

# Origins & History of Goju Weapons Kata

## **Okinawan Kobudo History - A traditional weapon art.**

The word "kobudo" means "ancient weapons way". Okinawan kobudo had its start around 400 years ago when Japan began to assert control over the Island of Okinawa. Warlords forced the Okinawan people to turn over their weapons to the Japanese. The move was made by Imperial Japanese leaders with almost no realistic political foresight and very little insight or perception into the Okinawan way of thinking. The ruling classes assumed that to gain political and financial control over this tenacious island race, all that was necessary was to disarm the people. The warlords specifically ordered that "all weapons" be turned over to the authorities. Little did the authorities realize that the Okinawan people were such a nationalistic race and so strongly devoted to freedom that they would go to any lengths to deceive and/or hide the weapons they needed to fight their oppressors. The resourceful Okinawans adapted everyday farming and fishing implements -- 6-foot staff (bo), rice-grinder handle (tonfa), horse's bridle (nunchiyaku), boat paddle (ueku), rice sickle (kama), etc. -- for self-defensive purposes. Thus, weapons were called "farm implements", but underground the fighting population was training in the use and proficiency of these tools.

Soon the weapons masters became a most feared force in the battle for political freedom, feared by the Japanese and idolized by the Okinawan people whose protectorate they were. This was the birth of what we now know as Okinawan Kobudo. Over time, the use of these weapons became formalized into a beautiful, graceful, and effective art that has been passed down from generation to generation.

At different times and for various reasons during its history, weapons were banned on the island of Okinawa. In 1429, Sho Hassi united the kingdom of Okinawa under his rule and renamed North and South. During the era of his grandson Sho Shin, the policy of "Bunji-Kokka", or government by culture not military force, was put into effect. At this time all weapons were banned except for those used by military forces in 1477. The objective was to restore peace and to disarm rival clans.

Upon seizing control of Okinawa in 1609, the Shimazu clan instituted numerous rules of martial law, one of which was a ban on all weapons. This time, however, the ban was on a much larger scale than that instituted by Sho-Shin. Only the Satsuma samurai, who were the invaders and conquerors of Okinawa, were allowed to have weapons.

The methods used by the Satsuma for enforcing the weapons ban were ruthless. Any weapons found in an Okinawan's possession were immediately confiscated and the owner was severely punished. As part of the ban, the Shimazu also prohibited the Okinawans from participating in the study or practice of the martial arts.

This ban had a number of serious effects on the Okinawan martial arts. All study and participation was forced underground, and all teaching was done by word of mouth only. No written records exist which would allow us to trace the development of the Okinawan arts during this time period. This has led to the creation of many false legends due to the inability to document facts.

Secrecy became such an obsession that instructors hid true techniques from rival schools, as in the changing or hiding of moves in kata. This eventually led to the development of new and unique fighting techniques and systems including the modification of farming and work tools into weapons for combat use. The fighting attitudes in the martial arts schools became very violent due to the suppression of civil liberties and the general sentiment of the times.

And above all, the ban made Karate one of the most practical and effective hand-to-hand combat systems ever developed. The need for practical application kept Karate from degenerating to a mostly theoretical art or a simple or obscure form of exercise.

Aragaki Seisho - Aragaki the Cat (1840-1920) a Nahe te Master was also said to of been proficient at Ryukyu Kobudo, and was responsible for passing on the following Kobudo Kata: Urasoe Bo, Sesoko no Sai, Shokyu no Kon, Aragaki no Sai and Tsuken Hantagwa no Sai.

The weapons of traditional Okinawan Kobudo can be divided into two groups or categories: the Major Weapons and the Minor Weapons. The major weapons are those which are widely known and practiced with numerous traditional kata in existence. The minor weapons are those lesser-known weapons for which a limited number of kata exist. In fact, with some of the weapons, practice is limited to weapons manipulations and one-step applications. The major weapons of Okinawan Kobudo include Bo, Numchuku, Sai, Kama, Tonfa.

Below is a list of only some of the weapons that exist in the Okinawan weapons range. Many Okinawan Karate styles include these five major weapons in their training to some degree. Training with these five weapons helps to develop similar muscles as used in karate as well as hand-eye coordination and heightened reflexes. Many of the striking and blocking techniques practiced in everyday Karate can be easily adapted to use when armed with these weapons, making the transition to training with these weapons relatively easy and most beneficial to the karateka

Below are a list of Okinawan weapons.

<u>Okinawan Name</u>	<u>English Name</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Kata Origins</u>
<a href="#">1. Kon or Rokkushaku Bo (Compulsory)</a>	<a href="#">(Staff)</a> , its variant Jo	wooden	<p>Our system is mostly of Yamaneryu heritage. There are about twenty known kata for this weapon including Shuji No Kon Sho, Shuji No Kon Dai, Koshiki No Shuji, Shu shi no Kon, Sakugawa No Kon Sho, Sakugawa No Kon Dai, Sakugawa No Kon Chu, Soeshi No Kon Sho, Soeshi No Kon Dai, Sueyoshi No Kon, Kong No Kon</p> <p><b>(Taira Shinken's Bo Kata):</b> Shirotaru No Kon Sho, Shirotaru No Kon Dai, Sesoko No Kon, Yonekawa No Kon, Tsukenbo, Chinenchichanaka, Chatanyara, Choun, Urasoe, Tsukensunakake, Tokubetsu-Bo: Kyu Shaku Bo, San Shaku Bo, Matsu Higa no kon, Ten U no kon, Chatan Yara no kon,</p> <p><b>(Matayoshi Kobudo Bo Kata):</b> Shushi Nu Kun, Choun Nu Kun, Sakugawa Nu Kun, Chikin (Tsuken) Nu Kun, Shiishi Nu Kun, Ufutun no Kun, Chatan Yara no Kun, Kubo no Kun, Yonegawa no Kun</p> <p><b>(Isshinryu Bo kata ):</b> Tokomine No Kon,Urashi No kon,Shishi No Kon No Dai</p>
<a href="#">2. Nunchaku</a>		2 wooden sections connected with cord	<p>There are about six katas for this weapon. Nunchaku no Sho, Nunchaku no Dai, San Bon Nunchaku</p> <p><b>(Matayoshi Kobudo Nunchaku kata):</b>Kohbu Nunchaku kata Ichi,Nunchaku Kata sandan</p> <p>Kata, including Tsukenshitahaku no Sai, Hamahiga no Sai, Yaka no Sai, Hantaguwa, Kojo, Tawata, Chatanyara no Sai, Manji no Sai, Jigen no Sai, Aragaki no sai, Sokon no sai,</p> <p><b>(Matayoshi Kobudo Sai Kata):</b> Nicho Sai(also called as Ni Cho Zai, Sancho Sai(also called as San Cho Zai) and Shinbaro No Sai (also called as Matayoshi no Sai)</p> <p><b>(Isshinryu Sai kata) :</b> Kusanku no Sai,Chatanyara no Sai About 12 kata exist for this weapon.</p>
<a href="#">3. Sai</a>	(Iron Trident, Truncheon ) its variant Jitte	3 pronged metal weapon	<p>Current kata include Hamahiga no Tonfa, Yaruwa, Matsu Higa no tonfa</p> <p><b>(Matayoshi kobudo Tonkua kata) :</b> Tonkua Kata Dai Ichi,Tonkua Kata Dai Ni There are about 8 kata associated with this weapon.</p>
<a href="#">4. Tonfa or Tunfa or Tsuifa</a>	(Wooden Truncheon )	wooden handle from grinding stone again red oak or white oak	<p>The kata called Tozan, Kanigawa no Sho, Kanigawa no Dai</p> <p><b>(Matayoshi Kobudo Kama Kata) :</b> Kohbu Nicho Gama(also called as Tairaguwa Gushikawa No Kama No Kata Ichi)</p>
<a href="#">5. Kama</a>	(Sickles)	wood and iron	<p>The kata named Tsuken Akachu No Eiku De (Also called as Chikin Akachu No Eiku De)</p>
<a href="#">6. Eku or Eiku</a>	(Oar)	wooden	

<a href="#">7. Rothen or Tinbi or Tenbi</a>	(Short Spear and Shield)	commonly found in vine or cane, metal, or for presentation, in turtle shell.	Kanigawa no Tinbe <b>(Matayoshi Kobudo):</b> Matayoshi no Tinbe
<a href="#">8. Ken (Compulsory)</a>	(Bokken)	wooden sword	
<a href="#">9. Nitanbo</a>	(Arnis, Escrima or Kali)	wooden	

## Okinawan Weapons & Kata

### 1. Bo Kata

Given the name Yamaneryu by Chinen Masami (1898-1976,) the grandson of Chinen Sanda, the term is actually brings together three separate Chinese ideograms:

1. "Yams," meaning "mountain;"
2. "Ne," meaning "foundation or root;" and
3. "Ryu," meaning, "stream." The term was simply intended to describe the locale in Shuri's Samukawa village from whence Chinen's tradition came. It utilises natural mechanics and natural momentum developed through the movements. Our system is mostly of Yamaneryu heritage. There are about twenty known kata for this weapon. The Kata below was developed by Kyoshi Raff Lanciana of Zen Do Kai Wildcats.

### 2. Nunchuku Kata (Wooden Flail)

The Nunchaku is the Okinawan weapon composed of two pieces of wooden sticks connected by rope. Nunchaku handles should be made from a hardwood which is both strong and flexible. The original Nunchuku sticks were made from the core of a palm tree hardened three to five years in mud water. The wood became so hard after the constant soaking, it was unable to be cut even with a samurai sword. There are about six katas for this weapon. The Kata below was developed by Kyoshi Raff Lanciana of Zen Do Kai Wildcats.



### 3. Sai & Jitte (Iron Trident or Truncheon)

The Sai has become, to many, the virtual symbol of Okinawan Kobudo. The weapon is metal and of the truncheon class with its length dependent upon the forearm of the user. When held it should be about 3cm longer than the forearm and generally Sai are used in pairs. Advanced Sai uses 3, with one held in the belt behind ready for, and used for throwing. The tang is of the Korean classification and the pommel is variant to round, square or multi angled types much dependant on the emphasis of the makers usage.



In Sai jutsu, there are techniques such as utsu (striking), uke (blocking), tsuku (thrusting), uchiotosu (striking down), hikkakeru (hooking) and tsuranuku (piercing). Sai jutsu is regarded as form of self-defense. Unlike other martial arts around the world in which the basic idea is to defend yourself by fatally stabbing your opponent, the primary idea behind the development of Sai jutsu was to subdue an opponent without doing him any injury. Kata, including Tsuken shitahaku no sai, Tawada no sai, and Hamahiga no sai are still practiced today in Okinawa. About 12 kata exist for this weapon.

### 4. Tonfa (Truncheon )

There is in principal only one kind of Tuifa although the shaft varies in shape from round to rectangular. History has also shown the butt ends to be pointed but this is extremely rare. There are only a few so called traditional kata for the tuifa, although many more basic, or training, kata have been developed in more recent times. Current kata include Yara gua no Tonfa jutsu and Hamahiga no Tonfa jutsu. There are about 8 kata associated with this weapon.



The weapon is used in pairs and is of wood, again red oak or white oak preferably in keeping with the Bo. The length of the weapon is also the same requirements as the Sai, about three centimeters past the elbow when gripped. The weight like the Bo is paramount to the efficient usage of the weapon. Too light and it lacks power in Kumite, too heavy and the techniques lack speed and become ponderous.

Good body movement like the Sai can make this weapon formidable, combining the speed it needs and generates along with the skillful footwork for evasion and attack. Although there are stories of rice millstone grinding implements and

horses bridles etc. as being the origins of this weapon, these are merely coincidental. The weapons origins can clearly be traced back to China and be found in Indonesia and surrounding geographical locations. While the weapon may have been introduced into Okinawa via China (or elsewhere in southern Asia), it still does not rule out its use as a mill handle.

## **5. Kama (Sickle)**

Kama- jutsu is also called "Kama nu ti". About 700 years ago, in King Eiso's reign, agricultural tools such as hoes and sickles began to be made of iron. Along with these farm tools, many weapons were imported from mainland Japan and China in that era. Kama was first used as a weapon by farmers around 1314 A.D. when warriors and farmers rose up against King Tamagusuku's oppression. As a result, three chieftains were established. The kama was one of the most familiar pieces of farm equipment that could be used as a substitute weapon. The kama has not been used much for developing kata or for tanren. Most of the techniques have been developed from karate. Because the kama is a weapon with a blade and therefore incorporates a high degree of danger, it is somewhat different from the other forms of kobudo weaponry.



In this jutsu, a pair of Kama are used separately or connected with a string. There was also a Kama attached to a 150cm Bo. The effect of a Kama increases when used in a pair. In fighting, another Kama is hidden behind the back for throwing. The angle of the Kama to its handle is 90 degrees, but it can be 30, 45, or 60 degrees when used in a pair, increasing its killing efficiency. It is said that even sword masters avoided fighting Kama masters. However, a kama match involving rokushaku-bo (180 centimeter-long sticks), can be very thrilling. The techniques include ukete sasu (blocking and stabbing), tsuku (thrusting) and kiru (cutting), as well as nagete ateru (throwing and striking). The kata called Kanegawa no Nicho-gama remains today.

## **6. Eku or Eiku Jutsu (Oar)**

The eku is one of the lesser-known Okinawan weapons. The Eku was, and is, a genuine tool of Okinawan fisherman. Its popularity was obviously greatest in fishing areas, like Tomari and some of the outlying islands. The Okinawan oar is only slightly shorter in length than a Bo, and has a long narrow paddle. One side of the paddle is flat, or gently convex, while the other side is peaked. The tip is rounded or slightly pointed.

It can be used in a manner very similar to the bo, thrusting and striking one's opponent. because of its heavier mass and bladed edges, it has formidable striking power when used in cutting motions. It has one other unique property - it can be used to scoop sand at the opponent's eyes! The kata named Tsuken Aka Chu No Eku De remains today. The oar has not been very popular in Japan, however, it is not uncommon among high level Karate-ka on Okinawa.

## **7. Rochen or Tenbi Jutsu (Short spear/ machete & Shield)**

This weapon is the most glamorous of the Ryukyu system and exudes a feeling of history long gone. The usage however is more akin to a combination of Zulu fighting and European sword and small shield fighting. The Tembe (Shield) can be made of various material but is commonly found in vine or cane, metal, or for presentation, in turtle shell. The shield size is generally about 45 cm long and 38 cm wide. The Rochin (Short spear) is cut with the length of the shaft being the same distance as the forearm to the elbow if it is being held in the hand. The spearhead then protrudes from the shaft and can be found in many differing designs. In this school of thought, the Tinbe is used more to hide the Rochen than to defend against another blade..

The favored style has an expanded middle section before the point, which is twisted upon insertion to make the wound larger. The weight of the blade is critical for the spear usage, which is swiveled between the fingers to use both ends, smashing with the butt end and stabbing with the blade end. The techniques are circular to avoid too much direct contact on the shield and the short spear is predominantly used in an upward stabbing motion, piercing armor under the rib cage, armpits, and throat. The techniques of the Tembe-Rochin are unique to shield and spear usage.

## **8. Bokken / Ken Jutsu Kata**

Evidence suggests that swords have existed in Japan for its entire historical period. Short straight swords imported from China and Korea are among the earliest weapons found in sites around Japan. After 2000 B.C., when these swords first appeared, the Japanese began making their own. Around 700 A.D., Japanese swordsmiths forged the first of what are now considered the finest swords ever made. The Kata below was developed by Kyoshi Raff Lanciana & Kyoshi Maurice Garnier of Zen Do Kai Wildcats.



## 9. Nitambo Kata (Eskrima, Arnis or Kali)

Due to the Spanish influence the Filipino Martial Arts came to be known as "Arnis de Mano" - derived from a Spanish word "arnes", meaning trappings or defensive armor. It also acquired namesakes such as "estokada", "estoque", "fraile", or simply "arnis". The word "eskrima" is derived from the Spanish word "esgrima", which means "a game between two combatants with the use of blunt instruments". The name of the stick which could be either rattan or a piece of hardwood used in "eskrima" is called either - "olisi", "baston" or "garote".



A most practical technique is the use of Nitambo, or two short sticks. It is a method similar to the well known Philippine Eskrima, or Arnis, and may even have come to Okinawa via the Philippines. Nitambo are not considered common weapons in China, but they can be found in Southern White Crane systems, such as "Two Short Rods". In Nitambo, an approximately 18 inch stave is held in each hand, with which to effect devastating combinations of circular, snapping and linear strikes.