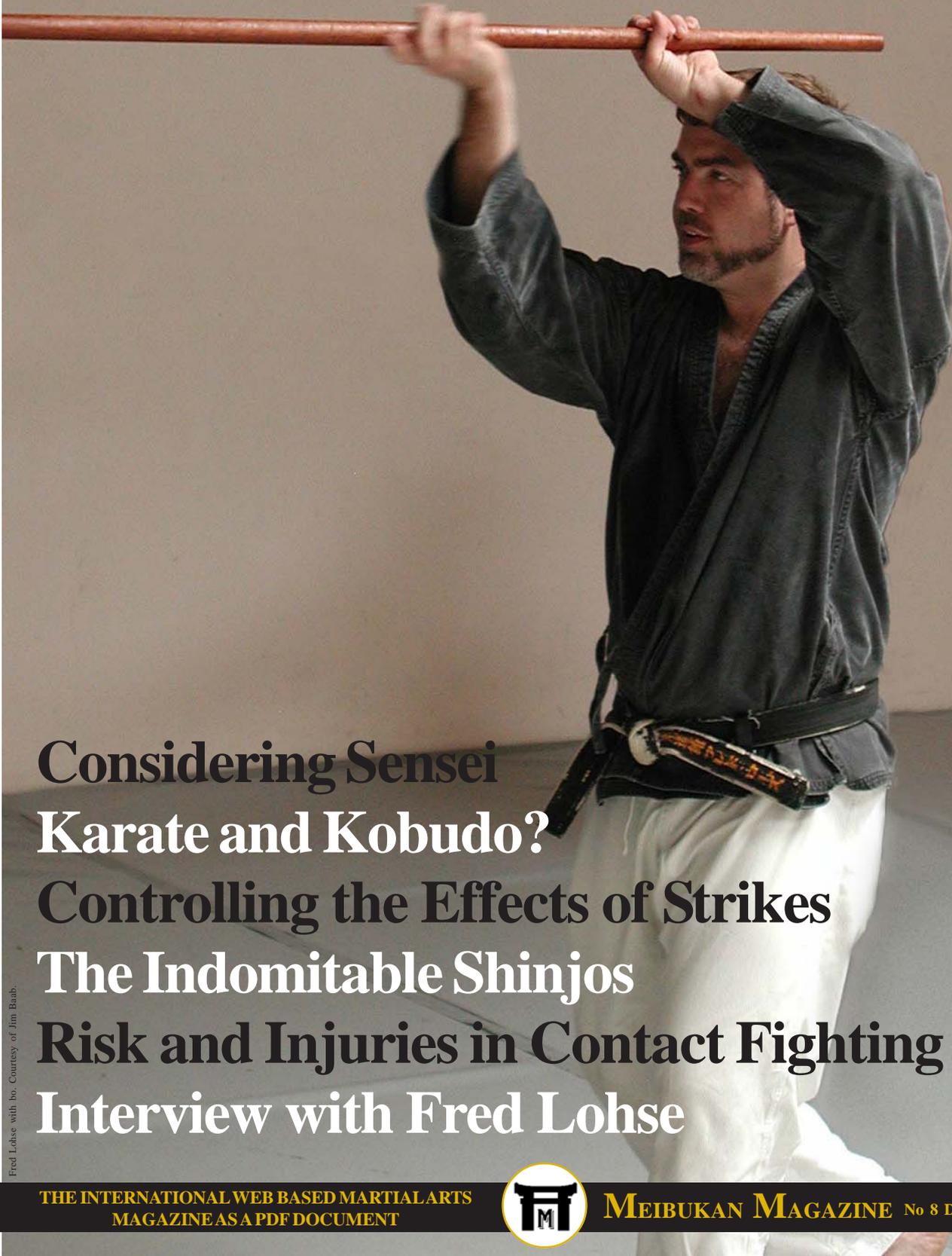


# MEIBUKAN MAGAZINE

House Of The Pure Martial Arts



**Considering Sensei  
Karate and Kobudo?  
Controlling the Effects of Strikes  
The Indomitable Shinjos  
Risk and Injuries in Contact Fighting  
Interview with Fred Lohse**

Fred Lohse with bo. Courtesy of Jim Baab.

THE INTERNATIONAL WEB BASED MARTIALARTS  
MAGAZINE AS A PDF DOCUMENT



MEIBUKAN MAGAZINE No 8 DECEMBER 2006

## MISSION STATEMENT

Meibukan Magazine is an initiative of founders Lex Opdam and Mark Hemels. Aim of this web based magazine is to spread the knowledge and spirit of the martial arts. In a non profitable manner Meibukan Magazine draws attention to the historical, spiritual and technical background of the oriental martial arts. Starting point are the teachings of Okinawan karate-do. As 'House of the Pure Martial Arts', however, Meibukan Magazine offers a home to the various authentic martial arts traditions.

## FORMAT

Meibukan Magazine is published several times a year in an electronical format with an attractive mix of subjects and styles. Each issue of at least twelve pages is published as pdf-file for easy printing. Published editions remain archived on-line.

Readers of the webzine are enthusiasts and practitioners of the spirit of the martial arts world wide.

## PRODUCTION

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## SUBMISSIONS

Meibukan Magazine is pleased to submit views, concerns and experiences on any subject matter IF related to the mission statement expressed by the Meibukan Magazine. Therefore articles, photographs and illustrations are welcome, although Meibukan Magazine is selective and can not guarantee that submissions will be placed. Submission can be mailed to our P.O. Box by floppy, CD or DVD, or can be sent to our e-mail address.

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## Column

**We want your help!**

## Feature

**Karate and Kobudo?**

Fred Lohse takes us on a journey through the history of karate and kobudo in an effort to explain why the two are actually inseparable.

## Interview

**Interview with Fred Lohse**

Lex Opdam interviews Goju-ryu and Matayoshi kobudo practitioner Fred Lohse.

## Physical Health

**Risk and Injuries in Contact Fighting**

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**The Indomitable Shinjos of Okinawa**

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**Mind over Muscle** - Writings from the Founder of Judo by Jigoro Kano.

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**Sensei: some considerations**

Is a martial arts instructor a spiritual leader? A leader of a community? Should he be? Or should he merely disseminate the most effective and correct fighting technique as promulgated by his respective art? Gil Gillespie on the interpretation of "Sensei."

## Feature

**Controlling the Effects of Strikes**

Kevin Secours explains that although pain for the practicing martial artist may be inevitable, suffering is optional.



## We want your help!

The 8th edition of our magazine is a fact. Although the business of our daily lives gives us but few possibilities, we are glad that we can present another edition to thousands of international readers. Our web statistics show that our PDF editions are well visited and downloaded and therefore we can also adopt that these are read. Also we get daily registrations of people who have put themselves on the mailing list for the announcement of every new edition (by means of our website). We are delighted that our aim, spreading the knowledge and spirit of the martial arts on an international level by means of the Internet, is met.

We want to thank those who have declared their mental support by sending us positive e-mails. We appreciate these responses and want to let you all know that we feel strengthened in our mission.

Because of changes in work and home situations, the editorial board of Meibukan Magazine has been reduced since the last two editions. For Meibukan Magazine this means less capacity on different fronts. Therefore we have to put more effort by means of time and energy into the search for interesting articles which would qualify for a possible publication in our magazine.

The general appraisal of an article (checking of facts/sources/persons etc. and aptitude), the contact with the authors and copyright holders, the preparations of those articles which are effectively placed, demand more time than most people imagine. We are always searching for good material, be it already published or new material. Often we have a mixture of both since our aim is not to be newsworthy in the first place but to be helpful in providing serious martial arts material to the interested. Both new and old material are fine for our magazine and when we ourselves have time and energy we also actively create and contribute to it.

Because we only have a few hands for the job to search/investigate interesting material, I want to call upon our readers to provide us with references/links to serious and thorough non-commercial articles which could be suitable for publication in our magazine.

It is difficult to explain in short what kind of material Meibukan Magazine is looking for, but now that the first 8 editions of our magazine have appeared, I believe that the articles published so far give a clear indication of the type of material we are interested in.

If you are in a position to provide us with material, the most convenient way for us would be if you could supply us with a weblink or even a Word document by email concerning the article that you think would fit in our magazine. Ideally, provide us with information of where and when the article is/was published (webpage or magazine), who the author is and -if possible- how to reach him and possibly the copyright holder. Even if you only have a weblink that you think could be interesting for our magazine, please feel free to mail us by our submission email. Of course we can not guarantee we will place the article(s), but we will certainly take the effort to study the material attentively.

*Lex Opdam*  
Editor in chief

## Karate and Kobudo?

**In talking to many practitioners of the Okinawan martial arts, one often hears two separate terms used; karate and kobudo. One is the unarmed practice common to the island, the other the weapon arts. On the surface, this separation makes sense; it's a very easy division to make since the difference between holding something and not holding something is pretty obvious. Since the translation for karate means "empty hand", the separation seems even more obvious. However, although this separation makes sense on the surface and is a common idea in Okinawa, in Japan, and here in the West, I would suggest it is an artificial one, one that comes out of a specific set of historic circumstances, and is not actually representative of the Okinawan martial heritage.**

*- Frederick W. Lohse III -*

Conceptually, separating armed and unarmed arts is rather unusual worldwide. While many of the Japanese Shin-budo are extremely specific in their choice of tools- Judo is empty handed, Kendo uses only a shinai (bamboo practice sword), Kyudo uses only the bow- these arts resemble the Western sports of fencing, boxing, or wrestling more than they do most martial arts. They were designed, much like their Western counterparts, to fit a specific need. Elements of practice that were deemed unnecessary to their goals were eliminated. Hence, Judo does not contain many of the armed or striking techniques common to many traditional Jujutsu styles, Kendo includes no unarmed training or understanding of the spear, halberd, or thrown weapons as many classical Japanese arts do, and so on. Their specific designs enable focused study of a particular set of techniques, a practice designed for self-development, sport, fitness, or some combination of these. However, in more traditional martial arts the differentiation between armed and unarmed arts is often vague, at best. The classical Japanese arts, Chinese arts, Philippine arts, Indonesian arts, all mix armed and unarmed techniques, usually in the same system, using the same tactical concepts. Historically, in looking at the Okinawan arts, the same applies.

While today karate and kobudo are often considered separate practices, this is a relatively new phenomenon on Okinawa.

In the past, the leading figures in the Okinawan martial traditions practiced, and taught, a variety of techniques. Looking at the various figures of Okinawa's martial past, this becomes immediately obvious. Kosaku Matsumora was known for his skill with the bo (staff) (Nagamine, 2000, p. 34). In the 1866 demonstration at the departure of the last Chinese Sapposhi, Seisho Aragaki, who went on to be Kanryo Higaonna's teacher, demonstrated a variety of armed and unarmed techniques ranging from empty hand to tinbe (shield & machete or short spear). The famous Yara Chatan passed down both Chatan Yara no Kusanku and Chatan Yara no Sai. Perhaps most telling, the single greatest legacy of one of karate's most famous exponents, a man who was nicknamed for his karate, "Tode" Sakugawa (Kanga Sakugawa), is the bo kata that bears his name, not his karate.



*Kanga Sakugawa*

“The classical Japanese arts, Chinese arts, Philippine arts, Indonesian arts, all mix armed and unarmed techniques, usually in the same system, using the same tactical concepts.”

Obviously, the pioneers of what was to become Okinawa’s karate and kobudo did not see the two as separate arts. The leading teachers practiced and taught both. This continued on into the next “generations”. Kanryo Higaonna is said to have been skilled with a variety of Chinese weapons. Along with his karate, Chotoku Kyan passed down the bo kata Tokumine no kon, a kata he considered an important part of his legacy. The noted bo masters Masami Chinen and Modem Yabiku both studied Itosu style karate. (See Hokama, 2005.) Indeed, virtually every legendary Okinawan bushi is known for both armed and unarmed skills. This is, with a little examination, not surprising. In earlier times, the martial arts were not practiced primarily for self-development, or sport. They were practiced for self-defense, or combat. In that light, any martial artist would need to be able to use, and be able to counter, not only unarmed attacks, but a variety of weapons. Over time, this approach to the practice of the martial arts has changed, starting during the Meiji period (1868-1912), and intensifying in the post-war years. However, in general the majority of late Meiji and early Showa era (1926-1989) Okinawan martial artists also intrinsically connected armed and unarmed practice.

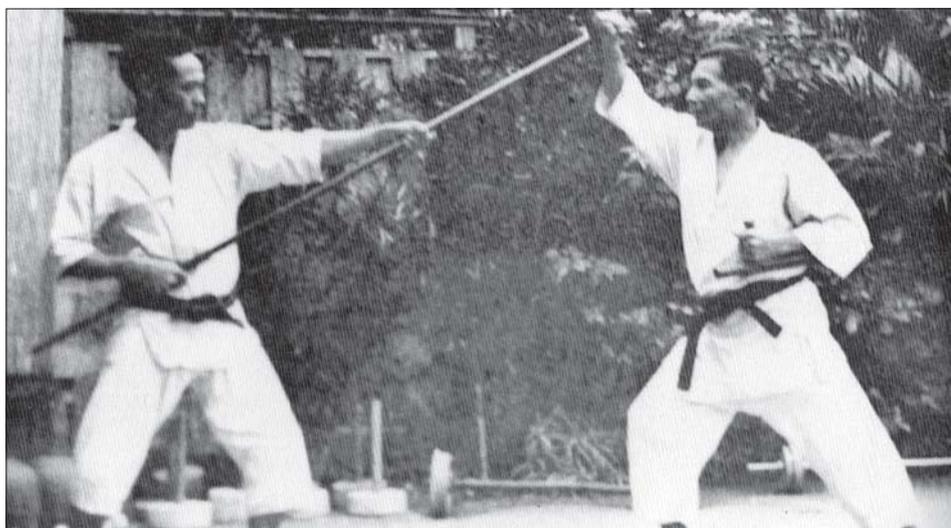
The founder of Shito-ryu, Kenwa Mabuni, known for his efforts to preserve and pass

on a huge number of Okinawan kata, was enough of an expert in kobudo to be one of Shinken Taira’s main teachers; he obviously considered the armed arts important enough to preserve as well. Taira, the founder of the Society for the Preservation and Promotion of Ryukyu kobudo, also learned from Jinsei Kamiya, a noted Goju-ryu exponent. Ginchin Funakoshi, the founder of Shotokan, also practiced kobudo, as the famous picture of him using sai (a forked metal truncheon) demonstrates. In the early days, he also taught some bojutsu, though this dropped out of most Shotokan practice. (McMahon, 2001.) Conversely, his student Shinken Taira also taught karate. During the late Meiji period and right into the post-war era, the Okinawan arts were undergoing massive change. They were being exported to Japan and becoming something new in the process, while on Okinawa they were being re-examined and renamed. With each generation, there had always been change and crossfertilization between styles and teachers. However, in this period there came to be a more focused approach to codifying systems, naming them, and creating clearer lineages and lists of kata to go with them. Nevertheless, throughout this process the conflation of armed and unarmed techniques continued. As people developed new systems and named them, they usually included both armed and unarmed kata. Isshin-ryu’s founder Tatsuo Shima-buko included a variety of karate, bo, sai, and tonfa (right-angled baton) kata. The late Juhatsu Kyoda considered armed techniques important enough to add bo and sai kata to the Tou’on-ryu he named after his teacher Kanryo Higaonna. When he

founded his organization, the Goju-ryu Kokusai Karate Kobudo Renmei, Seiko Higa, who had also studied with Shinken Taira, Shinpo Matayoshi, and Kenko Nakaima, included kobudo in the title even though there are no weapon kata in the Goju system. Other Goju teachers also considered kobudo essential to their practice- Seikichi Toguchi added rhythm bo and various kobudo kata to his Shoreikan, and Meitoku Yagi added Gekisai and Saifa practiced with sai. Zenryo Shimabuko taught Tokumine no kon along with Kyan’s karate. Kenko Nakaima’s Ryueiryu has always included armed and unarmed kata. Hohansoken was known for his Matsumura style karate, but also for his deep knowledge of a number of weapons. Seikichi Odo’s Okinawa Kempo includes a variety of armed kata, taught, as in all these systems, as part and parcel of the karate they accompany.

“Throughout the history of the Okinawan arts, karate teachers have taught and practiced kobudo, and kobudo teachers have taught and practiced karate. The two have never been seen as separate specialties, at least until recently.”

Throughout the history of the Okinawan arts, karate teachers have taught and practiced kobudo, and kobudo teachers have taught and practiced karate. The two have never been seen as separate specialties, at least until recently. Starting some time in the early part of the last century a separation began to develop, at least in many people’s minds, between Okinawa’s armed and unarmed techniques. Some of this change probably grew out of the existing training environment. While virtually all the old masters practiced both, different people were known for different things. While Chojo Oshiro practiced karate, people came to him to learn the bojutsu he was most famous for, and while people would go to Itosu to learn karate, they would perhaps not seek him out for the kobudo he knew. In each generation there would be teachers that were better known for different skills. In time some of these teachers’ students also became known for their teachers’ skills, creating lineages that held certain knowledge, more or less loosely. This is a general tendency however, and I would suggest that the real reason



Eisuke Akamine with bo and Shinken Taira with tonfa.

for the increased separation between armed and unarmed techniques was a particular set of historical influences on the development of the Okinawan arts in the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In looking at the Okinawan arts that have the least connection to the armed techniques of the island perhaps the starkest separation is in the Naha-te based Gojuryu<sup>1</sup>. While a number of Goju teachers have incorporated armed techniques into their teaching, the base system as founded by Chojun Miyagi is almost unique on Okinawa in its complete exclusion of weapon techniques<sup>2</sup>. Since Goju is so stark in this respect, examining some aspects of Goju's development in this period can shed some light on how this separation may have become more common in the Okinawan arts in general.

While Miyagi sensei's teacher Kanryo Higaonna was said to also be skilled in Chinese weaponry, he is not known to have passed any of this down. Among his students, Kyoda sensei went on to include bo and sai kata in his system, though it is unknown who he learned them from, while Miyagi did not. Higaonna's history may have some bearing on why Miyagi, who considered himself Higaonna's heir, did not include armed practice in his system.

Kanryo Higaonna began teaching his Naha-te in Okinawa around the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, the school system on the island was undergoing a series of deep changes brought about by the Meiji restoration. Among these changes was a new focus on physical and moral education (with a strong nationalist component) in the schools. Judo and Kendo were both standard subjects in schools in Japan, and were seen as ways to develop these traits. On Okinawa there was a push by a number of important teachers to have the local art, karate, become nationally known for its benefits, and to have it included in the school curriculum as well. Higaonna taught in the Naha Commercial High School starting in 1905, but was not the first karate

“...it is a formal movement away from a term roughly meaning “Chinese based fighting techniques” (toudi) to “Unarmed fighting way” (karate do).”

teacher in the public schools. Itosu Ankoh started teaching in the school system in 1901. In developing his karate to make it more useful for the school system, he changed the art as he had learned it, creating simpler kata (the Pinan katas) and focusing on group drills. It is also said that he made the practice safer, concentrating on its physical education elements. Although later he also taught in the schools, Higaonna and his karate initially lost out to Itosu in getting the public acclaim, and perhaps recompense, that accompanied the public school position. Morio Higaonna relates that it is possible Higaonna was not paid for teaching in the school system and that the principal asked him to focus his teaching on “physical, intellectual, and



Seiko Higa (1st row left), Seikichi Toguchi (1st row right), Ryugo Sakai (2nd row right), late 1950s.

moral education” (Higaonna, 1995: 21-22). He also relates that it may have been while teaching at the school that Higaonna “closed the fist” as a part of moving his karate from a purely fighting art to one also focused on health and moral development. (See Higaonna, 1995.)

While Kanryo Higaonna left nothing written about his feelings regarding the development of karate in the schools, one can imagine that he was disappointed that Itosu's karate, not his, was accepted. In the years ahead, Itosu continued to push for his karate, bringing it to the attention of the Ministry of Education, publishing his 10 precepts, and eventually having it thrive through his student, Funakoshi, who became the premier Okinawan teacher in Japan. Watching this take place, it is easy to see how Higaonna might mimic some of the changes Itosu made, focusing his art more on mental and physical education, and perhaps away from purely martial application. If nothing else, at some time in this period, he “closed the fist” in the system, a change considered to be a move towards a less directly combative

“To quote a senior practitioner of Uechi-ryu and student of Shinken Taira, Katsuhiko Minowa: “karate and kobudo are like two wheels on an axle.””

model of training. This process of development continued with Chojun Miyagi.

As Miyagi took over the mantle of Naha-te's leading instructor, he also was participating in what amounted to a sea-change in Okinawa's martial arts. With things like admission into the Butokukai, the change of the characters from “Chinese Hand” to “Empty Hand,” and the model of Judo to go by, it may have seemed there was a clear path for Okinawa's arts to follow into the future. Miyagi, along with a number of other notable karate figures, knew Jigoro Kano and had trained some Judo. He also saw the popularity of that art, its clear goals, organization, and development from older arts and its value as a method of physical and mental training. He wanted Okinawa's art, his art, to show the country its value as well, to promote the system his teacher had taught him, and perhaps to preserve the art in a changing world.

Of all the actions he took to help move Okinawan karate into the Japanese mainstream, one of the most telling was his participation in the meeting that proposed formally accepting the name change, and his support for this change (see McCarthy, 1999). While much has been made of the political and historical aspects of this, the name change accepted by many karate teachers in 1936, from the characters Chinese Hand (唐手) to Empty Hand (空手 karate), is truly symbolic of a much larger change in the common understanding of the art. In its basic translation, the character used for the term “te” or “ti” (手) means hand. In that sense, it is easy, and logical, to conflate it with a person's hands, and so with empty handed technique. However, in the Okinawan martial vernacular, the term has a different meaning. It refers to technique, and is almost a general term for the martial arts, armed and unarmed. As an example, in Matayoshi kobudo certain weapon kata are referred to as “ti”, as in Guwa no ti, or Guwa technique<sup>3</sup>. The name change to “Empty Hand,” therefore is an even larger

shift in the Okinawan arts than it appears if one is thinking of it only as a move between two terms for unarmed combat. Instead, it is a formal movement away from a term roughly meaning “Chinese based fighting techniques” (toudi) to “Unarmed fighting way” (karate do). By shifting the emphasis away from the more general Okinawan term to the more Japanese “te”, the meaning is limited, emphasizing the concept of the hand. This name change in essence redefines the art, removing the armed techniques that had always been part of the larger art entirely.

In the minutes of the meeting discussing this name change, Genwa Nakasone makes it very clear that a major reason for the name change is “consideration of karate do’s development as a Japanese budo.” (McCarthy, 1999: 60) Much as Judo left armed techniques behind, the new karate did as well. While Miyagi stated that the classical forms must be preserved, he also worked hard to develop a newer Okinawan budo. As a part of this, he participated in an effort to develop a generic “Okinawan Karate” after the model of Judo and Kendo—a Shin-budo put together from older arts in a new, organized, and focused package. To this end he supported and helped develop some of the proposed “unified” kata, now known as the Gekisai kata, wrote about the importance of the spiritual



Ryugo Sakai and Seikichi Toguchi, late 1950s.

and physical education aspects of training as opposed to the purely fighting aspects (see McCarthy, 1999), and traveled extensively to promote his art, both around Japan and as far away as Hawaii.

While Miyagi’s Goju-ryu does not exactly resemble the education-based model he

worked so hard to develop<sup>4</sup>, it has certain elements of it as core to its organization and practice. One of these is the complete absence of armed techniques. While I do not argue that Okinawan Goju-ryu lacks true martial content, as many sport karate styles do, I do see the absence of armed technique as an expression of Miyagi Chojun’s work to develop his karate as both an extension of the training he had received and as a modern Japanese Budo, complete with a clear syllabus, a defined set of warm up and preparatory exercises, and both kata for school children and public classes (the Gekisai) and the classical kata that had been passed down to him.

“...the attitude that weapon training brings is markedly different from the attitude that sport karate creates. Using a weapon is a constant reminder of the dangers of practice, and the deadly nature of the techniques studied.”

A deeper examination of the development of Goju-ryu is well outside the scope of this article. However, this brief examination serves to shed light on one way in which the separation of the armed and unarmed techniques on Okinawa came about. Looking at another good example of karate’s development in this period – the rise of Ginchin Funakoshi’s Shotokan – we see similar trends. Funakoshi brought karate to the mainland, received a good deal of help from Jigoro Kano in the process, and worked hard to popularize the art. In doing so, he primarily taught Itosu’s karate, a karate already prepped for a larger public audience, and continued to change it. He also took his karate deeper into the model of a Japanese Budo, in the process dropping the weapon arts he practiced and initially taught and focusing on the spiritual and physical education aspects of it, as well as identifying it closely with the “national spirit” of Japan. With his and Miyagi’s karate being the primary models for the Okinawan arts on the mainland, karate there developed almost entirely as an unarmed practice. (One could also perhaps say that this is one reason why sport karate then developed primarily on the mainland- with no weapon training in the practice, the mind-set weapons bring to training is excluded, making a shift to sport practice seem a

much more natural extension of the training in general.)

The changes happening in the public presentation of much Okinawan karate were also taking place in a larger arena of increasing formality. Before the 20th century, there were essentially no formal systems of toudi on Okinawa. Various teachers became well known, took students, and these students passed on their teachers’ knowledge. Students would train with various teachers, going to one famous for his bo work, another for his kempo, another for his kama (sickle), and so on in their search for knowledge. Most of the founders of today’s systems did this- Chojun Miyagi also trained with Gokenki and Todaiki, for example. In the push to become a Japanese Budo, formal names for systems, and then codification of what these systems contained, became necessary for acceptance into the Butokukai. Through this process, if a teacher did not know certain weapon skills, or did not want to teach them, these would then not become part of his “style”, or ryu, and his students would not learn them, or consider them part of the art. Hence some schools contain no weapon techniques, and with students encouraged to stay within one “ryu,”<sup>5</sup> cross training became less likely. In the long run, this led to ryu devoted entirely to weapon arts, partially as a reaction to the lessening of these practices in the larger Okinawan martial community, and partially since these teachers taught weapon skills and formed a school teaching them. However, as this stylistic formality increased in the early 20th century, it added another impetus to the increasingly liminal nature of the Okinawan weapon arts.

So, the name change creates a change in how the art is seen- it formally becomes an unarmed art- and codification creates some incentives to limit access to weapon training. Added to this, some of the main practitioners and teachers of the art work to push a model of it related to the Japanese Shin Budo, with clearly defined boundaries and a set of values that emphasize spiritual and physical training as much as or more than connection to earlier combative traditions. At the same time, Japan and Okinawa were changing. There is little need for armed hand-to-hand combat skills in the modern world. Soldiers use guns, and

civilians are mostly unarmed. It is easy to see the potential usefulness of karate as a means of self-defense. Training with archaic weapons is however, a little different- it is harder to justify it in any practical terms in the modern world, and Meiji Japan was nothing if not focused on moving into that modern world. Part of making the Okinawan arts relevant to the rapidly changing culture of Japan and Okinawa was removing the elements that seemed most incongruous with the push towards “modernity.” Again as was the case in the development of Kendo and Judo. It does not, on the surface, seem as relevant, so weapon training perhaps seemed easy to push aside.

“Doing hard, fast pair work day after day entails risk, and if you don't have some fear of injury you do not really understand the risks involved.”

This incongruity is then coupled with certain logistical issues. One is simply the amount of time it takes to develop anything resembling mastery of a variety of armed and unarmed skills. With karate being promoted as a “way,” like Judo or Kendo, it also becomes something people pursue as a part of a larger life, a method of self-cultivation. As a part of a larger life, the time needed to develop a full skill set becomes even harder to invest. Weapon training usually comes after some skill in unarmed technique is developed. It is not for new students, and in larger classes with students training for a shorter time, particularly in settings like the universities where karate was initially popularized in mainland Japan, it may never even come up. With students engaged for reasons of fitness or self-cultivation, it is not even necessary. Weapon training also requires much more space than empty hand training, is more dangerous, and has added equipment costs. Take all that, and with the art potentially redefined not to include it, it is easy to see how weapon training may have come to be seen as a separate, and less common, part of the Okinawan martial tradition. One not for all practitioners, but only for those who chose to go into the arts in a certain way.

By extension, then, it is also easy to see how it is even less well integrated into

karate training in the west. Not only did westerners start training karate well after the name change formally shifted its name to “empty hand” and these trends had had some time to work themselves out in Okinawa and Japan,<sup>6</sup> but in many cases they learned in mainland Japan, where the main systems – Shotokan and its descendants like Wado-ryu, Japanese Goju-kai, Shitoryu, and so on – don't include much if any weapon training. On Okinawa some westerners had instruction in weapon techniques, but most of the first generations also trained for a limited time, usually a short tour of duty on the island, giving many of them little time in which to get past the earlier stages of unarmed training. Even if they did have some training in kobudo, the weapons themselves were harder to come by back home, as were people to train them with. So it is even easier to see how in the west weapon training could have come to be seen as a separate, less common, and less important part of the tradition.

However, it is not separate, not less important, and historically not less common. While on the mainland many karate styles developed without armed techniques, on Okinawa senior practitioners have always maintained a connection to both. As noted above, as new systems developed they included weapon training, and even in the case of systems like Goju-ryu, most major exponents pursued instruction in kobudo, and maintained it in their practice. Given the incentives not to –logistical pressures, a push towards a defined budo model, systems codified not to include it, and a nomenclature that excludes it – why has kobudo training remained so central to the Okinawan arts?

In short, because the empty hand arts are incomplete without it. To quote a senior practitioner of Uechi-ryu and student of Shinken Taira, Katsuhiko Minowa: “karate and kobudo are like two wheels on an axle” (McKenna, 2006). I agree, and would further argue that karate and kobudo are not separate arts. Their connection for the earlier generations of Okinawan martial artists is clear, as is the importance of weapon training for most of today's senior practitioners. They are all parts of Okinawan “ti.” Making the point even clearer, Ryugo Sakai said to me in 1992: “you

cannot understand karate if you do not understand weapons.” I agree. But, one may ask, why?

First, I would say that the mindset of any martial training is crucial. There is much said these days about the difference between sport karate and classical karate. I think these definitions are somewhat fluid, hard sometimes to pin down. However, the attitude that weapon training brings is markedly different from the attitude that sport karate creates. Using a weapon is a constant reminder of the dangers of practice, and the deadly nature of the techniques studied. I am not a big fan of the “its so deadly we can't really practice it” school of talk. That's because often talk is all it is. To be “deadly” you need lots of training; you need to be fast, precise, strong, and determined to do damage. You also need to know how to do the “deadly” damage. Weapon training brings many of these elements to the forefront. In doing pair work, and armed or unarmed you cannot really train without doing pair work, the danger is apparent. Unless you are going so slowly the training is useless anyway or are so far away that only the weapons touch (useless again), a mistake can lead to serious injury or even death. Unarmed training is much more forgiving – one can take a decent punch, even to the face, with minimal damage – a split lip, loose or broken teeth, a broken nose, etc. However, a decent stab with the sai into the body might kill you, and will certainly require immediate emergency medical attention. This difference, if you are training hard and fast, creates a certain mindset. It



David Nauss, Fred Lohse, bo versus sai, Cambridge 2002.



*Kumi waza.*

Courtesy of Jim Brath.

requires attention, and proper intention. It requires trust in both self and partner. It eliminates competition, unless you want to train in a dojo full of cripples. You can't get lazy and let an attack in, and if your partner is training properly and making his attacks fast, hard, and as close to his targets as possible, you can't get lazy, ignore a single attack, or safely make random movements. You also need to deal with fear. Doing hard, fast pair work day after day entails risk, and if you don't have some fear of injury you do not really understand the risks involved. The risk is minimized through proper training, but never goes away. You need to accept and train past it to progress. These elements combine to create a mindset that is, in my opinion, that of classical karate, or toudi- a fighting art, not a sport. I believe it is focused and facilitated by weapon training, in a way unarmed training can't really match. At the same time, weapon training emphasizes a number of crucial physical elements that are easier to miss in unarmed practice. Proper ma'ai, or range, is essential to all techniques. But in unarmed practice, the differences in range are sometimes hard to see. Variations in height and reach of partners, and the variety of attacks with different ranges from shoulder bash to fully extended kick, come quickly and are sometimes very subtle. The larger differences between weapons, and their vastly different utility at different ranges, makes the practice of proper ma'ai very clear, and easier to understand. Moving between them then helps develop a sense of how range shifts, and how you can use those

*"The larger differences between weapons and their vastly different utility at different ranges, makes the practice of proper ma'ai very clear, and easier to understand."*

changes. Moving between them also makes one shift the focus of intention. You can see when someone is using a bo but thinking of their body- their intention is in their hands and feet, not where the weapon is. Shifting one's focus out through the weapon is a mental exercise in itself, one that teaches a great deal about range, intention, and timing.

Coupled with that is the process of developing targeting and precision. The striking surfaces of most weapons are much smaller than that of, say, an elbow. To hit properly you need to know where the weapon is going, quite precisely. While in unarmed pair work a general punch to the body might be acceptable (if not desirable), in weapon training a general strike is not really effective, or safe for your partner. Nor is it possible when the surface area of the striking weapon might be less than 1 centimeter in diameter. At the same time, the path the weapon

*"It's easy to forget the huge variety of things the body can do, and weapon training helps refine the sense of options open, helping to keep the practitioner using the proper tool for the task at hand, armed or unarmed."*

you about making sure you use the same precision in your unarmed technique, as well as again teaching you about shifting your focus to where it needs to be instead of where it is habitually.

The variety of weapons practiced is also a teaching tool. One counters a bo attack with a kama differently than one does with an eku (oar). Each weapon has a different range, as discussed above. They also have different characteristics- some cut, some pierce, some bludgeon, some, like the body, can do a variety of these. Some can take an attack directly and some require



*Houhan Soken.*

travels is also crucial. While I might treat someone with a slightly wild punch as a training opportunity, I won't do pair work with someone who can't really control where their weapon is going. It's too dangerous. In developing skill, you need to be able to control both the target and the path the weapon takes to get there, very cleanly. This then leads to being able to put the weapon where you want, when you want, in the way you want. In turn this can teach

dodging or redirection when used to defend. These options are determined by their physical qualities, and changing between them teaches a sense of how to use different options in a way that is again harder to see with unarmed practice, since all the options are always there. For example, it's hard to grab with a tonfa, but pick up nunchiyaku (2 section flail) and suddenly a whole set of seizing techniques becomes available. It's easy to forget the huge

variety of things the body can do, and weapon training helps refine the sense of options open, helping to keep the practitioner using the proper tool for the task at hand, armed or unarmed.

Finally, weapon training also helps train body movement and mechanics. The bo, for example, is stiff. If the body is also stiff, little power will be transmitted through the weapon. It will move slowly and inaccurately, and the more strength poured in, the less effective the strikes will become. This is, pretty much, the same in karate training. However the bo, and other weapons, make this immediately clear. They teach pliability of form, quick footwork and agility, and evasion in a way that is slightly harder to do in karate training. One can, if planted properly, take a strong sweep or mawashi geri (round kick) to the leg. One cannot take a strong strike with the bo there and stay standing. That difference alone changes the practice.

Together these and other things amount to an added dimension in training. The different emphasis creates small but noticeable differences, ones that help develop certain skills more easily. While some are physical, most are mental – shifts



Fred Lohse, Sakai Ryugo, Kagoshima, 1992

Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

in focus, intention, and conception that are challenging but rewarding. Its not that they can't be developed through unarmed practice alone – they most certainly can. It's just that weapon training forms, in some ways, a shortcut or training assist that carries across weapon and body, helping develop a more fully rounded and more capable martial artist.

In short, historically the weapon arts of Okinawa were practiced along with the unarmed arts, as part of a continuous body of knowledge. They are as intrinsic to the martial culture of the island as its more

“One can, if planted properly, take a strong sweep or mawashi geri (round kick) to the leg. One cannot take a strong strike with the bo there and stay standing. That difference alone changes the practice.”

popular karate, and have been treated as such by most all of the island's famous martial artists. They also carry an aesthetic, a beauty, all their own. For various historical and cultural reasons, the unarmed aspect of Okinawa's arts has come to the fore in recent decades, with this shift being particularly emphasized by the formal name change away from a general martial moniker (toudi) to the term “empty hand” (karate). However, the weapon arts, while currently less popular, teach certain concepts central to the larger martial ethos of the island, and so form an element of training that is essential to truly understanding these arts. They are as much toudi as any unarmed practice.

Much as my teachers do, I believe that one can not really practice Okinawan karate if one does not practice kobudo. It's not that I don't like karate or think it has great depth. It does. It's just that alone it is incomplete. Or, perhaps, as Shinpo Matayoshi said to me, it is just that “karate, yes, it is one of the weapons in the Okinawa kobudo.”

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Naha-te was a Meiji period term for Okinawan martial arts that developed in the Naha area of Okinawa. These include Goju-ryu, Tou'on-ryu, and Uechi-ryu. Uechi-ryu is also notable in its exclusion of armed techniques. However, it came to Okinawa well after the development of most of the other systems on the island; Kanbun Uechi did not start teaching until 1924, and Uechi-ryu was not taught in Okinawa until as late as 1949 (see McKenna, 2006, History of Uechi-ryu, p. 23). Since armed techniques are often taught later in many Chinese arts, it is interesting to speculate that Kanbun Uechi may have missed out on more than the Suparinpe he supposedly did not learn, but there is no evidence to make this anything but speculation.

<sup>2</sup>Even systems founded by people like Juhatsu Kyoda and Shoshin Nagamine include armed techniques.

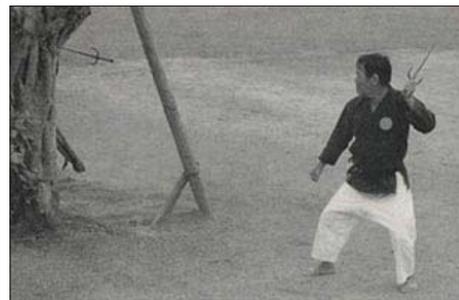
<sup>3</sup>Methods for using a guwa, or kue, an Okinawan and Japanese farming hoe. A number of the kata in the system use this nomenclature. They include: Kama no ti, Kuwa no ti, Tsuken Akachu no Eku di, and Nunti no ti, among others.

<sup>4</sup>Perhaps in part because of an ambivalence on his part. We will never know, but I imagine he was in some ways caught between wanting to preserve the tradition he valued so much, and bringing it

into what he saw as a new world.

<sup>5</sup>The impetus for this, a combination of Confucian ideology emphasizing respect for the teacher, nationalist sentiment also emphasizing loyalty and respect for elders, and commercial incentives that became more relevant after the war, is a complex issue, and outside the scope of this article.

<sup>6</sup>Indeed, while there was never a complete discontinuation of weapon training on Okinawa, the unarmed arts had grown so much more popular that the founders of both of the main lines of kobudo instruction on Okinawa today, Shinken Taira and Shinpo Matayoshi, stated a desire to preserve and promote Okinawa's armed traditions as one reason for opening their dojo. In some ways, it is possible to see the “decline” in the kobudo noted by both



Shinpo Matayoshi throwing sai.

men as instead a change in an existing balance: a vast increase in one portion of the art instead of a decline in another.

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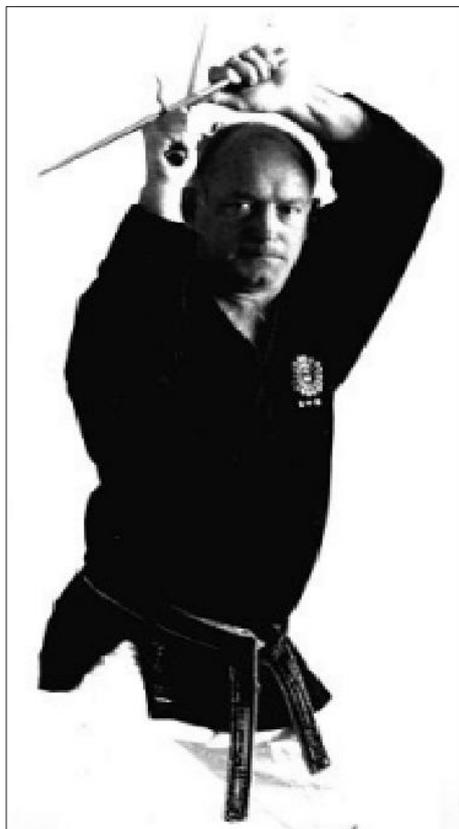
# Interview with Fred Lohse

**Fred Lohse is a practitioner of the Okinawan martial arts and chief instructor of the Kodokan dojo in Boston which is dedicated to training of Goju-ryu karate do and Matayoshi kobudo. A path in the martial arts that began with curiosity and evolved into discipline, overcoming obstacles and gaining insight. An introduction to a martial artist who embraces both armed and unarmed disciplines.**

- By Lex Opdam -

Mr. Lohse, although we have met and trained with each other in the past in the USA and the Netherlands, would you be so kind as to introduce yourself to our readers?

Yes, I would be happy to. I was born in Massachusetts, and much to my surprise live there now. I have worked as a teacher and school administrator, and now work as a contractor in the Boston area. I started training Goju-ryu karate and Matayoshi kobudo in 1986, under Kimo Wall, while a student at the University of Massachusetts.



Kimo Wall.

Courtesy of Kimo Wall.

After college, I moved to Japan and took a job working for the Ministry of Education. I lived there for a little over two years, and practiced Higa lineage Goju-ryu and Matayoshi kobudo under Sakai

Ryugo (a student of Sensei Higa and Sensei Matayoshi in the 50s and early 60s), as well as made periodic visits to the Kodokan honbu dojo to train with

“life is for living, not just thinking about the possible future”

Matayoshi Shinpo. While living in Japan I also had the opportunity to practice Jigen Ryu Heiho in the dojo in Kagoshima, and Ufuchiku kobudo under Masada Kei'ichi. I then spent some time traveling, and returned to the states to do graduate work at Harvard University in Japanese Studies and International Education. Since then, I have been training with Kodokan Boston, and on occasion with Gakiya Yoshiaki. We run a small dojo here in Boston, practicing Goju-ryu and Matayoshi kobudo, and I consider myself lucky to have some great training partners and to have had such fantastic and generous teachers.

Sensei Kimo Wall formed his own organization in 1970 and called it Kodokan or 'School of the Old Way' to honor his teacher Matayoshi. In the years that followed, he founded several schools in and outside the United States and began teaching in 1981 for the Physical Education Department of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

You entered Sensei Kimo Wall's Kodokan in 1986 while you were a student. Did you ever encounter the martial arts before this time and what was your attraction to the martial arts?

I had no martial arts training before that, except that in high school I used to "spar" with a friend who did Uechi-ryu. We played around, but there was no method to it. I knew nothing else about martial

arts except from movies and books. Probably due to popular images, I was interested in trying it out, but I'm not sure I would still be practicing if I did not happen onto a good teacher.

From the first day in the dojo I knew I was hooked. The practice was so different than the images in the movies, and so much more interesting.

I can imagine that your growing interest especially in this early stage of your real exposure towards martial arts when entering Sensei Kimo Wall's dojo would change to a different kind of catalyst for further and deeper study and practice.

What did it mean to you when you started with the martial arts and what does it mean to you nowadays? Could you express in what way martial arts affected your life? When I started, it was just for curiosity, and to have a way to work out. It soon



Ryugo Sakai and partner, Toguchi dojo, late 1950s.

Courtesy of Anthony Mirkin.



Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

Fred Lohse, David Nauss, Kimo Wall, Liu Chang'i, Mike Piscitello, Watertown 1996.

process has introduced me to people I would otherwise not have met, taken me places I would never have gone, and helped me learn things about myself, others, and our world that have helped me grow as a person. In general, it has made my life more interesting, and fulfilling place. Besides, it's fun.

became an important part of my schedule, but I doubt I could have said why, except that it was fun. Difficult, painful, and exhausting, but fun. Nowadays it is still hard to explain, and the main reason is that it is still fun. I enjoy going to the dojo, and enjoy the practice. It has taken a very large place in my life, and I feel like there is still so

**“One didn't practice to "stay in shape," but stayed in shape to practice.”**

much in it for me to learn. When I started, I needed the discipline (though I doubt I would have said that then!) and the discipline still adds a great deal to my life, as does the desire to be continually learning and growing. The process of pushing myself to learn, of overcoming obstacles like injuries, time constraints, and so on has taught me a great deal about what one can do if the desire is there. The Japanese terms seishin tanren and keiko sort of sum this up. They are difficult to explain, but in general refer to the ideal that the sometimes difficult or painful daily push to engage is more important than reaching any far-off goal. This reminder that life is for living, not just thinking about the possible future, is a good one.

On a more straightforward level, I have also made many great friends and done some very interesting things because of the practice, and I feel in general that training has made me a more connected and aware person. Because I have focused so much time over the years on training, and researching what we do, it would be easy to say I was too focused on one thing, and I have certainly sacrificed other things to do it. Nevertheless, I have found that this

**Could you describe the way you were instructed by Sensei Kimo Wall in the first few years while being a student at the University of Massachusetts? Were there separate lessons in Goju-ryu and Mata-yoshi kobudo and what focus did the lessons have concerning kata and kumite?**

The training I started with would be familiar to most Okinawan Goju-ryu students. We trained 5 days a week, and sometimes informally on weekends. Sensei Kimo ran every training session, assisted by a few seniors who had more experience than us college students. In the last year I was there, classes were run by his senior student, Sensei Giles Hopkins. We did warm-ups, calisthenics, lots of basics and paired basics, lots of basic kata, and a lot of work with paired sets Sensei Kimo designed for Geki sai and a couple of the



Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

Fred Lohse, kama, Kagoshima 1991.

kata Sensei Seikichi Toguchi created- Geki ha dai ni and Kaku ha dai ichi. From there it was work on the classical kata and some work with applications of them. It was a university dojo, and so most of the dojo members had 4 years or less of training. Therefore there was less emphasis on classical applications and more on basic kata and application, basic skills like punching, blocking and throwing, and so on. The connection between kata and application was made very clear, from the first day.



Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

Fred Lohse, tonfa, Amami Oshima, NHK television demo, 1990.

Also, like the Higa dojo on Okinawa, we did essentially no jiyu kumite, and we never did any sport application. In fact, my first exposure to sport karate was in Japan- I had never really seen it before, and was very disappointed.

The kobudo was less formal. Not everyone was interested, and training was either done during regular classes, after class, on weekends, or on our own. Again, the focus was on kata and paired sets, much like the karate.

**You have lived in Japan for two years and trained in different dojo's while being there. Were there big differences in instruction on a social/cultural level when comparing the martial arts training you were exposed to in the USA and Japan?**

This is a huge question. The short answer was that in the dojo, there were few differences. Sensei Kimo taught in a traditional manner, and his instruction was very similar to what I had in Japan. There were some differences, of course. Since I was training with adults in Japan (many with 20 or more years experience), not college students, and since Sensei Sakai did not use Sensei Toguchi's kata, we focused almost entirely on supplementary training, body conditioning, basics, sanchin, classical kata, and application of the classical kata. Like many dojo in Okinawa, there was



Mr. Higo, unknown, Matayoshi Shinpo, Fred Lohse, Okinawa 1990.

Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

also very little emphasis on calisthenics during class training- we were expected to keep fit and use supplementary equipment outside class time. One didn't practice to "stay in shape," but stayed in shape to practice.

Of course training was very challenging physically, but through karate technique, not simple exercises. The instruction was very detailed, and I also noticed that as my language skills improved, my ability to receive instruction did as well.

One thing I did notice is that, perhaps again because it was an adult dojo, there was little military-style discipline, like I have seen in many American dojo. We would each start when we got to the dojo, and there would only be a short group warm up when sensei formally bowed in and started class. Then Sensei Sakai would have different people work on different things, instead of training us as one group. Sensei Matayoshi often taught the same way. You would spend a good deal of time working alone, with one partner, or just a couple of people. Instruction was very detailed, and very personal. There was also less attention to class time. Training started when the first student arrived, sometime between 6:30 and 7:30 PM, and finished with senior kata, application, or a lecture, sometimes as late as 11 PM. I feel that, in general, in Japan the discipline is expected to come from the students, so instead of pushing students who are going soft, the teacher will let them do as they will and focus on the students who are trying hard. Interestingly enough, you might say it is more individualistic.

There was also less questioning. In Japan the concept of respect is very clear. The students might ask questions if given the opportunity, but even when people are close

in rank, juniors don't usually question their seniors.

This is normal in many work and social environments, where the senpai-kohai concept is very clearly understood. This means that students will work on what they are taught instead of constantly looking to what is next.

It also means that one does not ask questions unless given the opportunity, though Sensei Sakai was somewhat unusual in that he would occasionally encourage questions, usually after a long training session.

While there are other differences, mostly due to differences in culture, the final thing that struck me was the reason most people had for training. While our training was very hard, sometimes painful, and focused on application, I never met anyone in Okinawa or Japan who said they had started training for self-defense purposes. The martial arts are one element of a larger set of social constructs in Japan. These "ways," like chado or shodo, are pursued for discipline, self-development, and connection to traditional values, as much or more than for their content. This attitude was central to practice, in that a certain significance was attached to ritual and form of practice. Personally, I believe that these forms often lead to better under-

standing of and ability with the content, though this methodology is more similar to an old-fashioned apprenticeship than most modern pedagogical theories.

**'One didn't practice to "stay in shape," but stayed in shape to practice.'** This concept is very unfamiliar in most Western martial arts dojo's. What is your own opinion on this matter and what expectations do you have when teaching martial arts to others in connection to this concept?

Yes, it is a different concept. The idea is that karate is martial arts, not a health club. The training is very physically demanding, but in practice one does pretty much only karate or kobudo. This can, at different times, be more or less aerobic, emphasize strength more or less, and so on. It certainly helps

**"students will work on what they are taught instead of constantly looking to what is next."**

keep one in shape, but three sessions a week is not enough to keep one in really good shape. A student is expected to maintain physical form. For strength training, aerobic training, flexibility training, and so on, the student is expected to see his or her weaknesses and improve on them in their own time. The dojo is there to practice the art, and the student has to be physically prepared for this. If they are not, they can participate, but they will be limited in how well they can learn, how they progress, and what they can do in



Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

Fred Lohse and Masada Keiichi, Kama Uchionbo kumi waza, Kagoshima 1992.

the dojo. This is pretty much how we train here. Training is demanding, and some activity outside the dojo is pretty much essential to improving, so that each training session does not just break you down. I try to keep in shape outside class, and in a good week will train or work out 2-3 times

and want to see other people enjoy what you do- you need to teach others to have people to train with, and to maintain your art. I wound up teaching classes on occasion in my dojo in Japan, when none of the senior teachers were present, and I have been asked to do an occasional se-

requires additional insurance and liability coverage, and we have decided not to pay for that, and not to assume those liabilities.

**You mentioned the sempai-kohai relationship. What do you expect from the students in the Boston Kodokan dojo where you instruct and what kind of obligations in a spiritual sense do you have/feel towards your students and/or fellow martial artists as human beings and as part of society?**

Well, another big question. As for what I expect of the students, that's simple. I expect them to respect and listen to their seniors and treat their juniors well. I also expect them to train hard, and take charge of their own progress. As for my obligations, that is more difficult to say. I feel I have a responsibility to understand what I am teaching as best I can before teaching it, to be honest with my students and training partners, and to push myself to keep improving. I also believe it is necessary to teach responsibly. This means not to do anything that will damage a student, to treat each student as a person not just a face in the dojo, and to have a plan for imparting what we do, not to be random with the students. We don't live in Japan, so some of the social structures around the sempai/kohai relationship would be dysfunctional here. However, one element in that ideal that does carry easily is that the teacher has much more responsibility than the student: the student just has to show up, do what he or she is told, and work on their own to try to understand it. The teacher has to keep improving him or her self, guide the student responsibly through the material,



*Tsuken Akachu no eku di, Kagoshima 1991.*

Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

besides our classes. At other times, with various demands from work and family, I won't do anything outside of class, if I even make all our classes. I have the same expectations for myself that I have for the students, and feel a need (for many reasons) to try to keep my general physical level up. I certainly feel I need to be in better shape!

**Could you tell us something about the small Kodokan dojo in Boston that you run together with some other students of Sensei Kimo Wall and tell us your motivation to start teaching martial arts?**

The dojo was started by a few friends from college, who wanted a place to train. They started it while I was living in Japan, and I joined when I moved back to the area. I wound up doing some of the karate and most of the kobudo teaching over time.

**"The idea is that karate is martial arts, not a health club."**

There was no real motivation for this other than wanting to have a place to train, and to share. As my friends and I kept training, we wound up teaching new students. I think it just happens if you keep training

minar by people who are interested in what we do. Over time, I have found I enjoy the process of opening our art to someone who is interested, and motivated.

I'm not interested, however, in teaching professionally. I think it makes keeping an open mind about your training and keeping your focus on your training, not how to keep the bills paid, difficult. Besides, I don't really want my avocation to also be my vocation. Now, we run classes 3 times a week, for 2 hours, and the dojo is run as a non-profit: no one gets paid anything to teach (actually, the teachers pay dues as well) and is open to adults who are interested. We don't have children's classes.

**Is there a reason for not having children's classes?**

Yes, actually a couple. First, children's classes require a special skill set and require that somewhat different material be taught. The goals of the class are different. Since none of us have taught children, we don't really have the skills involved. At the same time, children's classes require time, and a great deal of effort. We all have full time jobs, and rent training space by the hour. Therefore, we prefer to train with adults, and be able to train and push ourselves physically. Finally, in the US teaching children



*David Nauss, Rich Cassidy, Cambridge 2001.*

Courtesy of Jim Baugh.



Courtesy of Kimno Wall.

*Kimno Wall, Chuck Brotman, bo versus sai.*

have a plan, and in general keep each student's best interests in mind.

On a different level, I don't think that the martial arts impart any special responsibilities outside the dojo except perhaps an extra need to control one's temper, and not to be violent. Well, perhaps also a responsibility to preserve and keep alive the arts we practice. But while it may not create a set of new obligations, martial arts training does not take away any of the obligations one has as a member of society. Being honest, honorable, and responsible for your actions, among other things, are part of what any human being should do, and any disciplined practice should reinforce those ideals, not pretend to put someone above them.

**Sensei Kimno Wall (William James) started his Goju-ryu karate in 1949 in Hawaii when he was six years old and continued his study of Goju-ryu on Okinawa in 1962. Did he ever mention to you who his first Goju-ryu teacher was and in what way he was taught until he moved to Okinawa in the service of the Marine Corps?**

He studied under Walter Higa and his son Sam Higa, who ran a store and the dojo in his town. On Oahu there was also Mitsugi Kobayashi. He said that the classes were identical to those in Okinawa- junbi and hojo undo, kihon, kata, and kumite. In the Higa lineage there is no jiyu kumite, and that was also the same. That dojo is no longer open, I believe.

**As I recall Mitsugi Kobayashi trained under Yukiso Yamoto (a Judo and Aikido teacher) and while he was on Okinawa in the 1950's also studied Goju-ryu under Seiko Higa, one of the most senior students of Chojun Miyagi. What connection did both Walter Higa and his son Sam have? Were they connected to Seiko Higa?**

Walter Higa (no relation to Higa Seiko- the name is common in Okinawa), the father, was a contemporary of Higa Seiko under Sensei Miyagi. He immigrated to Hawaii around 1930 with his family, as contract worker in the sugar cane and pineapple industry. Sam Higa learned from his father.

**"The teacher has to keep improving him or her self, guide the student responsibly through the material, have a plan, and in general keep each student's best interests in mind."**

**On Okinawa Sensei Kimno Wall started studying under the well known masters Seiko Higa and Seiko Kina and later on after the death of Master Seiko Higa in 1966, he would receive instruction from Master Seiko Higa's son Seikichi. In the dojo of Master Seiko Higa not only Goju-ryu was taught, but also kobudo by the famous Master Matayoshi Shinpo. It was in this dojo that Sensei Kimno Wall received his main Goju-ryu and kobudo practice. Could you tell us something of the experiences and practices of Sensei Kimno Wall on Okinawa in the 60's?**

I can relate some of what I know. Training under Sensei Higa was done much as it was years later. There were two classes- the regular class that ended at around 9 PM and a seniors class that started then. Kata, application, kihon, etc. were the bulk



Courtesy of Jim Baah.

*David Nauss, Fred Lohse, Cambridge 2002.*

of training, with more application and advanced concepts in the seniors class. Perhaps the biggest difference was that the dojo was open every day, and training ran from early evening till late in the night. Training under Sensei Matayoshi was different in those days. Sensei Matayoshi had recently returned to Okinawa, and was reconnecting with many former training partners and students of his father. Sensei Kimno used to drive him around the island (since he had a car) to meet people. He had not yet started his dojo, or finalized a formal syllabus. Training was sometimes in the dojo of Sensei Higa (though Taira Shinken also taught there) where Sensei Matayoshi was living, sometime outside



Courtesy of Jim Baah.

*Fred Lohse, Cambridge 2002.*

the dojo, and sometime outside in other places. Sensei Kimo would often train during the day, when he was not at work on base, and so often trained one on one. Sensei Matayoshi would at times focus on one weapon for a month or more at a time, training every day. I also know that in kumi-waza Sensei Matayoshi would cover many techniques that are not in the kata.

**What do you exactly mean with techniques that are not in the kata?**

I mean that there are many techniques with each weapon that are not in the kata-counters, throws, etc.. Particularly for the less common weapons like the tinbe or sansetsukon, the kata form a base, but would have to be much, much longer to

**“one thing I think is often difficult for Japanese or Okinawan instructors is that it is sometimes very hard to communicate with their Western students.”**

contain all the information. Also, some weapons like the kyushaku bo or tekko did not have kata.

**You mentioned that kobudo master Taira Shinken also taught in the dojo of master Higa. Did he teach especially to the karate students of master Higa and in what way did he interact with master Matayoshi’s kobudo instruction and visa versa since both were teaching at the same dojo but also both taught differently?**



Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

Fred Lohse, David Nauss, bo versus sai, Cambridge 2003.

He did teach Sensei Higa’s students, but I don’t know for how long, or exactly how. I don’t really know how the two teachers interacted, except that Sensei Matayoshi was living in the dojo when he came back from Japan, and Sensei Taira had been teaching there before that. They were both friends of Sensei Higa. I believe that in those days there was much more sharing between different teachers than now, but I was not there and so cannot really say.

**What kind of relationship did Sensei Kimo have with masters Matayoshi and Higa? Although he was a foreigner, he seemed**

**to already have access to the inner circles of Okinawan karate society in the 1960’s.** I can relate some of what Sensei Kimo has shared with me. He came to Okinawa with a number of years of Goju-ryu training and a written recommendation to Sensei Higa, as well as experience in the Okinawan culture from his home dojo and the town in which he lived in Hawaii. This gave him a number of advantages that not every serviceman training in Okinawa in those days had. He was very active in the dojo, helped with things like rebuilding it after a typhoon and such, and with his work schedule was able to spend a lot of time in the dojo and with Sensei Matayoshi. He became close to both the Higa and Matayoshi families, and I know these personal relationships were, and are, very important to him. Other than that, I can’t really say much about his personal relationships.

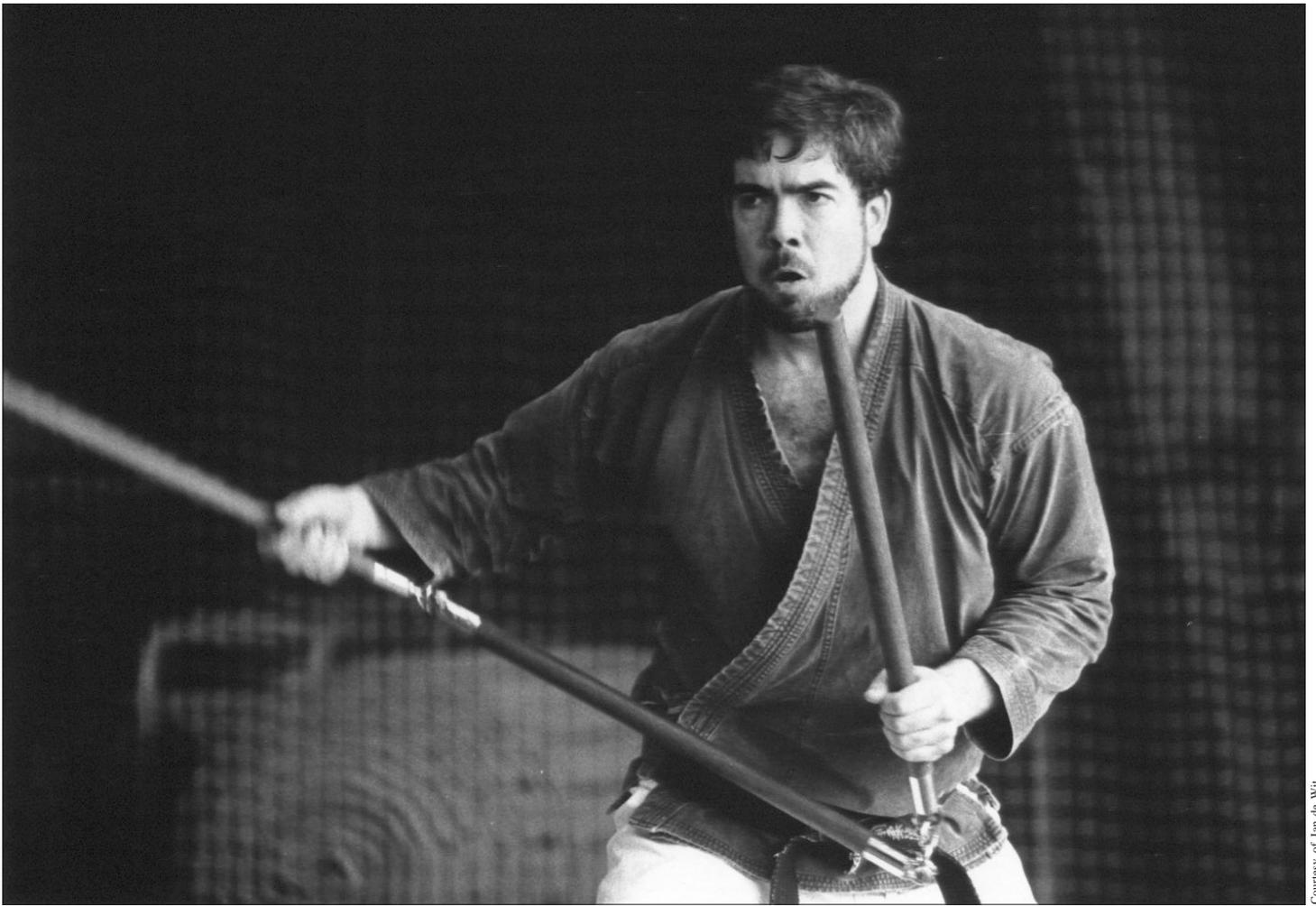
**I can imagine, since you are a practicing Matayoshi kobudo artist, that it was an honor and pleasure to train under Grandmaster Matayoshi himself?**

It certainly was. Sensei Matayoshi and his students were very generous to me, and the dojo in those days, with so many seniors concentrated in one place, was an amazing place to visit as a student. I consider myself lucky to have been able to train under Sensei Matayoshi, and the senior members of the dojo when I visited there. Lest I be mis-interpreted, I have



Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

Kenichi Yamashiro, Shinpo Matayoshi, Fred Lohse, Kodokan dojo, Okinawa 1995.



Courtesy of Jan de Wit.

*Sansetsukon kata, The Netherlands 1997.*

never been a “top student” of his- most of my training has been under Sensei Kimo, Sensei Sakai, and Sensei Gakiya - but due to my introductions, instruction, and experience in the system, I was able to train in the Kodokan when I visited Okinawa, and receive more than just basic instruction in the system from Sensei Matayoshi. Of course, language ability helped here as well- one thing I think is often difficult for Japanese or Okinawan instructors is that it is sometimes very hard to communicate with their Western students. While the base of training is pretty physical, there is a great deal of instruction that is verbal- imagine trying to learn soccer or how to swim from a coach you could not understand, for

instance.

In any case, Sensei Matayoshi was a fantastic teacher, with an amazing depth and breadth of knowledge about the Okinawan martial arts. He was very generous with what he taught, and was always willing to take time to explain something, and to take questions from a sometimes impertinent gaijin. He seemed to encourage similar behavior in his seniors, and I was treated very well in those days by Sensei Gakiya, Sensei Yamashiro, Sensei Itokazu, Sensei Komura, and Sensei Nagai in particular. He was also a very nice guy. Very funny, very quick, and a gentleman. Again, I didn't know him that well, but well enough to wish I had had more time to spend in Okinawa in those days.

There are a number of things that would be important, at least to me. The most important thing in any dojo is the atmosphere. A dojo must be welcoming, the people kind, and the expectations of the students

“A dojo must be welcoming, the people kind, and the expectations of the students high.”

high. People should enjoy being there. Of course the training must be hard, but if the teacher or seniors are domineering, mean or surly, or the “feeling” of the dojo seems bad, then it does not matter how good they are- it is not a good place to train. Karate and kobudo are about life long practice, and I don't think it's a good idea to dedicate yourself to an unhealthy environment.

After that, as far as training goes, there are a number of things I would suggest one look for. Credentials are a mixed bag. Some very skilled practitioners in the West no longer have a direct connection to a specific dojo in Okinawa, while some highly ranked and well connected people have



Courtesy of Jim Baab.

*Sansetsukon bo kumi waza, Green StreetStudios 2003.*

In the article ‘Karate and Kobudo’ you have written for this edition of the Meibukan Magazine, you clearly show the connection between karate and kobudo. What would you personally advise people in our Western society who are looking for an Okinawan martial arts school in which to practice and study?



Ryuichiro Sakai, Fred Lohse, Ryugo Sakai, Ryudo Nagata, Kagoshima 1992.

Courtesy of Fred Lohse.

very poor skills. Therefore, I would look for a connection to Okinawa on the part of the dojo, one with many years of history, not just a couple of years as part of a large

“Some very skilled practitioners in the West no longer have a direct connection to a specific dojo in Okinawa, while some highly ranked and well connected people have very poor skills.”

organization. However, I would also make sure both the teacher and the senior students demonstrate good skills, and attitude. The seniors in some ways are more important, because if the teacher is good but cannot teach, there is limited opportunity in the dojo for a student. I would also look for a well-rounded dojo. Not



Fred Lohse, David Nauss, bo vs sai, Cambridge 2003.

Courtesy of Jim Baah.

surprisingly for me that means both armed and unarmed techniques are taught, both include a full range of kihon, kata, and paired work, and the seniors are skilled in both.

One of the difficult things in the West is that there is something of a lack of good kobudo instruction. However, there are some teachers who learned in the 60s and 70s still teaching, and a number of younger teachers studying with good kobudo instructors now who are passing on the art. Particularly with the kobudo instruction, I would be sure to check on the teacher's connection to his martial lineage, and length of study. Finally, I would look at how the dojo is run. If it is an Okinawan art, the customs and language should be part of training. The classes should be organized but not overly rigid, the students should know how the dojo works, they should demonstrate proper reigi, or etiquette, and the dojo should be proud of its connection to their teachers, and to Okinawa and its martial heritage.

Lex Opdam, Editor-in-chief of Meibukan Magazine interviewed Fred Lohse in September 2006.

For more information on the Kodokan dojo please visit:  
[www.kodokanboston.org/index.html](http://www.kodokanboston.org/index.html)



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# Risk and Injuries in Contact Fighting

**As martial artists, we face difficult choices as we train. The closer we come to modelling the reality of a military or self-defense situation, the more likely we are to sustain (or cause) serious injuries. Thus, it is important to know whether the benefits of contact training outweigh the risks involved.**

- By Joshua Landa, MD -

Contact can mean many different things. There is a difference between a light punch with gloves to an elbow to the face, a controlled hip throw on a mat to a body-slam into the chairs. In addition, it can occur in a variety of situations ranging from friendly competition in a martial arts club to a professional fight. In this discussion, all of these scenarios are considered, but it must be remembered that details matter. The unifying theme, however, is greater contact during training and competition leads to both faster and more realistic learning while increasing the risk of injury.

An excellent example of this trade-off comes from a French study that looked at previously injured judoists and their abilities, and reached the surprising conclusion that the judoists with prior injuries developed “improved sensory and cognitive adaptation abilities.” Most astonishingly, the worst injuries were associated with greater improvement in balance. The article concluded, “Although high-level

“The unifying theme is the theory that increasing contact during training and competition leads to both faster learning and increased risk of injury.”

sports develop specific physiological and sensorimotor abilities involved in balance control, they also increase the risk of injuries.”<sup>1</sup> However, this study did not follow the people who quit judo because of similar injuries. Moreover, it did not consider motivation. Otherwise, how to explain the need for workers’ compensation or sport medicine?

Different schools have approached this issue of contact in different ways. Some embrace intense full-contact fighting, while others shy away from all competitive training. For instance, note the following

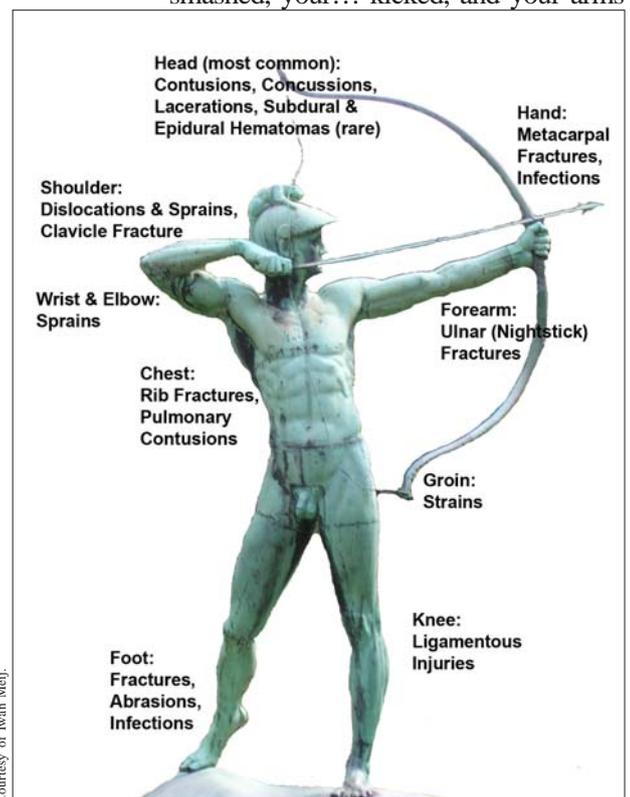
explanation of pushing hands sparring used by practitioners of the Chinese martial art of Tai Chi:

*Pushing Hands is a simplified form of sparring popular with students of Tai Chi. Lacking the punches and kicks common in the practice fighting of many external martial arts, Pushing Hands is a gentle sport of control where success is achieved by upsetting the balance of one’s opponent. Typically, participants begin facing one another, each in a bow stance. Each participant has his or her outside hand on the elbow of their opponent and the inside hand on the wrist. As the match begins, the pair use their hands to push against one another, seeking to control one another’s energy. Sudden or forceful shoving is taboo. The victor should be the pusher of the greatest skill, not the greatest brutishness.*<sup>2</sup>

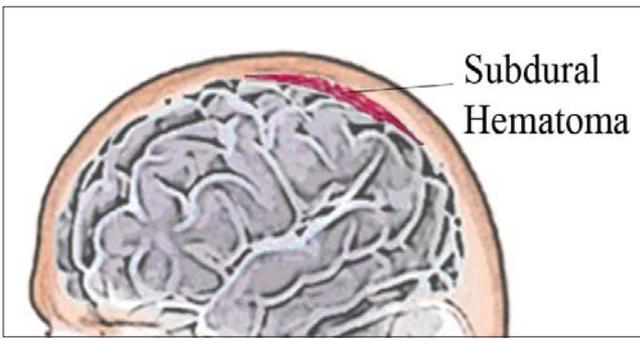
It is hard to imagine that this type of sparring causes many injuries to the participants. Thus, this method can be viewed as a good way of practicing martial arts, as it allows the practitioners to practice skills and techniques that might be useful in a self-defense situation without causing serious injury during training. Additionally, the practice probably helps the practitioner learn to remain calm, and also to control internal energy. Both of these qualities are certainly important in any fight or self-defense situation. At the same time, however, the dissociation from fear associated with this type of spar-

ring is not very realistic and does not accurately mimic a self-defense situation that one is likely to encounter. Thus, this relatively gentle approach to sparring contrasts starkly with the method used by modern practitioners of mixed martial arts (MMA), Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, and other high-contact arts. These styles have become popularized by a wave of no-holds-barred (NHB) competitions, most notable the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), where grappling arts, in particular Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, became a household name after the accomplishments of the Gracie family and their style.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is not always a particularly “gentle art”. For instance, Carlos Gracie, one of the earliest practitioners of the style of Jiu-Jitsu that eventually became what today is known as Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, once issued the following challenge: “If you want to get your face beaten and well smashed, your... kicked, and your arms



Common fighting sports injury locations and injuries.



Courtesy of Iwan Meij.

Schematic of subdural hematoma, a known injury risk in boxing.

Arizona Senator John McCain, are against Ultimate Fighting. As one author put it, the senator was “horrified at the ground fighting, kicks, and head butts seen in such competitions. It was ‘barbaric,’ he said. It was ‘not a sport.’ He sent letters to all 50 governors

asking them to ban ultimate fighting. The outcry against ‘human cockfighting’ became a crusade, and like many crusades, it was founded on misunderstanding.”<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, Ultimate Fighting may prove to be no more dangerous than boxing, where known risks include subdural hematoma. A properly located strike to the head (or a series of less accurate blows) can cause tearing to the bridging veins that connect the brain and the sinuses that carry blood away from the brain. This condition is thought to be the most common cause of fatalities in competitive boxing<sup>6,7</sup>, and is a risk in other contact sports as well.

broken, contact Carlos Gracie at this address...”<sup>3</sup> Gracie’s invitation makes apparent not only the aggressive training methods of practitioners of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, but also the attitude and general approach towards fighting that, at least for some, they embody.

Full contact is employed as a method of training under more “realistic” conditions. Although hurting one’s partner is not the goal, the methods are intended to simulate the lack of cooperation one would expect from a real opponent or attacker. Thus, Roy Harris, an expert in several martial arts including Jeet Kune Do, Karate, and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, writes in his article *Effectiveness in Fighting* that “sparring is one of the best tools to develop the timing of your techniques. For when you spar, you truly do not know what your opponent will do, so you must respond accordingly. You must develop your reflexes.”<sup>4</sup>

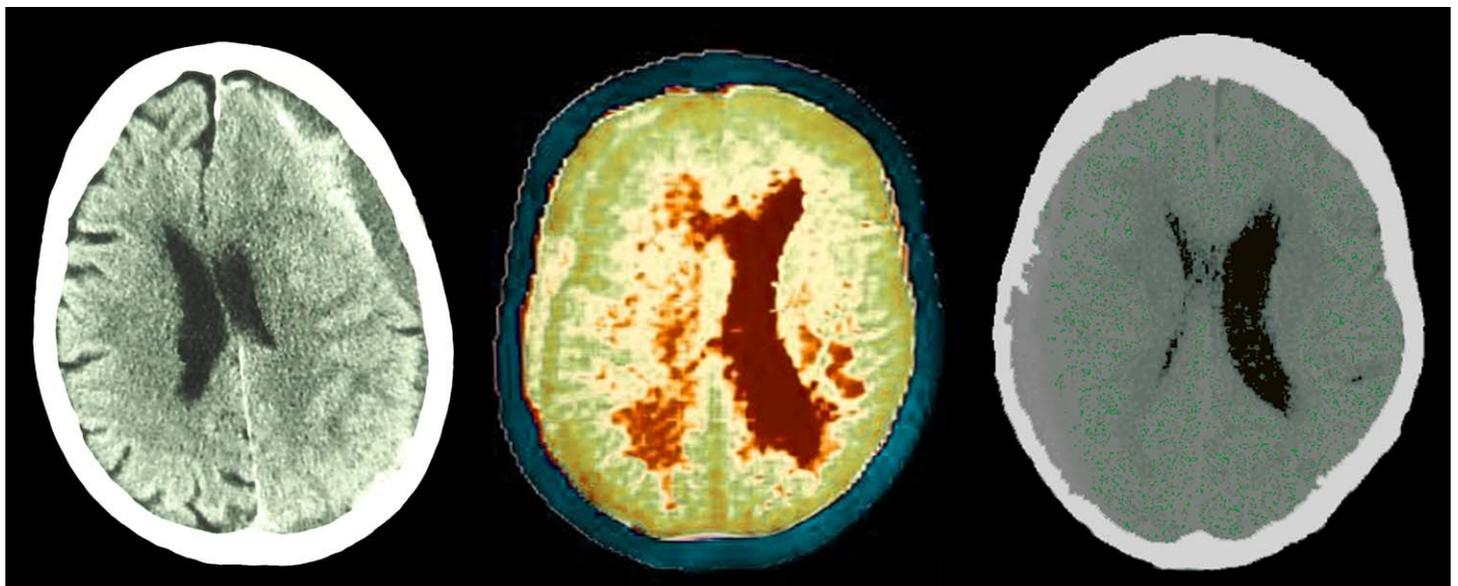
Other injuries associated with martial arts, boxing, judo, and similar sports are broken bones, ligamentous knee injuries, sprains of the shoulders and ankles, and assorted infections. True, such injuries in combative training situations, while elevated over non-contact training, are comparatively rare. But they do happen, and they are (or have the potential to become) very serious injuries. And, due to the nature of the sport, boxing or martial art injuries attract far more attention due to the way they were re-

ceived than if they occurred while the injured person had simply been walking down the street. It would be ideal to know the precise injury rate in contact fighting. Unfortunately, so far as I can tell, no one knows the real numbers of injuries. Instead, everyone seems to be arguing anecdotally rather than objectively.

“Full contact is employed as a method of training under more “realistic” conditions. Although hurting the partner is not the goal, the methods are intended to simulate the lack of cooperation one would expect from a real opponent or attacker. (Roy Harris)”

A search of “Martial Arts Injuries” in PubMed Plus (a major Internet search engine that searches for topics in clinical medicine across a large number of major research journals) yielded only 107 articles. Of these, I was unable to find even a single article that compared the injury rates of different martial arts to one another. And, in the articles about individual martial arts, there is not even unanimity about what the most dangerous techniques are.

For example, when used by law enforcement officials, the chokehold has been implicated in several deaths<sup>8</sup>. There was also a study described a 29-year-old man who developed an embolic stroke after “neck holding maneuvers” at a martial arts class<sup>9</sup>. There is a small but existent risk of embolism (dislodgement of a small blood clot) that can result in a stroke from carotid massage, a technique in which a physician



Images of subdural hematomas.

massages a carotid artery in the neck for therapeutic reasons. Nonetheless, most authorities believe that a choke, released in a reasonable time, is a generally benign technique unlikely to cause lasting damage. Indeed, one study recorded that, “while professional boxers may show brain functional impairment in comparison to normal subjects, judoists do not.”<sup>10</sup> A second study confirmed these findings, concluding, “There is no evidence of permanent central nervous system functional changes due to judo practice and choking.”<sup>11</sup> Although a third study raised the concern that “choking in judo may induce subclinical electroencephalographic perturbations”<sup>12</sup>, there was no evidence that any of these changes were at all relevant since there was no documented loss of function in this study either.

Similarly, NHB competitions have been a focal point for public concern. Therefore, one would expect them to be well studied. This has not happened, at least in the medical journals searched by PubMed Plus. In popular media, however, Brian Kodi gives an excellent approximation of the issue. He writes regarding the death of Douglas Dredge in a NHB competition that:

**“In his landmark paper that followed over 15,000 international martial artists over 18 years, Birrer showed that while overall injury rates were low, sparring was responsible for an incredible 74% of the injuries in taekwondo and karate.”**

*Mr. Dedge’s death inevitably brings up the issue of safety in NHB. MMA (mixed martial arts) events are inherently dangerous. Death, which is not uncommon in many other “safer” athletics, is inevitable in NHB. Those who tout NHB as a safer sport than boxing should take note of the following: Kevin Neundorff, a media and public relations assistant at USA Boxing, the governing organization for U.S. amateur boxing says that in 1992, the last year for which he had complete statistics, USA Boxing put on 23,528 bouts, and there were 87 insurance claims for injuries and two for deaths. And these are only amateur bouts. The number of pro boxing fights around the world very likely far exceeds this number. The*

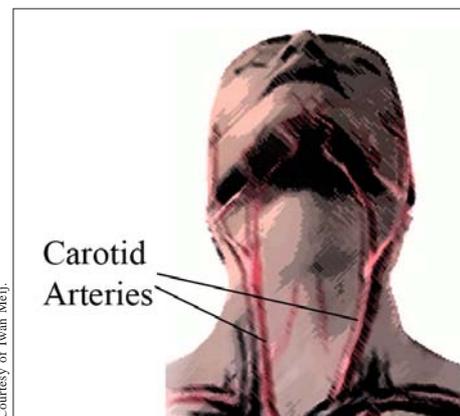
*American Journal of Medical Association (JAMA) puts boxing deaths at a rate of 0.13 per 1,000... UFCs (ultimate fighting competitions) have been around since 1993 with an average of 7 fights per event and 5 shows per year. The total number of UFC matches has not exceeded 180 in 5 years. Conservatively speaking, if there were 20 additional NHB organizations since 1993 with roughly the same number of fights as the UFCs, the sum of all MMA fights worldwide in 5 years would be under 3,780 and there’s already one accounted death. While it may be too early to tell, MMA risk for death appears to be at least two times higher than that of boxing.”<sup>13</sup>*

Kodi’s calculations take into account a number of assumptions that may or may not be true, and his analysis has far too few numbers to be statistically valid. However, his calculation is an interesting approximation and the fact that there has been even one death in an NHB match is alarming, considering there have been relatively few of them.

The concrete data that does exist in the established medical literature mostly relates to striking arts, perhaps due to the medical community’s longer-term interest in boxing. As is the case with boxing, most of the known studies show that striking arts result in high injury rates. In his landmark paper that followed over 15,000 international martial artists over 18 years, Birrer showed that while overall injury rates were low, sparring was responsible for 74% of the injuries in taekwondo and karate.<sup>14</sup>

Another grimly titled study, *Morbidity and mortality in the martial arts: A warning*, chronicled a series anecdotal injuries reported over 10 years during the course of martial arts activities. There was even one video-recorded fatality that the authors believed “demonstrate(s) the danger inherent in participation” in such activities. They also document the potential for serious neurological injury.<sup>15</sup>

Only one study of Muay Thai kickboxing, a sport and martial art centered on competitive fighting, was found. Muay Thai kickboxing has an injury rate of between 2 to 14 per 1,000 participants per year.<sup>16</sup> This is a rate is similar to injury rates in other



Location of the Carotid Arteries that get constricted during a choke.

striking arts such as taekwondo and karate. Although deaths occur in Muay Thai, as in boxing, sprained fingers and toes, cuts and bruises on the head, face, and neck, and bloody noses are the more typical injuries. Ultimately, one makes one’s decisions based on the best available information. In terms of sparring activities, practitioners and teachers must fairly assess whether the benefits of rigorous sparring, which are self-evident to most practitioners in developing essential fighting skills, are worth the injuries that are sustained while training. Additionally, it is useful to determine what increases training benefits while minimizing injuries. Thus, to give some examples, the use (or non-use) of protective gear, regulations regarding strikes to certain areas of the body, specific requirements of “tapping out”, and other details should be investigated both for effectiveness in training and risk of injury.

This said, the existing information tends to be anecdotal rather than objective, and sometimes polemical rather than scientific in tone. Injuries sustained in full-contact fighting arts, in particular martial grappling arts and professional MMA competitions, have not been well catalogued in peer-reviewed medical and scientific research methods. Nonetheless, there is evidence of increased risk of brain and joint injuries, with brain injuries more common in striking sports while joint injuries are more common in grappling sports. There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that participation in tournaments and contests leads to a higher risk of injury than does participation in friendly non-competitive training. The injury rates in MMA are not known, but the limited data available at this point shows that they are probably comparable to boxing and wrestling competitions.

## Addendum:

Since the original publication of this report, several additional studies of injuries regarding full contact arts have been published. In particular, it has been found that the most common cause of stoppage of a series of televised MMA bouts was blunt trauma to the head.<sup>17</sup> Another study of 4 MMA maneuvers showed the potential for certain moves to place significant stress on the cervical spine<sup>18</sup>, though whether this is clinically relevant is not clear. There are also newer studies on taekwondo and karate, which show that prevention is essential and newer rules may prevent some injuries, as well as a study on muay thai, which may have a higher

**“Injuries sustained in full-contact fighting arts, in particular martial grappling arts and professional MMA competitions, have not been well catalogued in peer-reviewed medical and scientific research methods. Nonetheless, there is evidence of increased risk of brain and joint injuries”**

injury rate than previously thought<sup>19</sup>. While much more research is needed, it is reassuring that the growing interest in MMA has produced some studies on the subject. The practitioner of full contact fighting must be aware that there are significant risks with these sports. However, at this time, these risks still have not been shown to equal or exceed the risks involved in other more widely sanctioned contact sports such as boxing.

**Joshua Landa** is a student of various martial arts including Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Ryukyū kempo. He also holds a black belt in Chung do kwon taekwondo. Since graduating medical school at the University of Pennsylvania in 2004, he has been a resident in orthopaedic surgery at New York University and the Hospital for Joint Diseases. He is currently taking an extra year in his residency as a research fellow specializing in the biomechanics of orthopaedic surgery.

## Footnotes

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<sup>3</sup>Published in a Brazilian newspaper ad, circa 1920s.

<sup>4</sup>Roy Harris. *Effectiveness in fighting*. From [bjj.org/articles/harris-effective-ness.html](http://bjj.org/articles/harris-effective-ness.html).

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# The Indomitable Shinjos

## of Okinawan Uechi-ryu Karate

At the 1984 karate demonstration commemorating the third anniversary of the death of Seiyu Shinjo, Grand Master Kanei Uechi spoke these words of praise: "It already has been three years since the great loss to our Association. Unfortunately, once Seiyu Shinjo became seriously ill, modern medicine could not help him. He worked actively as a teacher and as a board member of the Uechi-ryu Karate Do Association. Karate was not recognized by society during the 1940's to 1970's. Mr. Shinjo made great efforts to popularize, develop, and organize karate. Moreover, I could say that he was one of the persons who made the greatest strides toward karate becoming internationally known as a cultural inheritance of Okinawa. He was instrumental in making the Uechi-ryu Karate Do Association, one with an international stature. There are many of Mr. Shinjo's students actively teaching Uechi-ryu karate all over the world. I can rely on Mr. Kiyohide Shinjo, son of Seiyu Shinjo, to carry on his father's will."

- By Alan Dollar -

The Shinjo family is one of the most dynamic and renowned names of traditional Okinawan karate. Three generations of Shinjo men have helped mold the history of this unique karate style. The history of this karate family parallels the growth of Pangainoon and Uechi-ryu karate from the time Kanbun Uechi first taught martial arts outside China.

With the exception of Kanei Uechi, no one has had more influence on the development of Uechi-ryu karate and the Uechi-ryu Association than Seiryu, Seiyu and Kiyohide Shinjo. In the Japanese dialect their names can be pronounced Kiyoshi, Kiyoyu and Kiyohide, respectively. The

last name, Shinjo, can also be read Arashi-ro.

### Wakayama, Japan

Seiryu Shinjo (formerly called Seizan Shinjo) was born on Ie-jima, June 10, 1908. His father, Seisan Shinjo was a well-known bo [six-foot staff] expert on Ie-jima. Seiryu traveled to Wakayama seeking employ-

*"With the exception of Kanei Uechi, no one has had more influence on the development of Uechi-ryu karate and the Uechi-ryu Association than Seiryu, Seiyu and Kiyohide Shinjo."*

ment in 1923, one year before Kanbun Uechi. Seiryu found a job with the same company that Kanbun later would, the Himomaru Sangyo Kabushki Kaisha, a boseki factory. He worked at a different location but eventually heard stories of Kanbun and that he was now teaching. He introduced himself to Kanbun, and requested permission to become his student. Kanbun checked on Seiryu's background and observed his character before accepting him as a student.

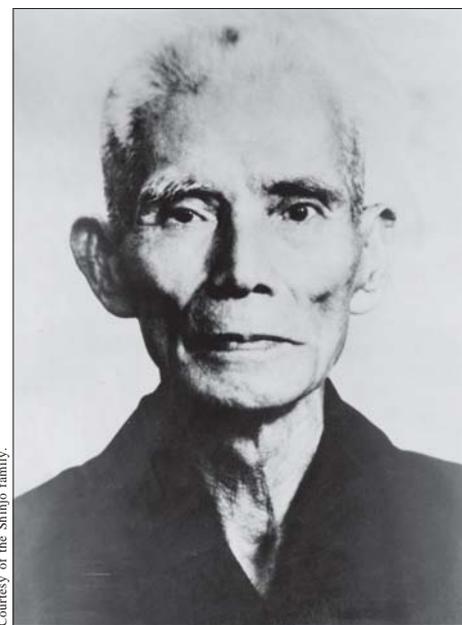
karate expert of the time, from Motobu, Okinawa. Seiryu Shinjo was a small, agile man who became known for his incredibly fast kicks. Hisaguwa Seizen (fast kicker Seizen) was the nickname given to him by his peers. Seiryu was a quiet, gentle man who would not quarrel with anyone. Kanbun grew to like him very much and they became the best of friends. Kanbun felt comfortable with Seiryu and Tsuru. Their house was the only place he could relax and express himself. It became a gathering place for Seiryu's friends including Kanbun, who was present for the birth of their daughter, Sayako. Sayako Shinjo later mar-



Kanbun Uechi.

Courtesy of the Shinjo family.

Seiryu Shinjo entered the Shataku dojo early in 1927. He and his wife Tsuru, whom he had met in Wakayama, were married later the same year. Tsuru is the daughter of Seisho Toyama, a famous



Seiryu Shinjo.

Courtesy of the Shinjo family.



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

*Tsuru Shinjo described her home as being very similar in size and appearance to Kanbun Uechi's house and dojo in Wakayama.*

ried Ryusen Tomoyose, the oldest son of Ryuyu. Ryuyu Tomoyose was Kanbun Uechi's first student in Wakayama.

Tsuru Shinjo died in March 1996, in Kadena, Okinawa. She was eighty-eight years old. She spoke with vigor and humor about her life around the karate men. She said the men would gather at her house and talk well into the night about karate and women.

One evening Seiryō and Kanbun talked so late into the night that Kanbun went to sleep there. Kanei Uechi (called Sandee at that time) became alarmed the next morning when he found his father gone. He feared Kanbun had been in a fight with rival karate men and lie beaten or dead somewhere.

He searched the many rivers and waterways that surround Wakayama, to no avail.

**“In Japan he always taught explosive individual moves from a kata, ikyodo, but never demonstrated the entire kata.”**

As evening approached, he pondered where his father might be and went to Seiryō's house. He found Kanbun and Seiryō seated around a small table, still deeply engaged in conversation.

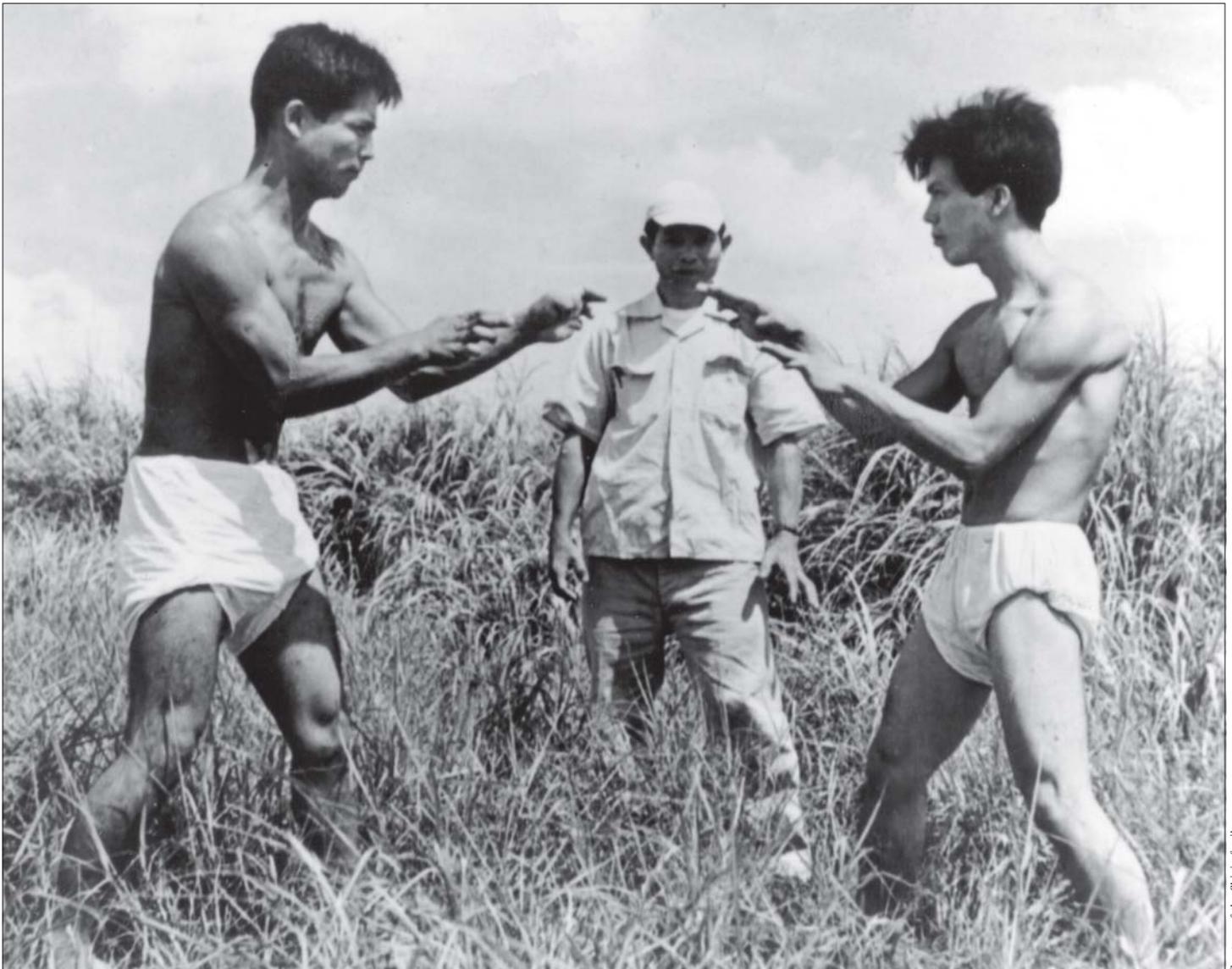
Tsuru Shinjo, who was very frugal, occasionally managed to obtain beef, which she would salt and store under the house.



Courtesy of the Shinjo family.

上地流嘉子納修武館  
Master Seiyu Shinjo.

Meat was scarce in Wakayama. There was a law in Japan that prevented the killing of cattle because of their importance in farming. Kanbun did not eat meat, but liked the tendons and cartilage. He



Courtesy of the Shinjo family.

*Seiyu Shinjo (left) spars as Kanei Uechi looks on.*



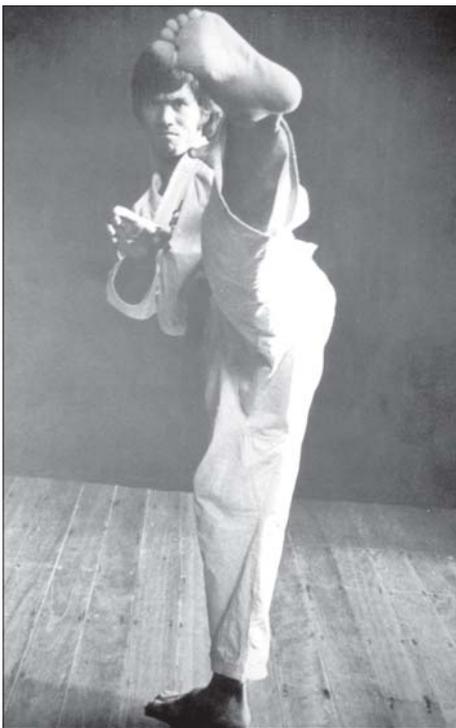
Hokonoto, a monument to those who died on Ie-jima Island during the war.

Courtesy of Alan Dollner.

believed eating them made his tendons strong. Tsuru often gave Kanbun the sinew from the meat she stored.

The Shinjo's first son Seiyu, born July 10, 1929, was named after Ryuyu Tomoyose. Seiyu was born premature, at seven months, and was so small his mother compared his head to the size of a teacup. He caught diphtheria when he was three years old and beat death by only ten minutes, according to doctors at the hospital. Seiyu was never sick, even with a cold, after that.

Kanbun became fond of the exuberant young Seiyu, who pleaded for years with his father to let him study karate. Seiyu became a student at Kanbun Uechi's Tebira dojo in 1939. He was ten years old.



Kiyohide Shinjo.

Courtesy of the Shinjo family.

Seiyu, and other new students performed cleanup and other duties around the dojo. The first three months of training consisted of doing Sanchin steps across the dojo. Holding his arms in the proper position was added to the stepping, the following three months.

The rambunctious young man complained daily to his father that they had done the same thing in class again. Seiyu remained

“On November 3, 1951, three years after the passing of the great karate master, Ie-jima Island produced a modern day karate legend named Kiyohide Shinjo.”

determined to learn karate. Eventually Seiryu began teaching his son at home, in addition to Kanbun's teachings. Seiyu Shinjo was exposed to an unprecedented learning opportunity for nine years. Classes at the elementary and high schools were taught in shifts, so children could work. Seiyu went to the Miyamae Shogoko elementary school, only a few hundred yards from the Tebira dojo. He later attended Wakayama Kogyo (Technical High School) at night. He trained in the morning sessions at the Tebira dojo and worked at a job making pots and pans during the day. The high school is still in operation today. Wakayama was relatively undamaged during the war and many buildings of that era remain.

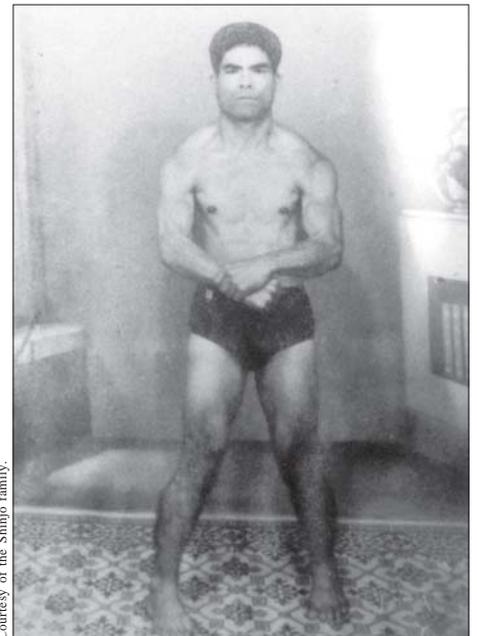
Seiyu Shinjo was drafted into the war effort by the Japanese military. He attended pilot school, including kamikaze (divine wind) pilot training. Fortunately the

war ended shortly after his military training began and Seiyu was released from duty. Seiryu became ill with a respiratory problem toward the end of their stay in Wakayama. He had to quit his karate training.

The harsh conditions in Japan after the war facilitated the decision to return to Okinawa. The Shinjo family traveled with Seiko Toyama and Kanbun Uechi. Seiyu was leaving the only home he had known.

### Return to Okinawa and Ie-jima island

The group was interred in a prisoner of war camp for six months, when they returned to Okinawa. They lived in tents and fought starvation and depression. To lift morale [sic] in the camp, Kanbun demonstrated karate. It was the only time his students saw him perform all the katas in their entirety. In Japan he always taught explosive individual moves from a kata, ikyodo, but never demonstrated the entire



Courtesy of the Shinjo family.

Seiko Toyama began training at Kanbun Uechi's Wakayama dojo one year before his life-long friend Seiyu Shinjo.

kata. After release from the camp, Seiko Toyama moved to Naha. The Shinjo family and Kanbun Uechi relocated on Ie-jima Island.

Seiyu Shinjo met and married Yoshi Kohama there in 1947. They built a house on the property of the Shinjo family, a few hundred yards from the home of his parents. Hokonoto, a monument to the people who died on Ie-jima Island during World War II, now occupies the site. Members of the Shinjo family still live on Ie-jima



*Seiyu Shinjo's Asato (Naha) Uechi-ryu dojo, established in 1955.*

Island, which has a current population of 5,500 people.

Kanbun lived less than a mile away, where he died on November 25, 1948. The Shinjos were the only ones present. They contacted Kanei the next day and using a small sabani boat, assisted him in returning his father's body to Okinawa.

On November 3, 1951, three years after the passing of the great karate master, Iejima Island produced a modern day karate legend named Kiyohide Shinjo.

The Shinjo family moved to Naha in 1953. Seiyu Shinjo continued his karate training under Kanei Uechi. The two men, who

had grown up as brothers, worked for three years as security guards for the Okinawan railroad (Nihon Tetsudo Koyogo). They worked the night shift preventing theft from the train yard. Okinawa was impoverished after the war, and American relief was slow in coming. Some people took what they could to survive.

Seiryu and Tsuru Shinjo soon moved to Kadena, a small village at a focal point in the road between Naha and Nago to work in the laundry shop owned by Seiryu's parents. The laundry business was booming because of the occupying American forces.



*Seiyu Shinjo's Asato (Naha) Uechi-ryu dojo, established in 1955.*

Seiyu Shinjo stayed in Naha and at twenty-six years old, opened the Asato Uechi-ryu dojo in 1955. It was the fourth Uechi-ryu dojo established in Okinawa. Three years later the first black belt promotions in the Uechi-ryu system were awarded. Seiyu Shinjo was promoted to Godan (fifth degree).

*"Seiyu Shinjo stayed in Naha and at twenty-six years old, opened the Asato Uechi-ryu dojo in 1955. It was the fourth Uechi-ryu dojo established in Okinawa."*

**The Kadena era of Uechi-ryu karate**

The land on which the Asato dojo stood was appropriated by the government for a new thoroughfare (Highway 58) connecting the southern and central parts



*Kiyohide Shinjo at twelve years old with his father.*

of the island. In 1960, Seiyu Shinjo and his family moved to Kadena, and opened the Kadena Uechi-ryu dojo. His second son, Narahiro, was born the same year. The Shinjo dojo has operated at the same location for thirty-five years as of this writing. The Kadena Shubukan is the only one in which three generations, grandfather, father and grandchild have learned karate in the same dojo.

*"Kiyohide did not like karate practice for several years, and probably for good reasons."*

Kiyohide Shinjo began karate training, not by his own choice, when he was ten years old. Kiyohide did not like karate practice



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

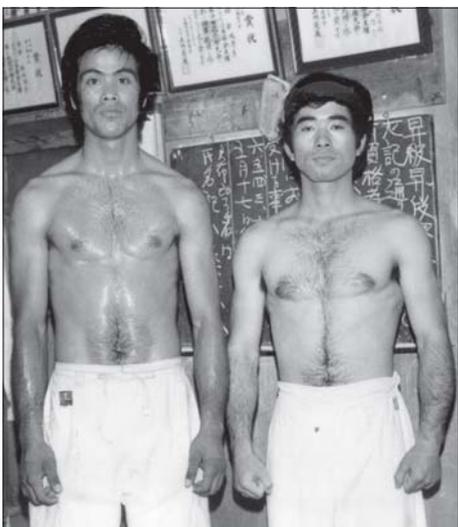
Kansei Uechi with Uechi-ryu's most winning competitor, Kiyohide Shinjo.

for several years, and probably for good reasons. Six o'clock in the evening was the starting time for karate class and Kiyohide's favorite television variety show, Golden Hour. His father would grab him by the ear and forcibly lead him into the dojo.

Seiyu was a hard man concerning karate. He also maintained the uncompromising, and sometimes inhuman, standard of training established by Kanbun Uechi. As the young man became accustomed to the

"During the first few decades after World War II, intoxicated servicemen often found their way into the dojo, challenging the Okinawans to fight."

training regime he was given the added responsibility of cleaning the dojo for thirty minutes before class began. On one occasion, when Kiyohide was fourteen years old, he and some friends went to the river after school. They cut bamboo swords and



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

Shinjo Kiyohide and Takamei Takayasu, defenders of the Shinjo legacy.

played at being samurai warriors. Kiyohide kept a keen eye on the setting sun, as a reminder to return to the dojo on time. He misjudged the time and arrived home after class had already begun. He put on his gi (uniform), slipped into the dojo, and joined the group exercise. He was not called on all night to

perform individual kata, as the other students were. He knew his tardiness had been noticed. After all the students left, Seiyu Shinjo went into a rage over his son's lack of responsibility. Mr. Shinjo took a large knife and cut the gi top down the

ordered his son to fight the belligerent Americans. For many years, the challengers beat the skinny young Okinawan. As Shinjo Kiyohide's size, strength, and karate ability increased, so did his dislike for American servicemen. In time, he won every fight, with great pleasure.

Kiyohide was promoted to Shodan (first-degree black belt) in 1968, eight years after he began training under his father. He estab-

"He became a legend in Okinawa in the process and is often called "Okinawa's Superman.""

lished karate clubs in high school and college. He also studied kendo for seven years during that time, earning the rank of Nidan. By 1969, the Shinjo family was complete with three daughters and four sons. The



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

Tournament competitors prepare to fight to keep the championship flag and cup in the Kadena dojo.

back and ripped it from his son's body. He did the same to the belt and pants, telling his son that since he did not take his karate training seriously, he no longer had to practice. The incident passed and Kiyohide was allowed to resume his training.

### From dojo defender to Okinawa tournament champion.

During the first few decades after World War II, intoxicated servicemen often found their way into the dojo, challenging the Okinawans to fight. Shinjo Seiyu often

Shinjo's oldest child, Toshiko, born the night of Uechi Kanbun's death, died as a young child. Five of Seiyu's children are Uechi-ryu black belts, as are his brothers, Seiho and Kiyoshi.

### Tournament history

In 1968, The Uechi-Ryu Karate Shubukai held the first annual Uechi-ryu tournament. It included kata (forms) and kumite (sparring) competition for black belts. Shinjo Seiyu was the organizer and director. Kiyohide placed third in kata in this inaugural tournament.



Four generations of Shinjo karate men take pride in the day's performance.

Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

At the third annual tournament in 1970, Kiyohide won both kata and kumite competition. He continued to do so for a record nine years. He became a legend in Okinawa in the process and is often called "Okinawa's Superman."

The annual Uechi-ryu tournament was held in two parts. Kata competition was held in the Futenma dojo under the watchful eyes of Uechi Kanei and all the style's sensei and sempai (seniors). Sparring competition was conducted the following week.

"The Uechi-ryu tournament ran uninterrupted for twenty years until the break up of the Uechi-ryu Association in 1988."

In 1978, the eighth year of Kiyohide's championship reign, the first All-Okinawa Championship Tournament was held. The champion of this historic sparring event, open to black belts of all karate styles, was Shinjo Kiyohide. He soon retired from competition due to his father's ill health.

Kiyohide is a graduate of Okinawa Kokusai University, majoring in law. He married Michio Nakamura in 1977. Their first sons, Shuichi and Kiyohito were high school karate champions each year they were in school and competed in the National High School Championships in Japan.

1988. The Kadena dojo won the championship in fifteen of the twenty tournaments!

Narahiro is often lost in the shadow of his famous brother. Narahiro also inherited his father's vigor and relentless approach



The All-Japan Sports Festival (Kokutae) was held in celebration of Okinawa's Reversion to Japan in April 1972.

Courtesy of the Shinjo family.



The championship flag remained in the Kadena dojo for two decades.

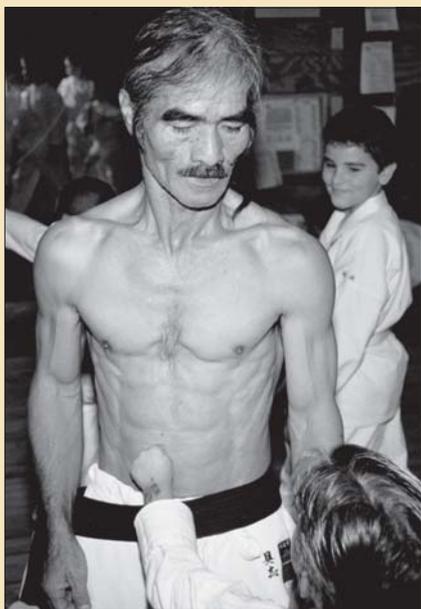
Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

They are a bright future for the balance of traditional karate and the competitive aspect that has developed since karate was introduced into Japan.

to karate and is every bit as accomplished as his older brother. He has also traveled internationally, teaching and demonstrating Uechi-ryu karate.

Shinjo Narahiro, Seiyu's second son, placed first in kata in five of the eight Uechi-ryu tournaments following his brother's retirement. The Uechi-ryu tournament ran uninterrupted for twenty years until the break up of the Uechi-ryu Association in

In August 1995, Narahiro placed fourth in kata in the All-Okinawa World Pre-Tournament. He repeated the feat by placing fourth in the Okinawan Karate and Kobudo World Tournament in August 1997.



Courtesy of Alan Doller.

### **Shinyu Gushi.....**

*Shinyu Gushi, born May 25, 1939, first began karate training in the Oroku dojo under Saburo Uehara. As a high school student, Mr. Gushi wanted to start a karate club at his school. Sensei Uehara was against the idea, wishing to keep his instruction more secret.*

*Mr. Gushi discussed the situation with the more progressive thinking Seiyu Shinjo, who supported the idea.*

*Impressed by Mr. Shinjo's students and his goals for Uechi-ryu development, Mr. Gushi joined the Asato dojo in 1956. After Shinjo Seiyu moved to Kadena, Mr. Gushi trained in Wakasa under Itokazu Seiko. For ten years, he taught class and performed demonstrations at the Naha Ginza dojo. He opened his own dojo in Oroku in 1985.*

*He is currently the only Okinawan master of Uechi-ryu living in the United States.*

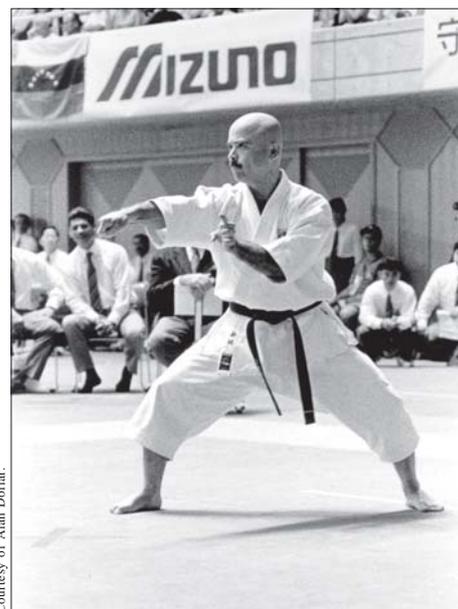
### **International influence**

On May 15, 1972, the United States gave up control of Okinawa and the island reverted to Japan. The All-Japan Sports Festival (Kokutae) was held at the Naha Stadium (near the site of the new Okinawan Martial Arts Kenritsu Budokan)

as part of the reversion celebrations. Massive demonstrations of Okinawan karate and dance (odori and eisa) were performed. The Japanese Government gave every karate participant a new dogi. The patch on the gi was patterned after the Olympic torch.

Shinjo Seiyu was adamant about increasing public awareness of Uechi-ryu karate and expanding its practice in America. To this end, he was one of the first sensei to open his dojo to American servicemen. He performed many demonstrations, for Okinawans and Americans, to propagate Uechi-ryu karate.

The Uechi-ryu Karate Association had developed and refined its rank structure since the first promotions in 1958. In 1972, the association awarded Shinjo Seiyu the title of Shihan (master instructor), certificate number six. Seiyu and his father, Seiryu, were promoted to Hachidan (eighth-



Courtesy of Alan Doller.

*Nahahiro Shinjo placed fourth in the August 1997 Okinawa Karate and Kobudo World Tournament, an event that had 1,750 participants. April 1972.*

Kiyohide was promoted to Yondan and received Shihan certificate number thirty-one from Uechi Kanei in 1974. He was pro-



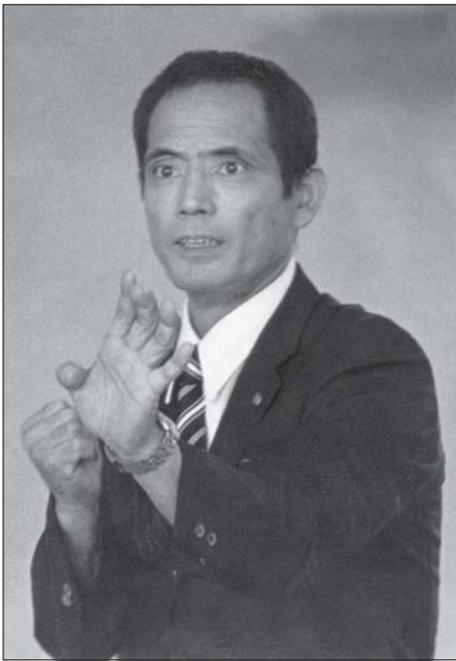
Courtesy of the Shinjo family.

*Tsutomu Nakahodo breaks a 2x2 pole over the arm of Shinjo Seiho during a demonstration for the U.S. Armed Forces.*

degree black belt) on May 16, 1974. Seiryu received the first Hachidan certificate ever issued by the Uechi-ryu Karate Association.

**“Shinjo Seiyu was adamant about increasing public awareness of Uechi-ryu karate and expanding its practice in America.”**

moted to Godan in 1977. Although younger than his contemporaries, Shinjo Kiyohide tested for Rokudan (sixth-degree) and Nanadan (seventh-degree) with Masters Nakamatsu, Takamiyagi, Gushi, and Senaga. Shinjo Seiryu, the founder of the Shinjo karate dynasty, died March 5, 1976, from a lung disease he had contracted in Wakayama. He was sixty-eight years old.



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

*Seiyu Shinjo was a driving force in Uechi-ryu's development in Okinawa.*

The dojo-house structure in Kadena was very small. There was a small living room and kitchen adjacent to the dojo. The dojo area itself served as the sleeping quarters for the entire family. The small house and dojo were torn down and replaced in 1976. The new house was built on top of the new dojo, dramatically increasing the training and living area.

Seiyu developed diabetes in his late forties and his health deteriorated rapidly. He underwent two operations and died during the second on October 23, 1981. He was

*“At the time, he expressed the opinion that he needed ten more years training under his father to properly prepare him to be a karate teacher.”*

only fifty-two years old. Shinjo Seiyu was posthumously awarded the rank Kyoshi (expert teacher) and Kudan (ninth-degree black belt) by Uechi Kanei and the Uechi-ryu Karate Association and the All-Okinawa Karate Federation on November 26, 1981.

Seiyu's premature death brought with it a dark cloud over the world of Uechi-ryu karate. After Seiyu's death, Mr. Nakazato Shugoro, founder of Shorinkan Shorin-ryu and then president of the All-Okinawa Karate Federation, delivered the following speech:

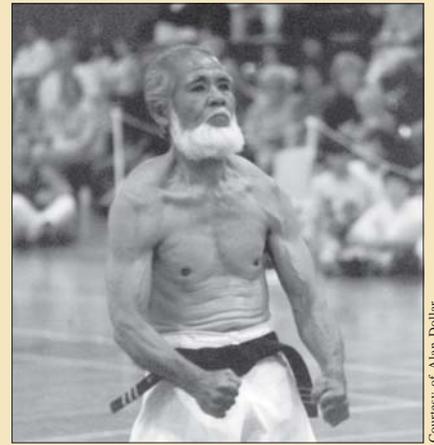
*Mr. Seiyu Shinjo had the good fortune to be a disciple under Kanbun Uechi,*



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

*Seiyu Shinjo breaks a 2x2 pole on the arm of green belt Alan Dollar.*

*the founder of Uechi-ryu karate, and his son, Kanei Uechi. He became Tatsujin [master of the highest skill of karate]. Sensei Shinjo was an intelligent, gentle, respectful, and open-minded person, who always tried to understand karate-do, both philosophically and technically.*



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

**Seiko Toyama.....**

*Seiko Toyama was born in 1928. He started training in Uechi-ryu under Kanbun Uechi in Wakayama Prefecture. Toyama and Shinjo Seiyu, who started training under Kanbun one year later, became friends for life. For years, they listened intently as Kanbun and Ryuyu Tomoyose talked.*

*He is a wellspring of information about Uechi-ryu karate's history and a robust storyteller.*

*Seiko Toyama trained under Kanbun Uechi for eight years in Wakayama. He accompanied his sensei and the Shinjo family from Wakayama to Okinawa.*

*He continues to teach and work on his farm. Part of that work includes catching habu, a deadly nocturnal snake indigenous to Okinawa, with his bare hands.*



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

*The original Kadena Uechi-ryu dojo was rebuilt in 1976.*

After he opened the Uechi-ryu Karate-do Kadena Shubukan, he taught not only karate to his students, but also the philosophy of human life. He helped the development of children's physical and mental health in his neighborhood. He was like a second father to both youths and adult karate students.

Besides teaching his own students at his dojo, he spent his time helping to develop the Uechi-ryu Karate-do Association and the All-Okinawa Karate Federation, where he served on the Board of Directors. I sincerely respect him for his great achievements toward the prosperity of Okinawan karate.

Unfortunately, in the world, there is no perfect thing or person, and even a strong person like Mr. Shinjo could not defeat his death. However, his oldest son, Mr. Shinjo Kiyohide, and other students have inherited his karate philosophy and knowledge. I hope Mr. Shinjo Seiyu is watching



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

Master Kiyohide Shinjo teaching in his new Yomitan dojo. His family home is located on the top floor, just like in the former Kadena dojo.

his son's and students' development of karate ability from heaven.

After his father's death, Kiyohide reluctantly assumed the teaching responsibilities

at the Kadena dojo. At the time, he expressed the opinion that he needed ten more years training under his father to properly prepare him to be a karate teacher.

He founded a fraternity within the Uechi-ryu Association to honor his father and called the group Kenyukai. "Ken" means "fist," "yu" is part of Seiyu's name and "kai" means "group." Kenyukai stands for

**"Four generations of Shinjo karate men have dedicated themselves to the physical and spiritual teachings of Kanbun and Kanei Uechi."**

"Shinjo Seiyu's Strong Fist Group." The Kenyukai version of Uechi-ryu karate is now practiced around the world.

Shinjo Kiyohide has served on the All-Okinawa Karate Federation Board of Directors since 1980. He was voted Board chairman from 1991 to 1994, and is the youngest person in the Federation's history to hold that position.

He has pursued Uechi-ryu karate's growth as fervently as his father did. He has raveled to Germany, Spain, twice to France, three times to Brazil and Canada, four times to Argentina, and twelve times to America in his efforts to present the Kanbun Uechi-Seiyu Shinjo methods of teaching Okinawan Uechi-ryu karate. Kiyohide's compassion toward foreign practitioners has increased with each exposure. He admires the long-term devotion and ever



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

Alan Dollar



Courtesy of Alan Dollar.

*The Japanese government declared imminent domain in 2004 and the center of Kadena circle was leveled for new high rise buildings. A new dojo was built in Yomitan, and the Shinjo legacy continues.*

increasing ability he has witnessed outside Okinawa. The Shinjo karate legacy was fostered by Kanbun Uechi's teachings. Four generations of Shinjo karate men have dedicated themselves to the physical and spiritual teachings of Kanbun and Kanei Uechi.

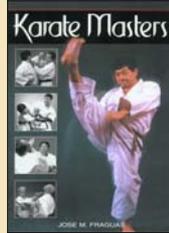
The Shinjo family is one of vigorous strength who live by the code of live life easy and peacefully; but when it is time to fight, become ferocious! Gosatu Bokuto!

**Alan Dollar** began Uechi-ryu karate training under Seiyu Shinjo in the Kadena dojo in 1974 during his first Marine Corps tour of duty to Okinawa. All black belt ranks through Godan (fifth degree) and Shihan (Master Instructor) were presented by Kanei Uechi in the Futenma Soke Dojo. He currently holds the rank of Kyoshi, Nanadan (seventh degree) and Godan in Okinawa Kobudo. After running his dojo for 30 years, he retired from active teaching in 2004. He remains the North American Director for the Kenyukai Association under Kiyohide Shinjo.

For more information and photos of Okinawa, karate and the Kenyukai go to:  
[www.alandollar.com](http://www.alandollar.com).

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Karate Masters  
by Jose Fraguas

178x254 mm, 350 pp,  
400 photos

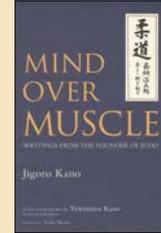
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### KARATEMASTERS

Karate-do is one of the most popular yet mysterious martial arts in the world. In 'Karate Masters', through conversations with many historical figures such as Osamu Ozawa and Masatoshi Nakayama, and numerous current world-class masters such as Hirokazu Kanazawa, Fumlo Demura, Teruo Hayashi, Morio Higaonna, Hidetaka Nishiyama, and Stan Schmidt, the many threads of karate learning, lore, and legend are woven together to present an integrated and complete view of the empty-handed art of fighting, philosophy, and self-defense. Now for the first time, interviews with 24 of the world's top karate masters have been gathered together in one book. Containing information that has not appeared anywhere else, the interviews contain intriguing thoughts, fascinating personal details, hidden history, and revealing philosophies. In these 24 gems, each master reveals a true love for the art and a deep understanding of every facet associated with the practice and spirit of karate-do as a way of life. No matter how well you think you know these karate masters, you haven't really experienced their wit, wisdom, and insight until you've read Karate Masters. Any karate practitioner who appreciates martial arts history and philosophy, and who feels that this rich heritage is a necessary steppingstone to their personal growth, will find this book an invaluable reference and a must-have addition to their personal library. Author Jose M. Fraguas, a fifth-degree black belt in Shito-ryu karate, is an internationally recognized martial arts authority who is well-known to the world's top karate masters. His desire to promote both ancient philosophy, and modern thinking provided the motivation for writing this book.

Harry Cook - He Conquers, Who Conquers Himself • Ray Dalke - An American Samurai • Fumio Demura - Leading by Example • William Dometrich - Western of the Eastern Way • Teruo Hayashi - In Pursuit of Karate Excellence • Morio Higaonna - The Master, The Warrior • Dan Ivan - Karate's Enduring Spirit • Hirokazu Kanazawa - Master of the Karate Spirit • Taiji Kase - Karate's Timeless Master • Tak Kubota - The Master of Inner and Outer Strength • Kenei Mabuni - A Balance of Heart and Body • Kenzo Mabuni - Staying the Course • Patrick McCarthy - Standing on the Shoulders of Giants • Chuck Merriman - Wisdom of the Ages • Takayuki Mikami - The Essence of Perseverance • Minobu Miki - Karate's Modern Traditionalist • Masatoshi Nakayama - A Legacy of Excellence • Hidetaka Nishiyama - Karate's Driving Force • Teruyuki Okazaki - The Ultimate Development of Character • Osamu Ozawa - Tempered by Fire • Henri Plee - The Gichin Funakoshi of Europe • Tsusuo Sakumoto - In the Modern World, But Not of It • Stan Schmidt - Karate's Guiding Light

By Marc van Dam



Mind over Muscle  
by Jigoro Kano

140x196 mm, 160 pp,

available at  
[www.mikado.nl](http://www.mikado.nl)  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### MIND OVER MUSCLE

This book is a collection of the life's work and essential teachings of Jigoro Kano, who founded Kodokan Judo in Tokyo in 1882. Kodokan Judo was for Kano the culmination of a lifelong devotion to the jujutsu of the past, which he reorganized along educational lines while taking great care to retain its classical traditions. In doing so, he opened the path from jutsu (skill) to do (way), and broadened the horizons of knowledge until he reached the point at which he began to advocate seiryoku zenyo (maximum efficiency) and jita kyoei (mutual prosperity), which represent the universality and ideal of human existence, and are the core values of judo. Throughout his life, Kano repeatedly emphasized grasping the correct meaning of judo and putting it into practice. That is to say, one must understand that judo is the way by which one can make the best use of one's mental and physical energy, and put that into use for the good of society. Because judo was defined in this way, it became subsumed into an altogether richer, more complex, and universal judo, which in turn evolved into a principle that can be applied across the spectrum of human life. The circumstances surrounding the development of judo are described throughout this book, as are its underlying principles, which the author believes have universal applicability to everyday life.

In the annals of Japan's modern martial arts, no name is better known than that of Jigoro Kano. Born in 1860 in Hyogo Prefecture, he created Kodokan Judo in 1882, the year after he graduated from Tokyo Imperial University, majoring in literature, politics, and political economy. He was a professor and principal of Gakushuin, principal of the First Higher School, and later, the Tokyo Higher Normal School, and in 1889, as a member of the Imperial Household Department, he made a study tour of European Educational institutions. He became the first Japanese member of the International Olympic Committee in 1909 and the first president of the Japan Amateur Sports Association when it was founded in 1911. Elected to the House of Peers in 1922, he died at sea aboard the Hikawa Maru in 1938 while returning from an IOC meeting in Cairo.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF JUDO: A Brief History of Jujutsu • From Jujutsu to Judo  
2. THE SPIRIT OF JUDO: Seiryoku Zenyo: The Essence of Judo • Judo and Physical Training • Judo and Intellectual Training • Judo and Moral Education • Judo as Martial Art • A Basic Principle For Everyone: Judo and Its Application to Everyday Life  
3. JUDO TRAINING: The Purpose of Judo • The Three Levels of Judo • The Practice of Judo • Judo and Education • The Samurai Spirit • Judo Practice at The Dojo • Kata Practice Afterword • Bibliography

By Marc van Dam

# "Sensei:" Some Considerations

**"Sensei" is one of those unique terms that, though understood conventionally by the community that uses it, allows many interpretations and nuances, inviting lasting confusion and dialog. Within the martial arts community, "sensei" is understood as "teacher," and the acknowledged Japanese translation is generally given as "one who has gone before." Virtually all budoka are comfortable with this definition and accept it at face value. Yet within the budo community the dialog persists as to the actual role of the one who as instructor in his art is called "sensei." Even with an accepted definition there are layers of meaning, quite similar in their "understood" implications, to the Jewish title "rabbi," which is also conventionally defined as "teacher," yet which possesses great depth and expands far beyond the parameters of that definition.**

- By Gil Gillespie -

Is a martial arts instructor a spiritual leader? A leader of a community? Should he be? Or should he merely disseminate the most effective and correct fighting technique as promulgated by his respective art? What should the student expect from this relationship? Which end of this continuum is appropriate? Or is it somewhere in between?

These questions form the crux of an ongoing and recently more intense dialog regarding the essence of "sensei," its implications and expectations. I have never been a rabbi, or any ordained spiritual leader. I was, however, a public school teacher and coach, and my budo experience has increasingly placed me before

**"Within the martial arts community, "sensei" is understood as "teacher," and the acknowledged Japanese translation is generally given as "one who has gone before"."**

groups of budoka as their instructor. I would never call myself "sensei," although my kohai do when I teach, only that their *dojo* etiquette remain consistent. As these classes unfold, how do I see myself vis-à-vis the question at hand? As the senior student that night I owe the other students more than just leading the techniques. I owe them instruction. I owe them the richest, most fulfilling budo experience I can encourage to evolve during that class.

Yet I must recognize my limitations, and theirs. Many junior instructors voice the

self-indulgent refrain, "This is where my art is," and then conduct the class as their own private laboratory with the students as their personal research tools. More perceptive, and more correct actually, is the perspective, "Where is THEIR art?" Another pitfall of fledgling instructors is the overblown lecture, which is seldom as interesting to the listeners as it is to the speaker. People come to train, not to listen.

I am much closer to our mudansha on The Path than our sensei and senior instructors. That should never be overlooked, although that does not mean I can never challenge either myself or my kohai. So from my vantage I am closer to the understanding of "coach" than "sensei." "Coach" is another of those terms whose meaning is particular to the milieu. There is a world of difference between the former college athlete teaching elementary school physical education because his eligibility has run out and the man who has over years molded groups of disparate individuals into selfless, committed units striving toward a goal. Both are addressed as "Coach."

Again the layers of meaning and understanding color the picture. My own coaching experience on the scholastic level mandated that I be more attuned to the development of the entire individual than to mere success in competition. That philosophy never left me and I have seen it played out even at the callous professional level. Vince Lombardi may have said "winning isn't everything; it's the only thing," but to a man his former players

maintain a veneration that transcended loyalty and became family. The former Boston Celtics maintain that spirit and those ties with curmudgeon mentor Red Auerbach. This paternal relationship proliferates more easily in the collegiate ranks, exemplified by the life imprint of people like Dean Smith of North Carolina basketball and Joe Paterno of Penn State football. Their players and others maintain a close relationship long after their performing careers end, consulting with their "coach" about life's larger perspectives throughout the remainder of their lives.

The quintessence of this relationship would have to be that of former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden and his touch on the lives of his players. People in the sports world will always speak of him in awe and not merely for his championships and array of hall of fame players. John Wooden exemplifies excellence in life and sports; he never wavered from instilling the living definition of student-athlete, and insisted that a college degree be the least of his young men's accomplishments. One of his players, now in the hall of fame, said that they never considered leaving early for the riches of professional basketball. They treasured the experience and never wanted to miss the excitement and challenge of practice,

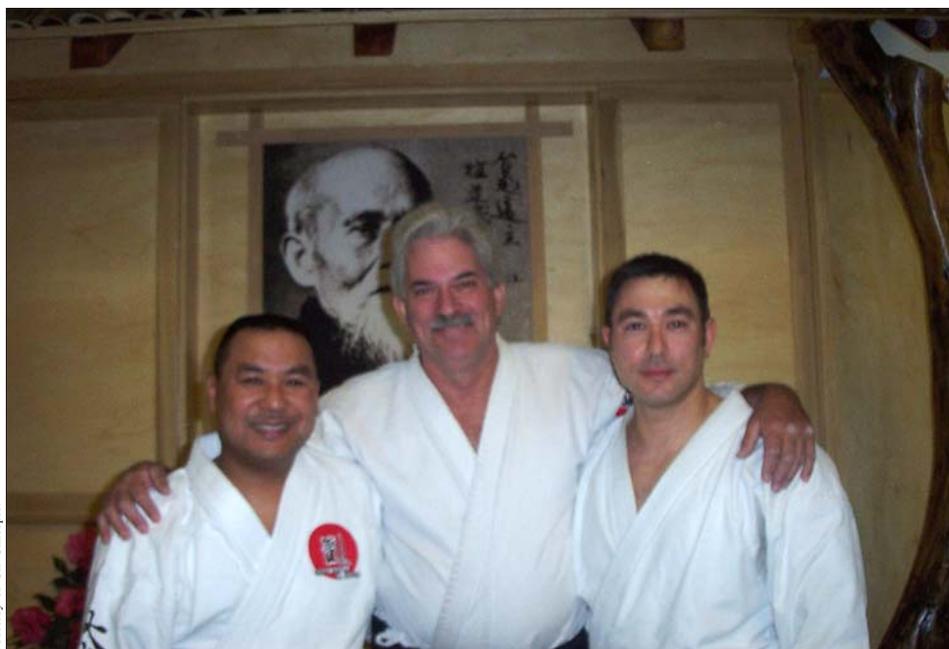
**"I am much closer to our mudansha on The Path than our sensei and senior instructors. So from my vantage I am closer to the understanding of "coach" than "sensei. ""**

which was richer than the games, because of the depth of the interaction and learning that took place there. For the title of his autobiography John Wooden chose references to neither victory nor championship, but rather *They Call Me Coach*. So all well and good, but how does “coach” transfer to “sensei?” The segue is realized through the relationship that develops and is forged over time. In Japanese budo we know it as the sensei-seito relationship. The stigma of sports and competition polluting the purity of budo, which is decried by many masters (including men such as Mochizuki and Ueshiba), does not invalidate that understanding. The goals may differ (or in the case of tournament fighters become quite congruent), but the bonds that grow through prolonged training define the nature of the relationship. In praising one of his best all time players, former St. John’s University basketball coach Lou Carnesecca singled out “his monastic devotion to the rehearsal.” That rings of a budo dojo!

*“The segue is realized through the relationship that develops and is forged over time. In Japanese budo we know it as the sensei-seito relationship. The stigma of sports and competition polluting the purity of budo does not invalidate that understanding.”*

One major difference is that a sensei is still expected to “do it,” whereas coaches are almost invariably “retired” and serve merely as guides and sideline instructors. In a budo dojo the instructor is not only of senior rank, but almost always he is the most advanced technician in attendance. Many times there are younger, stronger, faster yudansha in class who could conceivably outclass their instructor in a purely physical sense. That changes nothing in the equation of the sensei’s position as the instructor and in the students’ respect for that title, independent of the man who holds it in that class.

These bonds are not superficial and develop only if the student manifests a serious commitment and follows it up with unflagging determination. No matter how devoted the student may be to the impersonal refinement of technique or enhancement of combat proficiency, the gradual



*Gil Gillespie with Keith Oshiro (left) and Ian Pinkerton (right).*

deepening of his relationship with his sensei becomes a corollary of his training. In brief military or police training programs this is impossible due to the omission of the paramount ingredient: time. The trainee may glean various techniques, but the sensei-seito relationship only comes to fruition through thousands of hours over many years. The first time my sensei referred to me by name on the mat remains an honor not even equaled by my later attainment of dan rank, which I now realize is merely something that happens to all budoka if they just stay around!

So the relationship is not only wrought over time, but it must be earned. As budoka we are all familiar with the extraordinarily high attrition among mudansha. Only a small percent of those who begin budo training actually persevere. Many sensei will not even teach beginners, leaving that instead to their sempai cadre. Even more painful and wasteful in a sensei’s eyes are the students who begin to manifest some power and grace around third kyu or even attain shodan and then just disappear. So an instructor measures his commitment, and this reciprocal relationship is neither assumed nor superficial.

As this relationship defines itself over time, the sensei perceives the totality of his student. His instruction goes beyond mere technique. Some students will need to learn confidence; others will need to learn to trust their partners; others may need anger management. My budo instructor

suffers from the debilitating neuromuscular ailment myasthenia gravis. After the conventional medical community had exhausted its resources and he thought he would have to face the rest of his life as a weakened cripple, his sensei (our Japanese shihan) took him under personal physical and psychological care. The treatments were based on deep breathing with meticulous maintenance of proper postures and specific movements. Twenty years later only my instructor still survives from his original diagnosed group.

Naturally the bond shared by these two gentlemen is singular and is not presented here as a blueprint for the sensei-seito

*“No matter how devoted the student may be to the impersonal refinement of technique or enhancement of combat proficiency, the gradual deepening of his relationship with his sensei becomes a corollary of his training.”*

relationship. It is, however, representative of the potential that exists when a sensei takes a holistic approach to teaching the entire person, beyond technique, and the student earns the sensei’s acknowledgement of the depth and sincerity of the student’s commitment. The Japanese grandmaster of one of the oldest lines of koryu swordsmanship emphasizes this very “sincerity” as the most important character in true budo, and his kanji brushwork for it graces the opening page of that ryu’s manual. To

“Many times there are younger, stronger, faster yudansha in class who could conceivably outclass their instructor in a purely physical sense. That changes nothing in the equation of the sensei’s position as the instructor and in the students’ respect for that title, independent of the man who holds it in that class.”

a man the fine sensei in my experience have repeated that sincerity and perseverance are much more sought after among their students than natural athletic or fighting ability.

Yet at issue here is the nature of martial arts instruction. We have arrived at the second oldest and least fulfilling inquiry into the nature of training: “It’s not about fighting” (the oldest and least fulfilling reply, of course, is “Just keep training!”). As frustrating as it is to hear, the latter is true. The validity of the former is defined by the student’s goals for training; and again the “X factor” in the mix is time. Over time a student’s goals for training refine and change. A relationship develops with his sensei. Even the most hardened fighters undergo an evolution of their

character; budo literature is replete with descriptions of this phenomenon. They may not all undergo a mystical transformation like Ueshiba Morihei, but they realize there is something more, and they teach it.

Technique becomes the vehicle for learning principle, in both budo and life. In yet another of those budo paradoxes, this widening of a sensei’s teaching perspective is ancillary to instruction in the art; he is still firstly and principally a budo instructor. And in another paradox, the student has no right to expect anything beyond budo instruction. He enters the dojo as a beginner and a stranger. He must demonstrate the above commitment and sincerity over the passage of time - a great deal of time. The sensei-seito relationship will take on its own distinct and individual flavor. Neither the sensei nor the student can will it, accelerate it, or force it. It just happens, like promotions and injuries.

There is nothing inherent to impel any instructor to take this approach. Each must choose his own path, and there is nothing at all improper in choosing to merely teach technique and the art as experienced. Many instructors prefer this view as do many students. They find it simpler, less entangling, and even more pure. It is merely my own observation that teaching “the whole person” is more fulfilling for both. If, as Joseph Campbell taught, we are the vehicles of our consciousness, then there is a time for a fill-up, and a time for a tune-up. Teaching only technique can be seen as a fill-up, whereas a holistic approach to “the vehicle” is analogous to a tune-up. Somewhere along the line the need for the overall health of the vehicle will manifest itself.

Many will insist that budo is budo and they will attend to their

particular tune-up elsewhere, thank you very much. Allowing each his own I merely try to stay on The Path, believing full well that it is all about this step, this moment, and any destination is an illusion. I will never “arrive.” None of us will. Each class is its own experience in The Now, and they just all add up. In the end, that’s what validates the seemingly unfulfilling cliché “Just keep training.” It doesn’t

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matter if we ever use our training “in the street.” It doesn’t matter if budo builds character or reveals it. Remembering that the origin of the word “dojo” refers to an area for a spiritually physical discipline within a Buddhist temple, I treat my training space as my sanctuary. My fellow budoka and I have left the mundane world outside and gathered to walk The Path together for a while.

And among us there will be one we will call “sensei,” who will be teacher, technician, critic, coach and guide. But most of all he will be a companion on The Way.

**Gil Gillespie** was born in 1948 in Long Branch New Jersey. He obtained a bachelors degree in International Relations and has experience as a public school teacher/coach. He holds a Nidan degree in Aikikai Aikido training under Shihan Saotome and Sensei Dennis Hooker and, in addition, a Shodan degree in Iaido under Sensei Shimabukuro and Sensei Carl Long. He is a free-lance scenic artist and lives in rural central Florida with his wife Junko and daughter Jade.



Courtesy of Gil Gillespie.

*Gil Gillespie training with Daniel Vaccaro.*

# Controlling the Effects of Strikes

## An Internal Approach to Handling The Violence of Impact

**"An important difference between a military operation and a surgical operation is that the patient is not tied down. But it is a common fault of generalship to assume that he is."**

**--Sir Basil Liddell Hart**

- By Kevin Secours -

### You Can't Block Everything:

The quote above refers to a dangerous risk for military planners—that is the very real danger of becoming pre-occupied with offensive tactics without realistically considering the efforts and effects of a resistant enemy. This same assumption is equally common and just as dangerous in many martial arts. Too often, martial practitioners idealize their opponent into a robotic or inanimate participant, placing all of their focus on their own offensive in-tents. They forget the very obvious reality that in a real fight, you won't be the only one struggling to stay alive; your attacker will have just as much drive, freedom and creativity to survive as you will. The end result is that fights are generally sloppy, brutal and quick, and utterly void of the aesthetic tidiness of a Hollywood action movie. Bodies flare with stress chemicals, nervous systems ramp into overload, and things rarely work out exactly as you have planned.

**"As the Taoist philosopher Lao Tzu noted, "the notion that yielding overcomes force is known by all but practiced by none.""**

Since the dawn of martial training, combat systems that have understood this reality, have necessarily sought to prepare warriors for the reality of getting grabbed, struck, cut and broken. The way that this threat has been handled varies greatly, from hard style to soft. On the more vigorous end of the spectrum, the near superhuman capacities of Chi Kung masters and kung fu practitioners are the meat of legend in the Chinese martial arts, as are the shin conditioning practices of

the Muay Thai boxer and the makiwara regimen of the karateka. India Kushti wrestlers historically used aggressive massage to both heal their bodies and to toughen them for contact. Similarly, the legendary wrestlers from the Zurkhaneh<sup>1</sup> of Iran use slapping and hitting to desensitize their limbs against impacts and grabs. At the polar extreme of these more sensational methods, we also find the complete dedication to the ideal of yielding and succumbing to force. Martial arts like Tai Chi, Hsing I and Bagua, prioritize remaining supple and adaptive as the ideal preparation to force. As the Taoist philosopher Lao Tzu noted: *"the notion that yielding overcomes force is known by all but practiced by none."*

While all of these methods have their merit, they ultimately deal only with the idea of resisting or avoiding the initial impact. Many arts neglect the equally

important topic of recovering from the effects of strikes during the midst of combat, should they infiltrate your defenses, particularly those that might exceed your conditioning level. Quite simply, no matter how good you are, everybody can get hit, surprised and hurt. In this article, I will attempt to outline some functional concepts that can be used to counter the effects of strikes after they have been received and the science behind these practices in the hopes that they may add to the readers' current training and perspective.

### Closing The Gate:

This tissue in our skin and internal organs are filled with specialized receptors that read sensations and send messages to our spinal cords. *"Nociceptors"* read pain stimuli through small nerve fibers, while the sensation of touch is carried through large nerve fibers called *"mechano-*



**A simple way to test gate theory is to have someone pinch your body until it causes mild pain. Then while maintaining the pinch, vigorously rub near the pinched area. You will quickly notice the feeling of pain subsiding and the feeling of the rubbing dominating.**

Courtesy of Kevin Secours.

receptors". Many body hardening practices seek to deaden the function of the body's nociceptors so that individuals can bear greater degrees of pain than ordinary people. The danger inherent in these approaches is that, over the years, these methods can deteriorate the function of the body. Arguably, the use of ointments, breathwork and specialized massage can offset many long-term difficulties and there

**"Quite simply, no matter how good you are, everybody can get hit, surprised and hurt."**

is evidence that there are ways of lessening the damage, but ultimately the risk of injury and disability is still present nevertheless, particularly if these methods are misused.

Regardless of the prolonged effects, even within the immediate context of training and combat application itself, pain plays an important role as an early warning system in the body. Simply put, if something hurts, we know when to stop or at the very least to become more aware that a limit is close at hand. Lacking this sensitivity can impair judgement and increase the overall risk of injury. The extreme repercussions of not feeling pain can be seen in individuals who are born with congenital insensitivities to pain. People who suffer from inactive or faulty nociceptors frequently experience painless fractures or joint problems from everyday activities,

which they in turn aggravate through continued use. They also frequently suffer from dental and skin problems from constant fidgeting, scratching and cumulative abuse which they simply do not realize is occurring. Not surprisingly, a lack of pain sensitivity usually also leads to drastic decreases in healing times due to the real risk of constant re-injury. In the end, pain has a very important purpose as a warning signal and guide in our training.

In 1965, Patrick Wall and Ronald Melzack proposed that our perception of pain hinged on the relationship between the information being received by both our pain receptors and our touch receptors. Since touch receptors were larger, they proposed that touch could in effect override and intercept the influence of the smaller pain receptors. In our normal state, neither touch nor pain neurons transmit signals. In this condition, inhibitory interneurons block casual signals to prevent us from being overwhelmed by every common physical sensation we encounter. For example, ordinarily we will not be actively aware of the feeling of the air on our skin unless we are actively focusing our mind on it as we might during a meditation session, however if a slightly larger or colder than normal gust of wind tears through us, we will shiver and momentarily become aware of this otherwise ignored sensation. Wall and Melzack ultimately determined that when touch is activated, it not only distracts the brain, but it also triggers inhibitory interneurons that

actually block the sensation of pain. In the game of touch vs. pain, touch trumps pain. Since both touch and pain must enter the nervous system through the same pathways, if touch gets there first, it in effect "closes the gate" on pain, refusing to permit it access to your perceptions.

Obviously, the effect of touch and pain receptors are relative. While touch receptors are larger and more dominant than pain receptors, the sensation of a water drop on our hand will likely not be enough to distract us from a freshly broken leg. In such an extreme case, the broken leg would provide immense pain stimuli and would require more significant touch to overcome it. Touch fibers are bigger, so a

**"In the end, pain has a very important purpose as a warning signal and guide in our training."**

little touch does go a long way, but the more extreme the pain is, the more thorough the touch and your own mental focus needs to be in order to overcome it. In truth, we already know this fact from our own life experiences. Case in point, imagine, late one night, you're walking towards your kitchen sink to pour yourself a glass of water. You're half asleep and feeling your way through the darkness and then suddenly you smash your foot into the corner the wall. If you're a normal, healthy individual, with unaffected pain thresholds, the first thing that you will likely



Courtesy of Kevin Secours.

Styles, such as Russian Systema, teach practitioners how to remove strikes from their partners. After delivering a solid blow to the body, here we see the use of a heavy sweep of the hand to intercept and wipe the pain away.

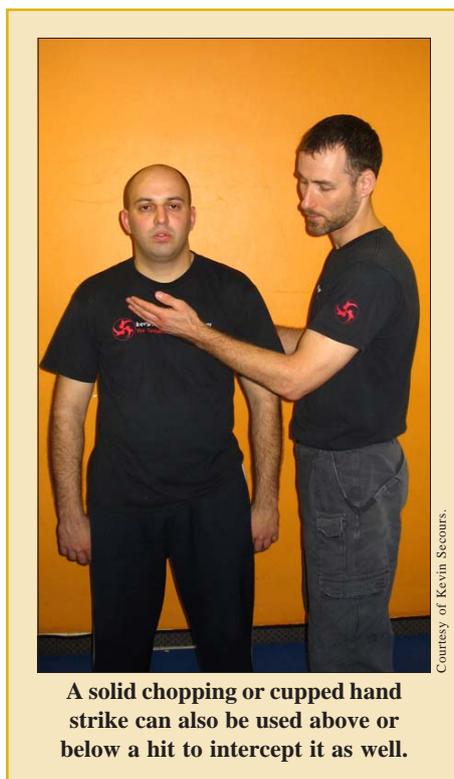
do is cry out and begin hopping up and down on one foot as you try to rub it better. This is a natural demonstration of gate theory at work. We immediately instinctively use touch to counter the pain of the stubbed toe. So it would seem we've intrinsically been using gate theory all along in our lives. How then can we take this very obvious reality, a response that we have all known and experienced firsthand and apply it to our combat training and application more fully?

### **The mechanics of pain management:**

First, let's consider the different components at play here. Even if we were completely bedridden, unable to move a single finger to intercept our pain signals with touch, we would still have our ability to breathe. If we return to the previous example of stubbing your toe, we'll notice that in this situation, the first thing that most people will automatically do is breathe out, perhaps shouting or crying out in pain. Whether we cry out, or try to suppress that urge to cry out, our body's natural reflex is to first breathe to counter the pain. Many martial arts therefore work with this reflex, strengthening and reinforcing it through

**“Since both touch and pain must enter the nervous system through the same pathways, if touch gets there first, it in effect “closes the gate” on pain, refusing to permit it access to your perceptions.”**

training. For example, in Karate, the Kiai or “spirit yell” can be used to focus energy, startle an opponent and bolster the spirit, but it can also serve to protect the user from impact and pain. In fact, a Kiai need not be audible. As Gichin Funakoshi wrote, what matters most is that the kiai originates in the stomach, “joining the whole of your body power and your spirit”. While sound can play an important role in strengthening your psyche and startling your opponent, it is not necessary to help you counter your own pain from an impact. Breathwork need not be explosive either. Many health practices teach softer methods to guide the practitioner through pain and injury. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a leading proponent of pain management and stress reduction, has been championing the role of breathing in his efforts to make meditation mainstream for



decades. He has stated that the reason breathing is so important is that it both balances and calms the body while providing the practitioner with a primary focal point. Through mindfulness of one's breathing, his practitioners learn how to move away from the emotions they don't want (pain) and to move towards the emotions they choose (joy, relaxation, etc.). To look at this through a gate theorist's perspective, they learn to literally “feel” their breath and in so doing, stimulate their touch receptors, thereby intercepting and block the pain stimuli.

The Russian Martial Art of Systema can provide us with another very good example of Gate Theory at work. Practitioners of this art are taught different breathing methods to interrupt pain similar to the one described above. They are also taught how to integrate wavelike body motions to dissipate and eventually erode the pain caused by impacts. Strikes to the face and body are often countered with a sharp exhale, not unlike the exhale that naturally occurs after one takes a drink of alcohol. Most relevant for our concerns here, Systema practitioners also learn how to incorporate the use of touch to counter strikes. A soft, heavy handed swipe of the hand is often used to treat the point of impact. This is often referred to by practitioners as “removing” the strike, since the action very much resembles an effort to physi-

cally grab the pain with their hand and throw it away from the body. Individuals unfamiliar with gate theory sometimes wrongly assumed that this practice carries some sort of mystical connotations, but as we have already learned in this article, it is simply another expression of using touch to intercept pain.

The location of the touch can also matter. Systems like acupuncture and acupressure focus on targeted areas of the body that yield maximum effects on the nervous system. Every touch stimulates the release of “*endogenous opioids*”, a pain relieving chemical found naturally in the body. By touching specialized areas in the body, however, these effects can be greatly optimized; some areas are simply more receptive to touch, such as the hands and fingers, the head and neck area and the soles of the feet. Moreover, most pressure point systems believe that vital nerve centers are positioned along pathways in the body called “*meridians*”. By focusing on working along these meridians, practitioners can in effect benefit from traveling on pre-existing channels in the body. Like walking through the woods on a worn path versus forging a new trail through the wilderness, travel on existing passages is obviously much easier and more effective. The same is true with pathways in the body.

Touch can also carry profound psychological implications as well. Returning to the example of Russian Systema, practitioners of this approach believe that the intent behind a given touch is also extremely important. To understand this idea simply, consider the idea of a mother's touch. Few things on this planet are quite

**“A martial artist must accept that training will involve pain. Pain is inevitable. Suffering however is optional -it is a state of mind.”**

as soothing as the touch from a loved one. As children, a mother's touch was often all that was needed to make us completely forget our pain. In exactly the same way, if we touch a training partner after inflicting pain with a strike, using a touch that is genuinely focused on healing and calming the body, the effect of our touch will be

much greater. This simple concept is something deeply understood by masseuses. Any good masseuse realizes that tension is transferable through touch. If they approach their patient with a lack of awareness and allow their own tension to infect their movement and body, they will in effect spread their tension into their subject. By comparison, a masseuse that understands how to use soft and careful touch, they can bypass even the most chronic injury and bring peace and relaxation to their patient's mind and body. Similarly, in Systema, students are taught how the intent of their touch or strikes and the state of their own body can spread to their opponent. As Systema Grand Master Mikhail Ryabko has noted:

*“a touch with malice hurts more than a punch with love”.*

**Changing our perceptions of pain:**  
**“Reject your sense of injury and the injury itself disappears.”**

—**Marcus Aurelius**—

In the end, the mechanics of Gate Theory are easy to understand. In fact, everyone reading this is likely already using it to some degree as a matter of instinct. What is more challenging that understanding the concept is the change in perception that is sometimes required in order to implement it. A martial artist must accept that training will involve pain. Pain is inevitable. Suffering however is optional—it is a state

of mind. Dr. Patrick Tissington studied the role of fear and pain in the military. He notes:

*“about 1% of the general population is genuinely fearless. They simply do not experience what we call fear and that can be measured physiologically in terms of their heart rates remaining constant despite exposure to situations which would frighten most other people.”*

This bravery he notes is not due to socioeconomic factors or genetic predispositions. Rather it hinges on *“a belief in one's own ability...if you look at the men who have won the Victoria Cross [Britain's highest medal for gallantry] you have introverts and egotists, working class and gentry—all kinds of personalities and background. The only thing these men have in common is unusually high self-belief and faith in their own ability to complete a task..”*

When we look at famous fighters throughout history, we will generally find an unshakeable confidence in personal ability. A champion like Muhammad Ali is a popular example of a fighter who had heroic encounters with pain. Whether he was enduring a broken jaw in his fight with Ken Norton, surviving the abuse of his rope-a-dope against George Foreman or brutally battling against Joe Frazier, Ali was

a clear example of self-confidence. As he said:

*“To be a great champion, you must believe you are the best.”* He quickly added: *“if you're not, pretend you are.”* In his own words, the only way he could

**“When we look at famous fighters throughout history, we will generally find an unshakeable confidence in personal ability.”**

be “licked” is if he were made into a postage stamp. Self confidence and faith in your ability along with a clear perception of your own motives and goals are ultimately the foundation upon which tools like Gate Theory are built. This brief discussion of Gate Theory has offered you a fresh insight into the workings of pain in your body. Hopefully, it will also provide you with a simple tool which you can integrate into your personal training to bolster your focus, your confidence and to reduce the effects of fear and injury.

**Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Literally meaning “House of Strength”; the traditional wrestling gyms of Iran.



Courtesy of Kevin Secours.

Styles such as Jujitsu often teach reflexive clinching after receiving a strike. While clinching obviously serves to allow the recipient to regain their balance and awareness after the shock, smearing the head against your opponent's body can also serve to intercept the pain signals and help cope with the effects.

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For more information about Systema please visit:  
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