

The Art of
Hojo Undo

**POWER TRAINING FOR
TRADITIONAL KARATE**

MICHAEL CLARKE

YMAA Publication Center
Wolfeboro, N.H., USA

YMAA Publication Center

Main Office: PO Box 480

Wolfboro, NH 03894

1-800-669-8892 • www.ymaa.com • ymaa@aol.com

ISBN-13: 978-1-59439-136-1

ISBN-10: 1-59439-136-X

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Cover design by Axie Breen

Edited by Susan Bullowa

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Publisher's Cataloging in Publication

Clarke, Michael, 1955-

The art of hojo undo : power training for traditional karate / Michael
Clarke. -- Wolfboro, N.H. : YMAA Publication Center, c2009.

p. ; cm.

ISBN: 978-1-59439-136-1

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Karate--Training. 2. Martial arts--Training. 3. Muscle strength.

I. Title.

GV1114.3 .C53 2009

796.815/3--dc22

2009933388

0909

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Printed in Canada.

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Foreword

Tsuneo Kinjo, Kyoshi 8th Dan

There is probably no one in the world today who hasn't heard of *karate*. A number of fighting sports these days have incorporated *karate* techniques, but how many people can really say they know the difference between traditional *karate* and sports *karate*? *Karate* was the Okinawan people's sole weapon for self protection. In the words of *Goju ryu karate* founder Chojun Miyagi, "Karate is the ability to train your body to the point whereby you can overcome an opponent with one technique without the need for weapons." If you can't do that, you cannot protect yourself.

Sports *karate* has two branches, *kata*, which focuses solely on outward appearances and *kumite*, which is about winning and losing. Traditional *karate* however is completely different. The secret to traditional *karate* lies in daily training with the *makiwara*, *chiishi*, *nigiri gami*, *kongoken*, *ishisashi*, *kigu* training, and other *hojo undo*. All of this combines to train every part of your mind and body and helps foster a *bujutsu* spirit. Regular daily training is the true essence of traditional *karate*.

In this book, Mike Clarke has captured the secret of traditional *karate* power. As an Okinawan it makes me proud that Mike has taken the time to introduce to the world the essence of traditional *karate*. I hope that this book is well received by everyone throughout the *karate* world.

Tsuneo Kinjo, Kyoshi 8th Dan
Okinawa Goju Ryu Karate So Honbu, Jundokan
Asato, Okinawa

Foreword

Tetsuhiro Hokama, Kaicho 10th Dan

I want to offer my congratulations to Mr. Michael Clarke on the publication of his new book. Mr. Clarke loves Okinawa and has come to Okinawa many times for *karate* training and to learn more about *karate*'s history by continuing his own research. His detailed understanding of Okinawan culture is the reason this book can be written because it is about *hojo undo*, and this comes from our *karate* tradition.

To write a book like this about *karate* would be very difficult for an Okinawan *karate* teacher, but for a foreign *karate* teacher it must have been even more difficult and taken a great effort and a lot of patience. Mr. Clarke teaches *Goju Ryu karate* in Australia and has written other books about *karate*; he is respected by everybody. He is an honorable *karate* man of the next generation, teaching physical and mental techniques, and is my friend in *karate*. I highly recommend this book to everybody.

Tetsuhiro Hokama, Kaicho 10th Dan
International Goju-ryu Kenshi-Kai Karatedo-Kobudo Association
Nishihara, Okinawa

Foreword

Hiroshi Akamine, Kaicho 8th Dan

I first came to meet Michael through a series of interviews. He was doing research on *kobudo* weapons and wanted background for a number of articles he was writing for *Blitz Magazine* in Australia. We sat for several hours discussing the aspects of each weapon, what their origins were or could plausibly be, how they were used, what modifications were needed to make them truly effective fighting instruments, how they would be used in various situations, and any unique techniques which were associated with each. Throughout the interviews I was impressed with the effort he made to understand the answers.

When I saw the finished articles I was impressed with how he presented his research in context. He approached the topics as a person who had benefited from years of training; with his open mind, he was very quick to see how training in *kobudo* highlighted the underlying fundamentals of martial arts. While visiting, Michael noticed our array of *machiwara* and *chiishi*, and he asked how we used them in our training. That led to another pleasant conversation on training tools and techniques, which clearly demonstrated the depth of research he had put into this project even back then. I look forward to seeing what he has discovered in other *dojo* and how he writes about their training techniques and tools.

I recommend this text based on the quality of Michael's work with us on *kobudo*. I am sure it will be a valuable asset for learning how the tools are used as an extension of training the body and hardening resolve through strict application of effort and technique. These types of works are important in cataloging and transferring methods developed by our own teachers, and they make a fine addition to anyone's martial library.

Hiroshi Akamine, 8th Dan

President

Ryukyu Kobudo Hozon Shinko Kai

Tomigusuku, Okinawa

Foreword

Patrick McCarthy, Hanshi 8th Dan

The work which lies before you is not simply another “how to” book about *karate* but rather a penetrating look at Okinawa’s principal fighting art, the culture in which it unfolded and one integral aspect of its practice, referred to as *hojo undo*. A rarely discussed aspect of our tradition, to the best of my knowledge Mike Clarke’s work is the first book on this subject. A seasoned *karateka* and writer, the author’s principal aim is to present this important practice in a historical context while revealing something of Okinawan *karate* culture, too. To this end I am confident that my colleague’s publication successfully achieves his intended outcome.

Setting the contextual premise of *hojo undo*, the author has gone into great detail regarding the history of *karate* on Okinawa, but in a refreshingly bi-partisan manner. Like any true martial artist, Clarke is not interested in promoting the concept of *karate* “styles,” but rather universal values, generic mechanics, and immutable principles instead. I’m certain that he has conclusively presented *hojo undo* as an integral if not natural part of training in the fighting arts—with or without weapons. He’s also looked at how the idea of conditioning the body and mind collectively evolved alongside the fighting traditions from India through China and to Okinawa.

I particularly enjoyed the fresh way this author addresses the demise of “old-school” training through the introduction and rise of modern rule-bound practices—as one school of thought fell quietly dormant, another gathered momentum. Also, I am confident that Clarke’s observations on how Japanese *budo* culture influenced this transformation and shifted its attention to *kihon*, *kata* (including incongruous application practices) and rule-bound *kumite* will explain an important yet rarely addressed aspect of how and why modern *karate* arrived in its present condition. Like any competent researcher, Clarke’s reinforces his historical theory by referencing excellent English language sources dating back to the 1950s and 1960s. Drawing the reader’s attention to both the past and present, I agree wholeheartedly when Clarke suggests that had *karate* been introduced to the West directly from Okinawa, rather than through the highly conformist Japanese culture, we would most certainly be embracing a creative art far more representative of Okinawa’s old Ryukyu Kingdom Period and the holistic values it placed upon the living of daily life, rather than the rule-bound and overly ritualistic practices so widespread today.

Explaining the history and use of the most commonly found training equipment, the author discusses possible origins and shows how such apparatus can be easily constructed. This is particularly helpful for the reader interested in producing *hojo undo* equipment for the *dojo*. He’s included many interesting stories and cited quotes from other writers’ works that were appropriate. Including the lifting equipment, *makiage kigu*, two kinds of *chiishi*, *nigiri gami*, *tan*, *ishisashi*, *kongoken*, and *ishi geta*, Clarke’s also written chapters on the impact equipment, such the *makiwara*, *tou*, *jari bako*, *ude kita*.

and *kakite biki*. He's even included a chapter on *ude tanren* and a chapter on *junbi undo* (preparatory exercises) along with a dozen auxiliary exercises, which can be done when access to the tools is limited or nonexistent. Linking these exercises to techniques found in *kata*, and pointing directly to examples from both *Goju ryu* and *Shotokan*—two schools which perhaps best represent the principal traditions which form the mainstream of *karate* today—the author succeeds in offering far more than just an exploration into *hojo undo*.

With the absence of any work on *hojo undo*, *The Art of Hojo Undo: Power Training in Traditional Karate* is destined to become an instant success and I am pleased to be able to lend my name to its publication. Moreover, Mike Clarke's empirical experience and deep knowledge of both Okinawa's fighting arts and the culture in which it evolved makes him uniquely qualified to produce a book of this nature. Personally, I can't think of a single person anywhere in the world better suited to introduce this subject, and I highly recommend *The Art of Hojo Undo: Power Training in Traditional Karate* to teachers and students alike.

Patrick McCarthy, Hanshi 8th Dan
International Ryukyu Karate-jutsu Research Society
<http://www.koryu-uchinadi.com>
A link to the past is your bridge to the future



INTRODUCTION

On the island of Okinawa, since ancient times, people who practiced the fighting arts have lifted weights and struck inanimate objects to develop their strength and endurance. *Hojo undo*, or supplementary training, also called *kigu undo*, borrowed heavily from the martial traditions of China. In both cultures, it seemed only natural to condition, in tandem, the body and the mind in the pursuit of martial integrity. To this end people devised the many and varied tools we find today. Almost all of them were fashioned from common household items, everyday workplace objects, and things that came easily to hand. So many tools have been devised that it is beyond the scope of this book to include each and every one of them, although you will find within these pages all the most commonly used equipment and training methods. The Okinawans followed the example of their Chinese counterparts by using such tools and training drills to enhance their strength, and in doing so even introduced a few of their own. The *makiwara* as we know it today, for example, was developed in Okinawa and is now arguably the single best-known piece of *hojo undo* equipment in the *karate* world. Many years later, in the mid-1930s, the renowned *karate* teacher Chojun Miyagi integrated the *kongoken* into Okinawan *karate* after he visited the Hawaiian Islands in 1934.

Regardless of which fighting methods the Okinawans practiced, with weapons or without, they always valued and utilized *hojo undo* in their training regime. Because of this, they became famous for not only their pugilistic abilities, but also for their astonishing strength and power in comparison to their size. In their quest to punch above their weight, martial artists in former times seemed to understand that the same trinity of body, mind, and spirit they needed to manipulate and control the various tools would also bring them the increased strength, confidence, and endurance they would need when facing an adversary.

The earliest mention of *karate* I have been able to uncover dates back to 1721 and comes from observations made by the Imperial Chinese envoy Hsu Pao Kuang in his *Record of Transmitted Facts of Chuzan* (Japanese: *Chuzan Denshinroku*), where he speaks of fists being used to punch (Bittman, 2005). A scant reference I'll grant you, but



Old Shurei Mon (Gate of Courtesy). This gate, along with Shuri Palace, was destroyed during the battle for Okinawa, in April 1945. Today a modern replica stands in its place.



Chotoku Kyan and students c. 1941. Left to right: Jion Nakazato, Chotoku Kyan, Matsumoto, Nishihara, and Kurato.

clearly an indication of the fact that such activities were going on and in sufficient measure for him to take notice and include them in his notes. Forty-one years later, in 1762, Yoshihiro Tobe based his *Notes on the Great Island* (Japanese: *Oshima Hikki*) on the account given by envoys of the Ryukyu Kingdom who had been stranded in Tosa on their way to Satsuma. In it, the first written account of Okinawans training in a weaponless martial art is clearly pointed to when he notes: “A few years ago, Ko-shan-kin, who was skillful in the art of grappling, came from China with numerous disciples.” The grappling art of Ko-shan-kin he called *Kumiai Jutsu* and described it as a method of *Chuan-fa* (method of the fist). Over time, the memory of Ko-shan-kin’s techniques have been preserved in the *Shorin ryu karate* tradition as the *kushanku kata*.

In his book, *(Concerning) Various Themes of the Southern Islands* (Japanese: *Nanto Zatsuwa*), written sometime between 1850 and 1855, Sagenta Nagoya offers his account and observations on the customs of the Ryukyu Islands. One tradition he draws the reader’s attention to is the practice of what he calls *Tsukunesu Jutsu*. We have only to look at the drawings accompanying his essay to see that *hojo undo* is an essential element in the martial art he is describing. For in his sketches we can clearly see a man training with a *makiwara*, and a second is conditioning the back of his fist (*uraken*) on a large stone tablet. The practice may go by a different name these days, but the image leaves little doubt that this was Okinawan *karate* he was writing about, and the drawings are clearly showing two types of *hojo undo*.



Eisuke Akamine (1925-1999) on the left, training *kobudo* with his *sensei*, Shinken Taira (1897-1970). Note the *hojo undo* tools in the background.

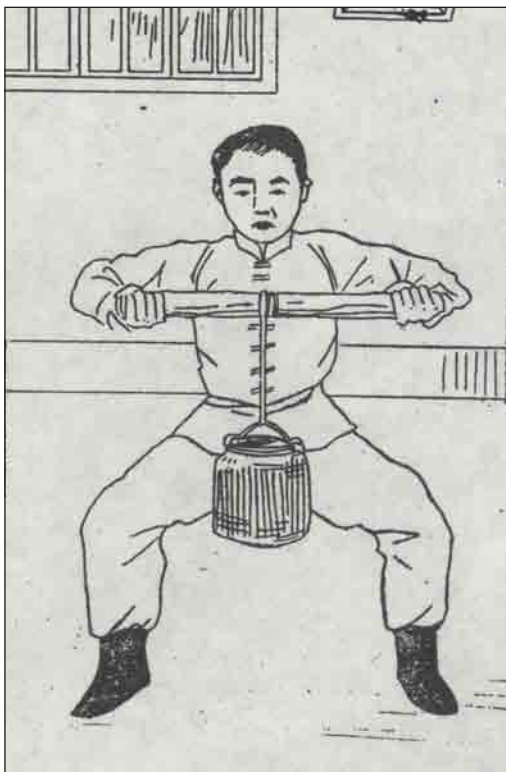


3

LIFTING TOOLS

I have divided the tools into two groups, those that are gripped and picked up and those that involve various degrees of impact. When training in *hojo undo*, you are free to use any tool in any order; it is not necessary to follow the sequence set out in this book. Neither do all the tools have to be used to gain some benefit from this type of training. If certain equipment proves impossible to construct or find, make the best with what you have. This is how the Okinawans of old approached their training and still do today. Okinawan *karate* is not based on performance statistics measured off against some benchmark figure, but rather on how well you are doing now compared to when you started. *Hojo undo* is as much about gaining confidence through the reality of working with these tools as it is about improving your physical strength.

Makiagi – Wrist Roller



A very difficult way to use the *makiagi* is depicted in this old Chinese drawing.



The author (aged 53) training with the *makiagi*, made from old window weights, at his *dojo* in Tasmania.



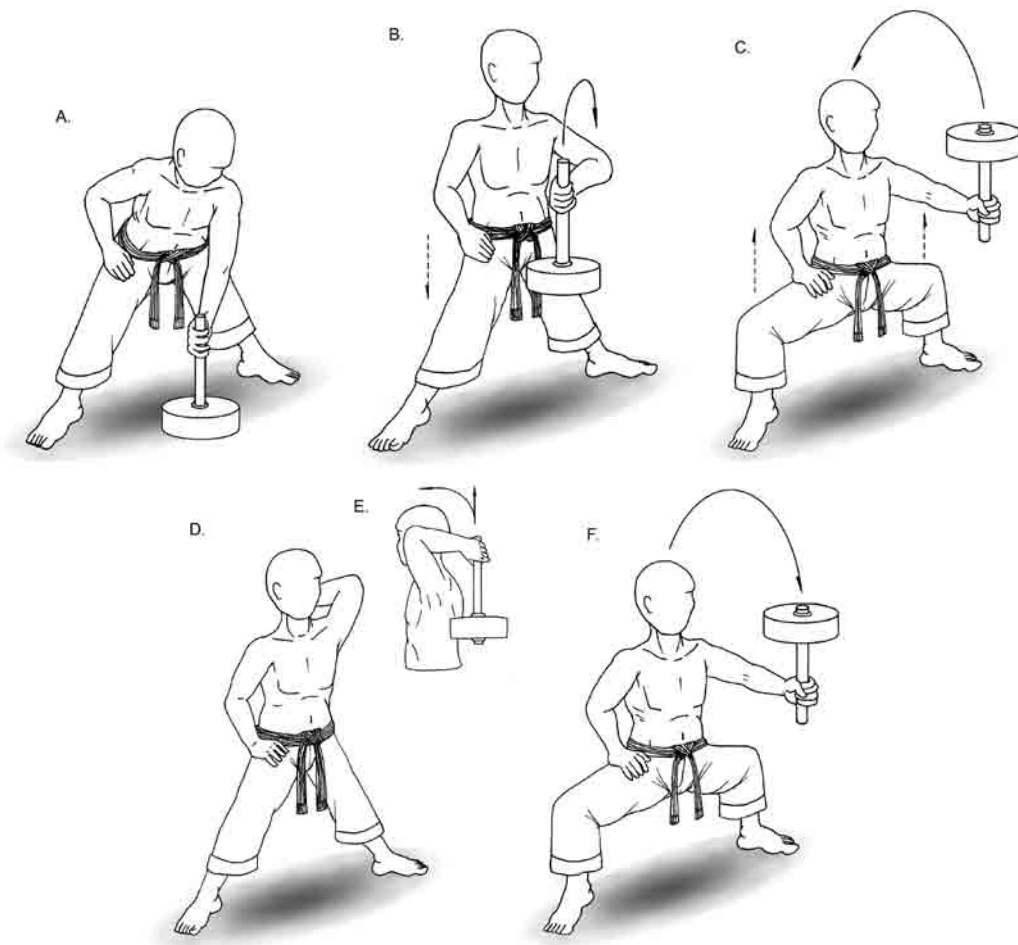
This ancient looking tool was in fact made by Richard Barrett and is used in his private *dojo* in Almeria, Spain.



Deceptively simple to look at and easy to make, this tool will test everyone who uses it.

This most basic of tools can be found around the world wherever people gather to develop their bodies. In the earliest versions, rocks were tied with a length of cord or chain to the center of a short piece of wood, and raised and lowered by use of gripping

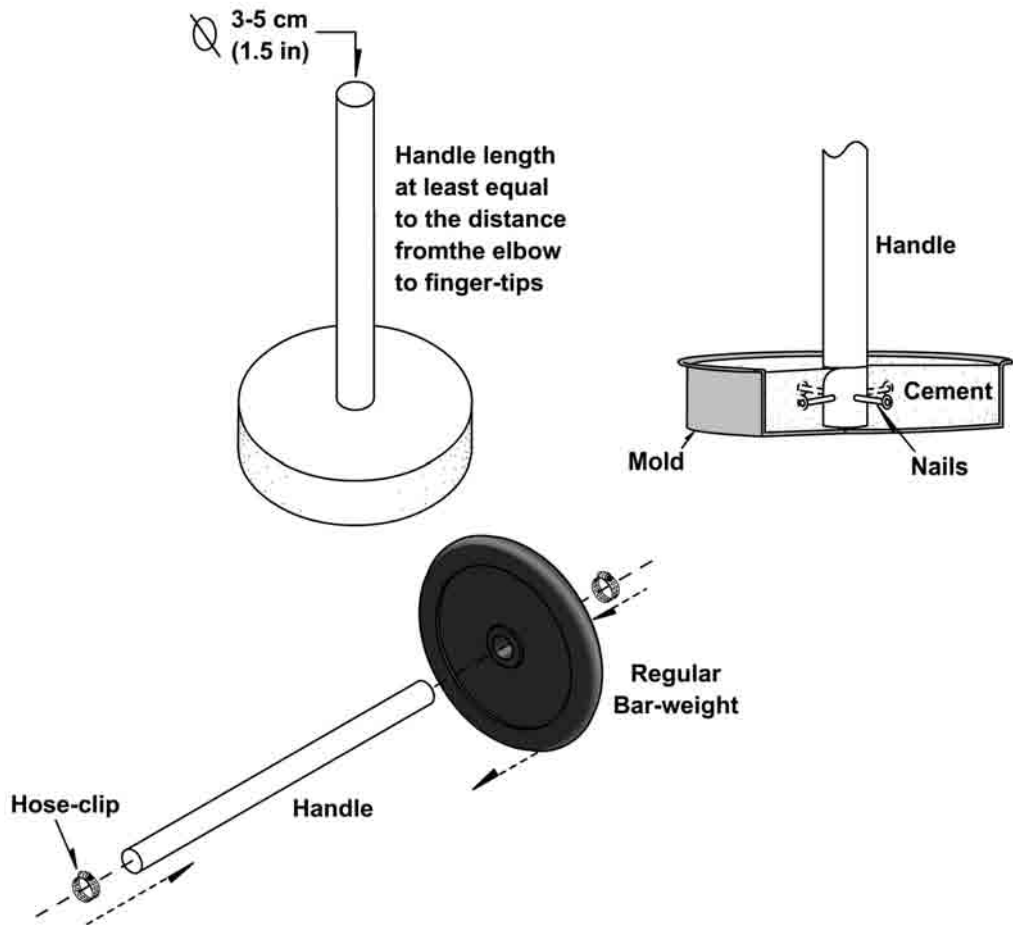
Single-Handle Chiishi



Exercise 1

From the starting position (Figure C), lift the tool in a chopping action over the shoulder while you straighten the legs and stand up (Figure D); let the *chiishi* drop behind the shoulder, relaxing (Figure E) the muscles of the arm while maintaining a tight grip. Take a deep breath in through the nose before breathing out through the mouth and sitting back into *shiko dachi*; when you do so, engage the tricep muscles at the back of the upper arm to lift the tool clear of the shoulder and then, in a chopping action, bring it back over the shoulder before coming to a halt in the starting position (Figure F). This exercise (minus the lift) should be repeated at least ten times before returning the *chiishi* to the floor and commencing the same exercise with the opposite arm.

Chiishi (Single Handle) Construction Notes



Nails are fixed into the dowel before placing it in the mold. Alternatively, hose clips are placed on both sides of a regular weight.

You need a length of wood that is at least equal to the distance from the elbow to the tips of the fingers, with a diameter of approximately one and one-half inches (3.5 cm). The weight is made from cement poured into a mold and the handle placed in the center. Care should be taken to keep the handle straight while the cement hardens. To add to the grip of the handle in the cement, nails should be driven through the end of the handle in opposing directions before the handle is placed in the wet cement and left to dry. The *chiishi* I use in my *dojo* weighs 14 lbs. (6.35 kg).

Ishisashi – Stone Lock



The original use of the *sashi* can be seen in this photograph. Although these 'modern' *sashi* are made from iron, in former times they would have been made from carved stones.



The author's teacher, Eiichi Miyazato sensei, training in *sanchin kata* with the *ishisashi*.



This ancient *ishi sashi*, carved from solid rock, is on display at the Okinawa Karate Museum in Nishihara.



Tetsunosuke Yasuda sensei was in his 70's when this photograph was taken. Now in his mid-eighties, he still trains in *karate*, *iaido* (the art of drawing the sword and making a cut), and *yoga*, and acts as the senior advisor to the Jundokan *dojo*.



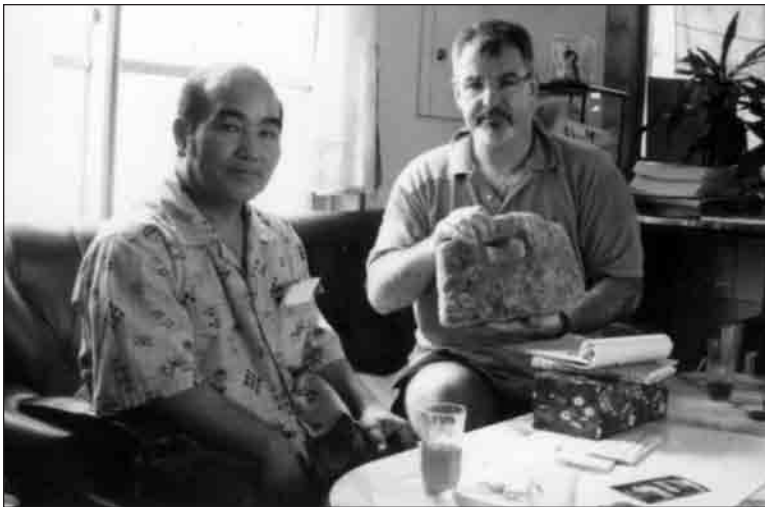
Here Hisao Sunagawa uses the *ishisashi* to enhance his shoulder strength by recreating the postures and movements found in the *Goju ryu kata, shisochin*.



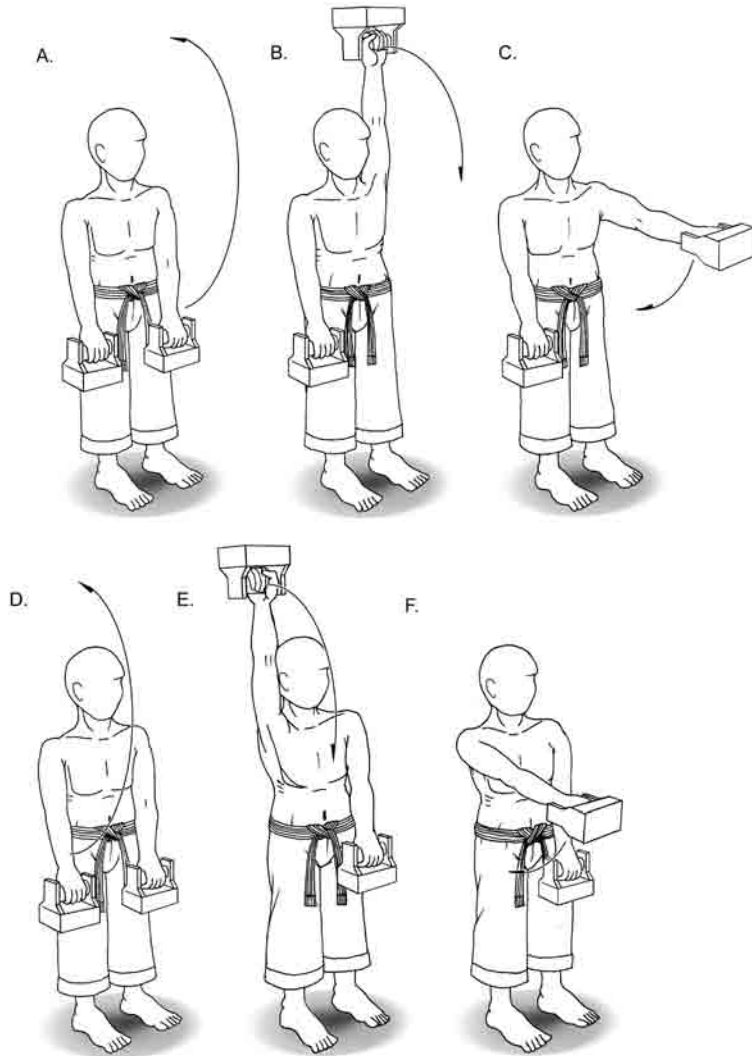
Hisao Sunagawa of the Jundokan *dojo*, Okinawa, uses the *ishisashi* to help develop his excellent *shiko dachi* (low stance), as well as his shoulder muscles.



A single giant *ishisashi* appears in this old Chinese martial arts manual, a copy of which was given to the author some years ago by Tetsuhiro Hokama *sensei*, the owner and proprietor of the Okinawa Karate Museum.



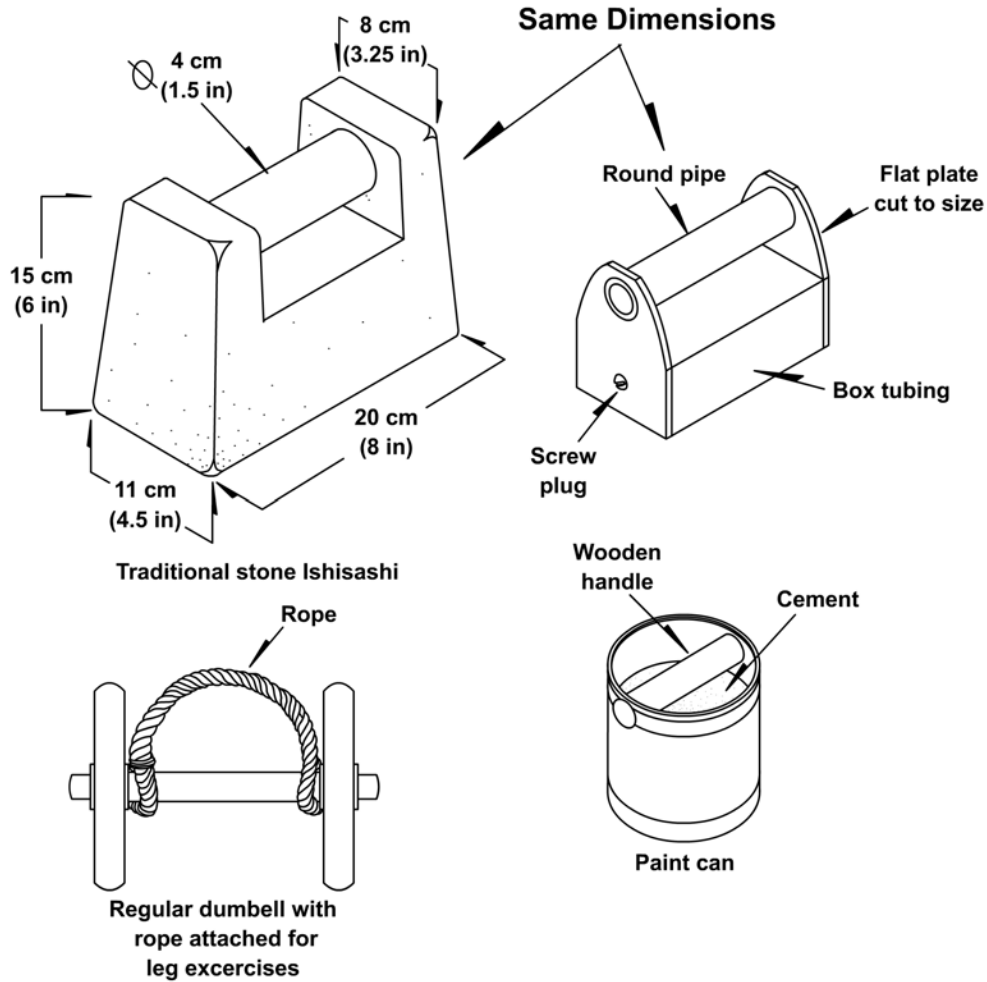
Karate teacher, historian and world renowned author, Patrick McCarthy discussing *hojo undo* with Masahiro Nakamoto at his home in Shuri, Okinawa.



Exercise 1

Standing in *heiko dachi*, hold the *sasbi* in front of the body with the palms facing in toward the body as shown (Figure A). Keeping the arms straight at all times, raise the left arm in an arc until it points vertically above the head (Figure B). The movement should be matched exactly with an inhalation through the nose that starts and finishes with the lift. From there the tool is lowered halfway while half the breath is released (Figure C). A pause and brief moment of focusing both the arm and the breath is taken before continuing with the return of the tool to its original position, accompanied by the complete exhalation of the breath. From there, the action is repeated with the right arm.

Ishisashi Construction Notes



Carved from stone or made from steel, regular weights and old paint cans will do the job too.

These tools take a little imagination to construct and access to a stonemason or someone with a workshop and abilities in welding. However, I have seen versions of *ishisashi* made from old paint cans filled with cement and given wooden handles, as well as house bricks with wire handles fixed to them. If it is not possible to fashion the traditional tools from stone or from metal, it is possible to train in all these exercises with a suitably weighted set of dumbbells. A short length of rope tied to the dumbbell facilitates the leg exercise. The *sashi* I use are made from lengths of steel box pipe, tube, and plate, welded together; they weigh 8 lbs. each (4.5 kg). A small hole at one end (plugged by a screw) allows sand to be added, increasing the weight of the tool.

Kongoken – Large Iron Ring



The author's teacher, Eiichi Miyazato sensei. This photograph was taken around 1960 when he was approaching 40 years of age. His *judo*, as well as his *karate*, no doubt benefited from training with the *kongoken*.



The author at 40 years of age, wrestling with the *kongoken* at his *dojo* in Perth, Western Australia.

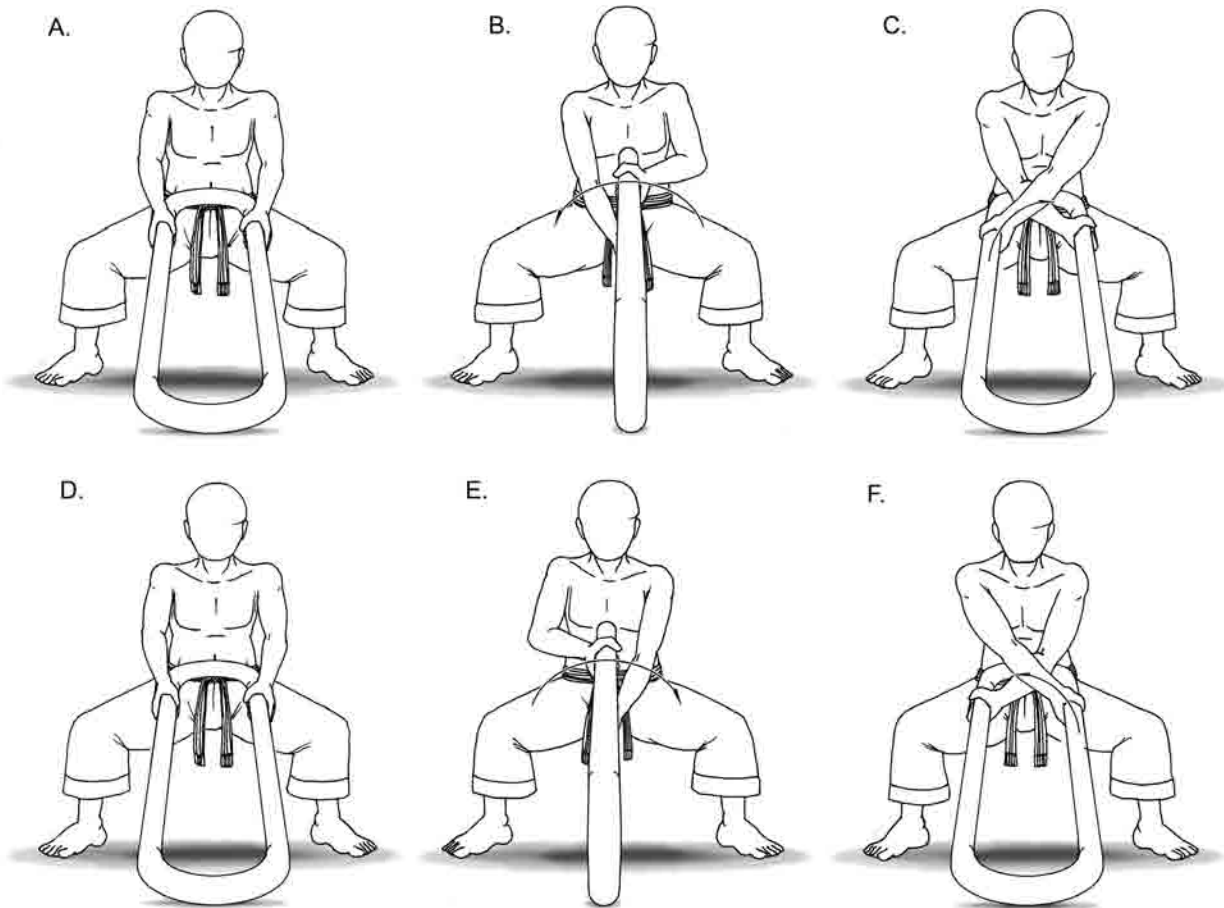


With the *ishisashi* being demonstrated by a student of the Jundokan in the foreground of this photograph, a two-person *kongoken* drill is under way in the background. Tokyo, October 1973.



Here, Ryosei Arakaki looks on while his fellow Jundokan students display the *ishisashi*, *kongoken*, and *tan*. Tokyo, October 1973.

In the mid 1930s, Chojun Miyagi sensei, the founder of *Goju ryu karatedo*, traveled to the Hawaiian Islands in the mid-Pacific to teach *karate* and to lecture on its history and cultural benefits.¹³ During his time there, he observed the local wrestlers training.



Exercise 1

Begin by holding the *kongoken* as shown (Figure A). Making sure your back is upright and the legs strong, allow the tool to slip through the fingers and palm of the hand while the left arm pushes over and the right arm pushes under (Figure B), thus twisting the tool on its own axis. With the arms now crossed (Figure C), both of them pull in a reverse motion returning to the starting position (Figure D) and continue through twisting the tool to the opposite side (Figures E and F) before once more reversing. It is important not to stop there, however, but to continue by pushing and pulling in a continuous motion, back and forth, from one side to the other. The movement of the arms being crossed on one side to being crossed over and back again counts as one exercise. If possible, you should try to begin by completing at least fifty. Do not allow the legs to come up out of a strong *shiko dachi*. Regardless of how difficult this exercise might seem in the beginning, you should remember that with one end of the tool remaining on the ground, only a portion of its true weight is being dealt with.



4

IMPACT TOOLS

Unlike the tools discussed up to now, the equipment in this chapter introduces and delivers various levels of shock to the body of the user. Shock, either corporal or psychological, is often the reason why people are brought to a standstill when it comes to getting through a tough situation. When the shock of impact hits and the stress levels begin to climb, this is when *karateka* remind themselves to look for ways through and not waste time searching for ways out. Dealing calmly with shock is an ability acquired by becoming familiar with it, and in this notion lays the reasoning behind the training. No one is suggesting we should grow to enjoy pain or discomfort; on the contrary, as healthy human beings, we should try to minimize such negativity in our lives. However, *karate* is a form of self-defense we will call on in times of high stress and anxiety. It is not the time to “freeze” when our assailant’s blows hurt when we block them. Familiarity is the key to being able to cope under stress and working regularly with the following tools will help you find that.

Makiwara – Striking Post



Gichin Funakoshi (1868-1957), with his *do-gi* jacket removed on one side, perhaps to suggest the same solemnity as an archer in *kyudo* (Japanese archery) adopts when facing his target (also known as a *makiwara*). He prepares himself for the punch.



The punch is thrown. Unlike *kyudo* however, in *karate* it is most definitely essential to hit the target.



A very rare photograph of Gichin Funakoshi training with the *makiwara*.



In 1965, a series of three postage stamps were issued, each one depicting an important part of *karate* training. This one clearly shows the importance of *hojo undo* and the *makiwara* in particular.

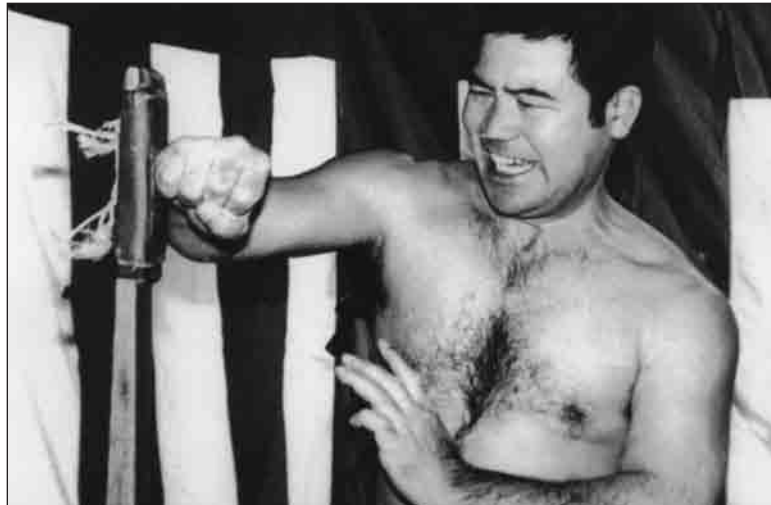


Surrounded by three *makiwara*, Giko (Yoshitaka) Funakoshi (1906-1945), the third son of Gichin Funakoshi who was according to many historians the person most responsible for modern *Shotokan karate*, uses just one of the tools to train his punch. Unfortunately he died tragically young at the age of 39.

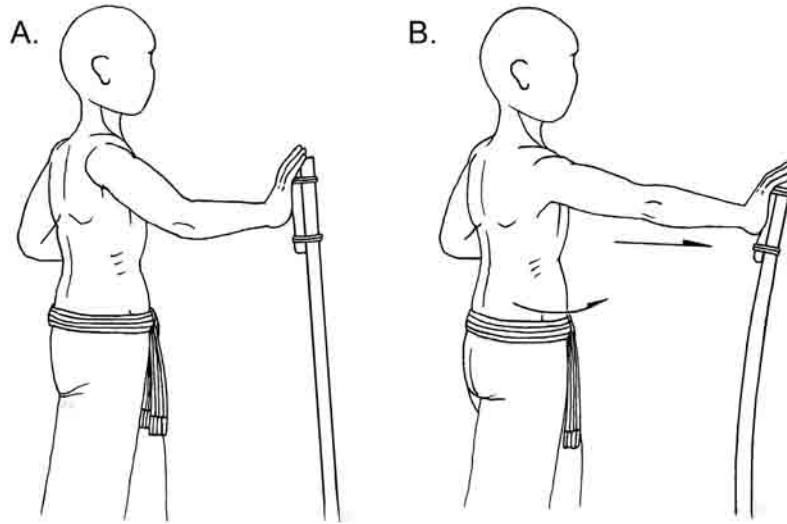


Morio Higaonna (b. 1938) has trained on the *makiwara* almost all his life. Here he is conditioning the inside ridge of his hand by striking the *makiwara* continually with *heito uchi*.

Tettsui uchi (hammer-fist strike) being used with full force by Morio Higaonna against the *makiwara*.



At 70 years of age and with a lifetime of conditioning behind them, these were Morio Higaonna's hands as they looked when the author visited him at his *dojo* in Makishi, Okinawa in February 2008.



Exercise 3

Stand before the *makiwara* in a natural position with one side slightly forward and the opposite arm held out with the open palm lightly resting on the pad of the tool (Figure A). The other arm is chambered as if ready to punch. Bend the knees a little to lower your body weight and thus the center of gravity. Inhale calmly through the nose. Then with as much explosive power as possible generating from the hips, exhale and thrust the palm into the pad of the *makiwara* (Figure B) as if trying to snap the top off. At first the *makiwara* will no doubt return your energy and spring back just as hard as it was pushed, returning to its normal position without too much effort. Over time, however, it should be made to remain in a bent position for as long as the hand is in contact with the tool. This should not exceed more than a few seconds because the idea of the exercise is to build up a sense of explosive power over a short distance and not to see how long a bent post can be held back. Repeating the exercises on the opposite side ensures an equal progression of ability on both sides of the body. Using the same arm as the forward hip is another way to do this exercise, and all four versions of this exercise should be practiced. It should also be remembered that one side of your body is usually stronger or better coordinated than the other; therefore, more training should be done on the weaker side if you are to even out the progress being made.

has the effect of increasing the sum of the combined parts, making the outcome of the technique far greater than you might imagine. As a concept, *kiai* is found in all Japanese and Okinawan martial arts and is noticeable most often during training by the loud shout issued at the moment a technique is delivered.



Pushing the attacking arm down and delivering a rolling back fist strike to the face is a combination found in many martial arts.



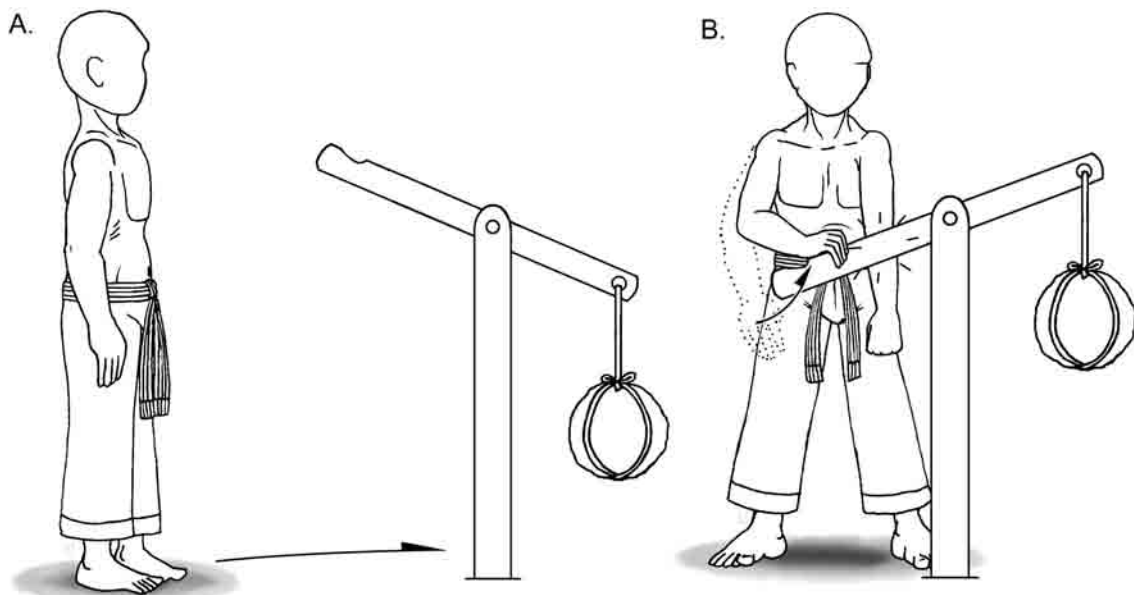
These drawings, on display at the Okinawa Karate Museum in Nishihara, show an array of different tools used by Okinawan *karateka* to condition their bodies.



In addition to blocking, defensive and offensive combinations can also be practiced.

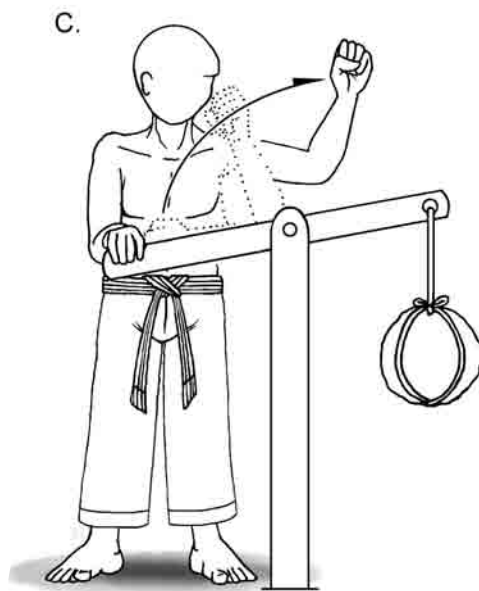


Kicks too can be used as shown here, off the front leg.



Exercise 2

Stand in front of the tool (Figure A) and using *tai sabaki* (body shifting), quickly shift to the left of the arm, blocking the limb of the tool with a left forearm *furi uke* (swinging block) while at the same time gripping the arm of the tool with the right hand (Figure B); continue on to perform *jodan hidari tettsui uchi* (left-side hammer-fist strike to the head, Figure C). This exercise emulates the opening sequence from the *Goju ryu kata saifa* and the *Shotokan kata chinte*. Again, moving in from the left and then from the right of the tool helps to develop skills such as entering (*irimi*) and switching sides smoothly and quickly (*hantai*). It also improves your stamina and encourages the examination of your breathing patterns. Remember, if our breath is not working with us then it is working against us, for there is no neutral position when it comes to our bodies' physical exertion and the energy-giving properties of our breath.





5

BODY CONDITIONING EXERCISES

Ude Tanren – Two-Person Conditioning Exercises

Within the various schools of *karate* in Okinawa, there are also a great many conditioning exercises that are done without tools, but with a training partner instead. To cover all of them and do justice to their value would require a book of its own and is something I am working on. For this reason, only a few *ude tanren* drills have been included here. However, once this kind of training becomes “normal,” the variety and combination of strikes and blocks a *karateka* can come up with indicates the progress he is making in the pursuit of realistic impact training for the body and mind. As well as the conditioning of the arms through regular practice, the purpose of *ude tanren* training is to cultivate the ability to deliver and receive “shock,” an important element of any *karate* technique, and the very thing that often brings many “thin-air” *karateka* (those who train without making contact with either each other or an appropriate training aid) to a standstill. Much like the drills used against the *ude kitae*, the *ude tanren* exercises encourage the body to condition itself while the mind (attitude) is toughened to withstand



A rare image of training at the *Uechi ryu* headquarters in Okinawa, c. 1970.



Kaneji Uechi sensei (in the background) watches over others training, while in the foreground students practice *ude tanren*.

higher levels of discomfort brought on by the shock of collision. With the familiarity of contact comes a kind of reference point in the mind that allows an impact to cause less confusion, in turn, allowing us to continue on to a conclusion. When unfamiliar things happen, our mind automatically tries to work it out. *Ude tanren* familiarizes the mind with close contact and the effects of impact upon the body. In a real situation, it is unreasonable to expect to walk away from a physical altercation without being hit, and for



Students at the Shinseidokan *dojo* use *ude tanren* to condition their arms.



Stepping forward into a block is often a new experience for *karate* students. Most step back when blocking.



Becoming accustomed to impact on the legs.



Stepping forward while blocking allows the mind to stay on the offensive.

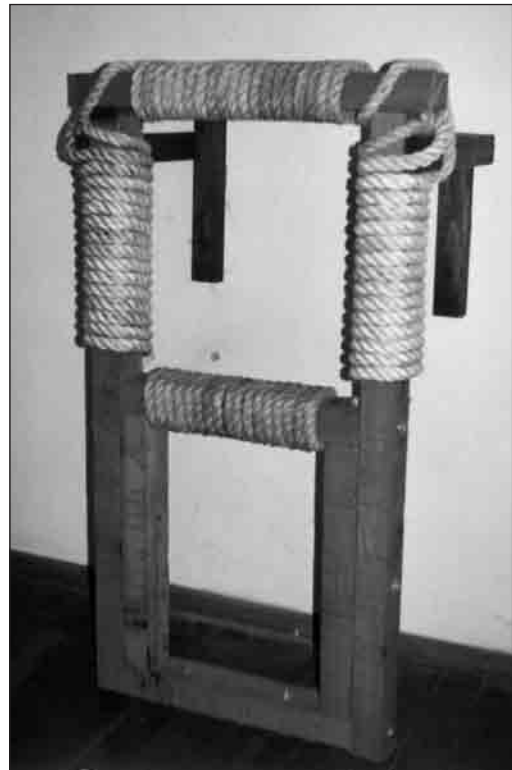
this reason alone, it is essential that *karateka* work with a training partner (or with tools) on a regular basis, and certainly more often than they work in thin air. *Karate* is an art of self-defense, a martial art, an art that requires not only an ability to hit, but also an ability to withstand being hit. The weakest part of the body is quite often the mind, and *hojo undo* is a well-established method of developing and strengthening it.



OTHER TOOLS AND METHODS

Other Training Tools

As well as the tools discussed in this book, there are more. Actually, the number of variations of each tool that people have and still do come up with makes the inclusion of every tool an impossible task. Nevertheless, I have tried to include all the most commonly used tools, as well as some that have begun to be neglected. The tools in this book are a selection of the equipment I have worked with for over a quarter of a century. There are also some, I think, important tools that deserve a mention here if only because there are, I am sure, individuals still using them and passing on their knowledge to others, and I would not like readers to form the impression that this book is in any way a definitive work on the subject. It is, instead, an introduction to an aspect of traditional *karate* training that I believe is in some danger of being forgotten altogether in the West.



This training device, known as a blocking cube, was used by the author when he lived in Western Australia from 1988 to 1998.



COMMENTS ON HOJO UNDO FROM OKINAWAN KARATE MASTERS

Since I began traveling to Okinawa in 1984, I have been privileged to meet many great *karate* teachers over the years. Some have had a worldwide following, while others have not, but the majority of them have had something in common—their sincere love for the fighting arts of their homeland and their willingness to share what they know with others. It is beyond the scope of this book to detail the many conversations I have had with all of them, but I thought I would include a brief extract from just two of these exchanges to provide an incentive to others to seek out such teachers and perhaps have their own conversations.

Tetsuhiro Hokama sensei, 10th Dan, Goju ryu

Michael Clarke (MC): *How important is hojo undo training in karate?*

Tetsuhiro Hokama (TH): Well, as you know, in older times masters such as Kanryo Higaonna *sensei*, and Chojun Miyagi *sensei* went to China, and there they were training very hard every day. This was the Fuken style of fighting which became our *Goju ryu karate* when these people came back to Okinawa. While in China, they found out about *hojo undo* and so this became a very important part of training. Today, some people think that *karate* is just like any other sport, baseball, basketball, etc., but *hojo undo* is very special and so this makes *karate* very different from sport. The way we breathe in and out using these tools, for example, maybe in the sport kind of *karate hojo undo* is not so important, but for *budo karate* it is very important. Of course, all sports people want to know “how” their body works. So this is the same, but in *Goju ryu* we try to stay soft in our body as we breathe in, and become strong when we breathe out, for example in *sanchin kata*.



Tetsuhiro Hokama using a three section staff.



The author with Tetsuhiro Hokama at the Kenshinkan *dojo*.

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About the Author

Michael Clarke grew up in Manchester, in the heart of England's industrial North. Leaving school at 15 years of age, fairly well educated but without qualifications, frustration with his position in life soon began to manifest in anti-social and violent behavior. His downward spiral culminated in jail time, and it was from here that he began his climb back to propriety. Thirty-five years later, he is a different person. A prolific essayist, recognized around the world for his writings on the philosophical aspects of *karate* that underpin the physical training, his commentaries have appeared in magazines since 1985 in America, Australia, England, Japan, New Zealand, and Portugal. Upon request, his articles have been posted on Web sites where some have been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and Japanese.



Photo by Charlie Suriano/Bltz Enterprises

Also known for his interviewing skills, Michael has throughout the past twenty-five years published over forty interviews, many with teachers of international renown, such as the present *Doshu* of *Aikido*, Moriteru Ueshiba; Hirokazu Kanazawa of *Shotokan*; Morio Higaonna of *Goju Ryu*; and Tatsuo Suzuki of *Wado ryu*, to name but a few. As well, he has interviewed other famous instructors, and many who are not. Nine of his early interviews were published in his second book, *Budo Master: Paths to a Far Mountain*; and his autobiographical accounts of life, travel, and training in his book *Roaring Silence* and its companion volume *Small Steps Forward* have given inspiration to many.

These days Michael lives quietly with his wife, Kathy, high on a hill overlooking a bend in the river Tamar, in Northern Tasmania. Surrounded by natural bush land, he practices *karate* and *kobudo* in the small *dojo* attached to his home and spends the rest of his time reading, writing, walking in the forest surrounding his home, and watching science fiction movies. He can be contacted at shinseidokan@bigpond.com