeshi* from hakkoryu jujutsu.⁴⁵⁶ "Kanoha gaeshi" or "turning leaf" is an alternate name for te nage, the common hand throw. "Riote" means "both hands." We apply the te nage lock to both of his wrists at the same time. This places the enemy completely under our control, and also gives us the fourth and fifth examples of nihou geri in this kata.

Riote kanoha gaeshi gives you total control over the enemy:

- You can push and pull on his hands to move him around the room, like steering a wheelbarrow.
- If you push both hands downward, you can make him bow deeply toward you. This stops him from kicking.
- Take a step back while pushing his hands down. He will sprawl belly down on the floor, helpless.
- Take a step forward, pushing his hands toward his shoulders. He'll fall over on his back.

⁴⁵⁴ I learned this from jujutsu Master Peter Clarke of Leeds, England.

⁴⁵⁵ Levine, Darren, et al., *Krav Maga for Beginners: A Step-by-Step Guide to the World's Easiest-to-Learn, Most-Effective Fitness and Fighting Program*, Ulysses, 2009, p. 132-133.

⁴⁵⁶ Palumbo, 1988, p. 62-64.

- Pull one of his hands toward you, and push the other hand away. He will roll over in midair and land on his back. He rolls toward the side that you pulled on. If he manages to resist, just reverse the push-pull. He'll flop over on the opposite side. The body dynamics of this push-pull action are very similar to the two “punches” at the end of this cluster (steps 15-16 and 18-19).

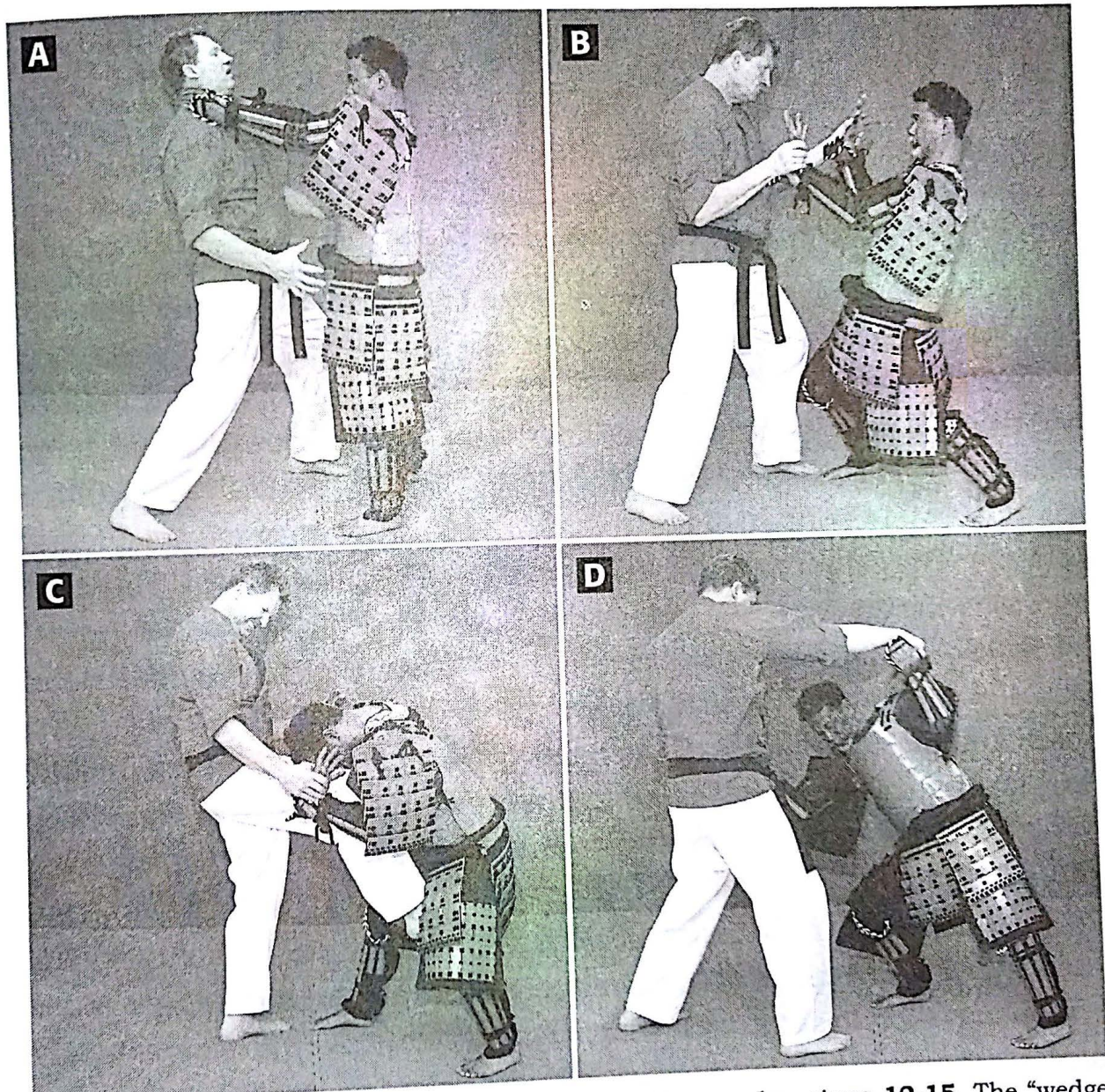


Figure 97: Riote kanoha gaeshi, nihou geri, heian yondan steps 12-15. The “wedge block” pries a hand choke from your neck (A), placing both of his wrists in painful locks (B). (The armor does nothing to protect the wrist joints.) The wrist locks force the opponent to bow, setting up the kick to the face and groin (C). Pull on one hand while thrusting the other away (the “punches”) to flip him on his back (D).

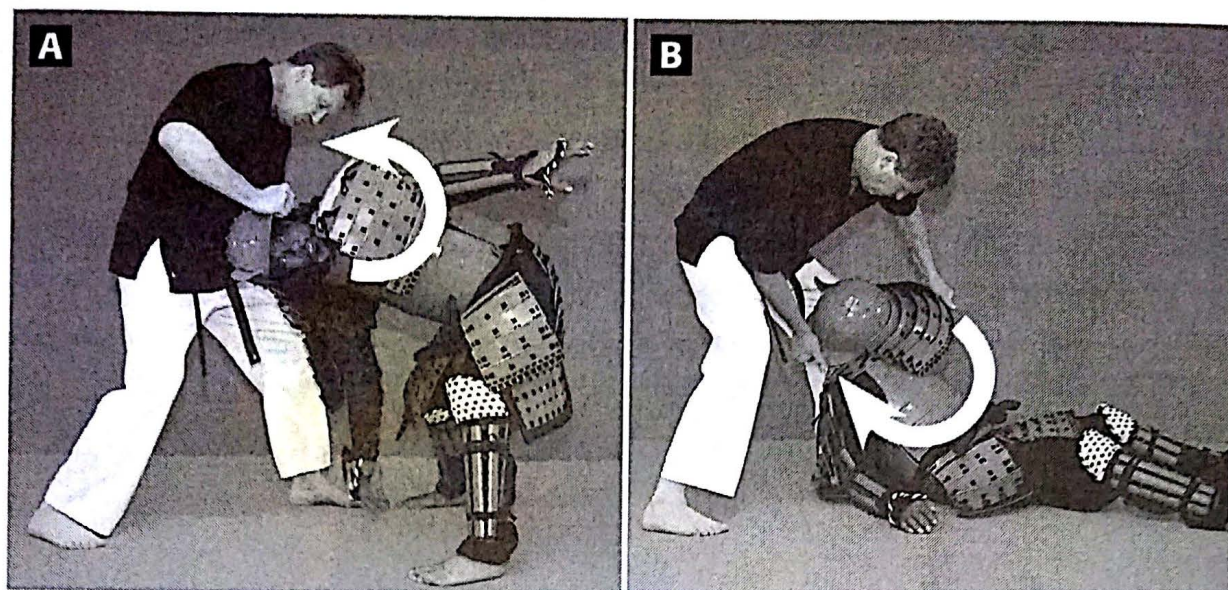


Figure 98: Kabuto gaeshi, heian yondan steps 14-15. Alternate interpretation of the “punches” in steps 14 and 15. After the knee in the face, use the helmet to roll him to the left (A). As he is falling, snap the helmet back and to the right (B). This breaks the neck.

Kabuto gaeshi: One night the tengu came to me again and pointed out that the push-pull “punches” at the end of this cluster could be an example of kabuto gaeshi, an ancient technique in which you kill the samurai by twisting his helmet back and forth like the steering wheel of a car. The helmet doubles the leverage against the neck vertebrae compared to just twisting his head in your hands.

Set up the double wrist lock and two-treasure kick as before. After the stunning knee blow to the face, shift your grip from his hands to the visor and skirts (shikoro) of the helmet. “Steer” the helmet hard to the left, locking his neck and forcing him to roll with the lock (Figure 98). When he starts to fall, suddenly reverse the twist, yanking the “steering wheel” to the right.

The weight of the armor makes it impossible to roll back with the second twist. The grip on the helmet gives you extreme leverage against the neck vertebrae. The neck snaps like a pretzel. Samurai have taught and practiced this technique for about 600 years.⁴⁵⁷

The hip dynamics of the two rapid “punches” are exactly right for this technique. Certainly Matsumura would have taught kabuto gaeshi to his students. Maybe the tengu have a point here.

⁴⁵⁷ Mol, 2001, p. 30-31.

The armor in the pictures is of recent construction but is “genuine” in the sense of being heavy-gauge steel throughout. The helmet is very heavy and feels like a big socket wrench clamped to your head. When someone grabs it, you know instantly that they can twist your head around and kill you.

10.3.5 Steps 20-22: Riote Kanoha Gaeshi Come-Along

Steps 20-22 of heian yondan are the sequence of three reinforced blocks (*morote uke*). All heian performers, and most pinan performers, do these three steps in exactly the same way.

The consensus in the karate-jutsu community is that these postures are not blocks. They seem to be augmented wrist locks, and the series of three suggests that we use the wrist locks to make the enemy soldier back up toward the exit. This person could be a prisoner, or more simply, he could be a shield.

A moment before, in step 19, you had hold of the opponent’s hands in riote kanoha gaeshi. This means you had a *te nage* wrist lock applied to each hand. If you maintain this hold, you can use it as a comealong forcing the opponent to go where you wish. If you vary the pressure on his wrists, you can steer him like a wheelbarrow. Steps 20-22 may be best explained as “driving” the opponent through the crowd, using his body as a shield.

There is a similar sequence in *empi kata* (moves 31-33) in which we place *gakun* grips on the opponent’s wrists and force him to back up to the edge of a well. (You dump him into the well in *empi*.) The *gakun* technique will be explained in Chapter 11. Suffice to say that it is another technique that lets you push the opponent around like a wheelbarrow. The sequence of three “reinforced blocks” in this kata could be a degenerate image of that *gakun* technique.

10.3.6 Steps 23-26: Nihou Geri, Riote Kanoha Gaeshi

Steps 23-26 of heian yondan are the “ear grab,” the knee lift and the final two knife-hand blocks of the kata.

We are usually taught that one grabs the opponent's ears or hair to pull his head down into a rising knee-lift (*hiza geri*). This technique is pictured in U.S. Army hand-to-hand combat manuals.⁴⁵⁸ The *Bubishi* calls it "twin dragons playing with a pearl."⁴⁵⁹ We also have an opportunity to continue the lesson of *riote kanoha gaeshi* and demonstrate the sixth example of *nihou geri* in the kata.

In step 22, you were driving the opponent backward, using *riote kanoha gaeshi* to implement the "wheelbarrow" comealong. We may picture this as using his body as a shield to push through a crowd.

In step 23, instead of grabbing his ears, just push his locked wrists down to force him into a bowing posture. Step 24 (kick and *kiai*) is the sixth example of *nihou geri*, the two-treasure kick. Your knee hits him in the face while your instep strikes his groin. Remember that half the shotokan world believes that the ankle should be extended so that the toes point at the floor during the *hiza geri*. This is exactly the foot position we use for the instep blow to the groin. I don't think that is a coincidence.

When you turn to your left in step 25, still maintaining the wrist locks, the result is to throw the opponent on the floor by rolling him over on his back. The knife-hand block gesture twists his wrists beyond the point where he can remain on his feet.

Alternately, you can switch your hands from the wrist grip to a helmet grip after the knee-lift. The left hand goes on the back of his helmet (or grabs his hair if there is no helmet). The right hand goes under his chin. As you turn and stack up for the *shutō uke*, your hands naturally wrench his head half a turn counterclockwise, throwing him on the ground and potentially breaking his neck. That's *atama makikomi*, the "head winding throw."⁴⁶⁰

The final step of the kata, number 26, does not appear to have any combative purpose other than to return to the starting line. This may be a good time to invoke the Last Move Rule (section 6.1.12). If you are not comfortable with that, you can recycle the *shutō uchi* applications discussed at the end of *heian shodan* (section 8.3.8).

⁴⁵⁸ War Department, 1942, p. 82.

⁴⁵⁹ McCarthy, 1995, p. 172.

⁴⁶⁰ Kirby, 1983, p 57.

10.4 Conclusion

The karate legends claim that the ancient masters toughened their hands so they could “crash through” samurai armor. This is a karate “urban legend” and yet there is an important element of truth in it. The old masters were, in fact, training to fight armored samurai. This kata kills at least four samurai opponents and severely abuses a few others.

Are these the “real” techniques of heian sandan? What evidence can we see in the kata?

- The theme is “wrestling a man in armor.” At least, that’s what the tengu told me and it seems to play out.
- Can we recognize the enemy? Samurai soldiers dressed in armor right up to the beginning of the Meiji Restoration. There was a garrison of these soldiers at Naha.
- Does the kata exploit the enemy’s weakness? The techniques of the kata are very specific about attacking weak points in the armor. The elbow strike into the back of the neck is a dramatic example of this.
- Can we see one of our masters teaching the lesson? Both Azato and Matsumura were highly trained in Japanese sword fighting. At that time, battlefield wrestling was a usual part of a sword fighter’s training, so they may well have received instruction in it. Kumiuchi kenden would play directly into Azato’s fanatical interest in disarming Japanese swordsmen.
- Are the techniques in a logical sequence? The kata begins by disarming the opponent before we wrestle him. Then we see what to do if his helmet comes off, followed by the alternative situation where his helmet stays firmly on his head. Late in the kata, we start heading for the exit, pushing a subdued enemy ahead of us as a shield. The progression of these lessons seems natural and organized.
- Are the techniques historically appropriate? Kumiuchi kenden is not well-documented because jujutsu teachers stopped teaching it early in the Meiji period. Even so, we know that kabuto uchi is a genuine historical technique and others may be inferred from the

structure of the armor itself. The disarming techniques and the joint locks are all historical.

- Does the kata form a complete lesson? The kata shows us how to disarm an armored soldier. It gives us ways to subdue him or to beat him unconscious. It offers two ways to break his neck and kill him. It shows us how to use an enemy as a shield while we escape from the room. That seems like a pretty thorough lesson.

Any way you look at it, one thing is perfectly clear: It is a mistake to wear armor to a fistfight.

Chapter 11



Sabers and Bayonets

The fifth category of enemy fighter was the “modern” soldier. “Modern” means equipped like Commodore Perry’s marines, who were armed with sabers, pistols, Springfield rifle-muskets and 16-inch bayonets. Matsumura, Itosu and Azato were present as 200 of these marines forced the gate of Shuri Castle in 1853. The same men faced modern soldiers again when the Japanese Imperial Army arrived to depose Sho Tai in 1879. Azato became obsessed with bayonet fighting as a result. He certainly shared that knowledge with his best friend, Itosu, who gave us heian godan in 1905.

Heian godan presents an extended lesson in disarming a modern soldier. The techniques for fighting over a rifle and bayonet are the same as those for fighting over a spear. They have been taught in every army of the world for millenia. The early editions of U.S. Army Field Manual 21-150 cover these situations in detail.⁴⁶¹

Heian godan contains the complete bayonet-disarming lesson. We learn how to attack from the left side of the rifle first, and then, we back out and learn how to attack from the right side. Every piece of the bayonet lesson is in the kata, and the pieces are *all in the right order*. This should give pause to the most hostile skeptic. That kind of thing doesn’t happen by chance.

In heian godan, we are staring straight into the heart of Matsumura’s training program.

11.1 Variations on Heian Godan

To gain perspective on heian godan, I analyzed kata performances from all of the text and video sources cited in section 7.2. There are many variations on heian godan, both inside and outside of shotokan. A full listing of the variations and differences would fill several pages. I have condensed it here to the most-relevant points.⁴⁶²

Steps 7-12 include the reinforced block, the jūji uke (“X” block), the open-hand “X” up block and the palm-to-palm “butterfly” pressing block.

There is a lot of variation in that “butterfly” gesture. Some groups take the hands slowly down to the right hip (Sugiyama, Ertl and Bendickson.) Some move the hands to the right hip quickly (Kenneth Funakoshi, seito shito-ryu). Some take the hands to the right chest (not

⁴⁶¹ U.S. War Department, *Unarmed Defense for American Soldier* (FM 21-150) June 30, 1942.

⁴⁶² The rest is available at www.ShotokansSecret.com.

hip), moving very quickly (old and new JKA, films from 1924, shotokai, wado ryu). Three groups abort the “butterfly” motion very early at the moment when the heels of the hands are together in front of the face (Kanazawa, robukai, matsubayashi ryu). The original gesture is well-known in jujutsu, and you can see it decaying from group to group as time passes.

In steps 13-16, shotokan groups turn counterclockwise to the rear and down block in side stance. Seito shorin-ryu performs this sequence like we do in shotokan except that they turn clockwise (opposite of shotokan) when stepping into the side stance down-block position.

Step 19 is the leap and kiai; step 20 is the landing in kosa dachi with jūji uke (“X” block). Most shotokan groups do these moves identically, but nonshotokan groups show wild variations, like:

- Seito shito-ryu performs the kosa dachi “X” block similarly to shotokan, but they omit the jump.
- Matsubayashi ryu steps in and *kneels* on step 20. The left knee is on the ground, to perform the “X” block. There is no jump.
- Seito shorin-ryu performers seem to stop the kata performance and walk away. They take two casual steps to the southwest, then turn east and shift in suddenly to kneel (on the right knee this time) for the “X” block. There is no jump.

Only shotokan students make this jump. It looks like someone added the jump to make the kata more difficult to perform. By the Shotoism Rule (section 6.1.13), we don’t have to explain a move that was added after the kata left Itosu’s hands. For instance, Gennosuke Higaki decided to ignore the jump in *Hidden Karate*, saying “the previous movement 19 with fist held high would not allow a high jump.”⁴⁶³

Steps 22-26 are the manji uke cluster at the end of the kata. Shotokan groups perform this sequence identically except for the turn in step 25. Kanazawa and Yamazaki (robukai) insert an extra position after the turn. In step 25, they begin in an upright (feet-together) manji uke position. They turn 180 degrees and, feet still together, *reverse the manji uke*. Then they proceed to the front stance and the shutō/teisho groin attack.

The many versions of heian godan remind me of Sally, the tattered

⁴⁶³ Higaki, 2005, p. 218-219.

heroine in Tim Burton's bizarre film, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Something beautiful was shattered here, and the broken pieces were stitched together imperfectly. The result hints at the original, but it is misshapen and disfigured. The gaps and the stitches show.

And it is scary. This is a very deadly kata.

11.2 Historical Applications of Heian Godan

The major thrust of this kata is bayonet disarming, but it begins with an escalation of knife-disarming defenses, beginning with the simplest standard arm bar and working up to more and more advanced techniques.

- Steps 1-3 are a standard arm-bar disarming move. It has application to knives and sabers.
- Steps 4-8 take the same disarming move and augment it with an arm-destroying reinforced wrist lock.
- Steps 8-12 show how to respond when the opponent switches the knife to the other hand. The knife ends up in his kidney.
- Step 13 shows two throws, each of which drop the enemy on the hilt of the protruding knife. This takes the idea of a "finishing blow" to a new level.

The second half of the kata presents the complete bayonet-disarming lesson in a step-by-step progression, first on the "dead" side of the rifle and then starting again on the "live" side.

- Steps 14-21 are the complete lesson on disarming a soldier of his rifle/bayonet, approaching from the "dead" side of the rifle.
- Steps 22-26 are the lessons on disarming the rifle/bayonet from the "live" side.

11.2.1 Steps 1-3: Ude Osae Dori, Ude Makikomi

The first three steps of heian godan are the inside block in back stance, the reverse punch and the "flowing-water" position (*mizu-nagare kamae*).

The opening move of heian godan may be interpreted as one of two common weapon-disarming techniques, both of which we should teach to our students.

Ude Osae Dori: Ude osae dori is a hakkoryu jujutsu wrist lock and arm bar that closely resembles this cluster.⁴⁶⁴ This technique is also very similar to the ikkajo arm bar described in heian nidan step 7 (section 7.3.4). It appears in Jorgensen's 1930 manual on police jujutsu and is certainly many centuries older than that.⁴⁶⁵

In step 1 of the kata, the enemy slashes at you with a knife held in his right hand (Figure 99). You stop the slash with an inside block, then (step 2) stun him with a reverse punch acting as a *metsubishi* (blinding technique).

The punching hand (your right hand) then reaches for the knife hand and secures a jujutsu "pistol grip" on the back of the hand. Your palm is against the back of his hand, and your fingers wrap around the little-finger edge into his palm. Now make the "flowing-water" gesture (step 3). Your right hand grips his knife hand, and your left hand grips his wrist. Your left elbow leans on his elbow, forcing a painful arm bar.⁴⁶⁶

The pressure on his elbow makes him double over, under control. Use your hands to apply opposing pressure to lock his wrist. His hand, in serious pain, opens and releases the knife.⁴⁶⁷

With a little practice, you can scoop up the knife at the instant of release. This gives you the option to take the man prisoner or to ruthlessly cut him down with his own blade.

Ude Makikomi: There is a second interpretation of steps 1-3 that is equally as practical and fits the kata motions even better. Budoshin jujutsu calls it ude makikomi.⁴⁶⁸ In hakkoryu, it is called *nuki uchi dori*.⁴⁶⁹

The enemy slashes with the knife as before. You block and stun, as before. Then slip your left arm down between his right arm and his body (Figure 100). Bring your left hand up behind his shoulder, and

⁴⁶⁴ Palumbo, 1987, p. 85.

⁴⁶⁵ Jorgensen, S.J., *Police Jiu-Jitsu*, Paladin Press, 1930 (reprinted 2005), p. 17.

⁴⁶⁶ Tomiyama, 2006, p. 95.

⁴⁶⁷ Pellegrini, 2009, p. 124.

⁴⁶⁸ Kirby, 1992, technique 4-3.

⁴⁶⁹ Palumbo, 1993, p. 92-93.

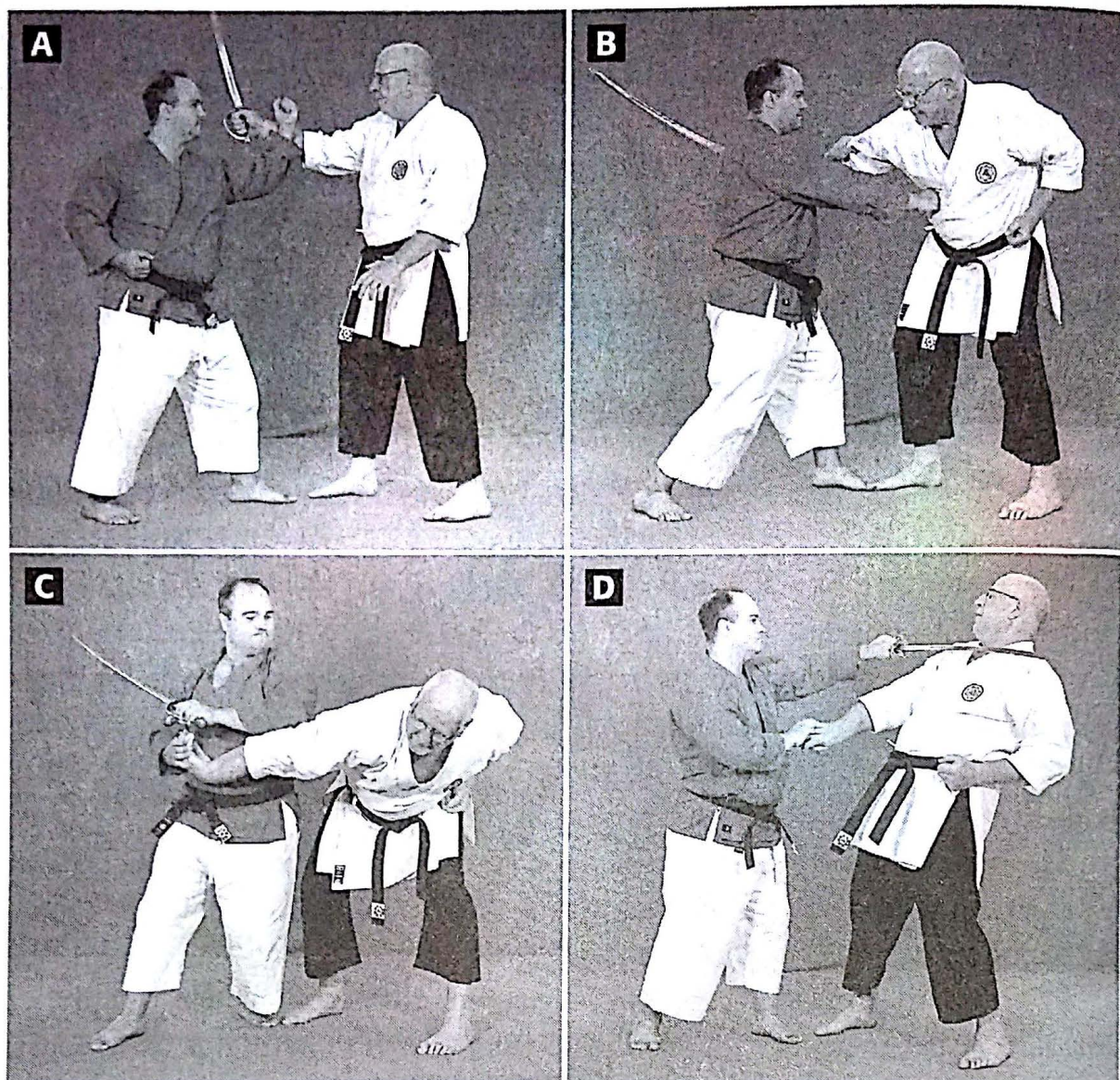


Figure 99: Ude osae dori, heian godan steps 1-3. The enemy slashes at you with a knife or saber. The inside block deflects the attack (A). The punch (B) is the *metsubishi* strike that stuns him prior to the lock. The “flowing water” position is the *ikkajo* arm lock and wrist lock (C). By placing pressure on the wrist and elbow, you can make him release the weapon into your hand. What you do with the weapon depends on your circumstances (D).

settle strongly into the “flowing water” position. This locks his shoulder and forces him to double over, under control. Usually the knife hand ends up twisted behind his back. You can reach over with your right hand to dislodge the knife.

That’s as far as the kata goes, but you might want to train your students in the other half of the technique. Turn to your right and apply downward pressure to his shoulder to take him facedown on the floor. You can then kneel with your left knee on his locked shoulder.

His twisted arm lies in the fold of your left thigh so that his knife hand protrudes from the vicinity of your left hip. You can let go with your hands; the kneeling posture maintains the shoulder lock. Take the knife away at your leisure. The classic ending is to crack his skull with the pommel of the knife.

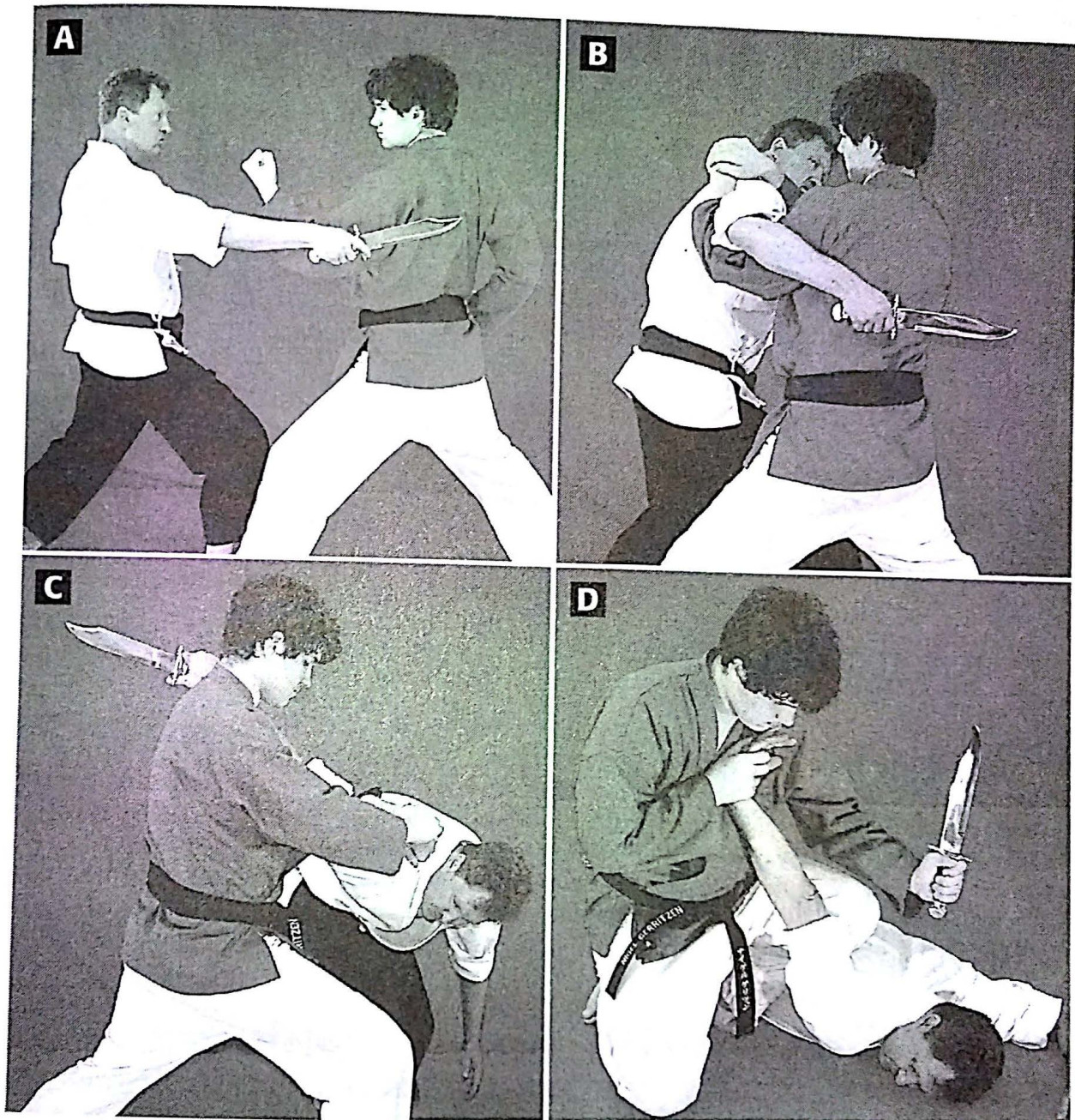


Figure 100: Ude makikomi, heian godan step 3. This is an alternate application for step 3. The enemy slashes at you with a knife or saber; you deflect the attack and stun him, as before (A). Slip your left arm under his arm and up behind his shoulder (B). The “flowing water” *kamae* locks his arm and bends him over, under control (C). Going beyond the kata, you can pin him on the ground and strike him with the pommel of the knife (D).

11.2.2 Steps 4-7: Ikkajo, Hiji Mochi Nikajo

Steps 4-6 of heian godan are the inside block, reverse punch and "flowing water kamae," all done to the right side this time. Step 7 is the reinforced block.

This lesson builds on the ude osae dori lesson described above. The opponent attacks with the knife in his left hand this time slashing from your left (Figure 101). Stop the slash with your inside block. Punch and stun. Use your punching hand (the left hand) to put a "pistol grip" on the back of his knife hand. Apply the ikkajo arm bar, locking his elbow. This is the mirror image of steps 1-3.

This time the opponent resists the arm bar by bending his elbow and pulling against your grip. This is a very common reaction if the opponent is strong and begins to resist before you get the elbow joint locked. In step 7, hang on tightly to his knife hand with your left hand, but use your right forearm to press his left forearm back toward his face. This creates the nikajo wrist lock, in which his arm bends to the shape of the letter "Z." Use your left hand to twist his knife hand up and back toward his face. At the same time, let your right elbow slide up on top of his forearm (as if you were reaching for his face) and apply pressure downward on his forearm with your elbow.

This is hiji mochi nikajo again (like section 9.2.2), but this time the lesson goes a little further. The arm lock is very close to the prescribed "morote uke" posture of the kata.⁴⁷⁰ The pain is intense. Most opponents will drop the knife at this point.

The fight isn't over yet. The enemy has another hand.

11.2.3 Steps 8-12: Tekubi Shime Waza, Jinzo Tsuki

Steps 8-10 of heian godan are the "X" down block, the "X" up block, and the palm-to-palm osae-uke (pressing block) motion that flutters down to the right hip like a butterfly. Steps 11-12 are the step forward with a left "punch" in mid-step and a right oi-zuki and kiai.

⁴⁷⁰ Shioda, 1996, p. 105.

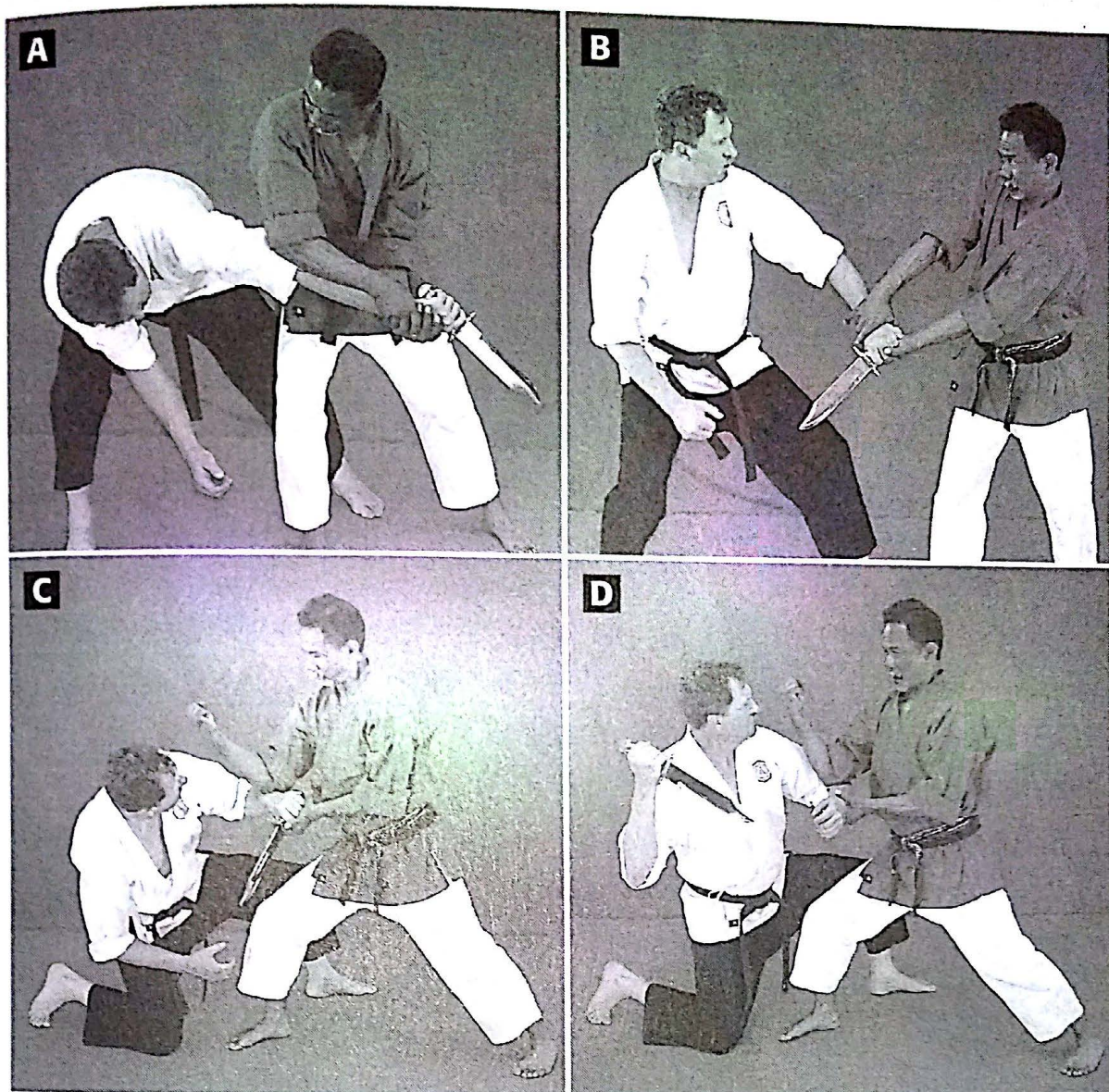


Figure 101: *Hiji mochi nikajo*, heian godan step 7. The enemy slashes at you with a knife in his left hand; you deflect the attack and stun him in steps 4 and 5. In step 6, you place him in an arm bar (A). In step 7, he resists the arm bar by pulling his arm back (B). Use your right forearm to bend his arm back into the nikajo wrist lock. Use your elbow to drive his arm down, which creates bone-twisting pressure in the forearm (C). Most men will drop the knife, but in this kata, he drops it into his other hand (D).

When you teach knife-disarming combatives, you must warn your students that the enemy has *two hands*. If you force the knife out of his left hand (as described in the previous section), he'll grab it with his right hand and attack with it. This is a fatal surprise if you are not expecting it. Heian godan contains this lesson.

Tekubi Shime Waza: "Tekubi" is "hand neck," which means "wrist." "Shime" is pain. Tekubi shime waza is another application of the ikkajo arm bar.

In step 7, you applied a reinforced wrist lock to his left hand to force him to drop the knife. In step 8 of the kata, the knife is suddenly in his right hand and you must react to the new threat.

The enemy raises the knife overhead and stabs down at your chest (Figure 102). Your response is to use your left hand to slap his arm to your right and down; it is the beginning of a large, clockwise circle that will carry us through the next three kata moves.⁴⁷¹ The slap to the right is not visible in the kata, but it lets us teach the full tekubi shime waza lesson, which would otherwise be truncated.⁴⁷²

The kata moves your hands vertically from the low "X" block to the high one, but that isn't how jujutsu experts perform this move. Instead, take his hand for a ride in a big circle, rotating out to your left on the way up. At about 9 o'clock on this clock dial, your right hand can set the jujutsu "pistol grip" on the back of his knife hand, with your fingers wrapped around the little-finger side of his hand. This is a perfectly natural motion that can be executed at high speed.

By the time you get to the top of the circle (step 9), you have already rotated his wrist most of the way into an ikkajo arm bar. It is interesting to notice that your hands naturally form an "X" at this point (like the jūji uke in the kata).

Continue the big circle down to the 3 o'clock position (step 10), pressing your left hand against his elbow to keep his arm straight.

The ikkajo arm bar gives you several options at this point, some of which you should share with your students. For instance, you can put pressure against his wrist, forcing his hand open so that you can take the knife. Or, you can lever his locked arm upward, creating a shoulder lock, and then use downward pressure on his locked wrist to force him facedown on the floor.⁴⁷³ Taiho jutsu students fold the captured arm into a painful comealong hold.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ In my dojo, this circular gesture is known as "the international sign of the donut," from a gesture in *Mars Attacks!*, Warner, 1996.

⁴⁷² Kirby, 1992, technique 2-6.

⁴⁷³ U.S. Army, 1992, figures 5-14 and 5-16.

⁴⁷⁴ Kuboto, 1987, p. 89.

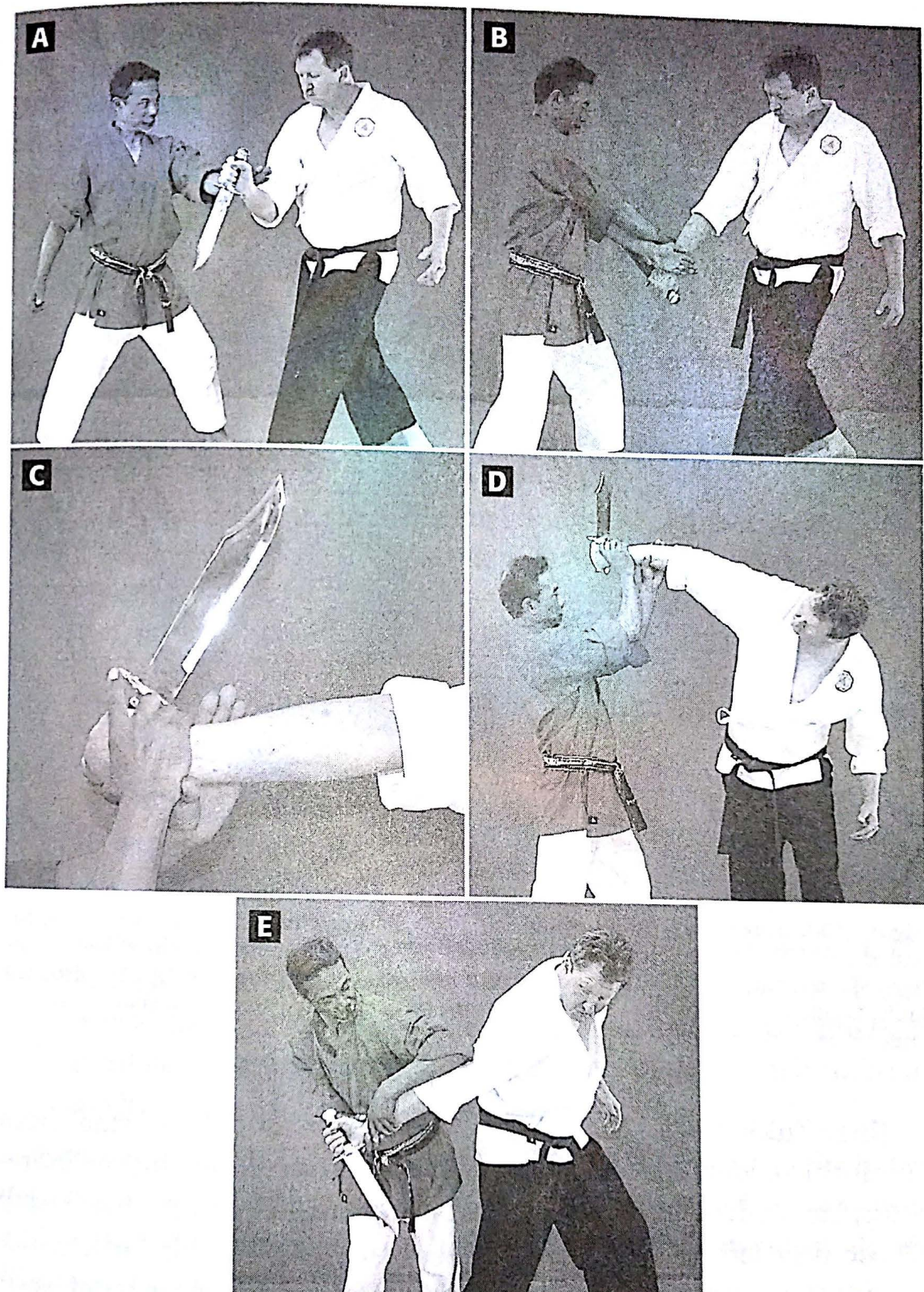


Figure 102: Tekubi shime waza, heian godan steps 8-12. The enemy has switched the knife to his right hand, point down, and tries to stab you in the chest. Slap his arm to the right and down in a circular motion (A). At the bottom of the circle, your “X” block takes his arm under control and continues the clockwise rotation (B). Roll his arm out to the left to secure the “pistol grip” on his knife hand (C). Roll it up to the top of the circle (D) and down on your right (E) to set the ikkajo arm bar.

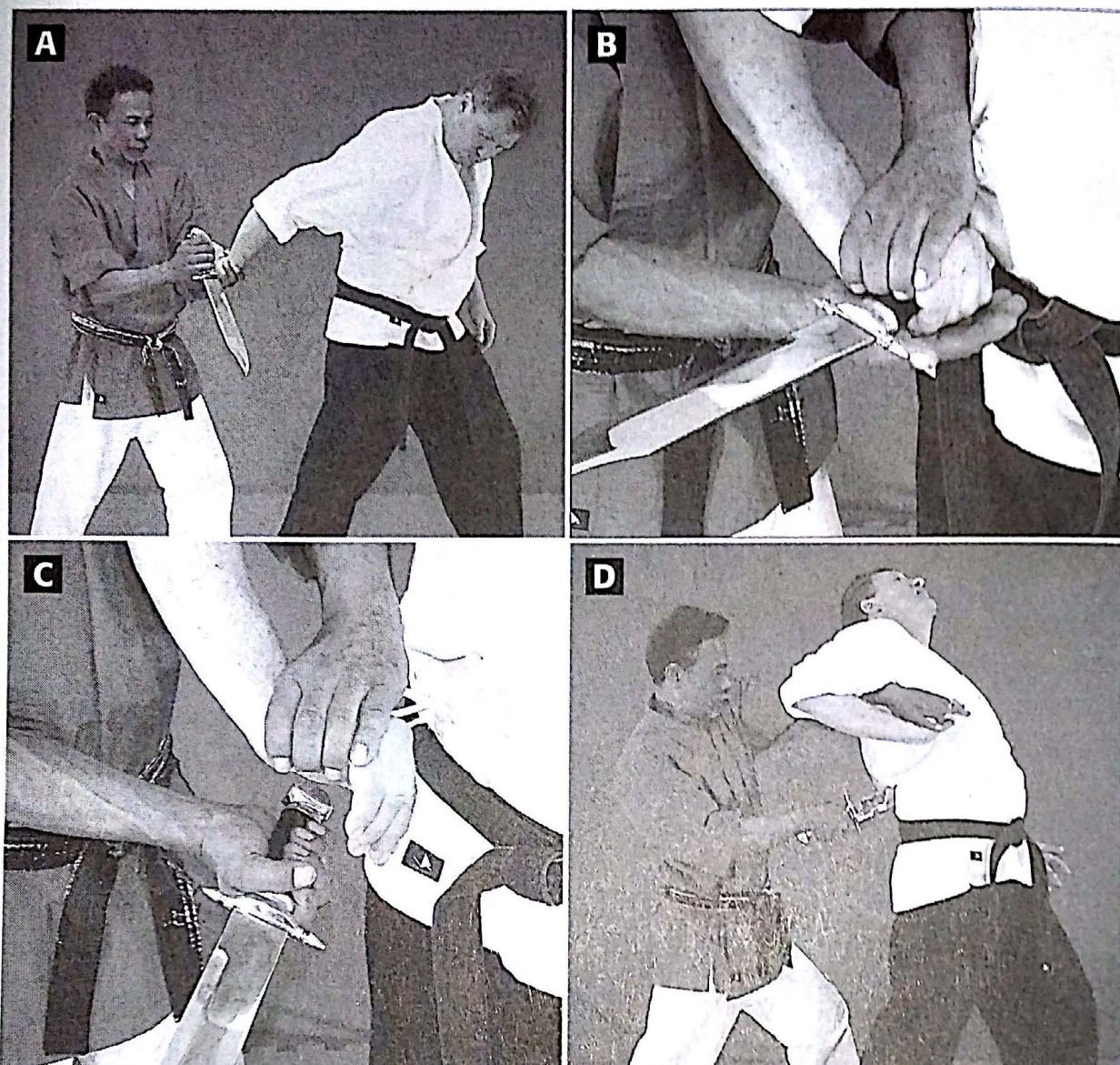


Figure 103: *Jinzo zuki*, heian godan steps 11-12. Beginning from the arm bar at the end of step 10, use your left hand to reach under and secure the *sankajo* wrist lock on the back of his hand (A). Rotate his hand toward his body to apply the lock (B). He'll drop the knife. Catch it with your right hand (C). In step 12 of the kata, step forward and drive the knife into his kidney (D).

Jinzo Zuki: A more deadly option is *jinzo zuki*, the “kidney stab” from *kumiuchi kenden*, the ancient art of battlefield wrestling. It is melodramatic, but students love it (Figure 103). From the *ikkajo* arm bar in step 10, use your left hand to place a new “pistol grip” on his knife hand, but this time from below (your palm against the back of his hand, your fingers wrapped around the little-finger edge of his palm). Let go with your right hand and shove your left hand in next to his ribs, twisting his arm into a very painful *sankajo* wrist lock (the “punch” of step 11).

This lock is *extremely* painful and forces him to drop the knife. If you are adept, you can catch the knife in your right hand as it falls. (The transition from ikkajo arm bar to sankajo wrist lock is practiced heavily at the sandan level of hakkoryu jujutsu as part of their *mochi maware* principle.)⁴⁷⁵

Step 12 is the “front punch and kiai” move. That’s when you put shotokan power behind the knife and bury it in his kidney. You can kiai, like the kata, or you can just let him do the screaming.⁴⁷⁶

Combatives training is starkly ruthless.

11.2.4 Step 13: *Shihonage*, *Nihonage*

Step 13 of heian godan is the move after the first kiai, when we turn counterclockwise, take a big step to the south in side stance, and “down block” to the south. Then, we turn our back to this opponent and ignore him. Traditional explanations of this move tend to be rather lame.

The critical question here is whether we want to turn counterclockwise (like shotokan) or clockwise (like seito shorin-ryu). According to the Shadow Principle (section 6.1.9), we are at liberty to turn either way. Each direction leads to an application that kills the opponent.

- Clockwise: The clockwise turn leads to a *shihonage* throw. This is a beginner technique in jujutsu and aikido.^{477,478} It is easy to perform and it builds confidence.
- Counterclockwise: The counterclockwise turn (as in the kata) leads to a *gakun* (*yonkajo*) takedown. This is an expert technique that every black belt should learn. It requires more hand strength than most beginners can provide. Once learned, *gakun* can be used in a wide variety of circumstances.

Either throw will drop the enemy on his back, directly on the hilt of the knife that we left protruding from his back in step 12. The impact will wrench the knife sideways in the wound. This is the most vicious “finishing move” I’ve ever encountered.

⁴⁷⁵ Palumbo, 1993, p. 56-57.

⁴⁷⁶ U.S. Army, 1954, p. 42-43.

⁴⁷⁷ Combes, 1999, Volume 1.

⁴⁷⁸ Westbrook, 1970.

Shihonage is the “four-direction throw” of aikido.^{479,480,481} *Nihonage*, the “two-direction throw,” is exactly the same technique in hakkoryu jujutsu.⁴⁸²

In step 12, you shoved the attacker’s knife into his right kidney (with a kiai). Your left hand still has a grip on his right hand at the beginning of step 13. Use your right hand to grasp his wrist, so you have a two-handed grip. Bring your left foot up to your right, raise your hands high in the air and pivot to your right. Allow his arm to pass over your head as you turn. Face south. You have his right arm twisted up next to his ear in the classic shihonage setup (Figure 104). Step to the south with your right foot, and do the so-called “down block” gesture. The opponent drops on his back (on the hilt of the knife).

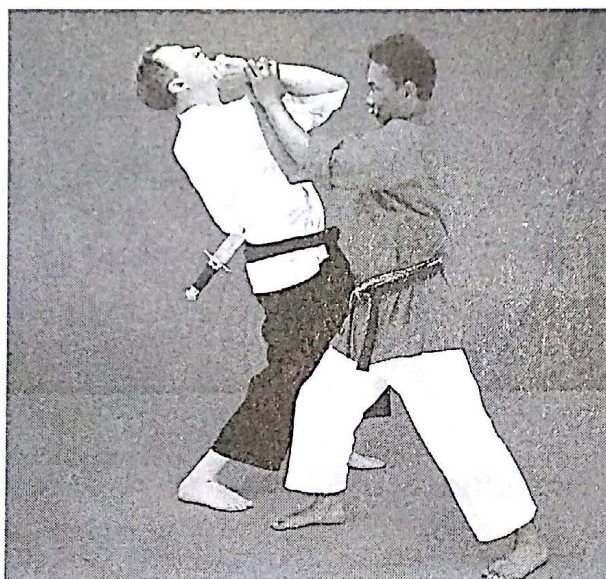


Figure 104: *Shihonage*, heian godan step 13. Shihonage is the beginner application for step 13. Grasp his wrist and turn your body clockwise to lock his shoulder. Throw him on his back. He lands on the hilt of the knife.

You can let go of him now. He’s done. The knife twisting in the wound will do appalling damage.

Dropping the opponent on the hilt of a knife is an exotic ending for shihonage. Don’t overlook the usual combat application of this throw. Shihonage is called “the four-direction throw” because you can steer

⁴⁷⁹ Shioda, 1996, p. 71-81.

⁴⁸⁰ Combes, 1999, Volume 1.

⁴⁸¹ Westbrook, 1970, p. 206-215.

⁴⁸² Palumbo, 1988, p. 87 and 91.

the enemy and make him fall anywhere you wish. In combat, aim his head at a hard edge, like the edge of a table or the bumper of a car. This delivers a powerful blow to the back of his head as he falls. Without this added blow, shihonage is toothless. The opponent just gets up again.

11.2.5 Step 13: Gakun Nage, Yonkajo

Gakun means “effective grip.” It is a major feature of hakkoryu jujutsu,⁴⁸³ and is used to a lesser extent in aikido where it is known as yonkajo, the fourth basic control technique.^{484,485,486}

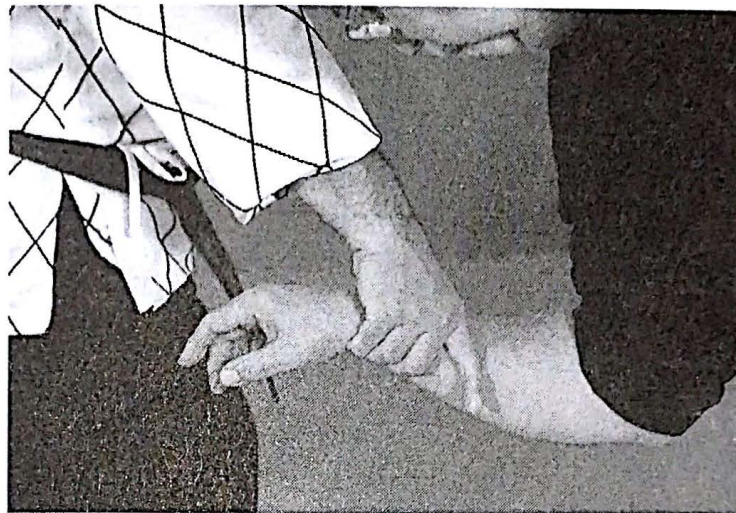


Figure 105: Gakun grip, yonkajo. The gakun grip looks harmless, but it isn't. The bony edge on the inside of the first knuckle is driven into the muscles and nerves of the forearm. The victim can be taken to the ground and pinned there with this simple grip.

Gakun is deceptive. It looks completely harmless when viewed by a third party (Figure 105). There is a hard, bony spot on the palm side of your index finger knuckle. When you grasp a person's forearm with your hand, this bony spot can be pressed into nerves and muscles of the forearm, causing agonizing pain. A person practiced in gakun techniques can loosely grasp your wrist, casually point his index finger at the ground, and make your knees buckle. He can also rotate your arm back and up behind you and use gakun pressure to drop you on your back. This technique looks very much like step 13 of heian godan.

⁴⁸³ Palumbo, 1993, p. 58-59.

⁴⁸⁴ Combes, 1999, Volume 1.

⁴⁸⁵ Westbrook, 1970, p. 198-203.

⁴⁸⁶ Shioda, 1996, p. 118-119.

Grasp the back of the opponent's right wrist with your right hand, using the *gakun* grip (Figure 106). Bring your left foot up next to your right. Rotate counterclockwise this time, like the *kata*, pushing his arm ahead of you. Step strongly to the south with your right leg; use the power of your body to drive the *gakun* grip to the south and down (the "down block"). The opponent will spill on his back, landing on the hilt of the knife. That will finish him.

Gakun is difficult to master, so teach *shihonage* to the beginners, and save *gakun* for the black belts.

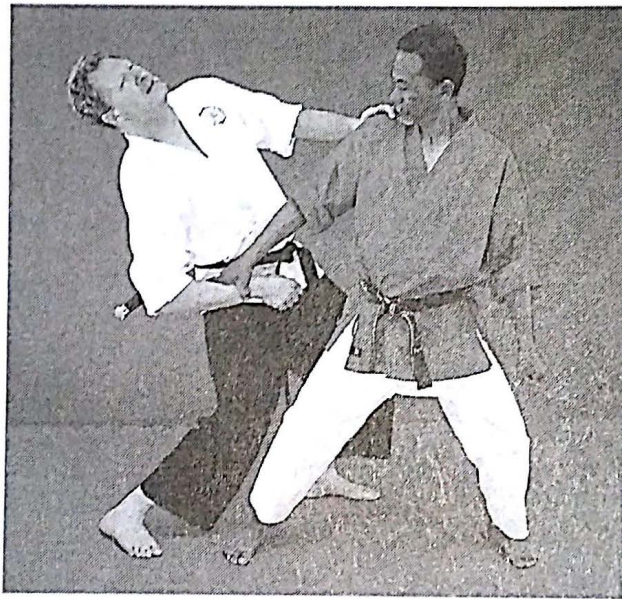


Figure 106: *Gakun nage*, heian godan step 13. This is the black-belt application for step 13. Turn counterclockwise and apply the *gakun* (*yonkajo*) grip to his forearm. As you step in and "down block" in step 13, press the *gakun* knuckle into his forearm, pushing him down and back. This creates severe nerve pain in the forearm. His stance collapses and he falls on his back. Since there is a knife sticking out of his back, this simple technique is a "finishing blow."

11.2.6 Steps 14-21: *Seionage* (for Beginners)

Steps 14-21 of *heian godan* are the sequence from the *kake te* "block" in side stance to the jump and *kosa dachi* landing, with the following *morote uke* gesture to the south. The purpose of this section of *heian godan* is to teach a recruit how to take a rifle and bayonet away from a soldier, approaching from the "dead" side of the rifle (from the enemy's left). However, there are bound to be classes where your students forgot to bring their rifles and bayonets, so let's explore a beginner interpretation first.

Traditional interpretations of this sequence are very weak and usually involve a phantom enemy who swings a bo staff at your legs (forcing you to jump). This phantom menace then inexplicably vanishes before cracking your skull, as he would surely do if you knelt in front of him.^{487,488} Just about the only part that seems convincing is the elbow strike in step 16. As the experts say, cup the back of the opponent's head with our left hand, and then smack him in the face with our elbow. This is an effective technique if you place the heel of your left hand against his jaw below the ear and drive the elbow into the opposite corner of the jaw. That move snaps the jawbone like a pretzel.⁴⁸⁹

Most karate-jutsu artists point out that steps 17 and 18 (the two moves just before the jump) closely resemble the setup for *seionage*, the classic judo shoulder throw.⁴⁹⁰ If so, then the opponent flies over your shoulder and lands on his back on the floor while move 19 (the jump) carries you across his body to the far side before you squat in *kosa dachi* to do the "X" down block of step 20.

We should also note that some non-shotokan lineages kneel in *handachi* position (one-knee down) but don't use *kosa dachi*. This is significant because the *handachi* position with wrists crossed is a very common posture in jujutsu. You see it in many situations where you have thrown your opponent and proceed to use a choke or submission hold. There are chokes and joint locks that look exactly like *jūji uke* (the "X" block).⁴⁹¹ So let's teach the students one of them.

Seionage is very easy to perform. Begin by grasping the opponent's right sleeve in your left hand.

Step in with your right foot, and slam (gently in practice) your right hip into his groin. This breaks his posture. At the same time, slip your right arm under his right arm at the shoulder. This is step 17 where we jump in with an alleged "reinforced block."

Continue your turn so that you can put your tailbone against his right hipbone. You must squat enough to get your pelvis lower than his.

⁴⁸⁷ Tomiyama, 2006, p. 104-105.

⁴⁸⁸ Redmond, 2006, p.

⁴⁸⁹ Adams, Brian, *The Medical Implications of Karate Blows*, A.S. Barnes & Co., 1969, p. 45.

⁴⁹⁰ Morris, 2009, section "*Seio Nage*."

⁴⁹¹ Mifune, 2004, p. 126-127.

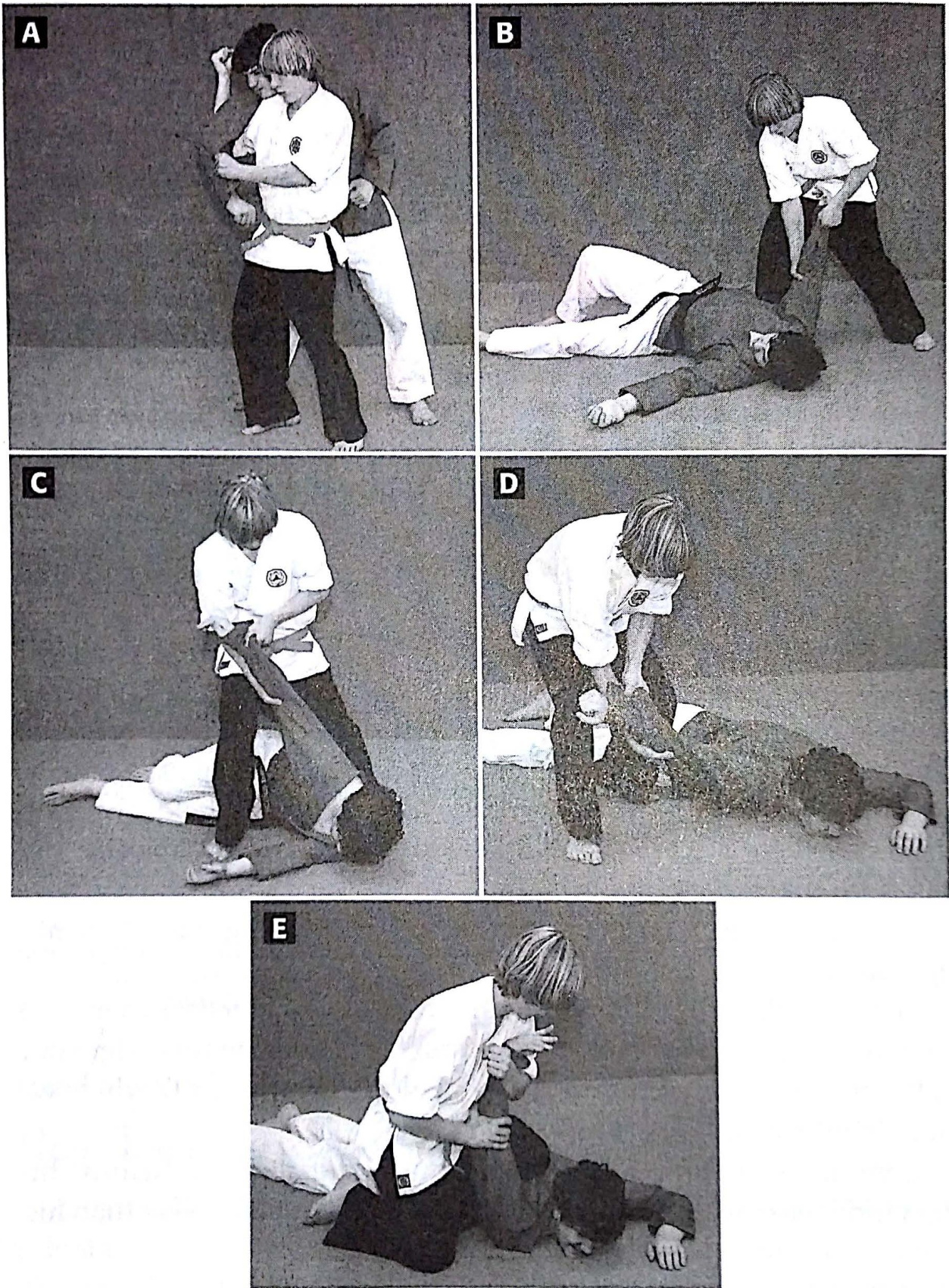


Figure 107: Seionage, heian godan steps 17-19. On the nights that you practice heian godan without your rifle/bayonet, substitute seionage for the rifle-disarming lesson. Break his posture with your hip as you move in. Hook his arm in the crook of your elbow (A). Align your tailbone with his right hipbone. Take him over and down (B). Then, step (jump) across and roll him on his belly (C, D). Drop your knee into his shoulder to pin. Lever his arm toward his head to lock the shoulder and force submission (E).

Draw him across your hip. You can put a little bounce into it by straightening your legs to lift him into the air. This would be step 18 of the kata. He goes over and lands on his back. You still have his right sleeve in your left hand.

The “jump” (step 19) carries you across his body. Pull on his arm to roll him over on his belly.

Kneel into handachi with your left knee on his shoulder blade, pinning him to the ground. Push his locked arm in the direction of his head to lock his shoulder and force a submission.

Note that stepping (jumping) across the opponent’s prostrate body is *not* the best way to roll him over, since there is a good chance he’ll try to kick. Most jujutsu artists would just walk around his head, staying away from his feet, as they roll him over.

These moves adequately mimic the kata and teach some very useful skills. They will keep the beginners busy until you are ready to show them the bayonet combatives.

11.2.7 Bayonet Combative Measures

My source for the historical veracity of these disarming techniques is my tattered copy of U.S. Army Field Manual 21-150, *Unarmed Defense for the American Soldier*, published by the U.S. War Department in 1942.⁴⁹² The manual is very hard to find today, so I have also referenced the techniques in the 1954 edition, which is titled *Combatives, or Hand to Hand Combat*.⁴⁹³

I worked out these bayonet-disarming applications using an 1854 Springfield rifle-musket with a 16-inch triangular bayonet. This was almost identical to the weapons carried by Perry’s marines. If you substitute a bo staff for the rifle, some of the techniques will be more difficult to perform. Students often get a death grip on the small-diameter bo, making it difficult to disarm them. The rifle, however, is fatter and harder to grip than the bo is. It is also much heavier. Keep this in mind as you experiment with these techniques.

The person holding the rifle will use it in a very predictable way (Figure 109). The basic drill is to thrust the point at the enemy soldier’s

⁴⁹² War Department, 1942, p. 202-218.

⁴⁹³ U.S. Army, FM 21-150, *Combatives*, 1954, p. 101-115.

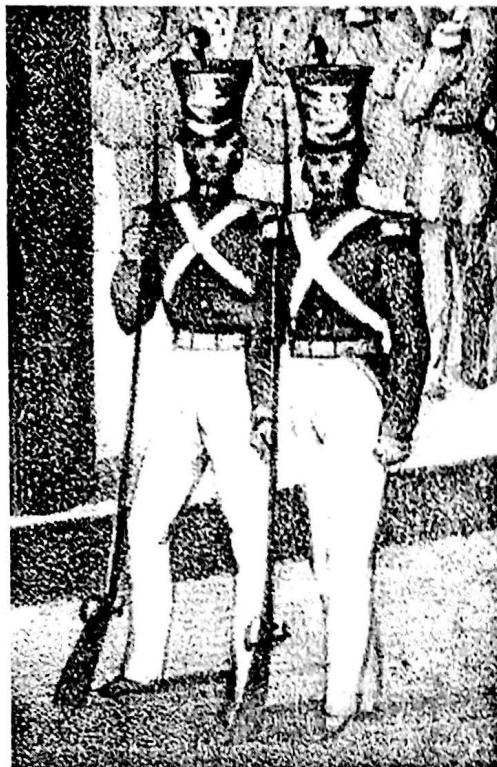


Figure 108: U.S. Marines with rifles and fixed bayonets in the Shuri Castle reception hall. This is a close-up view from Perry's *Narrative*.

throat, slam the stock solidly into the side of his head, pull back and smash his face with the butt, and then slash down his face with the blade. Repeat as necessary.

If you are interested in sophisticated bayonet-against-bayonet fighting, see *Cold Steel* by John Styers.⁴⁹⁴

It is significant that bayonet drill is always done righthanded. When you see a squad of soldiers, the rifles are all held with the right hand at the neck of the stock near the trigger and the left hand under the fore-stock (the barrel). This one-sided approach means that rifle-disarming lessons are asymmetrical. The techniques are different depending on which side of the rifle you are facing. This is why except for the opening and closing clusters, heian godan is completely asymmetrical.

If you move in next to the soldier's left arm, you are on the "dead side."⁴⁹⁵ There is very little he can do to bring the weapon to bear on you. The rifle is a handicap to him.

If you are on the soldier's right, you are on the "live side." You are in danger in multiple ways. He can strike at your head with the stock. He

⁴⁹⁴ Styers, John, *Cold Steel*, Paladin Press, 1974.

⁴⁹⁵ Levine, 2009, p. 320-333 for the Krav Maga explanation of "live side" and "dead side."

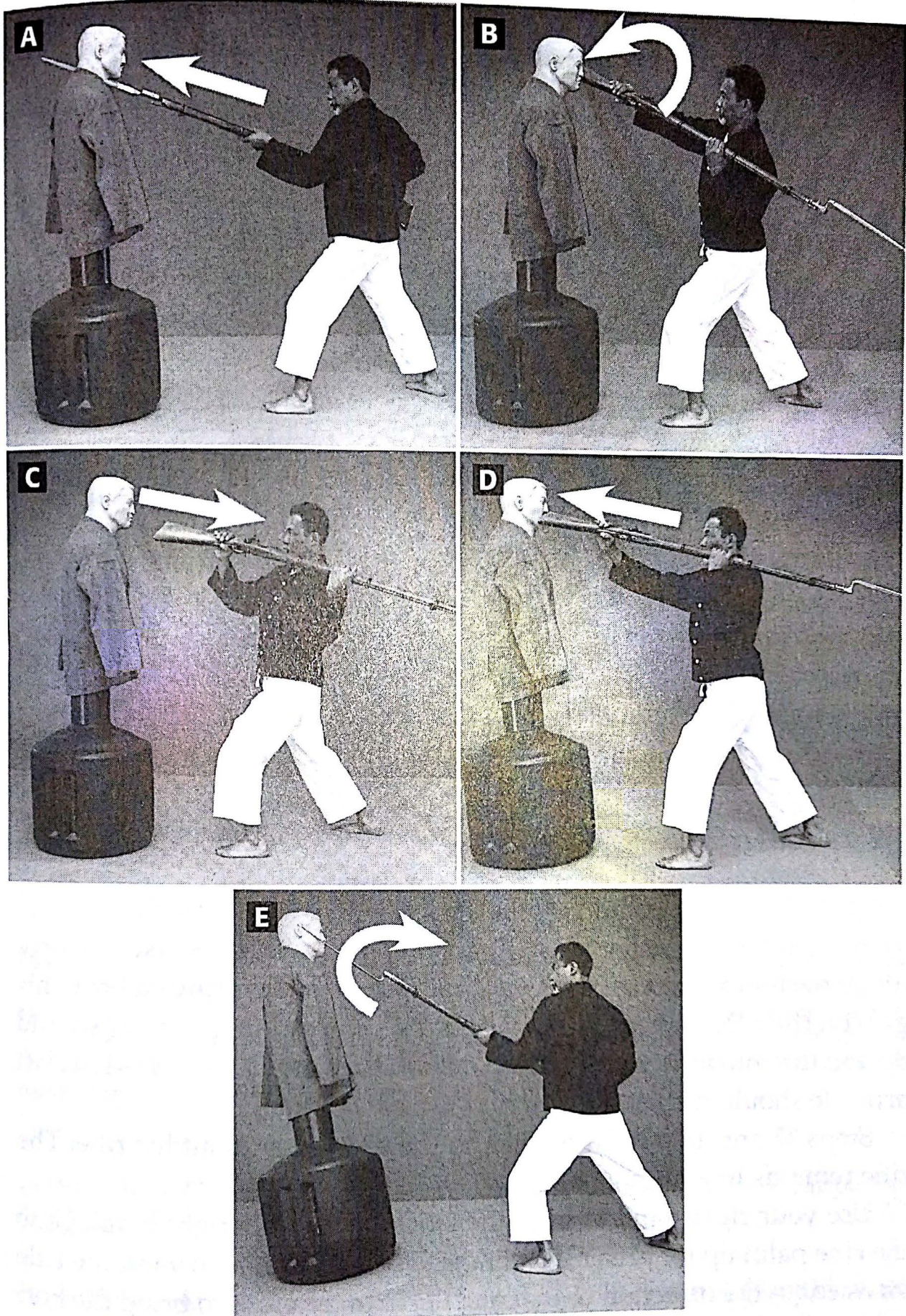


Figure 109: Basic bayonet drill. Modern armies don't do much bayonet drill because their rifles are too short and fragile. This was the drill in the 19th century: Stab at the throat (A). Strike to the head with the stock (B). Pull back (C). Smash the face with the butt (D). Rake the face with the blade (E). Begin again at (A).

can slam the center of the rifle up under your chin. He can strike at your head with the barrel. When on the "live side," you must always keep your hands on the rifle.

11.2.8 Steps 14-21: Bayonet Disarming, Dead Side

An experienced drill instructor can take a rifle away from a recruit with ridiculous ease, as can most aikido and jujutsu instructors. For a less-experienced person, however, it's a good idea to begin by breaking the soldier's left elbow. Once his left arm is damaged, taking his rifle from him is much easier. For instance, the U.S. Marine Corps combatives manual shows 22 pages of rifle-disarming techniques, *all* of which begin by breaking the opponent's left elbow.⁴⁹⁶

In steps 14-16 you are attacking the soldier's left arm (Figure 110). According to the military manuals, the first step is to "beat" the rifle to the side so it isn't lined up on your throat. Step 14 is the *kake te* "block," which lets you push the bayonet to the side and grasp the fore-end of the rifle near (or on) his left hand. From that point on, keep your left arm straight, and he will have difficulty bringing the rifle to bear on you.

In step 15, yank the rifle toward you to straighten out his left elbow. Use your crescent kick (*mikazuki geri*) to hyperextend his locked elbow. Any damage to his arm will weaken his grip on the rifle.

Step 16 makes a second attempt to break his left elbow. Step in and grab his left wrist with your right hand. Use the "elbow strike" to force his elbow into an arm bar. Do your best to damage his arm and break his grip on the rifle. (After these two attacks, your training partner should do you the courtesy of pretending that all strength has deserted his left arm. He should just let it fall to his side, as if broken.)

Steps 17 and 18 put the soldier on the ground without his rifle. The rifle remains in your hands.

Use your right hand to grab the stock behind his right hand. Grab the rifle palm up for greatest leverage. Use both hands to yank the rifle forward (in the direction of the muzzle) in an attempt to bring the butt of the rifle out in front of his abdomen. You may or may not be successful

⁴⁹⁶ U.S. Marine Corps, *Close-Quarters Combat Manual* a reprint of FMFM 0-7 by Paladin Press, 1993, p. 156-178.

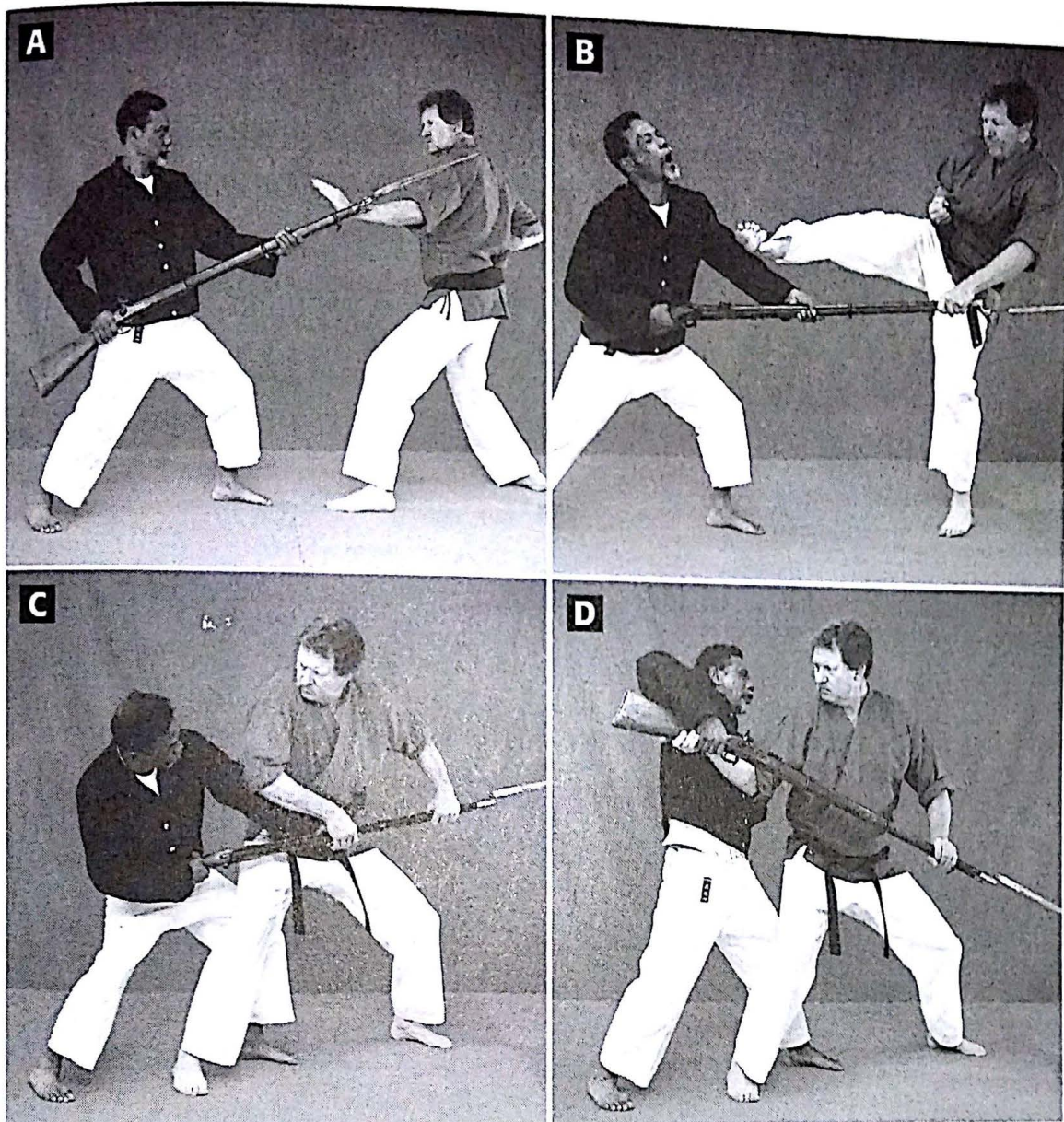


Figure 110: Hiji ate, attacking the elbow, heian godan steps 14-16. To take a rifle from a soldier, you must first break his left arm. Step 14 is the hooking block that beats the bayonet to the side so you can step in (A). Pull the rifle toward you to straighten his arm. Step 15 is the crescent kick to the back of his left elbow (B). Step 16 is the elbow strike to the back of his elbow, which rolls into an arm bar (C). Once his arm is broken, you can reach in to grasp the stock just behind his right hand (D).

in this effort. (This is step 17, the crouching kosa dachi with the apparent “morote uke.”)

- If you succeed in yanking the rifle out in front of his abdomen, then step 18 (“uppercut”) slams the butt of the rifle up under his chin (Figure 111). This is a staggering blow. The following throw (if any is needed) is a jujutsu technique that flips him

forward to land on his back. (This is budoshin's naka mae nage, a jo-disarming throw.⁴⁹⁷)

- If he holds the rifle rigidly, you won't be able to pull the stock past his right hip. In that case, step 18 (the "uppercut") raises the butt of the rifle high behind his right shoulder. Step 19 (the turn before the jump) executes a classic seionage throw. The soldier, desperately clinging to his rifle with his right hand, sails over your right shoulder to the ground. Once he is on the ground, lifting the rifle straight up plucks it out of his grip. The bayonet ends up pointed straight down at his chest.

Step 19 is the "jump." Step across him (or jump, if you wish) and squat into kosa dachi (Figure 112). Use your dropping body weight to drive the bayonet through his body. Then rise, place your left heel against his chest and use the apparent "reinforced block" of step 21 to drag the blade out of his chest again. In real life you may have to plant your foot against his ribs to draw the blade out.

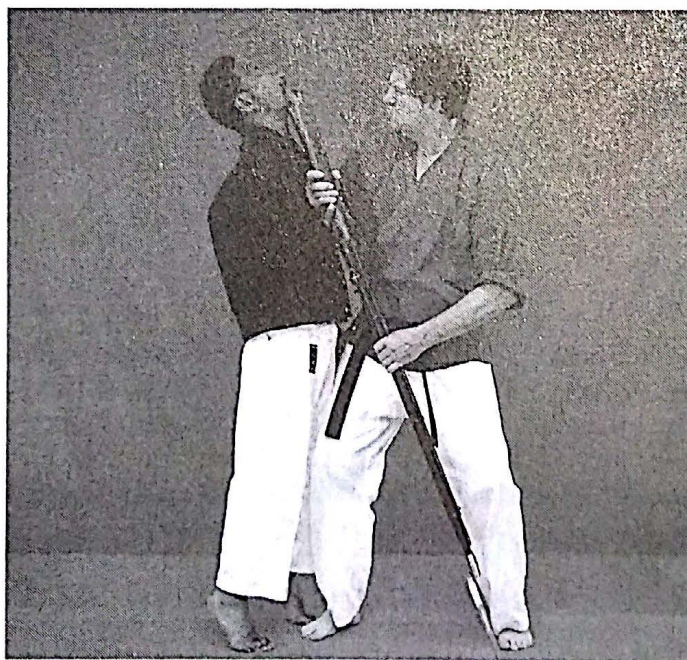


Figure 111: Chin strike, heian godan steps 17-18. Grasp the rifle in both hands and yank it forward, attempting to pull the stock in front of his body. Then raise the butt of the rifle under his chin. This is the preferred ending, but it can be frustrated if the enemy keeps a tight grip on the rifle.

⁴⁹⁷ Kirby, 1992, technique 5-12.

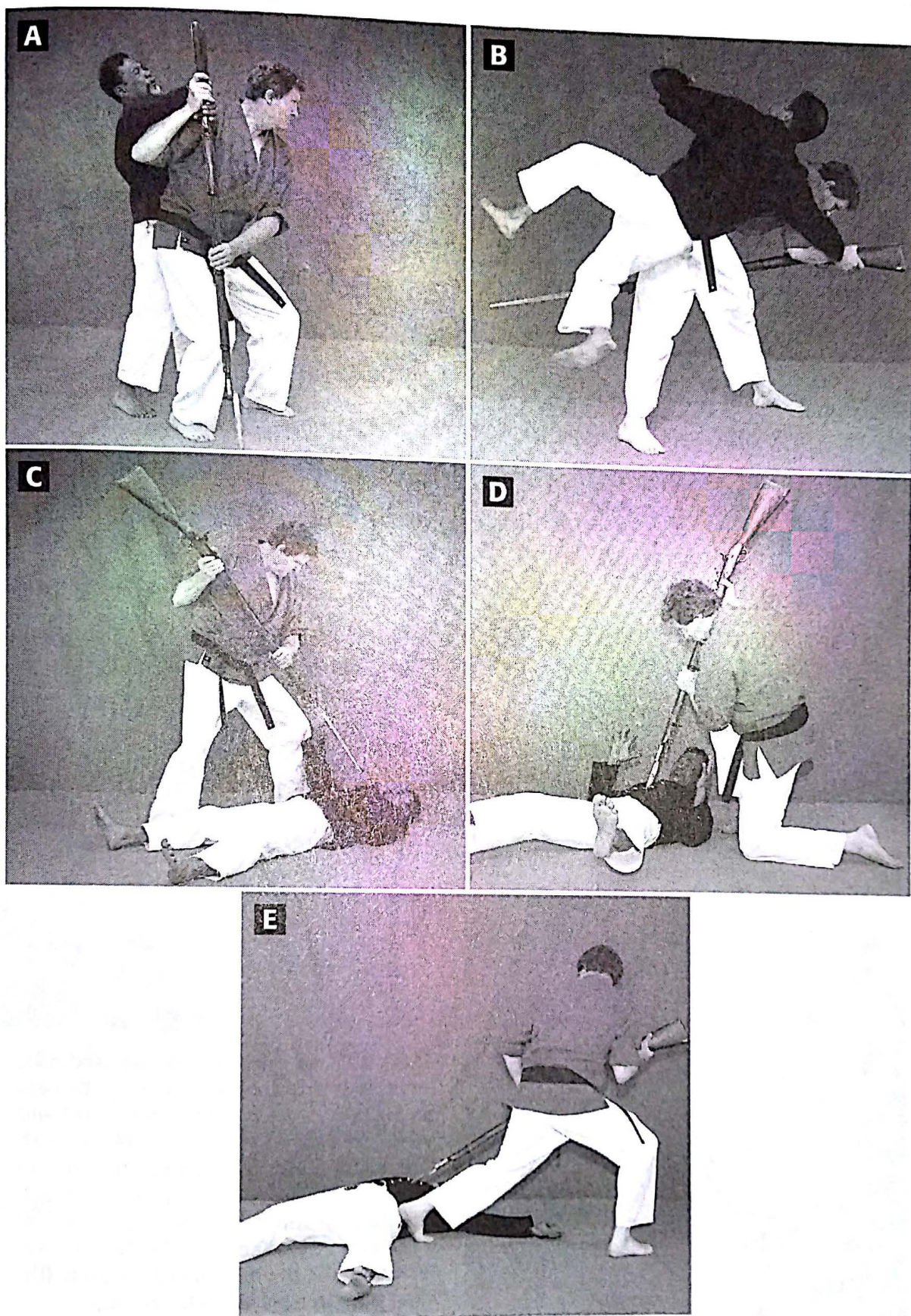


Figure 112: Bayonet in-and-out, heian godan steps 19-21. If the soldier grimly clings to the stock of his rifle, he'll be easy to throw (A, B and C). Use your weight to drive the bayonet through his chest (D). The "reinforced block" is the technique for pulling the blade out again (D). Ribs clutch at blades.

This last technique is a gruesome but essential piece of battlefield wisdom. The blade often gets stuck in the ribs. Matsumura would have shown apprentice bodyguards how to free the bayonet: Brace your foot on his chest and yank it free.

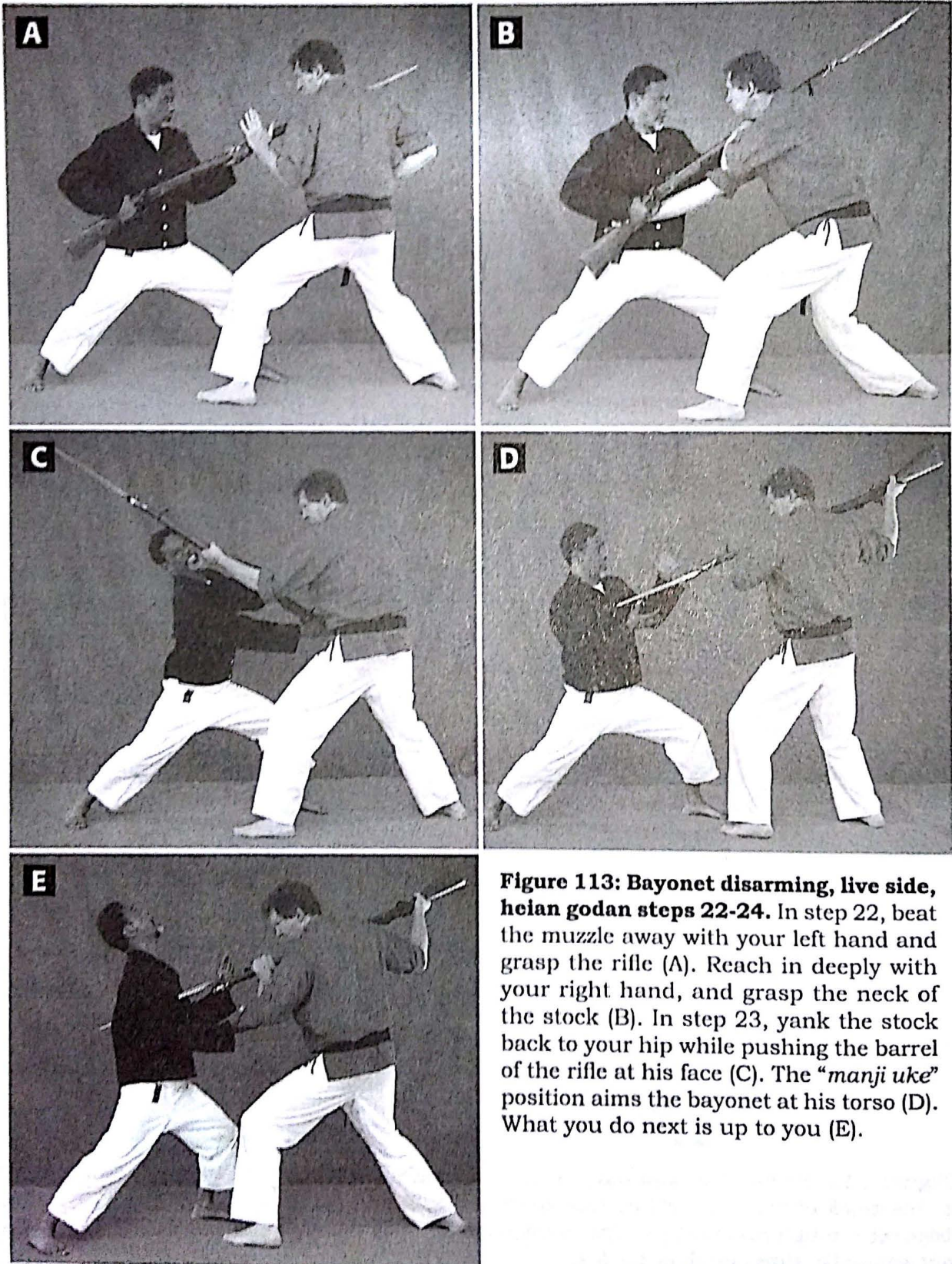


Figure 113: Bayonet disarming, live side, heian godan steps 22-24. In step 22, beat the muzzle away with your left hand and grasp the rifle (A). Reach in deeply with your right hand, and grasp the neck of the stock (B). In step 23, yank the stock back to your hip while pushing the barrel of the rifle at his face (C). The “*manji uke*” position aims the bayonet at his torso (D). What you do next is up to you (E).

11.2.9 Steps 22-26: Bayonet Disarming, Live Side

The previous sequence taught the novice bodyguard how to beat the rifle to his left and break the soldier's left arm as a preliminary to disarming and killing him. In this cluster, we beat the rifle to the right, instead. Then, we take the rifle away from him. We have the choice of whether or not to finish him off. That is a choice as old as battle.

As you turn back to the north after step 21 of heian godan, you are opening a new chapter in the kata. Once again you face an enemy soldier barehanded. He threatens you with a rifle and bayonet. This time you will beat the blade to your right and attack on the "live" side of the rifle. This is dangerous, but sometimes you don't have any choice.

In step 22, beat the muzzle of the rifle to your right using your left hand (Figure 113), and then grasp the fore-end of the rifle. Reach in deeply with your right hand and grasp the stock behind his right hand.

In step 23, use shotokan hiki te power to yank the neck of the rifle back toward your right hip. The rifle will spin end-for-end. Push the fore-end of the rifle into his face, striking him hard in the forehead with the heavy barrel of the gun. Very similar techniques are shown in the 1942 and 1954 editions of U.S. Army Field Manual 21-150.^{498,499} John Pellegrini included this technique in his book on combat hapkido.⁵⁰⁰

In step 24, pull away from him (in manji uke kamae), keeping the point of the bayonet directed toward his chest. The kata does not impale him at this point, but in real life you would have the option.

Step 25 is the spin to the left. This is the classic rifle buttstroke, wherein you crack his skull with the stock of the rifle in a horizontal strike to the side of the head as you turn.

Steps 25 and 26 are the mirror image of the live-side disarm, reminding us that this particular technique actually works on both the live and dead sides of the rifle.

⁴⁹⁸ War Department, 1942, p. 202-205, 216-218.

⁴⁹⁹ U.S. Army, 1954, p. 101-115.

⁵⁰⁰ Pellegrini, 2009, p. 148.

11.3 Conclusion

Could these be the “real” applications of heian godan? The internal evidence supporting these applications is overwhelming:

- The theme of the kata is “disarming a modern soldier.” The kata is equally divided between saber disarming and rifle disarming.
- Can we recognize the enemy? These techniques paint a clear picture of Perry’s naval officers and marines. Viewed through another lens, we see Okubo’s conscript soldiers.
- Does the kata exploit the enemy’s weakness? Soldiers behave and fight in predictable ways. When they fix bayonets to their rifles, we know exactly what they are going to do next. This makes them vulnerable.
- Can we see one of our masters teaching the lesson? When we look at this kata, we see Azato looking back. Azato was fanatically devoted to disarming skills and was also a swordfighting and bayonet-fencing expert. Here is a kata that is all about saber disarming and bayonet disarming. Where would Itosu have learned these lessons if not from Azato? This kata is as close to the historical Azato as we are likely to get.
- Are the techniques in a logical sequence? We take away the soldier’s sword and kill him with it. We take away the soldier’s knife and kill him with it. We take away the soldier’s rifle and kill him with it, once on the “dead” side and then again on the “live” side. Every step of this kata links to the steps before and after like the gears in a watch. If we were to add a step, or remove one, or reverse the order of any part of the kata, the lesson would be disrupted. The watch would not run.
- Are the techniques historically appropriate? Bayonet disarming (spear disarming) has been taught essentially the same way to every army in the history of the world. So, too, with knife, saber and sword disarming. Some lessons are universal, whether taught in Okinawa or in front of the walls of Jericho.
- Does the kata form a complete lesson? This lesson is as organized, thorough and complete as anything we would ever hope to see.

You can sometimes force an application on a kata (using Crabtree's Bludgeon), but when a widely-practiced, multistage combative lesson suddenly appears in a familiar kata, we have found something significant. This is a lesson the Shuri bodyguards would have taught their recruits, and there it is, plain as day, in heian godan.

When Funakoshi studied karate, kata was everything. Kihon and kumite came along later when karate became a sport. You can do "real" karate without kihon and without kumite, but you can't do karate without kata. Now we can see why. The kata are our textbooks and contain vicious combat lessons that the Shuri bodyguards needed and used. The kata are so rich with combat wisdom that they make the modern sport seem pale and nerveless in comparison.

We have reached a milestone in our reconstruction of historical karate. We know the men, the circumstances and now the applications of their introductory kata. Hard-style karate turns out to be a lot more interesting, and a lot more deadly, than we had ever known.

Chapter 12



Lessons Learned

It is hard coming back to the present after immersing ourselves in karate's past. The magic that brought Shuri to life in our imaginations cannot hold. The mind fatigues. The image wavers and fades. Such journeys always end with a grudging return to the present, to bright morning sunshine and to the quiet responsibilities of our daily lives.

However, we are not quite finished. We have learned things on this journey. We know things about karate, about masters and about katas that cannot be ignored. We need to carry our discoveries into our dojo and into the high councils of our karate organizations.

These are the lessons we must carry away from this study:

- Breaking out of the box
- The character development myth
- Why there are five heian kata
- Why did Itosu bury the bunkai?
- Karate isn't empty-handed
- The missing skill
- Milk for babies, meat for men
- Masters and minions
- The truth about giri
- Ringing the bell

This chapter explores our modern karate in terms of this revolution. It points out what is true, what is not true and what needs to change as we take karate into the 21st century.

12.1 Breaking Out of the Box

For 50,000 years, human beings were mired in magical thinking, making no progress against the terrible diseases and malnutrition that killed most of our children before their third year. Then, in the 13th century, a Franciscan friar named Roger Bacon pointed out that we had an easy path to a better life. All we had to do, he said, was to open our eyes.

Roger Bacon shouted to mankind, "Cease to be ruled by dogmas and authorities; look at the world!" Four chief sources of ignorance he denounced; respect for authority, custom, the sense of the ignorant crowd, and the vain, proud unteachableness of our dispositions. Overcome but these, and a world of power would open to men.⁵⁰¹

Anyone who has spent time in traditional karate can tell you about "the vain, proud unteachableness of our dispositions."

This friar's anguished cry was the spark that set off the scientific revolution. It is the reason you personally did not die from that earache you had as a child. It is the reason your children and grandchildren will all outlive you. It's such a simple idea: Don't let your teachers lock your mind in a box! Open your eyes and look around!

Traditional karate has been a locked box cut off from reality for the last hundred years. People inside that box blindly believe it contains everything worth knowing, which is itself a form of magical thinking. People outside the box are amazed that karateka can be so arrogant and so ignorant at the same time.

As a student, inside the box, I was repeatedly told that a man can serve only one art. My teachers expressed contempt for people who would earn their black belt in one art and then wander away to enroll in a different art. People who had earned multiple black belts were denounced as dabblers and charlatans who had never really "mastered" anything. I believed these teachers and was proud that I had stayed the course, never wavering from my dedication to pure karate.

That is, I believed them until my search for the bunkai led me into other dojos. I made a couple of discoveries. The first was that a person who knows both striking and grappling is formidable in situations where the "pure" artist is helpless. When I look at a pure jujutsu fighter, I often think how easily I could bypass his ineffective blocks with skull-cracking punches. When I look at a pure karate fighter, I know how easily I could catch his kick and wrench his leg into an explosive spiral fracture.

The second discovery was that the simple techniques are the most practical. No matter the art, the really effective techniques are taught in the beginner years. Advanced students learn more difficult techniques but not more effective ones. Suddenly, that contemptable charlatan who

⁵⁰¹ Wells, H.G., *A Short History of the World*, Penguin, 1922, p. 232.

collected shodan belts in multiple arts began to look like a man on the right path. He learned the most effective techniques in each art before moving on.

If you live inside a master's box, then your skill set will be smaller than his. If you teach, then your students will live in boxes that are smaller still. Each generation has to be creative with their karate or the art withers and dies. Your personal art cannot grow until you break out of the box.

But there is no need to worry. Simply by reading books like this, you have lifted the lid and looked outside the box. Welcome to Bacon's "world of power." It has everything you had before and many times more than that. You'll be a stronger fighter now. You'll have a great deal more fun. Best of all, the dojo is no longer a prison for your mind. The martial arts world is a big place, and you are free to explore it.

There is one drawback, however. People who climb out of the box begin to grow. They can never fit inside the box again. And, sometimes, we miss the friends we left behind. Some people need those four tight walls around them.

12.2 *The Character Development Myth*

"The ultimate aim of karate lies not in victory or defeat but in the perfection of the characters of its participants." So said Gichin Funakoshi, a person of unquestioned good character. Is this statement *honne* or *tatemae*? Is it true, or does it conceal the truth?

Most of us have never stopped to wonder what Funakoshi's "perfection of character" actually means. We have a vague idea that it means to have the courage of your convictions, to speak the truth, to live according to a higher moral standard, to resist temptation, to defend what is right and oppose what is wrong and to stand up for the weak and the helpless.

Unfortunately, the Japanese idea of "good character" is the opposite of ours.

Traditional Japanese values are drawn from a completely different heritage. The samurai were quite unconcerned about our quaint Western concepts of good and evil. Their idea of personal integrity was to close ranks with their neighbors to keep the truth (*honne*) hidden and leave the falsehood (*tatemae*) unchallenged. The idea that an individual would follow his conscience instead of going along with the crowd was

horrifying to them. The very idea upset the *wa*, the Japanese sense of harmonious communal unity.⁵⁰²

“Character development” to a samurai meant to suppress all sense of personal responsibility and, instead, give his superiors instant, blind obedience.⁵⁰³ A samurai was expected to seek his own death in the service of his lord, learning to “push through” pain, injury and hardship to the point that death in the line of duty could be attained. Well-trained samurai behaved like lethal, relentless killing machines, even to the point of self-destruction. The suicidal *kamikaze* pilots of World War II were shining examples of the samurai value system.

This is the “good character” the Japanese masters expected karate to teach. Good character in Japan meant to be silent, to follow orders, to ignore your conscience and to never question your superiors no matter what they tell you to do. In peacetime, this makes Japanese society a model of harmonious cooperation, of which they are very proud. In wartime, however, the same values produced horrendous war crimes. That is a harsh judgment, but Japan’s history bears it out.

To be strong in the face of pain and hardship is a good thing. To be silent in the face of cruelty and injustice is not. We need to make some adjustments here.

If we want to mold the character of our students, we need to tell them what we expect. I put this notice on the wall of my dojo to let my students know what I expect of them. This is what it means to be a black belt.

The Black Belt Oath⁵⁰⁴

I wear the black belt. It means I have a special responsibility, because I carry life and death in my hands.

I protect the young, the weak and the helpless. If I see someone being hurt, I make it stop. I don’t just look away.

I obey the law. When someone breaks the law, I tell the police, even if it is a friend. I do not just ignore a crime.

⁵⁰² McCarthy, 1999b, p. 73.

⁵⁰³ Van Wolferen, 1989, p. 250-251. These comments on Japanese values are mainly drawn from this very impressive dissection of Japanese society.

⁵⁰⁴ You may reproduce this oath freely, giving proper credit to the source, *Shotokan’s Secret* by Bruce Clayton, Black Belt Press, 2010.

I tell the truth. I don't lie, not even when I might be punished. When someone is lying, I say so. I don't just pretend I didn't hear.

I win or lose by the rules. I do not cheat. When I see someone cheating, I say so. I won't let them steal a prize or a grade that they didn't earn.

I keep my promises. When I give you my word, I don't take it back. I expect others to do the same.

I follow my conscience. If something is wrong, I say so, even when all of my friends disagree. I will not be silent just to be safe or popular.

I swear on my honor to preserve rather than destroy; to avoid rather than confront; to confront rather than hurt; to hurt rather than maim; to maim rather than kill; to kill rather than die and to die rather than dishonor my belt.

The ancient masters tell us that winning one thousand victories in one thousand battles is not the highest skill. The highest skill is to *win without fighting*. This will be my lifelong goal.

This is my oath, sworn on my sacred honor, and only death will break it.

This oath was written for a teenage audience, but it makes an important point. After all, if a trained karate fighter can't stand up for what is good and true in the world, who can?

Make sure your students know the rules. Don't just train them to be mindless samurai. They need a code to follow.

12.3 Why There are Five Heian Kata

Why are there five heians? There are five heians because the Shuri bodyguards faced five kinds of enemies and trained explicitly to fight each one.

If you were training recruits for actual combat, would you show them a random selection of punches, blocks and kicks, the way we train shotokan beginners? I hope not. Combatives instructors put a face on the enemy and teach the recruits exactly how to defeat him. Targeting

a specific enemy is a very effective way to teach.

There is an interesting example of this in combatives literature. In World War II, the British published a combatives manual written by W.E. Fairbairn, a veteran of many hand-to-hand encounters as a law officer in the streets of Shanghai.⁵⁰⁵ The manual contained many drawings of evil-looking Nazis dying at the hands of handsome young Brits. A copy of this manual fell into Nazi hands, and a short time later, the Germans responded with their own manual called *Defense against English Gangster Methods*.⁵⁰⁶ It showed a young Nazi soldier in full kit fighting back against an evil Brit who looked suspiciously like Leslie Howard, the famous British film actor.

Both books depicted the enemy very clearly to help motivate the recruit. Should we be surprised when Itosu's kata do the same thing?

- Heian godan points to a very specific enemy, the "modern" soldier similar to Perry's marines or Okubo's conscript soldiers.
- Heian nidan is a sword fight, and it is easy to recognize the enemy. Itosu faced bureaucrat samurai every day.
- Heian yondan shows us how to fight the samurai garrison that was stationed at Naha.
- Heian sandan is a lesson in "bringing them back alive." It's a police kata.
- Heian shodan highlights the techniques Matsumura invented for bowling over challengers on the streets of Shuri.

Those five groups represent Shuri's enemies. If Martians had invaded medieval Okinawa, Itosu would have created *heian rokudan* just for them.

Not every kata is about a class of enemies, of course. Empi is about throws, which is a class of techniques. Kanku is about fighting in the dark, which is a tactical challenge. Gankaku is about fighting on a staircase. Tekki shodan is about protecting the person behind you. Every kata is about *something*. They all have a theme.

The theme of the heian kata series is, "Dispatching our enemies."

⁵⁰⁵ Fairbairn, 1942.

⁵⁰⁶ German Army Command, *Defense against English Gangster Methods (Silent Killing)*, 1942; reprinted by Paladin Press as *Silent Killing: Nazi Counters to Fairbairn-Sykes Techniques*, 2008.

12.4 Why Did Itosu Bury the Bunkai?

Six chapters back I promised that you would “see for yourself” why Itosu buried the bunkai. Let’s see if your answer is the same as mine.

To me, Itosu’s reason is as clear as it is compelling. Think of how the heian applications would look to a member of Okubo’s Meiji-era government. Japan had just spent several years and vast sums of money putting down the Satsuma Rebellion. The final battle on Mount Shiroyama occurred in 1877.

Suddenly, in the 1880s, here comes Itosu to establish a new martial-arts do (way) based on karate. From the heart of Okinawa, a traditional Satsuma territory, he offers five new kata. From the Japanese point of view, the kata teach unacceptable skills:

- How to disarm and kill a Japanese official (heian nidan).
- How to win brawls in the street (heian shodan).
- How to beat a person senseless and kidnap him (heian sandan).
- How to kill a Japanese warrior in armor (heian yondan).
- How to kill one of Japan's new conscript soldiers with his own gun (heian godan).

To an official of the Meiji government, Itosu's kata would have reeked of lawlessness, subversion and revolution. Three of the kata advocated explicit attacks on Japanese officials and soldiers! The other two are clearly criminal. The fact that Itosu intended to introduce the kata into the public school system would have generated a swift reaction from the government.

In that political climate, the true applications of the heians could not be revealed. Had they been revealed, the heian katas and karate itself would have been outlawed. Anyone who taught or knew the applications would have been arrested. To protect his students and his art, Itosu put the applications away and never mentioned them again. Remember that the reason for creating the do was to share the health benefits of karate, not to foment rebellion. The applications were irrelevant to health and would just cause trouble.

This seems so clear once you understand the politics of the times

and the historical purpose of the kata. Like Nakayama in 1945, Itosu needed to make karate look harmless to the ruling class. He did this by teaching the dances without explaining them. In my opinion, he succeeded a bit too well.

12.5 Karate Isn't Empty-Handed

Karate history books often mention that “kara te” means “empty hand,” because karate is the art with “no weapons.” This is a very misleading idea.

All martial arts teach us to use weapons. In the case of karate, the weapon is our own skeleton. Karate trains us in the biomechanics that generate power. We channel the power through our skeleton into the opponent's body. Karate fighters have “empty hands” but they are not unarmed.

The heian kata prove that karate uses conventional weapons, too. Karate is full of weapons and not just umbrellas, horse bridles and grinder handles. Rifles, katana, sabers, daggers and bayonets have all made an appearance in the beginner kata.

This seems like a paradox, but it makes perfect sense. The Shuri bodyguards could not bring weapons to the fight so they let their enemies bring the weapons. It isn't difficult for a karate-trained fighter to overpower an adversary and take his weapons. The second adversary then faces a karate fighter with gleaming steel in his hands, as we saw in heian nidan. This is a very intimidating prospect.

In self-defense circles, we say that a weapon multiplies your combat effectiveness tenfold. Whatever your strength and ability, you are ten times as effective with a knife in your hand. Now apply that rule of thumb to a karate fighter. Karate is his weapon, making him ten times as effective as an untrained fighter. That seems about right. If he cross-trains in jujutsu, he has another weapon and another tenfold advantage. If we hand the karate-jutsu fighter a knife, what happens? The knife amplifies the advantage another tenfold. Suddenly he is a thousand times as effective as before. An armed karate-jutsu fighter, set loose with lethal intent, can carve his way through a sea of untrained enemies.

That's what we expect of the Shuri bodyguards. They faced a sea of enemies. They swam through that sea like sharks.

The “empty hand” is for sporting events. Real karate, as seen in the heian applications, is intimately involved with military weapons.

12.6 The Missing Skill

The heian applications teach deadly combat skills, but they completely leave out one aspect of self-defense that we must not overlook. The shotokan kata say nothing at all about ground fighting.

Real fights usually end up on the ground. Karate students are almost helpless on the ground, yet this is the fight they have to win in real life.

A self-defense class must include ground fighting in some fashion. This is where most self-defense programs fall into a black hole. The problem is that ground fighting is fun. Students and coaches get carried away and forget that the ground is a dangerous place to be. You won't get to wrestle the opponent without interference. The opponent's friends will be kicking you in the head, belly or kidney the whole time you are down there. Trying to wrestle is suicidal on the street.

In years of study, I have found only two publications that treat ground fighting realistically:

- *Krav Maga for Beginners* by Darren Levine is the introductory manual to this Israeli self-defense system.⁵⁰⁷ The section on ground fighting proves that "the guard position" can only occur when both parties mutually agree to wrestle. Either party, whether above or below, can ruin the other instantly and disengage. The manual goes on to explore a wide range of punching, striking and gouging techniques to use on the ground. All of our karate students should be trained in these techniques.
- *Kata-Based Sparring* by Iain Abernethy has very little to do with either kata or sparring, in my opinion, but it teaches a life-saving lesson.⁵⁰⁸ The crucial drill has two fighters trying to pin each other on the ground. At the instructor's signal, a third fighter jumps in to "help" one of the contestants by striking, choking or locking whoever seems to be winning at the moment. It's a pretty rough drill. At a second signal, the helper switches sides and begins to beat up the other contestant! This drill rapidly convinces everyone that wrestling is suicidal. They learn to break away and get on their feet instead.

⁵⁰⁷ Levine, 2009, p. 157-185.

⁵⁰⁸ Abernethy, Iain, *Kata-Based Sparring*, DVD 70 minutes, Summersdale 2006.

Karate ground fighting isn't wrestling. When we lose our footing, we keep right on punching, striking, kicking, kneeing, elbowing, eye-gouging, groin-smashing, ear-slapping and bone-breaking, just like we would if we were standing up. Stay with what you know. Use your karate (and your jujutsu) to break free.

If your sensei doesn't teach some form of ground fighting, you are not learning self-defense. It's as simple as that.

12.7 Milk for Babies, Meat for Men

The heading refers to First Corinthians 3:2, which tells us to give milk to babies and save the meat for strong men. Now that we understand the heian kata, we karate teachers are going to confront some serious questions about our curriculum.

The combative interpretation of the heian kata is such a good fit that some large part of it must be true, even if we agree that some improvement is still possible. When we look into the heians, we see the kinds of combative lessons that every army drills into their new soldiers. This is military combat, not self-defense.

The heian kata show us how to render an enemy helpless and then murder him, usually with his own weapon. They are ruthless lessons in wartime survival. The problem is that most of our karate students are children. We don't normally train children for war.

We can't expose children to the kind of cold-blooded murder we see in these kata. Imagine the spectacle of little children stabbing each other in their little kidneys with their little rubber knives. Their parents would not be amused. How can we share the heian applications with this audience?

The first step is to realize that many of the heian applications can still be taught to children. There's nothing wrong with teaching the various throws we find in heian shodan, for instance. Children should be shielded from the wrist-breaking applications in step 3 of that kata because their wrists aren't strong enough to practice them safely. That's no problem for us. We've been telling them that step 3 was a wrist-release anyway.

Heian nidan is about swords, but we can hide the swords and teach the similar-looking jujutsu arm locks. Teach the usual knife-hand blocks and strikes. The scooping block in step 16 can catch a side thrust kick,

which lets the kick in step 17 attack the undefended groin. Parents don't seem to object to that kind of application.

Heian sandan is teachable as shown here, but we should tone down the chi gerk techniques to avoid knee injuries. Show them how to stamp on the opponent's foot, but not how to destroy a knee joint. Of course, we should never show children the eye gouges or the reverse hip throw! Children should not know about those techniques. Like Choki Motobu, they would find someone to try it on.

Heian yondan can be taught without mentioning armor if you skip the helmet strike. The ikkajo arm locks are very practical for children, and the two-treasures kicks don't have to be explained in any great detail. I would not show children the descending elbow strike to the neck. I pretend that step 11 is an uraken uchi instead. Don't show the kids the riote kanoha gaeshi wrist locks. Their wrists aren't strong enough. I show them the traditional wedge-block explanation instead.

Heian godan is all about arm bars and "X" blocks that work as knife defenses, up to the first kiai. We don't have to show the kids the sankajo lock, which might injure their wrists, or the kidney stab. The bayonet techniques can be taught as bo defenses, which conceals their real purpose while teaching similar skills.

There are plenty of useful self-defense skills we can offer children while saving the combat applications for our black-belt classes. We can make the "real" applications a black-belt privilege that the students have to earn. They should be adults and shodans, at least, before they play with edged weapons and firearms.

If we want to understand our art, we must seek its historical roots. We have no choice about that. We are not slaves to our history, however. We can pick and choose applications that will serve the needs of each audience. This is the opportunity offered by Crabtree's Bludgeon, which showed that we can find self-defense applications to match any set of hand gestures. We aren't locked into one interpretation of a kata.

12.8 Masters and Minions

In the course of this research, I spent a lot of time with the old masters, the ones who founded the karate styles. I studied their kata, read their books and absorbed their legends. One day, I realized that the old masters

were completely unlike anyone I've met in modern karate. This should bring us up short in surprise.

From our first day in class, we implicitly believe that the ladder of dan ranks must lead inevitably to master status, but this is not true. The old masters were completely different from their modern followers. A master might found a karate organization, but he would never join one. As Ross Perot famously said, "Eagles don't flock."⁵⁰⁹

The "real" masters of karate were Okinawans who studied many arts with many teachers. They moved freely from one teacher to another, cherry-picking the techniques and skills that they thought useful. In their senior years, they created the karate ryuha, which became our modern styles. Each style received a narrow slice of the master's knowledge, organized into a neat ladder for his students to climb.

Climbing that ladder does not teach us to be masters. It teaches us to be custodians. The minions preserve and protect the art. They do not innovate, they do not create. Instead, they form technical committees who write bureaucratic rule books. Mastery looks quite different.

Here's an example. Itosu was a true master. He created a set of three rohai kata and taught them to Funakoshi. Funakoshi was also a master. He discarded two of the rohai kata as worthless, and revised the third into a new kata (meikyo). Let's try to picture that in the modern context. Do you know any sensei who would casually throw away two of the heians and revise the others? Do you know of a shotokan group that would *tolerate* a teacher who did that? He would be defrocked as a heretic and driven out.

This is why karate organizations fragment and die when the founder dies. The old masters were free-thinking independent, iconoclastic people. No one inside a karate organization has the qualities of the master because the organization drives out the people who have those qualities.

The most dedicated sheep in the flock cannot become a shepherd. There is no path from one thing to the other. The most faithful student cannot become a master, because masters are not faithful students.

When we meet people who act like masters, we drive them away. We might be wise to wonder where they have gone.

⁵⁰⁹ Follet, Ken, *On Wings of Eagles*, New American Library, 1983, p. 362.

12.9 The Truth About Giri

Before closing, we need to spend a moment considering *giri*, the moral debt that the student owes to the teacher.

Giri is the “unpayable debt.” This indebtedness is profound. It takes about a thousand hours of practice to earn your black belt. Your teacher was there with you the whole time. How are you going to pay him back for the time he invested in you? Clearly you owe him something more than just your monthly dues. That sense of obligation is *giri*.

The concept of *giri* comes directly from Confucianism, a Chinese philosophy that strongly influences Japanese society. Some karate teachers explain *giri* as an absolute obligation of the student to the teacher, giving the teacher enormous control over the student’s life. This isn’t quite right, and it has led to some very ugly abuses in the name of *giri*. These abuses occur because we were not told the whole story about *giri*.

Giri is a demanding *two-way* relationship. The student is expected to obey the master because the master’s wisdom and benevolence guide the student to a better life. This is called “having the Mandate of Heaven.”⁵¹⁰ You can tell whether the master has the Mandate of Heaven by examining how he behaves. The mandate is bestowed on those who cultivate themselves morally, who participate in correct performance of ritual, who show filial piety and respect to their elders, and who practice benevolence and humaneness to their subjects. We are obliged to be loyal to this man because of his obvious moral rectitude. A student who forsakes such a master is morally bankrupt. He is a thief in the night and should be treated like one.

But there is another side to *giri*. A master can lose the Mandate. If you have been in the martial arts for any length of time, you have seen this happen. The master becomes narrow, petty and self-centered. He exploits and manipulates his students instead of nurturing them. He becomes vindictive, suspicious and angry. He destroys the love and loyalty that he once earned.

According to Confucius, a master who has lost the Mandate of Heaven is not worthy of *giri*. His abuses cancel all debts owed to him. If a teacher

⁵¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucian#Loyalty>

loses the Mandate of Heaven, we are under no further obligation to serve him. In fact, we have an obligation to walk away.

If your master nurtures you, you are obliged to be loyal. If he abuses you, you are obliged to depart. It's that simple.

The "unpayable debt" is not really unpayable. To honor your *giri*, you must follow in your teacher's footsteps. Set up your own school, spend the thousand hours beside your beginners, and take the students to your teacher for their *shodan* tests. Each new *shodan* is a good-faith payment on the debt.

This is how karate passes from one generation to the next.

12.10 Ringing the Bell

After the Battle of Okinawa, American soldiers found a large brass bell in the wreckage of Shuri Castle. The inscription on the bell said:

*"It will startle the indolent into activity that will restore honor to their names. And how will the bell sound? It will echo far and wide like a peal of thunder, but with utmost purity. And evil men, hearing the bell, will be saved."*⁵¹¹

I hope that *Shotokan's Secret* will echo in the karate world like a peal of thunder, so that karate itself can be saved. Karate cannot live in the dark. It needs to grow. It needs to evolve and adapt. It needs to change. It needs our help.

Teaching self-defense is one of the highest callings. Foolish and cowardly people think that "violence is never the answer," but we know differently. We teach helpless victims how to make the violence stop. We teach them how to stand up for themselves and how to defend their lives and their dignity. We place them beyond the reach of threats and intimidation. We teach them how to defend their rights and their freedom. This places a responsibility on us to teach these skills effectively.

There is no glory in listening to the distant bell. You have to climb the mountain and ring it. That's the activity that will bring honor to your name.

Ring the bell. Ring it like someone's life depends on it.

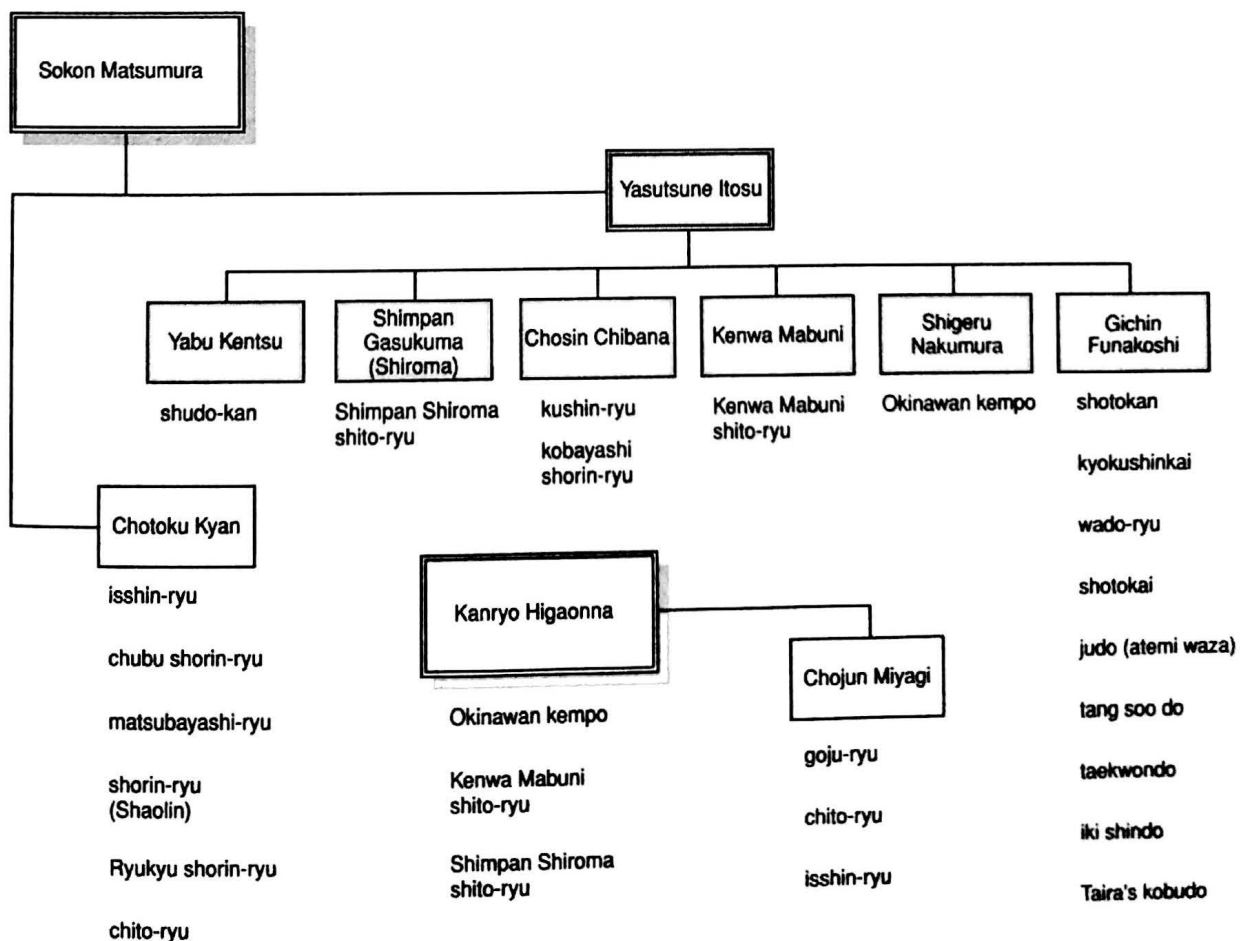
⁵¹¹ Appleman, 2000.

Appendix A: Karate Lineage Chart

This chart shows how the discoveries of Bushi Matsumura and Yasutsune Itosu have trickled down into the major styles of modern karate. I have also included the contributions of Chotoku Kyan, Kanryo Higaonna and Chojun Miyagi. These five men are the superstars of Okinawan karate. Everyone else is defined by his relationships to one or more of these famous men.

It is useless to depict all the relationships among these masters and their students, so I have simplified the chart by leaving out many famous names. Most of Matsumura's teachings come to us through Itosu. Most of Higaonna's teachings come to us through Miyagi. The knowledge did not pass cleanly from master to student, as diagrams like this would have you believe.

Still, it is useful to contemplate the paths of knowledge between Bushi Matsumura and the various karate styles we see today. One way or another, Matsumura touched every branch of modern karate except for the recent Chinese imports like *kenpo*, *goju-ryu* and *uechi ryu*.



Appendix B: Training Videos

I am in a unique position to recommend *shotokan*, *jujutsu* and *karate-jutsu* training videos to you. I have shelves of VHS and DVD products collected over a period of 20 years. Some are adequate, some are excellent and some are fraudulent. How do you know which ones to buy?

- The quality of the martial knowledge is critical in a video. I've seen many unskilled people demonstrating in front of a camera. It's embarrassing to watch.
- The quality of the teaching is even more critical than the performer's skill. The video instructor has only an hour to impart his knowledge. That isn't the kind of teaching we see in the *dojo*. Only a really exceptional teacher can make the transition to video.
- The quality of the videography and sound are not important. Professional footage of a poor teacher is a waste of time. Grainy silent movies of a good teacher can be priceless.

If you want to know the "right" way to perform the *shotokan kata*, there is only one place to go. Joel Ertl and Anita Bendickson have produced a library of DVDs covering all of the *shotokan kata*. Their performances are technically excellent (both are AAKF champions), but that isn't all. Their grasp of video as a teaching medium makes them giants in the field. Their DVDs teach you *exactly* how to do every *kata*, in meticulous and loving detail.⁵¹² Ertl's ability to stand on one foot for minutes on end while explaining a kick has to be seen to be believed. Bendickson's DVD on self-defense for women (*Scenarios in Self-Defense*) is something every instructor should study. The ladies don't live in the same world that we men live in.

For *kata* applications, the king of video is Iain Abernethy. His applications are not historical, in my opinion, but they are viciously practical in a bar-bouncer kind of way. You will go up a *dan* rank in 90 minutes by watching his video of the *heian kata*. He understands practical fighting in a way that Funakoshi and Nakayama never did. In addition, Iain has an infectious sense of humor that makes him very likable.⁵¹³

⁵¹² Ertl's and Bendickson's Web site is www.karatevid.com. Be sure to view the hidden scene after the final credits of the DVD about the *heian kata*.

⁵¹³ Abernethy, 2006. See his Web site, www.iainabernethy.com.

For jujutsu techniques, the first place to go is George Kirby's DVD series on *budoshin* jujutsu. These eight DVDs are extremely well done in every sense. Each one corresponds to a *kyu* rank from beginner to shodan. Each disk has 15 to 20 "kata." Each kata consists of an attack, a response and a submission. Shotokan students will recognize many of these techniques as kata applications. Kirby offers 8 DVDs for \$80. That's a bargain you can't pass up.⁵¹⁴

Yes, there are other teachers who have made excellent DVDs. My advice is to start with these three. If you were to buy all of the videos from these three sources, you would be busy for years and be in good hands the whole time.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ Kirby, 1992. His Web site is <http://www.budoshin.com/>.

⁵¹⁵ It should go without saying, but for the record, I have no financial relationship to any of these products.

Appendix C: Glossary

Most readers of this volume have enough karate expertise to recognize the Japanese technical terms we use every day in the dojo. Beginners, casual readers and reviewers may appreciate a quick reference to technical terms used in the text.

Age-uke – Upward block.

Aikido – A very specialized jujutsu emphasizing a graceful flow of motion while applying a wide variety of wrist and arm locks.

Aikijutsu – Aikido for people who aren't graceful. More practical and more brutal than aikido.

Alma mater – Latin, meaning “nourishing mother.” A person's college or university.

Ashi – Foot or lower leg.

Atama – Head.

Ate or **Atemi** – Striking techniques, usually in the sense of gouging a nerve center or vital point, rather than using the full power of a karate attack.

Atomic bomb – A military bomb based on nuclear fission, dropped from an airplane, that can destroy square miles of a city in a single explosion.⁵¹⁶

Awamori – Okinawa's family of distilled spirits, made from anything that can be fermented. Rice, turnips, fish, anything.

Awase – Denotes using two hands at the same time.

Barai – Parrying, warding off. Also seen as “harai.”

Bo – A hardwood staff, usually five or six feet long.

Bona fide – Latin, meaning “in good faith.” Genuine, authentic.

Bubishi – An ancient Okinawan text, mainly devoted to Chinese medicine and herbal remedies, but with an illustrated chapter on grappling.

Budo – Literally, “the way of the warrior.” Used here to denote medieval Japanese warrior culture.

⁵¹⁶ Some of my books are about nuclear war. When I mention that in class, the younger students have no idea what I'm talking about.

- Bunkai** - The fighting skills that the kata once taught.
- Bu jutsu** - A Japanese term meaning "martial arts."
- Bushi** - Warrior. Literally, "war man."
- Chanbara** - Sword fighting, but used here to mean the soft, padded weapons that have recently appeared in the martial arts marketplace.
- Chi gerk** - "Sticky feet" fighting, from wing chun.
- Chi sao** - "Sticky hands" fighting, from wing chun.
- Chuan fa** - Chinese unarmed fighting, popularly mislabeled "kung fu." Pronounced "kenpo" in Japanese.
- Combatives** - Combatives are the personal combat skills that turn a recruit into a soldier in a matter of weeks.
- Coup de grâce** - French, meaning the "blow of mercy" that ends the opponent's suffering. It sounds romantic until you realize that it is cold-blooded murder.
- Cuirass** - Armor that protects the torso. Originally from French, it is pronounced "kweer-ass" in English.
- Dai** - The larger or more important part. Also written "tai." Sometimes encountered in its alternate voicing: "O" as in "O-sensei."
- Dachi** - Stance. More generally, standing up. Also seen as "tachi."
- Daimyo** - A feudal lord of Japan, often brutal and despotic, like a count or an earl in medieval Europe.
- Daisho** - The traditional display of two samurai swords on a rack. The big sword (katana) is the *daito*. The short sword (wakizashi) is the *shoto*.
- Debana** - To attack at the moment when the opponent's attack begins. From kendo.
- De facto** - Latin, meaning a situation that is true in fact, even if it is officially ignored or denied.
- Dinglehopper** - A kata application that is pathetically wrong.
- Do** - An allegedly constructive life path. It is the Japanese rendering of "Tao." It also means the abdomen as a target in kendo.
- Dojo** - Training hall.
- Dojo kun** - A list of rules for students.
- Dori** - In jujutsu and aikido, a generic word for "technique," similar to "waza" in karate and judo.

Enbusen - Literally, a line on the floor. Used to denote the "floor plan" of a kata.

Fumikomi - Stamping kick, usually to crush the arch of the opponent's foot.

Futi - Forearm rotation, the wrist-snapping action used in nearly every strike and block in shotokan.

Gaeshi - This means "turning" or "twisting."

Gaijin - An "outside person," a foreigner, with the connotation of "savage" or "barbarian" because not a Japanese.

Gaiwan - The outer side of the forearm.

Gakun - "Effective grip" of hakkoryu jujutsu, similar to yonkajo in aikido.

Garami - Entanglement.

Gedan barai - Lower level swinging block.

Geri - A kick. Also seen as "keri." In some contexts it means to cut, as with a sword.

Gi - The white cotton karate uniform. It was copied from Jigoro Kano's judo uniform by Funakoshi in the early 1920's, and was then adopted by all Okinawan karate styles after 1936.

Giri - The unbearable burden; the unpayable debt. The life-long respect and obligation you own to your teacher — unless he mistreats you and betrays the trust. Then the bond is broken.⁵¹⁷

Glabella - The bony area directly between the eyebrows.

Guruma - Wheel. It implies rotation around a point.

Gyaku - Reverse motion. Usually applied when the hips are rotated opposite to the natural motion, as in *gyaku-zuki*, the reverse punch.

Habu - Okinawan pit viper. Like a rattlesnake with a silencer.

Hachimaki - A turban or headband.

Hakkoryu - A style of jujutsu derived by combining the practical parts of aikido with the anatomical knowledge of shiatsu. It is largely devoted to wrist and arm locks, with a heavy emphasis on nerve pressure points.

Handachi - This is the "half standing" position, where you have one

⁵¹⁷ Clayton, Bruce, "The Exception that Breaks Giri," on the *Shotokan's Secret* Web site. <http://www.ShotokansSecret.com>.

- foot and one knee on the floor, like the opening move of *empi kata*.
- Hangetsu dachi** – A fairly wide stance with the knees pulled inward. One steps forward in crescent-shaped steps that keep the groin covered while hooking behind an opponent's leg with the heel.
- Hanko** – A signature stamp, like a Chinese chop.
- Hanshi** – In San Ten Karate, the head of the organization, similar to a dean at a college.
- Hara** – Belly. In karate, the center of gravity of the body, in the bowl of the pelvis. In Japanese culture, the center of the spirit. Suicide was often performed through *hara kiri*, belly cutting.
- Harem** – Persian, meaning a sacred, forbidden place where you keep your trophy wives.
- Hiki te** – Pullback hand.
- Hiji** – Elbow.
- Hiraken** – Striking with the fingers folded but not closed into a fist. Contact is made with the second knuckles, usually in the throat.
- Hiza geri** – Knee kick, meaning that you slam your knee into the opponent's face or groin.
- Hoari topcoats** – The *keimochi* nobles of Shuri wore ankle-length kimonos with wide, belled sleeves as the uniform of their upper-class status.
- Homophones** – Words with different meanings that sound the same, as in *to*, *too*, and *two*. The Japanese language has thousands of homophonic words.
- Honne** – The real truth; what really happened; what people really think. This is the truth as it is rarely voiced in Japan. Contrast to *tatemae*.
- Humerus** – The bone of the upper arm, from shoulder to elbow.
- Iaito** – Practice sword like a katana with no cutting edge.
- Ikkajo** – The first basic wrist lock, also called an arm bar.
- Ikken hisatsu** – "One fist, certain death." This is the knock-down power that distinguishes hard-style from soft-style karate. It is derived from a similar expression in Japanese fencing.
- Ippon ken** – One-point fist. A fist with one knuckle stuck out like a point on the front of the fist.
- Ippon kumite** – One-step fighting drills. The attacker makes one attack. The defender makes one defense and one counter-attack.

Jigen ryu - The dominant sword-fighting school of Satsuma prefecture. They specialized in a powerful downward cut.

Jitte - One of the three temple kata.

Jiyu kumite - Fighting for points instead of blood.

Jo - A short bo stick, about four feet in length. This is exactly the size of the handle of an Okinawan parasol. These parasols are often visible in Perry's lithographs, mainly carried by keimochi men.

Jodan - Face or head level.

Judan - The 10th degree, or highest rank, in shotokan karate.

Judo - A very popular grappling sport, which might be described as jujutsu without teeth.

Judoka - A judo player.

Jūji uke - "X" block. A "block" using two hands, with the wrists crossed.

Jujutsu - Traditional Japanese unarmed combat arts, dating back six centuries or so. Judo is the sport version. Often appears as "jujitsu."

Jukendo - The sport of bayonet fencing, using wooden rifles with padded ends.

Jutsu - Skill or technique studied for combat application instead of spiritual fulfillment.

Jutte - Medieval Japanese nightstick, like a *sai* but with only one hook on the side.

Kabuto - The samurai warrior's helmet.

Kagami - Mirror, as in *te kagami*, the "hand mirror" wrist lock.

Kage zuki - Hook punch. A short punch that strikes sideways across the front of the body. It is usually an arm bar or shoulder lock rather than a punch.

Kagoshima - The main seaport of Satsuma Prefecture, home of the Satsuma samurai.

Kaiden - A "kaiden master" has received the menkyo kaiden certificate of absolute mastery. He has learned it all.

Kakiwake uke - Wedge block. Used to break a front choke by applying wrist locks to both of his hands at the same time.

Kakushi te - Some sensei pretend that the kata have "hidden moves" known only to the adept. This lets them pretend that they can explain

- the kata, while simultaneously refusing to do so.
- Kama** - A sickle, used for harvesting sugar cane, and sometimes for shortening samurai.
- Kamae** - A posture of readiness; a fighting stance.
- Kami** - Spirit or ghost. Also means "hair."
- Kanji** - Japanese pictographic writing, in which each symbol stands for a word or idea.
- Kanku** - This is the name of one of shotokan's major kata, originally called "Kusanku."
- Kanoha** - "Leaf." Kanoha gaeshi is the "turning leaf" wrist lock.
- Karate** - A sport in which two people pretend to fight while a judge carefully penalizes any realism.
- Karateka** - A person who studies karate.
- Karma** - The power that determines your destiny or fate, as influenced by the sum total of all of your good and bad acts.
- Kata** - A "form," showing the one, exactly-correct way to do something. Sometimes kata can also refer to the shoulder, as in the following entry.
- Kata guruma** - Shoulder wheel throw.
- Katana** - A samurai sword more than two feet in length, capable of transecting two or three human torsos with a single stroke. They actually tested swords this way in feudal Japan, much to the annoyance of the local peasants.
- Kake te** - Open hand block. Hooking block. Usually used to grasp the opponent's arm, or to push him back.
- Keage** - Usually rendered as "snapping," as in front-snap kick, but also means "rising."
- Keimochi** - The upper-class families of Okinawa, who served as the bureaucrats of the Shuri government. Also see shizoku.
- Keiseimon gate** - The southeast gate to Shuri Castle, behind the Seiden.
- Ken** - Either "sword" or "fist" depending on context.
- Kendo** - The sport where people hit each other over the head with split bamboo staffs, pretending to be sword fighting.
- Kenjutsu** - Like kendo, but with fewer rules and real swords.
- Kenpo or kempo** - The Japanese reading of chuan fa. Although called

“karate” in Japan, kenpo is usually a Chinese art recently transplanted to the islands. Lately “kenpo” has begun to lose all meaning, just like “shorin” did.

Kensai – An honorific title awarded after death, meaning “sword saint” or “fist saint” depending on the recipient.

Kesa kiri – The “monk’s-robe cut,” a sword attack that slashes diagonally from the top of the shoulder to the opposite arm pit.

KGB– The Committee for State Security (the secret police) of the Soviet Union. Not just bad guys, but very, very bad guys.

Ki – The magical power of life. Allegedly, masters can use it to stun animals as large as tigers. In practice, it has no visible effect on animals as small as gnats.

Kiai – Literally, “spirit battle.” A shout to disorganize the enemy while tightening stomach muscles for *kime*.

Kiba dachi – “Riding” stance. Also called “side” or “horse” stance.

Kihon – Basic techniques. Kicks, blocks, punches, strikes, stances.

Kime – Focus. This is the basic principal that directs all energy into your opponent, accepting none of it back into your own body.

Kizami – To strike with the leading hand or foot. To jab.

Kobudo – The Okinawan art of makeshift weapons.

Kon – In the name of a kata, “no kon” indicates that the kata is about staff fighting.

Koshi – “Hip,” as in koshi kamae, a fighting stance with your fists stacked next to one hip.

Kote – Wrist.

Kumite – Practice fighting. “Moving hands.” Rendered as *tegumi* in old Okinawa.

Kumiuchi – Battlefield wrestling, originally in armor, that was the original foundation for all types of jujutsu.

Kun or **kun-yomi** – The Japanese reading of a kanji symbol. In Japanese, a kanji symbol may have multiple *on* and *kun* readings.

Kung fu – Principally an American term signifying Chinese martial arts in general.

Kyoshi – In the San Ten organization, a senior instructor similar to a

- full professor at a college.
- Kyu** - A beginner rank, prior to testing for the black belt.
- Linear karate** - Karate characterized by high-impact, straight-ahead attacks. Also known as hard-style karate.
- Loo Choo** - Mandarin name for Okinawa (Liúqiú). Sometimes seen as "Lew Chew." The Japanese turned it into "Ryukyu."
- Mae geri keage** - Mae (front), geri (kick), keage (rising, snapping). Front-snap kick.
- Mae geri kekomi** - Mae (front); geri (kick); kekomi (thrusting). Front thrust kick.
- Maki** - To "roll up" or "wrap around." Often used in the names of martial arts techniques, and also found on sushi menus.
- Makiwara** - Punching post, originally wrapped in soft rope made of rice straw.
- Manji uke** - Swastika block. A posture in shotokan kata where you have one arm raised up behind you and the other arm extended down in front of you, usually performed in back stance. Resembles two hand throws in hakkoryu jujutsu.
- Mawashi zuki** - Roundhouse punch. A snappy, curving punch that connects with the opponent's temple.
- Meiji** - The first emperor to assume power after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868.
- Menkyo kaiden** - A certificate of complete mastery of a martial art. The bearer is a master certified by another master.
- Metsubishi** - A "blinding" strike. It is most often a backhand raking of fingernails across the opponent's eyes. The object is not to actually blind him, but to distract him and throw him out of posture. This creates the opening for a jujutsu technique.
- Migwa-te** - Karate styles based on the teachings of Chotoku Kyan.
- Mokujyo** - The wooden rifle/bayonet used in jukendo fencing.
- Morote** - Two-handed.
- Nage** - Throw.
- Naha** - The major seaport of Okinawa. Sometimes seen as "Napa."
- Nami-gaeshi** - Returning wave kick. The foot sweeps up and across the

body, then stamps back down, like a wave running up the beach and then washing down into the sea again.

Nemesis – Greek. In the context of this book, an archenemy. More generally, an avenging angel.

Nidan geri – Double kick, specifically the flying double front-snap kick.

Nihon nukite – Two-fingered poke at the eyes.

Nihou – Two treasures, as in nihou geri, the kick that hits the face and the groin in one motion.

Nikajo – The second basic wrist lock, where the arm is bent in a “Z” position.

Ninja – A stealthy Japanese assassin, usually depicted in black pajamas. Real ninja wear three-piece suits.

Nito-ryu – The branch of modern kendo that fights with a sword in each hand.

Nukite – Spear hand; a class of techniques that poke vital points with various numbers of fingertips.

Obi – The waist sash or belt.

Ochokui – The stairway behind the throne, inside the Seiden.

Oi-zuki – Front punch (strictly speaking, “pursuing” punch), usually launched while stepping forward in zenkutsu dachi.

Olecranon – This is the bony “point” of the elbow, the proximal end of the ulna.

On or on-yomi – The alleged ancient Chinese reading of a kanji symbol.

Osae – Pressing, usually pressing downward with the palm of the hand.

Oshi uke – A swinging down block with the palm up, striking with the thumb side of the forearm.

Otoshi – Downward, or dropping. Tai otoshi is the “big drop.”

Otoshi empi uchi – Dropping (downward) elbow strike.

Ouchibara – The Okinawan royal family’s private domain behind the Seiden.

Oyo – Applying bunkai to situations outside of the kata. If you cannot explain the kata, you can always change the subject by explaining oyo instead.

Peichin – The title of an Okinawan noble employed by the Shuri

- government.
- Radius** – The larger of the two bones of the forearm.
- Regent** – A temporary king, as when the real king is too young to take command.
- Renshi** – In the San Ten organization, a senior instructor similar to an assistant professor at a college.
- Renzuki** – Multiple rapid punches. Some of my students can launch five accurately aimed punches per second.
- Riote** – In the context of hakkoryu jujutsu, this means “two hands,” similar to “morote” in karate.
- Ryukyu** – Okinawa. “Ryu” is the Japanese spelling of “Loo.” “Kyu” is the Japanese spelling of “Choo.” See Loo Choo.
- Sai** – A rather odd, blunt dagger shaped like a trident and used as a police nightstick in Okinawa.
- Samurai** – The military class of medieval Japan.
- Sanchin dachi** – Hourglass stance. A very tight little stance with the toes turned in and the knees pulling toward each other, as if trying to hold a soda can between the knees while stepping forward and backward.
- Sankajo** – The third basic wrist lock of jujutsu and aikido.
- Sankaku tobi** – Triangle leap. A formerly secret technique that lets you bypass an enemy by leaping past him.
- Satsuma** – The southernmost of Japan’s many feudal states.
- Shaolin Temple** – The most famous martial-arts training center of ancient China.
- Shaoshi** – The mountain of karate, where the Shaolin Temple is located.
- Seiden** – The two-story building that was the seat of the Okinawan government, containing the two throne rooms.
- Seio otoshi** – The kneeling shoulder throw seen at the beginning of empi kata.
- Senpai** – This book is for black belt instructors. “Senpai” is the assistant instructor or the senior student of the dojo. Also seen as “sempai.”
- Sensei** – Master, teacher, doctor, professor.
- Sen no sen** – Timing in which you strike the opponent at the exact instant he decides to attack.

Seppuku – Ritual suicide. Also known as hara kiri, belly cutting.

Shiai – An arranged fight, full power, no rules. The loser can get hurt or killed. So can the winner.

Shihan – Literally, a compass. In San Ten Karate, a teacher of teachers. The shihan is the head instructor of a multi-instructor school.

Shiko dachi – Properly “oshiko dachi,” meaning “urination stance.” Similar to a deep side stance with the feet turned outward at 45 degrees.

Shime – Also appears as “jime,” a pain technique. In judo this is narrowly applied to choking techniques, which are certainly painful.

Shinai – A practice sword made of split bamboo.

Shinbyouden – The small mausoleum behind the royal living quarters at Shuri Castle.

Shioku – Pain. In the context of budoshin jujutsu, usually a nerve-pressure pain.

Shito-ryu – A style that attempts to include both hard and soft karate.

Shizoku – This was the Japanese name for the dispossessed keimochi and samurai families, following the Meiji Restoration.

Sho – When appended to another term, “sho” indicates that this is the smaller or lesser of two versions.

Shodan – First degree black belt rank. Sometimes used to mean “virgin.” It takes four years to become a shodan. There are another 60 years of tests before you reach 10th dan.

Shogun – Military dictator of Japan.

Shomen uchi – The vertical killing blow of Japanese sword fighting.

Shoreiji – The Southern Shaolin Temple of China.

Shorinji – The Shaolin (Young Forest) Temple of China.

Shoto – Gichin Funakoshi's pen name, meaning “pine waves” (whispering pines).

Shotoism – Kata moves that have been changed, added, or deleted by shotokan masters. You can recognize styles influenced by shotokan by the presence of these markers.

Shuri – The ancient capital of Okinawa, home of Matsumura, Itosu, and Funakoshi.

- Shuriken** - A small throwing knife, sometimes star-shaped.
- Shutō uke/uchi** - Shutō is "knife hand;" uke is "block;" uchi is "strike."
[sic] - Latin, meaning that a surprising word is not a mistake; let it stand.
For instance, Master Azato lived in Asato [sic] village.
- Sine qua non** - Latin, meaning "without this there is nothing." The essential ingredient.
- Soke** - This honorific typically means the original or founding master of a martial-arts school.
- Solar plexus** - The soft spot below the sternum, where a punch will stun the diaphragm and interfere with breathing.
- Soto ude uke** - Soto is "outside;" ude is "forearm;" uke is "block."
- Stipend** - A guaranteed paycheck. Usually not a very large paycheck.
- Sutemi waza** - Sacrifice throws. These are throws where both parties land on the ground together.
- Tabi** - Socks, split between the first and second toe, for wearing with zori sandals.
- Tachi** - An old-style straight sword. A technique done in a standing position. Often seen as dachi meaning "stance."
- Tachi dori** - Stealing the opponent's weapon from him.
- Taekwondo** - Korean; tae meaning "kicking," kwon meaning "punching," do meaning "way."
- Tai** - "Tai" means the larger or more important part. Also written "dai." Sometimes voiced as "O" as in "O-sensei."
- Tai chi chuan** - Mandarin, "supreme ultimate fist." China's slow-motion martial art.
- Taikyoku** - Beginner kata shared by several karate styles. It means "supreme ultimate" and uses the same kanji as tai chi.
- Tai sabaki** - Body shifting. Shifting out of the line of attack; sidestepping.
- Taiho jutsu** - The art of arrest; the police version of jujutsu. Taiho kanji mean "to chase and to catch."
- Tamauden** - The large mausoleum outside the Shuri Castle walls.
- Tanto** - A samurai sword less than one foot in length. A dagger.
- Tatemaie** - The official, false, self-serving version of "truth" that passes for history in Japan. Contrast to honne.

Tasset – A panel of plate armor that hangs from the cuirass. In samurai armor, six narrow tassets formed a loose “skirt” to protect the groin and thighs from sword cuts.

Te – Hand.

Teisho uchi – To strike with the heel of the palm.

Tengu – Demon, or evil spirit, who brings us inspirational nightmares.

Tessen – An iron fan. It was a steel nightstick disguised as a fan and worn in the belt.

Tettsui – Hammer fist. To strike with the little-finger side of the fist.

Tobi – “Flying.” Usually applied to some form of jump kick.

Tode – Okinawa word for fist-fighting prior to 1926. It means “Chinese hand.”

Tokugawa – The man who enslaved Japan, and his heirs.

Tomari – Seacoast village at the mouth of the Asato River, within sight of Naha.

Tonfa – The wooden handle of a rice-grinding millstone, used as a club in kobudo.

Tour de force – French for “an outstanding display of skill.” A masterpiece.

Tsuba – The guard above the handle of the sword.

Tsuki – Punch, or “thrust,” as in thrusting with the point of a sword. Often seen as “zuki.”

Uchi – In the context of karate techniques, “uchi” can mean “inside” (uchi ude uke) or “strike” (shutō uchi).

Uchinanchu – The Okinawan word meaning the people of Okinawa.

Uchina guchi – The native language of Okinawa, which is neither Chinese nor Japanese.

Ulna – The smaller of the two bones of the forearm. Connects to the little-finger side of the hand.

Uraken – Strike with the back side of the fist in a whipping motion.

Urasuka – The raised dais that elevates the throne of the Okinawan king.

Ushiro – Behind, in the backward direction.

Wa – The Japanese sense of communal well-being and harmony. To disturb the *wa* is the height of bad manners.

Wakizashi - A samurai sword between one and two feet in length.

Waza - A skill, technique, or drill.

Wushu - The Mandarin reading of the bujutsu kanji. This is the generic term for martial arts in China.

Yamabushi - Mountain warrior, usually meaning a hermit who studies the martial arts in solitude.

Yamazuki - Yama means "mountain," referring to the kanji character for mountain, which looks like a W. When performing a mountain punch, your head and arms make a W-shaped pose.

Yojimbo - Bodyguard for hire.

Yoko - Side, or sideways.

Yoko tobi geri - Yoko means "side;" tobi means "flying;" geri means "kick." Flying side kick.

Yonkajo - The fourth basic lock of aikido, similar to hakkoryu's gakun grip.

Zeme - In the context of hakkoyru jujutsu, a hold or attack, usually a body hug that pins the arms.

Zenkutsu dachi - Front stance.

Zori - Sandals with a strap between the first and second toe; commonly called "flip-flops" in America.

Zuki - Punch (with a fist) or thrust (with a sword). Zuki te is "punching hand." Also seen as "tsuki."

Appendix D: Bibliography

The footnotes refer to these books and videos from my collection.

1. Abernethy, Iain, *Karate's Grappling Methods*, NETH Publishing in association with Summersdale Publishers LTD, England, 2000.
2. Abernethy, Iain, *Karate's Joint Locks*, Volume 3, DVD 60 minutes, 2005.
3. Abernethy, Iain, *Bunkai Jutsu, Volume 1, the Pinan/Heian Series*, DVD 120 minutes, Summersdale, 2006a.
4. Abernethy, Iain, *Kata-Based Sparring*, DVD 70 minutes, Summersdale 2006b.
5. Abernethy, Iain, *Combat Drills*, DVD 70 minutes, Summersdale, 2007.
6. Adams, Brian, *The Medical Implications of Karate Blows*, A.S. Barnes & Co., 1969.
7. Alexander, George, *Okinawa, Island of Karate*, Yamazato Publications, 1991.
8. Alexander, George, *An Analysis of Medieval Japanese Warrior Culture and Samurai Thought as Applied to the Strategy and Dynamics of Japan's Twentieth Century Era of Warfare*, doctoral dissertation, Western Pacific University, 2001.
9. Alexander, George, *Hakutsuru, Secret of the White Crane*, Yamazato Videos, 2002.
10. Anonymous, *Karate-Do Kata*, Volumes 1 and 2, Japan Karate Association, 1994.
11. Appleman, Roy, et al, *United States Army In World War II, The War in the Pacific, Okinawa: The Last Battle*, Center Of Military History, United States Army, Washington, D. C., 2000.
12. Ayoob, *The Truth about Self-Protection*, Police Bookshelf, 1985.
13. Bennett, Tony, *Early Japanese Images*, Tuttle, 1996.
14. Bishop, Mark, *Okinawan Karate, Teachers, Styles and Secret Techniques*, Tuttle, 1999.

15. Brown, Carl, *American Law and the Trained Fighter*, Ohara, 1983.
16. Brown, Carl, *The Law and Martial Arts*, Black Belt, 1998.
17. Butler, Rod, "Master Teruyuki Okazaki 9th Dan," *Shotokan Karate Magazine*, issue 91, April 2007, p. 8.
18. Capener, Steven, "Problems in the Identity and Philosophy of T'aegwondo and their Historical Causes," *Korea Journal*, Volume 35 No. 4 Winter 1995.
19. Caiden, Martin. *A Torch to the Enemy*, Ballantine, 1960. The firebombing of Japan is an important part of history that is not discussed in American schools.
20. Cheung, William, *Finer Points of Chi Sao*, DVD 60 minutes, Unique Publications, 2007.
21. Clayton, Bruce, "The Exception that Breaks Giri," on the *Shotokan's Secret* Web site, <http://www.Shotokanssecret.com>.
22. Clayton, Bruce, *Jein Do: Self-Defense for Young People of All Ages, Teacher's Guide*, Jein Do LLC, 2010.
23. Clavel, James, *Shogun*, Dell, 1976.
24. Cook, Harry, *Shotokan Karate, a Precise History*, (no publisher), 2001.
25. Combes, Sam and others, *Aiki-do*, 5-volume set, 60 minutes per tape, Black Belt Video, 1999. (Republished in 2010 as a set of DVDs from the same source.)
26. Craig, Darrell Max, *Japan's Ultimate Martial Art: Jujutsu before 1882*, Tuttle, 1995.
27. Cunningham, Don, *Secret Weapons of Jujutsu*, Tuttle, 2002.
28. De Mente, B. L., *Behind the Japanese Bow*, Passport Books, 1993.
29. De Turreil, Paul, "Fukien Shaolin White Crane Kung fu: A Portrait of Grand Master Lee Kiang Ke," *Kungfu Magazine*, March/April 2001.
30. Dower, John, *Black Ships & Samurai, Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan (1853-1854)*. A Web site of the MIT Visualizing Cultures project, http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/black_ships_and_samurai/index.html.

31. Ertl, Joel, and Anita Bendickson, *shotokan karate instructional DVDs, 19 volumes, Ertl/Bendickson Productions, 1991-2006. www.karatevid.com.*
32. Fairbairn, W.E., *Get Tough! How to Win in Hand-to-Hand Fighting,* unknown publisher, 1942; reprinted by Paladin Press, 1996.
33. Fea, Allan, *Secret Chambers and Hiding Places,* BiblioBazaar, 2006.
34. Fick, Steaphen, *The Beginner's Guide to the Long Sword,* Black Belt, 2009.
35. Follet, Ken, *On Wings of Eagles,* New American Library, 1983.
36. Funakoshi, Gichin, *Karate-Do Kyohan,* Kodansha, 1973.
37. Funakoshi, Gichin, *Karate-Do, My Way of Life,* Kodansha, 1975.
38. Funakoshi, Gichin, *Karate-Do Nyumon,* Kodansha, 1988.
39. Funakoshi, Gichin, *To-Te Jutsu,* translated by Shingo Ichida, Masters Publication, 1994.
40. Funakoshi, Kenneth, *Mastering Shotokan Karate* (series of 10 volumes), VHS 50 minutes per tape, Panther, 1986.
41. Gillespie, Toshiaki, *Matsumura Seito Shorin Ryu* (series of 8 volumes), VHS 50 minutes per tape, Panther, 1991.
42. Haines, Bruce, *Karate's History and Traditions,* Tuttle, 1995.
43. Hassell, Randall, *Shotokan Karate: Its History and Evolution,* Focus, 1995, p. 195.
44. Henshall, Kenneth, *A History of Japan from Stone Age to Superpower,* St. Martin's Press, 1999.
45. Higaki, Gennosuke, *Hidden Karate,* Champ, 2005.
46. Higaki, Gennosoke, *Hidden Karate II,* Taiyo Publishing, 2006.
47. History Channel, *World War II: Okinawa: The Final Battle,* DVD 60 minutes, 2006.
48. Hokama, Tetsuhiro, *History and Traditions of Okinawan Karate,* Masters Publications, 2000.
49. Hubner, Thomas, *Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945,* Leavenworth Papers #18, Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1990.
50. Johnson, Nathan, *Zen Shaolin Karate,* Charles E. Tuttle, Co., 1994.

51. Johnson, Nathan, *Barefoot Zen*, Samuel Weiser, Inc., 2000.
52. Jorgensen, A.J., *American Police Jiu-Jitsu*, Paladin Press, 1930 (reprinted 2005).
53. Jotaro, Takagi (author) and John Teramoto (translator), *The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate*, Kodansha, 2003.
54. Kanazawa, Hirokazu, *Karate Kata*, VHS 95 minutes, Centered-Mind Films, 1986.
55. Kane, Lawrence, et al, *The Way of Kata*, YMAA, 2005.
56. Kerr, George, *Okinawa: The History of an Island People*, Tuttle, 2000. Your journey into Okinawa's past should begin with this book.
57. KGB, *Alpha Team Training Manual: How the Soviets Trained for Personal Combat, Assassination, and Subversion*, Paladin Press, 1993.
58. Kim, Richard, *The Weaponless Warriors*, Ohara, 1974.
59. Kirby, George, *Jujitsu, Basic Techniques of the Gentle Art*, Black Belt Books, 1983.
60. Kirby, George, *Jujitsu: Intermediate Techniques of the Gentle Art*, Black Belt Books, 1985.
61. Kirby, George, *Black Belt Budoshin Jujitsu*, 8 DVDs approximately 60 minutes each, Panther Productions, 1992. Kirby's Web site is www.budoshin.com.
62. Kirby, George, *Jujitsu Nerve Techniques: The Invisible Weapon of Self-Defense*, Black Belt Books, 2001.
63. Kirby, George, *Budoshin Ju-Jitsu*, Sixth Edition, self-published, 2002.
64. Kubota, Takayuki, *Close Encounters, The Arresting Art of Taiho Jutsu*, Dragon Books, 1987.
65. Lee, Bruce, "Liberate yourself from classical karate," *Black Belt*, Volume IX No. 9, September 1971, p. 27.
66. Levine, Darren, et al., *Krav Maga for Beginners: A Step-by-Step Guide to the World's Easiest-to-Learn, Most-Effective Fitness and Fighting Program*, Ulysses, 2009.
67. MacYoung, Marc, *Cheap Shots, Ambushes, and Other Lessons: A Down and Dirty Book on Streetfighting and Survival*, Paladin, 1992.

68. MacYoung, Marc, *A Professional's Guide to Ending Violence Quickly: How Bouncers, Bodyguards, and Other Security Professionals Handle Ugly Situations*, Paladin Press, 1993.
69. Martinez, Javier, *Isshinryu Chinto Kata Secrets Revealed*, San Juan, 1998.
70. Martinez, Javier, *Isshinryu Kusanku Kata Secrets Revealed*, Martinez, San Juan, 1998.
71. Martinez, Javier, *Isshinryu Naihanchi Kata Secrets Revealed*, San Juan, 1999.
72. Mashiro, N., *Black Medicine*, Volumes. I-IV, Paladin, 1978-1995.
73. Mayberry, Jonathan, *Ultimate Sparring: Principles & Practices*, Strider Nolan Publishing, 2003.
74. McCarthy, Patrick, *Classical Kata of Okinawan Karate*, Ohara, 1987.
75. McCarthy, Patrick, *The Bible of Karate: Bubishi*, Tuttle, 1995.
76. McCarthy, Patrick, *Ancient Okinawan Martial Arts: Korryu Uchinadi, Volume 1*, Tuttle, 1999a.
77. McCarthy, Patrick, *Ancient Okinawan Martial Arts: Korryu Uchinadi, Volume 2*, Tuttle, 1999b.
78. McDermott, Patrick, and Ferol Arce, *Karate's Supreme Ultimate: The Taikyoku Kata in Five Rings*, iUniverse, 2004.
79. McGuinness, Gary, *The Itosu Kata of Seito Shito Ryu*, DVD 60 minutes, The Martial Source, 2000.
80. Mifune, Kyuzo, *The Canon of Judo: Classic Teachings on Principles and Techniques*, Kodansha, 1960.
81. Mizukoshi, Hiro, *Aiki Tessenjutsu*, Airyudo, 1997.
82. Miyazaki, Makoto, "Powerful 1st Strike of Jigen Ryu," *Daily Yomiuri Online*, no date, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/columns/0005/lens236.htm>.
83. Mol, Serge, *Classical Fighting Arts of Japan, A Complete Guide to Koryu Jujutsu*, Kodansha, 2001.
84. Morris, Vince, *Karate's Secret Throws*, DVD 60 minutes, Kissaki-Kai, 2009.
85. Musashi, Miyamoto, *The Book of Five Rings*, Shambhala, 2005.

86. Nagamine, Shoshin, *The Essence of Okinawan Karate-Do*, Tuttle, 1976.
87. Nagamine, Shoshin, *Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters*, Tuttle, 2000.
88. Nagamine, Tayayoshi and others, *Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu*, Volume 2, VHS 50 minutes, Tsunami, 2002.
89. Nakasone, Genwa, et al, *Karate Do Dai Kan*, Tosho, Inc., Tokyo, 1938. An anthology by Genwa Nakasone, Hiroki Otsuka, Gichin Funakoshi, Hanashiro Nagashige, Shimpan Gusukuma, Choshin Chibana, Kenwa Mabuni, and Shinken Taira.
90. Nakayama, Masatoshi, *Dynamic Karate*, Kodansha, 1966.
91. Nakayama, Masatoshi, *Best Karate* (series of 11 volumes), Kodansha, 1977-1989.
92. Nicol, C.W., *Moving Zen*, William Morrow & Co., 1975.
93. Noble, Graham, "The Life Story of Karate Master Gogen Yamaguchi," *Dragon Times*, no date, <http://www.dragon-tsunami.org/Dtimes/Pages/articlej.htm>.
94. Omiya, Shiro, *The Hidden Roots of Aikido: Aiki Jujutsu Daitoryu*, Kodansha, 1998.
95. OPN-LA, "Early History of the Ryukyu Kingdom and its Relationship with China and Japan," Okinawa Peace Network of Los Angeles, http://www.uchinanchu.org/uchinanchu/history_early.htm.
96. Otaki, Tadao and Donn Draeger, *Judo Formal Techniques: A Complete Guide to Kodokan Randori No Kata*, Tuttle, 1983.
97. Palumbo, Dennis, *The Secrets of Hakkoryu Jujutsu, Shodan Tactics*, Paladin Press, 1987.
98. Palumbo, Dennis, *Secret Nidan Techniques of Hakkoryu Jujutsu*, Paladin Press, 1988.
99. Palumbo, Dennis, *Techniques of Sandan Gi: The Essence of Hakkoryu Jujutsu*, Paladin Press, 1993.
100. Pellegrini, John, *Combat Hapkido*, Black Belt Press, 2009.
101. Perry, Matthew, *Narrative of the Expedition to the China Seas and Japan, 1852-1854*, reprinted by Dover Press, 2000.

102. Perry, Matthew, *The Japan Expedition 1852-1854: The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry*, edited by Roger Pineau, with an introduction by Samuel Elliot Morrison, The Smithsonian Press, Washington D.C., 1968.
103. Petro, Joseph, *Standing Next to History*, St. Martin's Press, 2005.
104. Porta, John, et al., "Karate of Chojun Miyagi," *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, Volume 3, No. 3, 1994, p. 69.
105. Preble, George, *The Opening of Japan*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1962.
106. Quinn, Peyton, *A Bouncer's Guide to Barroom Brawling*, Paladin Press, 1990.
107. Quinn, Peyton, et al, *Barroom Brawling, The Art of Staying Alive in Beer Joints, Biker Bars, and Other Fun Places*, VHS 45 minutes, Paladin Press, 1991.
108. Redmond, Rob, *Kata: The Folk Dances of Shotokan*, published privately by Rob Redmond, P.O. Box 41, Holly Springs, GA 30142, 2006.
109. Rhawn, Joseph, "Japanese Testbooks, Koizumi, Sex Slaves, & the Nightmare of Nanking," George Mason University's *History News Network*, 10-17-05, <http://hnn.us/articles/14566.html>.
110. Ravina, Mark, *The Last Samurai: The Life and Battles of Saigo Takamori*, John Wiley and Sons, 2004.
111. Raymond, Matthew, *Kendo Principles IV: Nito-Ryu (Two Swords)*, DVD 60 minutes, e-bogu.com, 2005.
112. Rosenthal, A.M., *Thirty-Eight Witnesses: The Kitty Genovese Case*, Melville House, 2008.
113. Satow, E.W., "Notes on Loochoo," *The Phoenix*, Volume III, No. 55, May 1873.
114. Sells, John, *Secrets of the White Crane*, The Martial Source, 1996.
115. Sells, John, *Unante, The Secrets of Karate*, 2nd Edition, W.M. Hawley, 2000. This massive book on karate history is highly recommended, especially because the author shows a refreshing skepticism about the "official" version of events.
116. Shahr, Meir, *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion, and the Chinese Martial Arts*, University of Hawaii Press, 2008.

117. Sharp, Hal, *Classic Judo Kata*, DVD 30 minutes, Rising Sun Productions, 2006.
118. Shioda, Gozo, *Total Aikido: The Master Course*, Kodansha, 1996.
119. Silvan, Jim, "Oral Traditions of Okinawan Karate," *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, Volume 7, No. 3, 1998, p. 73.
120. Smith, Joseph Wayne, *Wing Chun Kung-fu Volume 2: Fighting & Grappling*, Tuttle, 1992.
121. Smith, Victor, "The Complete Tatsuo Shimabuku," *Fighting Arts Magazine* Web site, <http://www.fightingarts.com/content01/shimabuku.shtml>.
122. Spahn, Mark and Wolfgang Hadamitzky, *The Kanji Dictionary*, Tuttle, 1996.
123. Sobel, Dava, *Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time*, Walker & Company, 1995.
124. Statler, Oliver, *The Black Ship Scroll, An Account of the Perry Expedition at Shimoda in 1854, and the Lively Beginnings of People-to-People Relations between the Japan & America*, Tuttle, 1963.
125. Stenudd, Stefan, *Aikibatto: Sword Exercises for Aikido Students*, BookSurge, 2007.
126. Stevens, John, *Three Budo Masters*, Kodansha, 1995.
127. Styers, John, *Cold Steel*, Paladin Press, 1974.
128. Taylor, Bayard, *A Visit to India, China and Japan in the Year 1853*, G. P. Putnam & Co, 1855.
129. Tegner, Bruce, *Complete Book of Jujitsu*, Thor, 1978.
130. Thomas, Chris, "Did Karate's Funakoshi Found Taekwondo?" *Black Belt Magazine*, November 1988, p. 26-30.
131. Tomiyama, Keiji, *Karate: Pi'nan Kata in Depth*, Empire Books, 2006.
132. U.S. Army, FM 7-8, *Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, Department of the Army, 1992.
133. U.S. Army, FM 21-150, *Combatives*, FM 21-150, 1954. Reproduced in facsimile as *Hand to Hand Combat*, Paladin Press, 2005.
134. U.S. Army, FM 21-150, *Combatives Hand to Hand Combat*, 1992.

135. U.S. Marine Corps, *Close-Quarters Combat Manual*, a reprint of FMFM 0-7 by Paladin Press, 1993.
136. U.S. War Department, *Unarmed Defense for the American Soldier* (FM 21-150) June 30, 1942.
137. Van Wolferen, Karel, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, MacMillan, 1989.
138. Walworth, Arthur, *Black Ships Off Japan, The Story of Commander Perry's Expedition*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1946.
139. Warrenner, Don, et al., *JKA Kumite 70s, Masters of the Martial Arts, Part II Volume. 4*, VHS 45 minutes, Masterline Video, 1997.
140. Warrenner, Don and others, *Gichin Funakoshi, 1924 Vintage Footage*, DVD 25 minutes, Rising Sun Productions, 2003.
141. Westbrook, A. and O. Rati, *Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere: An Illustrated Introduction*, Tuttle, 1970
142. Weston, Mark, *Giants of Japan, The Lives of Japan's Greatest Men and Women*, Kodansha, 1999.
143. Yamazaki, Kiyoshi, *The Masters Series, Karate Do* (series of 5 volumes), VHS 60 minutes per tape, Black Belt, 1996.
144. Yates, William Butler, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, Scribner, 1996.
145. Yoshikawa, Eiji, *Musashi*, Kodansha, 1981.

Index

- Abernethy, Iain 235, 240, 246, 256,
 263, 294, 296, 344, 352, 368
 Age-uke 221-222, 229-230, 240-243
 Aikido 69, 188, 192, 208, 210, 223,
 230-231, 236, 238-240, 246, 255,
 258, 260, 286, 289, 290, 317-319,
 326, 354-356, 363, 367, 373,
 375-376
 Aikijutsu 69, 188, 236, 239, 354
 Ami uchi 231, 245-249
 Anachronism 186, 198
 Arakaki, Ankichi 129
 Arakaki, Seisho 98-99, 167
 Armor 40, 65, 69, 205, 220, 282-291,
 294, 296, 299, 303-304, 346, 355,
 360, 366
 Ashi garami 266-268, 271
 Atama makikomi 234-235, 302
 Atomic bomb 144-145, 182, 354
 Azato 95-100, 141, 143, 145, 160, 164,
 167-169, 175, 181-182, 209, 214, 223,
 306, 365
 Bacon, Roger 336, 337
 Bassai 82-83, 93, 99, 145, 180, 245
 Bayonet 52, 96-97, 112, 114, 181, 182,
 306, 308, 320, 323-324, 326-328,
 330-331, 343, 346, 358, 361
 Bettelheim, Bernard 50
 Black Ship Scroll 5, 110-112, 121, 123,
 369, 375-376
 Bubishi 192, 235, 248, 302, 354, 372
 Budoshin 188, 243, 289, 309, 328, 353,
 364, 371
 Chan Migwa 127, 136
 Chi gerk 134, 252, 265-268, 271, 273,
 278, 280, 346, 355
 Chi sao 134, 256-258, 260-261, 263,
 278, 280, 355, 369
 Chinte 93, 99, 198
 Chinto 86, 103, 145, 372
 Comfort women 65
 Crabtree's Bludgeon 186, 190-191,
 332, 346
 Cuirass 284, 290, 355, 366
 Debana do 221
 Debana ude 221-222
 Dinglehopper 186, 191, 201, 256, 355
 Down block 191, 208, 221-222,
 229-231, 233-235, 240, 244, 254,
 296, 307, 312, 317-318, 320-321, 362
 Dual subordination 35, 51, 68
 Empi 51, 93, 99, 145, 180, 188-189,
 191-192, 254, 265, 297, 301, 341,
 357, 362-363
 Empi uchi 287, 296-297, 362
 Enbusen 229, 356
 Ertl and Bendickson 207-208, 287,
 306, 352
 Eye gouge 255, 262-263
 Fairbairn 291, 341, 370
 Fang, Chi-Niang 66
 Funakoshi, Gichin 39, 70, 74-75, 78,
 83, 86, 88-89, 92-93, 95-97, 99, 100,
 104, 126-127, 130, 133, 135, 137,
 139, 140-142, 144-152, 164, 166,
 190, 198, 207, 261, 267, 280, 294,
 307, 338, 356, 364, 370, 373, 376

- Funakoshi, Kenneth 207, 208, 287, 306
- Gaiwan otoshi uchi uke 265
- Gakun 301, 317, 319-320, 356, 367
- Gakun nage 319
- Gankaku 68, 86, 99, 145, 341
- Gedan barai nage 240
- Giri 356, 369
- Goju ryu 135, 267, 351
- Gojushiho 86, 93, 99
- Ground fighting 344, 345
- Gusukuma 43, 83, 135, 139, 146, 373
- Gyaku-zuki 297, 308, 309, 312
- Habushu 116
- Hachiji dachi 246
- Haidate 284
- Hakkoryu 188, 236, 238-239, 265, 289, 298, 309, 317-319, 356, 361, 363, 367, 373
- Hakutsuru 227
- Hamni 208
- Handachi 321, 356
- Hangetsu 86, 99, 145, 357
- Hangetsu dachi 271, 357
- Hapkido 188, 249, 267, 331, 373
- Hara kiri 118, 357, 364
- Heian 63, 93-94, 178, 188, 190, 207, 336, 340, 345, 352
- godan 212, 306, 307-313, 316-320, 322, 324, 327, 328, 331, 333, 346
- nidan 86, 99, 205-223, 287-288, 294, 309, 341, 345
- sandan 132, 253, 255-258, 261-268, 271-273, 275, 278, 280, 341, 346
- shodan 43, 139, 206, 227-231, 233-235, 237-240, 242-245, 248, 302, 341, 345
- yondan 212, 282, 286-289, 291-292, 295-297, 299-301, 341, 346
- Hidari makikomi 211, 289
- Higaki, Gennosuke 258, 261, 267, 307, 370
- Higaonna 92, 99, 132-139, 351
- Hiji ate 231, 233, 327
- Hiji ate kokyu nage 231
- Hiji mochi nikajo 258, 260-261, 312, 313
- Hiki te 73, 331, 357
- Hiroshima 145, 154
- Hiza geri 287, 294, 302, 357
- Honne 64-66, 103, 109-112, 115, 126, 130-131, 147, 150-151, 338, 357, 365
- Hunt, Briggs 235
- Iaito 210
- Ikkajo 231, 233, 235, 237-238, 255, 260-261, 263-264, 288-290, 292, 294-295, 309-310, 312-314, 316-317, 357
- Ippon kumite 246, 357
- Itosu 55, 63, 86-104, 110, 119, 121-122, 126-127, 131-134, 137, 139, 141-142, 144, 147, 160, 164, 167-169, 178-180, 182, 185, 187, 190, 195, 197, 206-208, 223, 227, 229, 244, 263, 265, 268, 282, 296, 306-307, 341, 351, 364, 372
- Japan Karate Association 151, 206, 207-208, 287, 307, 368, 376
- Jigen ryu 78, 97, 162, 205, 209, 221, 358, 372
- Jiin 99, 180, 265, 268

- Jinzo zuki 316
 Jion 99, 180, 265, 268
 Jitte 99, 180, 265, 268
 Judo 69, 90, 130, 144, 146, 188, 275,
 282, 321, 355-356, 358, 364,
 372-373, 375
 Jūji age-uke 306, 312
 Jūji ji uke 286
 Jūji nage 258
 Jūji uke 288-289, 292, 306-307,
 312-314, 321, 346, 358
 Jukendo 96, 181, 358, 361
 Jutte 358
 Kabuto 69, 284, 288, 292, 294-295,
 297, 300, 358
 Kabuto gaeshi 69, 297, 300
 Kabuto uchi 292, 294-295
 Kagoshima 52, 78, 162, 223, 358
 Kaiten nage 246
 Kake te 273-275, 320, 326, 359
 Kakewake uke 297, 299, 346, 358
 Kami nage 234-235, 240
 Kanabo 283
 Kanazawa 207-208, 254, 265, 287,
 307, 371
 Kanku 68, 73, 79, 93, 99, 145, 180,
 265, 341, 359
 Kanoa gaeshi 297-299, 301-302,
 346, 359
 Karami nage 258
 Karma 84-85, 182, 359
 Kata guruma 265, 272-273, 359
 Katana 52, 175, 177-178, 210, 212,
 221, 343, 355, 357, 359
 Ken dori 288, 290-292
 Kendo 37, 68, 96, 146, 181, 188,
 208-209, 217, 219, 220-221, 223,
 292, 355, 358-359, 361-362, 374
 Kenpo 136, 146, 351, 355, 359, 360
 Kensai 91, 360
 Kesa kiri 214, 216, 284, 360
 KGB 278, 360
 Kiba dachi 254, 255, 263, 266, 267,
 271, 307, 317, 360
 Kinjo 104
 Kirby, George 192, 235, 256, 267, 277,
 353, 371
 Kiyuna 104
 Knife 308-314, 316-318, 320, 343, 346,
 365
 Kobudo 39-41, 68, 73, 86, 94, 97-99,
 101, 103-104, 120, 138, 149, 150,
 188, 360, 366
 Kokutsu dachi 253, 287, 308, 361
 Kong Su Kung 71-73, 103
 Kosa dachi 307, 320-321, 327-328
 Koshi guruma 273, 275
 Koshi kamae 286, 294, 360
 Koshiki no kata 282
 Kote 284, 360
 Kube shioku yoko nage 240, 243
 Kumiuchi 68-69, 78, 282, 296-297,
 316, 360
 Kusanku 73-74, 79, 93, 97, 103, 145,
 359, 372
 Kusazuri 284
 Kyan, Chofu 98-101, 127, 167-168
 Kyan, Chotoku 63, 81, 98-99,
 101-104, 126-128, 132, 136, 138,
 145-147, 229, 351, 361

- Last move rule 186, 197-198, 201, 302
Mabuni 83, 126, 135, 139, 190, 373
Macarena dance 190
Mae geri keage 208, 212, 282, 286, 292, 361
Mae geri kekomi 361
Maki age 217-219
Maki waza 209, 217-219
Makikomi 210
Manji uke 307, 331, 361
Matsuba dori 239
Matsubayashi ryu 95, 138, 207-208, 229-230, 245, 253-255, 286-287, 307, 373
Matsumora, Kosaku 102-103, 167, 209
Matsumura 54-55, 58, 73-82, 85-87, 89, 92, 95-96, 98-104, 110, 119, 122-123, 126, 128, 137, 138, 141, 144, 148, 160-170, 172, 175-177, 180-182, 187, 197, 204, 209, 214, 219-220, 223, 226-227, 237, 244, 265, 278, 282, 300, 306, 330, 341, 351, 364, 370
Meiji 34, 50-51, 126, 133, 140-141, 361, 364
Meikyo 93, 99, 347
Menpo 284
Metsubishi 309-310, 361
Mikazuki geri 326
Miyagi, Chojun 135, 138, 146, 351, 374
Mizu-nagare kamae 308-311
Mochi maware 317
Morote uke 209, 219, 253, 258, 260-261, 288, 292, 301, 306, 312, 320, 327, 328
Motobu 92-93, 146-147, 346
Mount Shaoshi 95, 139, 363
Musashi 37-38, 208-209, 212, 214-215, 220-221, 372, 376
Nagamine, Shoshin 89, 91-92, 102-103, 126-127, 133, 136, 138, 373
Nagasaki 65, 145, 154, 182
Nage waza ura no kata 275
Naginata 283
Naihanchi 86, 93, 96, 145, 169, 372
Naka mae nage 328
Nakayama 150, 191, 198, 207, 245, 373
Nami-gaeshi 271
Nanking 61, 65, 374
Ng Mui 66, 67
Nihonage 317, 318
Nihou geri 282, 287, 292, 294-299, 301-302, 362
Nijushiho 99, 265
Nikajo 235, 239, 255, 258, 260-262, 312-313, 362
Niseishi 99
Nito-ryu 37, 208-209, 212, 214-217, 219, 220-221, 362, 374
Nuki uchi dori 309
Nukite 67, 216, 253, 254, 261-263, 362
Occam's Razor 189, 201
Oi-zuki 76, 137, 226-227, 229-231, 233-235, 239-240, 244, 246, 263, 265, 273, 297, 312, 317, 362
Okubo 51, 53, 341

- Osae-uke 216-217, 253, 261, 263, 306, 312
- Otsuka 83, 373
- Oyadomari 101-102, 167
- Palgue forms 64
- Palumbo, Dennis 373
- Patsai 82, 93, 97, 145, 245
- Perry, Matthew 28, 34, 108-121, 128, 133, 142, 156, 160, 162-166, 172, 175, 177-178, 180-182, 204, 306, 323-324, 341, 358, 369, 373-374, 376
- Pirates 39, 72-73, 103, 182
- Pistol grip 231-232, 236, 260, 264, 298, 309, 312, 314, 316
- Rifle 39, 52, 96, 112, 114, 177, 180-181, 242, 306, 308, 320, 323-324, 326, 327-328, 331, 343, 358, 361
- Riote kanoha gaeshi 297-299, 301-302, 346
- Robukai 207-208, 229, 254, 287, 307
- Rohai 93, 99, 347
- Saber 22, 52, 112, 306, 308, 310-311, 343
- Sagurite no kamae 245
- Saigo, Takamori 51-52, 177, 374
- Sakugawa 70-74, 76, 78, 92, 103, 143
- Sanchin 85, 133-134, 138, 226, 267, 363
- Sankajo 316-317, 363
- Satsuma 35-37, 39-41, 44, 49, 51-54, 65, 78-79, 97, 102-103, 105, 110-111, 117-120, 157, 160-162, 168, 172, 174-175, 204-205, 358, 363
- Seionage 320-321, 328
- Seisan 86, 145
- Seito shito-ryu 207-208, 229-230, 254-255, 286-287, 306-307, 372
- Seito shorin-ryu 207-208, 254, 256, 286-287, 307, 317, 370
- Shadow Principle 186, 195-196, 208, 219, 254, 291, 317
- Shaolin 66-67, 84-86, 94-95, 128, 136-137, 139, 180, 363-364, 369, 370, 374
- Shihonage 317-320
- Shiko dachi 230, 364
- Shikoro 284, 300
- Shimabuku, Taro 104, 129, 136
- Shimabuku, Tatsuo 131, 375
- Shimasu 35, 44
- Shioda, Gozo 231, 375
- Shito-ryu 135, 139, 150, 207-208, 229, 279, 287, 364
- Shizen tai 246
- Sho En 30
- Sho Iku 37, 78
- Sho Ko 37, 78-79, 82
- Sho Shin 30-31, 42, 153
- Sho Tai 37, 51, 78, 89, 92-93, 96-98, 100-102, 105, 110, 143, 161-162, 167, 169, 306
- Sho Taimu 110-111, 113, 115-118, 121, 123, 163-165, 204
- Shomen uchi 205, 209-211, 213, 215, 223, 288-291, 364
- Shotoism 186, 198-199, 208, 229, 254, 286, 364
- Shotoism Rule 186, 199, 296, 307
- Shotokai 207-208, 229, 254, 287, 307
- Shutō age-uke 221, 286, 296

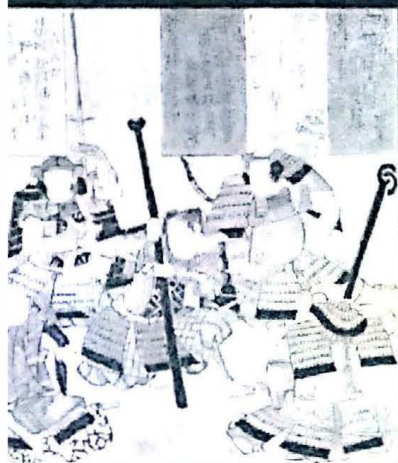
- Shutō gedan barai 286
Shutō koshi kamae 286
Shutō uchi 208, 246-248, 265, 286,
296, 302, 366
Shutō uke 208, 230-231, 245-249,
302, 365
Sochin 99
Sode 91, 284
Sugiyama 206-208, 254, 286-287, 306
Sun Tzu 164
Suniate 285
Tachi dori 208, 210-213, 223, 288,
290, 365
Taekwondo 62, 64, 145, 365
Tai otoshi 230-231, 240-242, 362
Tai sabaki 68, 97, 99, 290, 365
Taiho jutsu 210, 243, 314, 365, 371
Taikyoku 180, 227, 372
Taira 83, 150, 373
Taisho uchi 263
Takahara 31, 70-71
Takase, Eri 151
Tani-ha shito-ryu 207, 254-255, 286
Tanjuu nigiru 231-232
Tassets 284-285, 292, 295, 366
Tatemaie 64-66, 91-92, 103, 109-112,
115, 120, 126, 130-131, 135, 137,
146-147, 149-150, 338, 357, 365
Te kagami 188, 235-237, 358
Te nage 236, 298, 301
Teisho uchi 265, 307, 366
Tekki nidan 196
Tekki sandan 195
Tekki shodan 86, 93, 96, 99, 145, 169,
180, 271, 341
Tekko 284
Tekubi shime waza 312-314
Tengu 123, 187-188, 282, 300, 366
Tessen 79, 278, 366, 372
Tetsubo 283
Tettsui uchi 208, 229, 235-237, 240,
254, 263-265, 286, 366
Tokugawa, Ieyasu 31-35, 64, 108,
110, 204, 361, 366
Tsuba zeriai 209, 219-220, 223
Tsuki uchi 216, 217
Typhoon of Steel 152-154, 156, 157,
160, 174
Uchi komi dori 288-289, 291
Uchi ude uke 208, 218, 253-254, 256,
258, 260, 308-309, 312
Uchi waza 219
Ude guruma ushiro 256, 257
Ude makikomi 308-309, 311
Ude osae dori 238, 308-310, 312
Uechi ryu 85, 226, 351
Uehara 81, 82
Unsu 68, 99
Uraken uchi 208-209, 212, 254-255,
265-266, 268, 273, 294, 296, 346
Ushiro koshi nage 273, 275, 277
Ushiro zeme otoshi 265, 266, 268
Wado ryu 207-208, 230, 254-255,
286-287, 307
Waldow Principle 186, 195, 201, 212,
220, 222, 241, 295
Wankan 100

- Whalers 48, 49, 108, 182
- White crane 66-68, 70-71, 99, 133, 136,
227, 368-369, 374
- Wing chun 134, 188, 227, 244, 255-257,
267, 278, 355, 375
- Yamabushi 187, 367
- Yamaguchi 181, 373
- Yamazaki 254, 307, 376
- Yara, Chatan 103
- Yara, Yomitan 103
- Yari 283
- Yoko geri keage 208, 212, 286, 292
- Yonamine 80-82, 92, 168-169
- Yonkajo 317, 319, 356, 367
- Zenkutsu dachi 43, 227, 229, 246, 254,
287, 307, 362, 367

Defeat a samurai warrior with your bare hands.

Subdue a foreign pirate on a crowded waterfront.

Exploit an invading soldier as a human shield.



The predecessors of *shotokan* karate devised these survival skills to overcome impossible odds. When the king of Okinawa found himself trapped between samurai occupiers and U.S. Marines, his unarmed bodyguards answered these threats by creating the cornerstone of hard-style karate: the *heian kata*. Modern masters pass down these technical forms to their students, but their martial applications remained a mystery—until now.

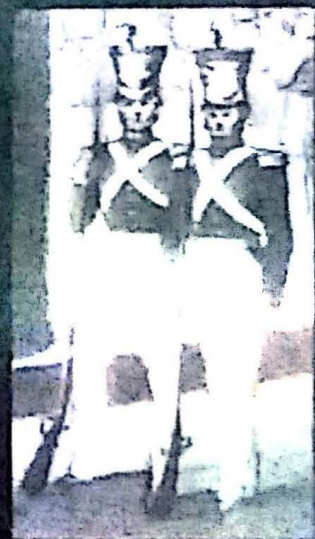
In this expanded edition of the acclaimed *Shotokan's Secret: The Hidden Truth Behind Karate's Fighting Origins*, author Bruce D. Clayton cracks open the

kata with new insights into their meaning and purpose. Featuring new artwork, archival lithographs, photographic sequences, and six never-before-seen chapters filled with extensive historical research, the book shows serious students and karate enthusiasts why the shotokan style remains one of the world's most influential arts.

The new edition analyzes the enemies that unarmed Okinawan bodyguards like Sokon Matsumura and Yasutsune Itosu faced. From there, *Shotokan's Secret* delves deeply into the heian kata, revealing how each heian form contains the key techniques for defeating one of Okinawa's adversaries.

Hundred of books have been published since Gichin Funakoshi's *To-Te Jitsu* in 1920, but Clayton's expanded *Shotokan's Secret* is the only one to dissect the lore, dig into the history and analyze the art. With *Shotokan's Secret*, you'll discover karate's true purpose.

Bruce D. Clayton, Ph.D., holds a seventh-degree black belt in shotokan karate and has studied the art since 1973. He is the author of several books, including *Shotokan's Secret: The Hidden Truth Behind Karate's Fighting Origins*. He has appeared on *60 Minutes*, the *CBS Evening News*, *Today* and the *Tomorrow Show*.



ISBN-10: 0-89750-188-8
ISBN-13: 978-0-89750-188-0



BLACK BELT BOOKS

A Division of OHARA PUBLICATIONS, INC.

World Leader in Martial Arts Publications

www.blackbeltmag.com



ACTIVE INTEREST MEDIA