

# Proper Weapons (buki) for Kobudo Practice

To train in any of the weapons we practice, the student must first own and properly prepare the weapon. Without the weapon, there is no point in practicing the movements. The process of purchasing and taking care of the weapon also increases the students familiarity with it.

Any weapon used must conform to the standards set for our dojo. This is primarily a safety issue. A weapon must be safe for both the user and those around him or her. Also, a weapon must be properly sized, weighted, and constructed to be both appropriate for the user and appropriate for the techniques of our system. The instructor retains the right to prohibit a student from using a weapon if it is below standard quality or otherwise inappropriate.

More details are listed by weapon below.

## **Chizikunbo**

The chizikunbo can be made of any wood. They should have a cord or rawhide loop, not one made of wire or plastic, and should not have any sort of metal cap on either end. They are a fairly universal size- an approximately 6" slightly ovoid stick with a loop for the middle finger in the center.

## **Kon**

A kon (bo) should be about a hand's width, about 6", taller than the person using it. Adults under 5'6" should use a 6' bo. In general, the bo should be made of a hard wood, be at least 1 1/4" in diameter at the center, and taper to around 1" at the ends. Thicker bo are acceptable, and traditionally Okinawan kon were up to 2" or more in diameter at the middle. While exact dimensions vary, very thin or light bo are not acceptable. They break, and do not have enough weight to do proper technique. The ends of the bo should be square cut, not rounded off. The bo should also be simple- no designs, staining, or other decoration. The surface should be sanded and oiled, not coated with any type of varnish or other hard finish. As they get used they must be maintained. Periodic re-sanding and oiling is needed to smooth chips and nicks and keep the weapon in good shape.

For much of our paired work, we also use a simple rattan bo. These kumi bo are made of rattan with the skin of the plant still on- the peeled versions will simply fall apart with any serious use. They are a bit safer for paired work, and much cheaper to replace when they wear out. These should also be over 1" in diameter.

## **Sai**

A sai should have the center tine just long enough to project about 1" beyond the elbow when it is held in the closed position. The index finger of the hand should not extend beyond the end of the handle when it is held in the same position. Sai must be plain iron or stainless steel. Chrome, aluminum, or composite sai are not acceptable- they are usually too light, the chrome chips off during use, and they can shatter in paired work. The handle should be wrapped in cord, or perhaps leather, and this should not be wrapped around the tines. It makes no difference if the shaft is round or octagonal, though the octagonal versions grip an attacker's weapon a bit better. The usual set of sai for our

kobudo training consists of 3 sai, not just 2. You can train with a pair, but the senior kata all require 3.

### **Tonfa**

A tonfa should be long enough to go about 1” past the elbow when held in the closed position. The handle should be tall enough that the top side of the thumb and index finger have some clearance from the cap when the weapon is spun, to allow for proper movement, and prevent blistering. We usually use a tonfa with a round body, not the square tonfa some systems use, though those are perfectly fine weapons. The tonfa should be made of hardwood. Soft wood tonfa are too light, and break easily. The surface should be sanded and oiled, not finished with paint or a varnish or other hard finish.

### **Nunchiyaku**

The nunchiyaku can be of different sizes, depending on the person and use. They should be made of hardwood, and should be sanded and oiled, not painted or varnished. The connection should be parachute cord or other strong cord, not chain, wire, or light cord. It should be securely tied through the top of the weapon, not attached to a swivel or hook at the top of the shaft. They can be round, ovoid, or octagonal, with octagonal being the most common.

The general weapon specifications we require call for a high quality weapon. This is primarily for purposes of safety, but also is an indication that we take our training, and the tools we use for it, seriously. It also means that the weapons we use are not the cheapest you can buy. However, by purchasing the proper weapon, you should have one that will last for many many years of hard use.

We can recommend companies to purchase weapons from. Some of them are on our website, and some give us a discount if ordering through the dojo. Any weapon brought to the dojo is subject to the inspection of the instructor, so you are better off speaking to the instructor before purchasing one.