

Okinawa Kobudo Implements

These are brief descriptions of the weapons taught in Kodokan. A number of the weapons resemble agricultural implements, or are said to be derived from them. However, most of these weapons are seen in various forms across the region, and it is highly unlikely that they were developed first on Okinawa, or that they are originally farm tools modified for combat. Much more likely is that local implements were used to substitute for weapons that were otherwise unavailable.

Bo

This is a nearly 2 meter stick. The Okinawan version, called a *kon* in the native Okinawan language, is tapered towards both ends, unlike most Chinese and Japanese staves. It is the most common implement in the *kobudo* syllabus.

The Matayoshi system also uses a *kyushaku*, or nearly 3 meter, *bo*, and occasionally a shorter 1-1.5 meter *bo*, or *jo*. These weapons are practiced using *kon* kata, properly modified for the different length, though there is a separate kata for the *jo*.

There are 5 basic classical *kata* for the *bo* in the Matayoshi syllabus. They are: *Shushi no kon*, *Choun no kon*, *Sakugawa no kon*, *Chiken (or Tsuken) no kon*, and *Shishi no kon*. *Shushi no kon* is the basic kata for the system, and is common to most Okinawan kobudo systems, in slightly different iterations. *Choun non kon* is a slightly less common *bo* form on Okinawa, being done in Yamane Ryu and some Taira lineage schools, and is said to be about 250 years old. *Sakugawa no kon* is named for its creator, "Tode" Sakugawa, a very famous Okinawan martial artist. *Tsuken no kon* is named for the island it comes from, Tsuken jima, a small island off Okinawa. It is also common to a couple of Okinawan systems. *Shishi no kon* is the last *kata* in the system, and is also taught in some Taira lineage schools, possibly coming from Yabiku Moden. It is supposedly named for its creator, though a stone reference in the name also refers to the technique of tossing small stones with the feet that is contained in the *kata*.

There are also a number of other *bo* kata that have been trained or taught at one time or another in the Matayoshi dojo, though they were not considered a core part of the system. These include: *Ufutun no kon*, a village form the name of which refers to the police; it also has another name that reads something along the lines of "circular method"; *Tokumine no kon*, which was created by Tokumine sensei and passed on by Kyan Chotoku; *Yonegawa no kon*, a left handed *kon* kata also included in the Taira lineage schools from Yabiku Moden; *Kubo no kon*; and *Yara no kon*, which may be related to *Chatanyara no kon* from the Taira lineage. Kimo sensei also teaches the *kata Papuhaku sho* and *dai* as training *kata* for the *bo*, together with 2 person *bunkai kumite* for these training *kata*.

Tonfa

Also called *tunkua*, *tuifa*, or *tunfa*. This implement is derived from the handle of a small stone mill used for grinding grain. The agricultural model includes a bamboo sleeve around what is used as a handle. It is a common weapon in China and South East Asia. (The baton many American police officers carry is modeled after this weapon. However, the larger size and greater weight of the baton make the style of use different.) There are two *kata* for the *tonfa*; *tunkua dai ichi* and *tunkua dai ni*. The *kata* taught in the Matayoshi

lineage in Okinawa were created by the Matayoshi family. There is also a third *kata*, *tunkua dai san*, created by one of Matayoshi sensei's senior students and practiced by a few of them.

Sai

These weapons are of Chinese or possibly Indonesian origin. They are seen in many Indonesian styles of *silat*, and in Chinese arts. They are usually used in sets of three, with a third *sai* kept in the belt, ready to replace one thrown or left behind. We study 3 *kata* for the *sai*: *ni cho sai*, *san cho sai*, and *Shinbaru no sai*. The *kata ni cho sai* and *san cho sai* were created by Matayoshi Shinpo, and *Shinbaru no sai* either by his father or his father's teacher. *Shinbaru no sai* is also sometimes called *Matayoshi no sai*. While the techniques for throwing the *sai* in the *kata* aim at the foot of the target, traditionally the *sai* were also thrown into the center of the body.

Manji Sai

These are *sai* that have one of the two tines bent backwards towards the handle, not towards the point. They are called *manji* due to their shape, which resembles a swastika, a symbol used to represent Buddhism in Japan. In Japanese, this character is called a *manji*. They are used much like the *sai* are, with the same *kata*, and are also sometimes called *Matayoshi sai*.

Nunti Sai

These resemble *manji sai* in that they have one tine bent backwards, however they have no handle; both ends are pointed like the long end of the *sai*. While they can be used in the hands, they are usually used with the *nunti-bo* (see below), kept in the back of the belt and thrown.

Nunti Bo

This is a Chinese weapon, learned by Matayoshi Shinko from Kingai while he was in Shanghai. According to Matayoshi sensei, the name implies piercing hand. It consists of a *bo* length staff with a *nunti sai* affixed into the end, leaving a long point and two hooks in opposing directions. There is one *kata* specifically for this weapon, *nunti no ti*. We also practice this weapon using *bo kata*, properly modified for the hooked end of the weapon.

Nunchiyaku

While these are usually considered to be derived from rice flails, the actual form of the weapon used on Okinawan is derived from a wooden bridle that stood vertically over the muzzle of a horse or donkey. The weapon itself, much like various other types of flails, is common across China and South East Asia. While many systems use a great deal of flashy movement with the nunchiyaku, when hitting something the rebound is very difficult to control, so combative technique is often very simple and direct. Training on a makiwara is essential to mastering the weapon. The *kata* we do for the nunchiyaku, *Matayoshi no nunchiyaku*, was created by the Matayoshi family. The Matayoshi *kobudo* system also uses a *san bon nunchiyaku*- a three section *nunchiyaku*, used much as the normal *nunchiyaku*.

Ekū

Called a *kai* in standard Japanese, this is a boat paddle. Similar paddles are still visible all over southern Japan and Okinawa in festival boat races and village dances, and are used as emergency paddles in all manner of boats. As a weapon it is also common in Indonesia. The *kata* for the *Ekū* is called *Tsūken Akachu no Ekū di*. The name refers to the creator, a martial artist nicknamed “red man” (Akachu) for his red face, from Tsūken jima.

Kama

These are standard sickles used for harvesting rice and other farm and garden tasks. They are common garden tools, and can be bought in any Japanese hardware store. As weapons they are common across Japan and South East Asia. We study 1 *kata* for this weapon, called *Matayoshi no ni cho kama* or *kama no ti*.

Yon or Roku Shaku Kama

These are *kama* affixed to the end of a 4 or 6 foot pole, like a pruning hook. It is practiced using modified *bo* or *kuwa kata*.

Guwa

Also called a *kue* or *kuwa*. This is a heavy agricultural hoe. It has a waist high stock and a blade about 25 cm long and 10-15 cm wide. A potato hoe, with 3 or 4 rake like points instead of a single blade, is also used in the same manner. As a weapon, this implement is also seen in China and in various South East Asian countries. There is 1 *kata* for this weapon, called *kuwa* or *kue no di*.

Sansetsu Kon

This means three piece staff, and the weapon is also called the Shorin (Shaolin) Sansetsukon. Matayoshi Shinko learned the techniques for using it from Kingai, in China, where it is a common weapon. There is 1 *kata* for this weapon in the system that was passed down by Matayoshi sensei. There is also a shorter *sansetsukon kata*, created by one of Matayoshi sensei’s senior students and practiced by some of them.

Tinbe

Also called *tinbe* or *tinpei*. In the Matayoshi system, this consists of the *tinbe*, a shield like implement, made of leather, cane, or metal, and the *seiryuto*, a machete. The traditional tinbe is made with a reed base covered with leather and coated with a thick, almost tar-like, material. The *tinbe* is used to hide the *seiryuto* from view, to defend and cover, and to scoop sand or dirt into the opponent's face. Other styles in Okinawa use a turtle shell shield and a *rochin*, a short spear-like weapon, but these are not part of the Matayoshi *ryu*. Similar systems, using a rattan shield and *dao*, short sword or large knife, are common in Southern Chinese and Taiwanese styles, as is the short spear used in other Okinawan forms of this weapon. There is 1 *kata* for this weapon, *Matayoshi no tinbe*. The *kata* comes from Matayoshi Shinko’s studies with Kingai.

Suruchin

This is a 2-3 meter long rope with a teardrop shape rock tied to each end. The style of use is derived from Chinese and Okinawan sources, and similar weapons are common in Indonesia and Japan as well. The form for the *suruchin* is called *suruchin no taeseiki*, and is more a series of drills than a kata.

Kudamon Bo

Also called an *utsu bo*. This is a 130-160 cm bamboo staff with another length of bamboo, about 60-100 cm long attached to it by either a piece of rope or a rotating joint made from bamboo. The implement itself is derived from a grain threshing flail; this is much more logical than a similar origin for the *nunchiyaku* would be, as with a long threshing flail the user wouldn't have to crouch over to do his work. Similar flail type weapons are common world wide. There is one *kata* for this weapon, and it is the only *kata* in the Matayoshi kobudo that includes kicking techniques.

Tekko

Also called *tikko* or *tetsuko*. This particular version of these weapons is supposedly derived from the stirrups from a saddle, or from horse shoes. The ends of the stirrups have a diamond shaped bump that can be used as a dull spur, (and to amplify the effects of a hammer fist) but the top of the curved section is either smooth or has just a couple of small studs. They are used like brass knuckles, and can be practiced with *karate kata*, properly modified in the hand movements, and *chizikunbo kata*. The more elaborate *tekko*, resembling spiked or bladed knuckle dusters, are not part of the Matayoshi system. Similar weapons are common in Japan and China.

Gifa

Also called *kanzashi* or *jifua*. These are hairpins, made of metal or wood, about 15-20 centimeters long. They are practiced using *karate* or *chizikun bo kata*, properly modified.

Chizikun bo

The shape of this form of handload is said to be derived from wooden handles on fishing nets. The middle finger is slipped through the string in the center, and the weapon is held across the palm. Similar wooden hand loads are common in the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, and China. This weapon is not part of the Matayoshi kobudo- Kimo sensei learned it from another teacher in Okinawa. The schools under Taika Oyata practice a similar *kata*. There is 1 *kata* for these weapons.