

# ***NODAN KARATE***



***The Five Principles***

by Nodan

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**The  
Five Principles**

**by NODAN**

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# **Warning!**

**The breaking and self-defense demonstrations shown in this book can be dangerous and should not be attempted without the supervision of a qualified instructor!**

# **CONTENTS**

**Forward 1**

**Quan Li and Sensei 3**

**Nodan Karate 14**

## **THE FIVE PRINCIPLES 31**

**1<sup>st</sup> Proper Bone Alignment 32**

**2<sup>nd</sup> 1-2 Timing 44**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Extension of Ki 56**

**4<sup>th</sup> Correct Breathing 62**

**5<sup>th</sup> Soft and Hard 63**

**Kicking Techniques 67**

**Blocking Techniques 74**

**Self-Defense 80**

**Best Martial Art 100**

**YouTube Videos 106**

## Forward

In 1971, I received a black belt in Shorin-ryu karate. After another ten years of training in a number of throwing and striking styles, I reached the upper limits of my physical ability as a martial artist. I was aware of stories about “enlightened” adepts who possessed superhuman strength, and I began a quest for enlightenment that would make me a great master. In time, I met my last two teachers, Quan Li and Sensei.

I discovered that karate can be practiced on two distinctly different levels. The first is physical, in which only one’s natural abilities are used. The Five Principles and breaking experiments demonstrated in my YouTube videos were all performed at this physical level.

The second level is spiritual, in which karate-do is a Way to enlightenment. Sensei once told me, “You can get power from the dark side or the light.” I ignored this warning and came under the influence of a ferocious occult spirit that I could not expel by force of will. This power came from the dark side, because I had been training out of ego. Pride had motivated me to follow the Way, in order to become a great master with superhuman strength like Sensei.

I was only delivered from this malevolent spirit when I repented and surrendered my life to Jesus. When I said “yes” to him, I felt the evil presence drain out of me and a warm and wonderful spirit of love pour in from above. I was filled with a sublime peace that cannot be expressed in words. In that moment, I *knew* Jesus was real.

In 2011, I wrote a detailed account of my “enlightenment” experience. The book has since been discontinued, because so few martial artists are pursuing higher consciousness today that the subject has, for the most part, become irrelevant.

## The Nodan Character

In 2004, I purchased a camcorder and began filming a series of board breaking experiments. These were intended to serve as a backdrop for my warning to martial artists against seeking enlightenment through their arts. At that time, I invented the “no dan” (no rank) character to conceal my identity, in order to protect the privacy of certain people who would not want to have their names associated with my past occult practices.

To create a disguise, I went to a joke shop and bought a long gray beard, a mustache, and a pair of fake, black rimmed glasses. To camouflage my voice, I used a soft, high pitched tone with a non-descript accent. I found that applying and removing the sticky spirit gum adhesive that attached the beard and mustache was very annoying. In addition, the explosive nature of the “one strike” techniques caused the glasses to occasionally fly off, while the scratchy beard and mustache required constant readjusting. Today, I have a special appreciation for what thespians often have to endure.



**Nodan character was inspired by “Tode” Sakugawa (1733-1815), the first Okinawan karate jutsu teacher. Cultural appropriation of this karate icon was out of respect for the masters who created the profound art.**

## **The Nodan Videos**

After videotaping the demonstrations, I purchased a computer and enrolled in a ten week video editing course. I was in my late fifties and soon discovered I had no aptitude for this new technology. After the classes ended, I had to pay the instructor to come to my house to finish my dvd!

The critics rightly savaged my effort, calling it cheesy and pointing to the awful acting and poor production values, which were exacerbated by the fact that my camcorder had only a one pixel resolution. This accounts for the relatively poor quality of my videos and pictures in this book.

Adding further insult, my anonymity generated false information about me on the internet, with one website going so far as to post bogus photos of the “real” Nodan! I finally discovered YouTube in 2009 and wisely hired a professional videographer to help edit videos for the **nodankarate** channel on YouTube.

## **The Five Principles**

The Five Principles are the result of reverse engineering the suspended board breaking experiments I conducted in 2004 and 2005. While none of these precepts are new to the martial arts, they have largely disappeared from most modern karate practice. This book is intended to be a guide for those martial artists who want to improve the striking power of their techniques, especially as it relates to street defense.

## **For the record**

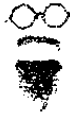
For the record, I did not receive any official dan (black belt) ranking from either Quan Li or Sensei during the five years I trained with them. Thus, “no dan” (no rank) is a fitting moniker for a make-believe karate master. Besides this, the



buffoonish character is a fitting parody for my misguided quest for superhuman strength and I benefit from remaining unknown, because humility finds refuge in anonymity.

The board breaking demonstrations seen in my YouTube videos are remarkably unimpressive when compared to the power that can be accessed from the dark side. I gave up that power, along with my desire to be a great master, when I surrendered my life to Jesus.

Peace be with you,



## Quan Li and Sensei



**My last karate teacher was Quan Li.**

I was a practicing black belt for ten years before I met my most influential karate teacher, Quan Li. As we trained together the first time, it became apparent that Li's technique was far superior to mine. I was surprised by his immovable stances, the heaviness of his blocks, and the unusual power in his strikes. Quan explained that I was using muscle power, while he was leveraging his strength using centered stances with proper bone alignments. The difference was astounding. Quan was the best karateka I had ever seen.

After our first workout, I concluded I would have to learn centered stances and Quan's axiom, "the hips must always precede the movement of the arm," if I was ever to approach his level of skill. Quan agreed to teach me his basics and we became good friends. He was my last karate teacher and training partner for five years.



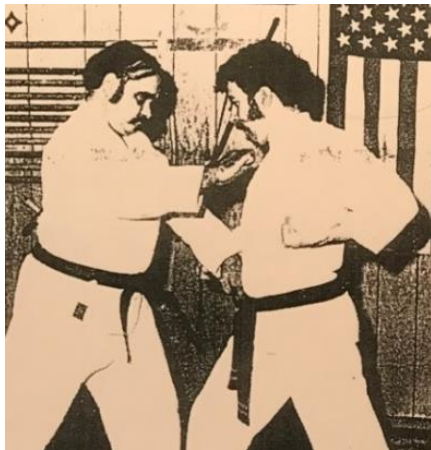
**Quan Li's Shotokan style was based on Sensei's interpretation of early Shuri-te karate jutsu.**



**Li performs kata in the video, "Nodan Teacher."**

After studying Mas Oyama's kyokushin karate for a year, Quan began training with Sensei, who taught a ferocious version of Master Funakoshi's early Shuri-te style. Sensei had on occasion trained with the legendary Oyama, who was considered by many to be the most powerful karateka of his generation. Sensei was influenced by the Kyokushin master's power approach and recalled attending an exhibition at a movie theatre where Oyama performed the Tensho kata. He said that Oyama had the Martial Spirit and that the sound of his breathing reverberated all the way to the back of the auditorium.

Sometime during the late 1960s, Sensei had a remarkable spiritual experience, in which he received the gift of extraordinary power from the Martial Spirit. I asked him how his power compared to Oyama's and he replied that he and the famous karateka were, "about equal in strength."



**Sensei demonstrates a downward block with a half fist strike to the throat. Quan received his black belt in Sensei's karate-do in the mid-70s.**

## Mas Oyama (1923-1994)



**Mas Oyama appeared on numerous magazine covers during his career.**

Quan Li's karate was based on Sensei's interpretation of the Okinawan karate jutsu that Master Funakoshi introduced to Japan in the early 1920s. This style was developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Shuri castle bodyguards who served the Okinawan king. Martial art historian and Shotokan expert, Dr. Bruce Clayton, describes the "new art" in his provocative book, *Shotokan's Secret*:

"The new art, called Shuri-te, was fundamentally different from traditional chuan fa... The new style made no attempt to subdue the opponent through painful nerve strikes or immobilizing joint locks. Instead, every element of the new art emphasized destroying the opponent completely in one or two seconds."<sup>1</sup>

Soken Matsumura (1797-1893) was the head of the castle bodyguards for fifty years and was most instrumental in the development of Shuri-te, which became known as “hard style” or linear impact karate. His protégé, Anko Itosu (1831-1915), transformed the combat oriented karate jutsu to karate-do, which emphasized spiritual development over fighting skill. Itosu became Funakoshi’s mentor and karate teacher.

Funakoshi viewed karate as one art and included kata from both the Shorei and Shorin styles. He was also influenced by Anko Asato, a master karateka and swordsman, who advised him to always think of his hands and feet as swords.

### Founders of Shuri-te Karate



**Matsumura (on left) and Itosu (on right) are flanking the Okinawan regent. The photograph was taken during Commodore Perry’s historic visit to the island in 1853.**

## Gichen Funakoshi (1868-1957)



**This magazine cover featured Funakoshi, “the father of modern karate” and founder of the Shotokan style of Shuri-te karate.**

Sensei stopped teaching his Shotokan karate in the late 1970s, believing the ferocious striking art no longer fit in a civilized society. In its place, he chose to teach Morihei Ueshiba’s aikido, a throwing art designed to cause as little injury as possible to an attacker.

After Sensei stopped teaching karate, he gave Quan Li permission to continue teaching his art, so long as he made no changes to it. Sensei’s program revolved around a structured five part workout, in which the kata occupied the central place. For masters like Sensei, kata functioned as “moving Zen” and was an essential vehicle for finding the true Way through karate-do.

Quan took a conservative approach to kumite, believing that free-style sparring was too dangerous before advanced black belt levels. Following Sensei's example, he taught prearranged one-point and three-step sparring forms that emphasized techniques taken from the kata.

Quan and I trained together each week for three to four hours. Quan was as good a teacher as he was a martial artist and he taught proactively, performing every repetition with me. For my part, I was a determined student, hanging on his every word and imitating his every move. We continued practicing karate together, even after I began training in aikido with Sensei.

\* \* \* \* \*

It has been more than thirty years since Quan and I trained together. To his credit, Quan never aspired to become a great master with powers like Sensei. Rather, he was motivated by his appreciation for the profound techniques of the art. To this day, he remains the best traditional karateka I have ever seen. His speed, power and precision technique are a benchmark of excellence for the traditional striking arts.

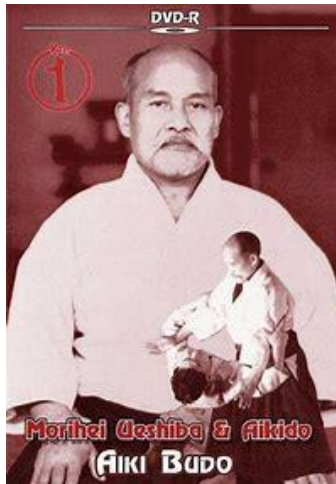
On the other hand, Sensei's extraordinary psychic ability and superhuman strength make him the most powerful martial artist I have ever seen.



## Aikido and Kobudo

Sensei dropped karate from his dojo curriculum, in favor of teaching Morihei Ueshiba's aikido (way of harmony) and kobudo (weapons). Whenever possible, I drove the nearly three hours round trip to train at Sensei's dojo.

### Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969)



**Ueshiba became known as “O Sensei” (The Sensei) and was considered to be the most enlightened artist in Japan.**

In 1925, Ueshiba defeated a master swordsman without having to fight, because he could sense the direction of his opponent's attacks. Afterwards, he experienced complete serenity of body and spirit and felt he had been “reborn” after being bathed in a golden light that poured down from heaven.<sup>2</sup> After this profound spiritual experience, Ueshiba believed he had become invincible. In “Poems of the Path,” he advises his followers, “move on toward enlightenment.”<sup>3</sup>



**At Sensei's dojo, I studied the sword and Jo. Aikido teaches circular movement, the unbendable arm, and extension of ki. I incorporated these principles into my karate street defense. My younger brother (right) has studied more than 25 years.**



**Aikido is a throwing art designed to control an attacker and cause as little injury as possible.**

## **Nodan Karate**

Nodan Karate is not a “style” of martial art, but rather the application of a proven striking method that utilizes The Five Principles and flexible makiwara practice to develop “one strike” power. As such, this method can be applied to most striking arts.

Unfortunately, as long as there are people in the world who want to dominate and victimize others, there will be a need for self-defense. Throughout this book, a number of street scenarios are demonstrated that show “one strike” applications, because what we practice is what we will do when faced with a real attack. Ultimately, the goal of street defense training is to foster a level of self-confidence that enables karateka to meet the everyday challenges of life and affirms the martial art proverb:

*A man learns to fight so he will not have to fight.*

### **Makiwara Training**

Along with expertise in The Five Principles, the primary tool for forging “one strike” power is the makiwara (striking post). The traditional Okinawan version is a wooden post wrapped in rice straw and buried three feet in the ground. These outdoor posts are stiff and hard, with limited flexibility. Over time, serious users develop thick calluses and bone calcifications on their hands and feet, which can lead to joint problems later in life. For five years, Quan and I practiced on such a makiwara made from a tapered 2x4 wall stud that was securely bolted to my dojo floor.

Sensei told me that Mas Oyama once told him that, after many years of intense makiwara practice, his hands were damaged to where he knew when it was about to rain, because

of the pain and stiffness in his knuckles. In his later years, Oyama suffered from severe osteoarthritis, but continued practicing karate until the last days of his life.

### **Fore fist knuckle calluses**



### **Traditional rigid makiwara**



In the early 1990s, I taught street defense to two young men, Yakov and Yohan, who were avid guitar players. To minimize their risk for hand injuries, I fabricated a flexible indoor striking post with a thick layer of soft rubber padding. The flexible post was based on the principle of graduated resistance, in which resistance increases over distance. Over time, this proved to be a safe and efficient way to develop powerful “one strike” techniques. Moreover, callus formation is not necessary for practical self-defense.

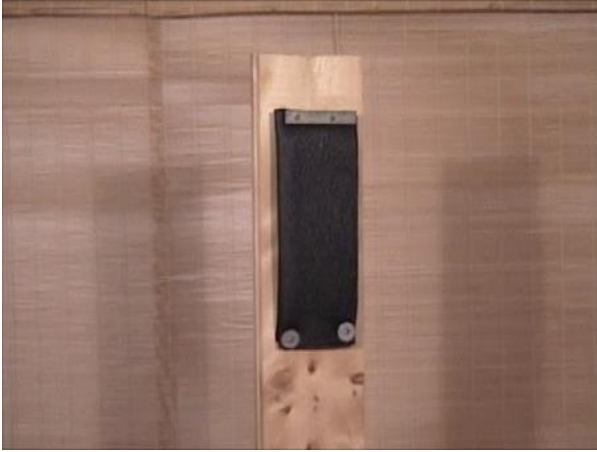
When conducting board breaking experiments, I used a single layer of rubber padding as a precaution against knuckle bruising, in case the board stack did not break. On those few occasions when the boards did not break on the first attempt, the thin layer of rubber padding provided a margin of safety. During my years of training and teaching, I always tried to put safety first, because I believe karate is for self-defense, not self-mutilation. I am now in my early 70s and I still practice with a flexible makiwara, in order to help maintain body core strength.

Makiwara practice is essential for developing “one strike” power, because graduated resistance builds bone and muscle strength. In addition, striking makiwara creates a different timing and feeling in the body that cannot be learned from punching the air.

The video, “Nodan Makiwara,” shows how to construct a flexible indoor makiwara and board holder from materials commonly found at most home improvement centers.



**I trained using a flexible makiwara for 12 years before filming my breaking experiments. Graduated resistance strengthens the body core and develops 3<sup>rd</sup> Principle, Extension of Ki (follow through).**



**This post was made from two 1x8 inch wide pine boards. Resistance can be adjusted by changing the width or type of wood. Several layers of soft rubber padding have been attached to the post using a bracket and fender washers.**



**Post holder was built with 2x4s and framing brackets attached to 3/4 inch plywood using 4 inch long bolts.**

## **Un-spaced Horizontal Board Breaking**

The correlation between flexible makiwara practice and “one strike” power is illustrated in the following suspended board breaks, in which I used my weak side left hand to highlight the effectiveness of the method. These experiments were conducted while I was in my late fifties, in order to show the advantage of sound technique (The Five Principles) over sheer athletic prowess.

Board breaking is relatively meaningless unless there is a protocol that provides a standardized method for measuring board strength. I conducted my breaking experiments using the scientific method, so they can be repeated by following the protocols on pages 26-28. Thus, karateka can test the power of their striking techniques against an empirically based standard.

### **5 Board Break with weak side Reverse Punch**



**5 board stacks are nearly 4 inches thick and can support a 650 lb. (295.45 kg) barbell placed across the centerline of the board running parallel with the grain (see p. 27).**

### **5 Board Break with weak side Elbow Strike**



**This was my strongest horizontal weak side strike.  
Note how the spine and leg form a straight line.**



**Elbow strikes eliminate the power losses through  
the elbow, wrist, and knuckle joints in the hand.**



#### 4 Board Break with weak side Bent Wrist



**WARNING!** Nerve damage to the wrist and arm can occur if the hands are not properly conditioned beforehand with the makiwara.



**A weak side bent wrist break was my most difficult breaking experiment.**

## Makiwara strengthening exercise



**The shoulders are squared to the target, while the hips are positioned at a cocked 45 degree angle.**



**The hips and upper body are rotated forcefully into the post and the entire body is focused hard. This is an exercise designed to strengthen the body core.**

## **Training Both Sides**

Training both sides of every technique is an important part of self-defense training, because an injury to either side can occur before or during a street confrontation. Street attacks are fluid and unpredictable, and having the option of using either hand is a major strategic advantage.

### **Left and Right 4 Board Palm Breaks from the Neutral Stance position**



**Left and Right 7 Board Bottom Fist Breaks**



**In spite of practicing more with my weak side left hand,  
the strong side right broke 7 boards with greater ease.**

## **Nodan Karate is street self-defense**



**“One strike” power from the neutral stance position is an essential skill for close quarter street defense.**

## **5 Board Break with weak side Palm Strike**



**This was my strongest upper level striking technique because the circular arc of the arm generates greater speed and the centered stance transfers the maximum bodyweight into the board stack.**

## Street Application



**Grab and choke holds from the front can be defended using a circular palm strike to the temple or rib cage.**



**Nodan uses the “unbendable arm” technique (p. 74) to minimize power losses through his elbow joint.**

## **Board Breaking Experiments**

I used un-spaced suspended horizontal board breaking to give tangible evidence of “one strike” power. This kind of breaking requires a substantial body weight transfer (Mass) and enough speed (Velocity) to overtake the movement of a hanging bag. A break will fail if the strike does not penetrate through the last board before the bag begins to move. While the dead weight of a suspended bag provides some initial resistance, this is minimal compared to the resistance afforded by using rigid supports.

Speed is a significant factor when assessing the efficacy of the horizontal striking and kicking techniques used in street defense. The resistance of the attacker’s body is more akin to the resistance of the suspended bag. This is why horizontal strikes are more damaging when they are applied against a stationary or advancing adversary, and less effective against an opponent who is leaning or moving away.

## **Breaking Protocols**

My boards were cut from 1x12 inch wide (actual mill size  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches) white pine donor boards, which are available at home improvement centers throughout Canada and the U.S. Pine boards are often used in breaking competitions and demonstrations because they are relatively easy to break. Thus, it is possible to measure the strengths of a variety of techniques (compare the 7 board bottom fist break on p. 23 with the 1 board push break on p. 59).

Each of my breaking experiments used 1x12x10 inch wide white pine boards. Testing revealed that each board could support, on average, a 130 lb. (59 kg) barbell placed across the centerline of the wood and running parallel with the grain.

It is not possible to assess the power of board breaking without having a measurable standard of board strength. Wood strength can vary widely depending on type, size, and moisture content, so a sample from each donor board should be tested just before breaking to insure consistency with the established standard. Each board stack was assembled from the same donor board with the grain patterns aligned and facing in the same direction. The heavy bag used in most of my experiments weighed 75 lbs.

When the boards are un-spaced, the resistance increases proportionally. Each 5 board stack could support at least a 650 lb. (295.5 kg) weight ( $5 \times 130 = 650$ ). Board strength can be adjusted by changing the width. For example, five 8 inch wide boards @ 130 lb. test strength are equal to five 10 inch wide boards @ 130 lb. test strength.



**Board holder was made from  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch plywood. It was cut to fit the curvature of the 75 lb. bag and was attached with rubber bungee cords.**





**On average, each test board supported a 130 lb. (59 kg) barbell placed across its centerline for one full second.**



**On average, test boards broke with 135 lbs. (61.4 kg).  
(See the YouTube video, “Nodan Board Testing.”)**



**Board strength can be adjusted by changing the width.**



**The suspended 5 board stack (left) is considerably more difficult to break than the rigidly supported 5 boards.**

## Speed and Strength Factors

Hand and foot speed is maximized through thousands of repetitions of each technique. Because flexibility increases speed and quickness, karateka should maintain a stretching routine that works the entire body. The significance of speed (Velocity) as compared to body weight transfer (Mass) for suspended board breaking is reflected in a physics formula, in which the speed of the strike is squared.

$$\text{Force} = \frac{\text{Mass} \times \text{Velocity}^2}{2}$$

Many masters, like Mas Oyama and Sensei, advocated weightlifting to develop overall body strength. These men adapted the strength they gained from weightlifting to their karate techniques through constant training.

I never used steroids and did not develop large muscles, but lifting heavy weights for seven years strengthened my body core and enhanced my ability to break multiple board stacks, especially using my weak side left hand.



**I began lifting heavy weights in high school.**

## **THE FIVE PRINCIPLES**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Proper Bone Alignment**

Stances are *centered* in the hara, a point two inches below the navel

### **2<sup>nd</sup> 1-2 Timing**

The hips are fully rotated *before* the striking arm or leg is extended

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Extension of Ki**

Follow through every technique  
(*Follow Through* Principle)

### **4<sup>th</sup> Correct Breathing**

*Inhaling* through the nose and *exhaling* through the mouth using the diaphragm

### **5<sup>th</sup> Soft and Hard**

The correct sequence of *relaxation* and *contraction* of all major muscle groups

## 1<sup>st</sup> Principle: Proper Bone Alignment

I learned centered stances from Quan Li, who taught that bone alignment is foundational to all martial arts. Whether training stances are low or high, the center of gravity must be located or centered, in the hara, a point two inches below the navel. To do this correctly, the pelvic tilt position of the hips must be maintained throughout every technique.

The ability to move in center becomes critical for the effective transfer of power through the hips. To learn this principle, I maintained a pelvic tilt position and placed my mind in the hara, in order to “think from the center.”

Below, Nodan stands at attention with his hands in the closed gate position. His feet grip the floor, his spine is straight, his head erect, and his shoulders are down and back. With his hips held in a pelvic tilt position, his centered stance becomes immovable.



**Yakov cannot push Nodan out of centered stance, because Nodan has re-directed Yakov's energy downward. Using this leverage advantage, Nodan easily moves Yakov backwards.**

## Centered Stance Testing



**Nodan is assisted by Yakov and three former students in stance testing demonstration, in which the three men will try to push Yakov out of his one-leg crane stance.**



**Yakov holds center as the men try to push him out of his stance. Then, by moving in center, he drives the three men backwards.**

**Centered front and back stepping**

**As Yakov steps in and Yohan steps back, they hold center as they seek out the correct foot placement. Note how they remain in upright centered stance positions throughout the exercise.**



**Yakov allows his punching arm to release and swing free, to lessen the shock from Yohan's outside forearm block. (See the YouTube video, "Nodan Students.")**



### Centered Straddle Stance Defense



**Yohan initiates a takedown attempt. Yakov steps back into a centered straddle stance.**



**Yakov's centered stance causes his feet to stick to the floor. This allows him to stop takedown attempt and position himself to execute a downward punch.**



**Yakov follows up with a downward elbow strike.**

### **Moving in center with spinning step**



**Nodan raises his hands to give attacker false confidence. Effective street defense strategies include understanding criminal psychology and using surprise and deception.**



**His initial pivot moves him out of the line of fire.**



**Nodan continues to spin into a centered straddle stance, as he traps the gunman's weapon arm.**



**Nodan counter attacks with a hook punch to the temple.**

### **Moving in center with cross-step**



**Nodan uses a fighting stance against the knife threat. His body is relaxed as he applies the “two-fold gaze” (p. 85).**



**He may use a head feint before preemptively moving in to block away the weapon hand.**



**Nodan maintains center as he cross-steps toward his opponent.**

### **3 Board Break with cross-chest knife hand strike**



**In order to break the 3 boards, Nodan must momentarily plant both feet in a centered straddle stance as he executes knife hand strike.**

### Centered Front Kick



**Yakov executes a front kick from a centered stance.**



**From his centered one-leg stance, Yakov uses the 1-2 Timing (2<sup>nd</sup> Principle) and bag caroms off his foot.**

### Fore Fist Bone Alignment

Until a strike makes contact, excessive tension in muscles, tendons, and ligaments dissipates the transfer of power from the hara (center) to the arms and legs. This is reflected in the 5<sup>th</sup> Principle, Soft and Hard (p. 63), in which the body is not entirely tensed before it focuses hard upon impact.

The interosseous membrane connects the two bones in the forearm (the radius and the ulna). Turning the fore fist at a 45 degree angle upon impact causes the minimum amount of tension in the membrane, which reduces power loss through the arm. Besides properly aligning the two bones in the forearm, the 45 degree rotation makes it easier to keep the elbow under throughout the movement of the arm. This is critical for the straight line thrust punch, because significant power loss can occur if the elbow is allowed to turn outward.

To find the ideal fore fist thrust position, extend both arms against a wall as if trying to push it over. Then, with the arms held straight and the elbows turned under, form a fist from the hand position as it pushes against the wall.



**Nodan's fore fist assumes a 45 degree angle as he breaks a 4 board stack from a one-legged crane stance (p. 48).**



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Principle: 1-2 Timing

Nodan's hips are fully rotated before his upper body and arm are extended into the target. The 1-2 Timing uses the first principle, Proper Bone Alignment, to generate speed and power. Although most karate styles teach that power is generated through the hips, few schools emphasize the two-step process.



**Step 1- As the hips are fully rotated, the upper body and striking arm move naturally and remain relaxed.**



**Step 2- Nodan's upper body is rotated 45 degrees into the target and his punching arm is extended.**

In the 1-2 Timing, the hip rotation (step 1) and the upper body rotation (step 2) are separate actions. In addition, the upper body rotation and the extension of the punching arm also move in a 1-2 timing sequence. Study this well:

***All blocking, striking, and kicking techniques execute a 1-2 timing within the 1-2 Timing.***

Note the bone alignments in Nodan's finishing position. His hips are in a pelvic tilt position, his fore fist forms a 45 degree angle, and his rear leg and spine form a straight line. His shoulders are held in the down and back position as they are rotated 45 degrees.

Because the hand moves quicker than the eye, full speed strikes will appear to be one continuous motion. Therefore, beginners must consciously separate the two steps within each blocking, kicking, and striking movement until the 1-2 Timing becomes a natural part of every technique.

## 1-2 Timing from Neutral Stance



**Step 1- From a ready thrust position (left photo), the hips are fully rotated toward the target (right photo).**



**Step 2- The upper body rotates 45 degrees toward the target and the palm strike is extended.**

## 4 Board Break from Neutral Stance



**As his hips rotate towards the target, Nodan's striking arm is relaxed and moves naturally.**



**Nodan's upper body rotates 45 degrees into the target and his striking arm is extended.**

### 4 Board Break from Crane Stance



**Step 1- He turns hips toward the target as striking arm moves naturally and remains relaxed.**



**Step 2- Nodan's upper body rotates 45 degrees into the target and his striking arm is extended.**

## Lunging Elbow Strike with 1-2 Timing



**Nodan steps into a centered straddle stance (left photo).  
Step 1- He rotates his hips sharply towards the target.**



**Step 2- He rotates his upper body and elbow into the 4 boards.**

### Close Hook Punch using the 1-2 Timing



**Nodan is grabbed by the lapels and feigns surrender, then lowers his arm into the ready thrust position.**



**Step 1- Nodan turns his hips toward the target as his punching arm moves naturally with rotation.  
Step 2- He rotates his torso and shoulders and extends the striking arm through the 3 board stack.**

### Back Elbow Strike defense with 1-2 Timing



**Nodan is grabbed in a one arm choke hold. He drops into a centered stance and prepares to throw an elbow strike.**



**He can use both arms for added power (left photo).  
The 1-2 Timing is applied in the reverse direction.**



### **1-2 Timing in Naihanchi (Tekki) Shodan**

In the video, “Nodan Katas,” The Five Principles are applied to one kata from each of three different striking arts, which give the forms a different look and energy.



**Nodan is positioned in a centered straddle stance.**



**Step 1- His hips rotate sharply towards the target (left).  
Step 2- He rotates upper body and extends elbow strike.**



**Nodan drops his hands into position for the next technique.**



**His hips are fully rotated before his arms are extended.**

### **Thrust vs. Push**



**Yakov executes a simultaneous downward forearm block and reverse thrust punch.**



**The bag caroms off Yakov's fist like a pinball, because he used 1-2 Timing. This distinguishes a thrust from a push.**

The 1-2 Timing must be studied well, because all striking, kicking, and blocking techniques rely on this principle to generate maximum speed and power. To learn this principle, the mind must be located in the center, a point two inches below the navel. If the mind is in the striking hand, the arm will lead rather than follow the hip and upper body rotations, resulting in a push rather than a properly leveraged thrust.

It is noteworthy that the first two principles, Proper Bone Alignment and the 1-2 Timing, are used by athletes to hit a baseball, strike a golf ball, and stroke a tennis ball. Ironically, these two essential precepts have become largely lost to modern karate. I could not have executed the 4 and 5 board horizontal breaks using my weak side left hand, without proficiency in these two principles.

### **Throwing a baseball uses 1-2 Timing**



**Throwing a baseball is similar to throwing a reverse punch.  
The hips are rotated before the throwing arm is extended.**

### **3rd Principle: Extension of Ki (Follow Through)**

For the Asian martial arts, ki (chi) is the vital energy and activating life force inherent in all living things. As such, some masters actively cultivate the ability to channel and project this unseen energy. I do not advocate seeking this energy source. Rather, I describe this principle as Follow Through, in which one's natural physical energy is mentally extended through each technique, "all the way to infinity."

This principle is essential for breaking multiple un-spaced board stacks, because the kinetic energy of a strike dissipates as it is absorbed by each successive board. Follow Through helps maintain enough speed to break the last board before the suspended bag begins to move.

Along with the Proper Bone Alignment and 1-2 Timing, follow through is emphasized in sports that involve hitting, throwing, and kicking a ball.



**The flexible makiwara helps develop Follow Through.**

**Follow Through with Bent Wrist Strike**



**Nodan's bent wrist break from a weak, cross chest position required a concentrated Follow Through.**

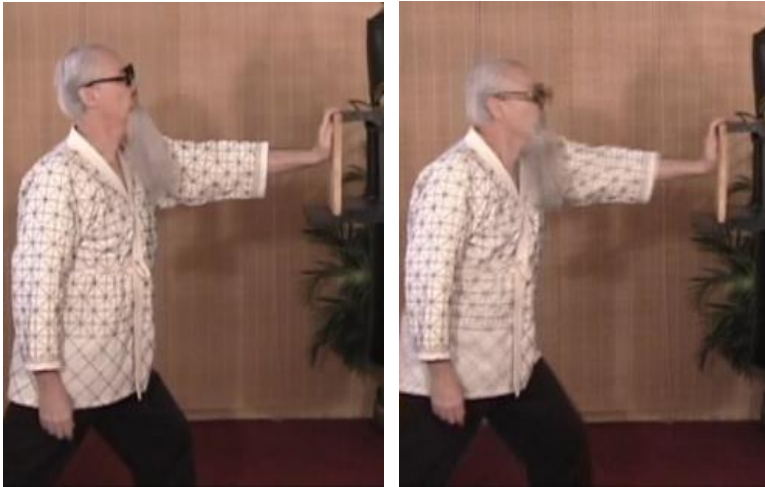


**The strike must be extended beyond the 3 boards.**

### **Follow Through with the Push Break**

This is a relatively safe, but difficult test of hip rotation and Follow Through. The push break is deceptively named because no amount of push will result in a successful break. The challenge is to thrust abruptly against the 1x12x10 inch wide pine board with enough force before the suspended bag moves. This is a zero inch break, because the thrusting hand is in contact with the board before the break is initiated.

This technique requires concentrated Follow Through and is not possible to execute without the Proper Bone Alignment and a well-developed 1-2 Timing hip rotation.



**In the left photo, Nodan's stance is relaxed, his rear leg and spine are straight, his head is held erect as if suspended on a string, and his elbow is under to minimize power loss through his elbow joint. Note that his right arm remains relaxed and that his explosive hip rotation (Step 1 of the 1-2 Timing) is barely discernible in the photo on right.**

## 1 Board Push Break with weak side left hand



**Nodan follows through as he rotates his upper body and arm into the target (Step 2 of the 1-2 Timing).**

In the photo above, Nodan rotates his upper body and thrusting arm through the target (Step 2 of the 1-2 Timing). As he executes the break, he focuses hard and exhales with a kiai yell. Throughout the movement, he follows through as if projecting his energy all the way to infinity.

Note how his right arm remains relaxed at his side throughout the technique. This is the application of the 5<sup>th</sup> Principle, Soft and Hard (p. 63), in which the muscles not essential to the strike remain soft and relaxed, in order to conserve energy and maintain flexibility.

During the push break, the hand never breaks contact with the board. The break occurs when the pisiform bone located on the outside part of the base of the wrist is pressed firmly against the board. This action causes the ridge of the hand to rotate slightly off the board, which gives the false impression that the hand has momentarily broken contact. It hasn't.



**Follow Through along two vectors**



**Nodan steps in and jams an overhead knife attack. A simultaneous rising block and palm strike to the jaw gives his adversary no time to counter attack.**



**Nodan projects his rising block outward to intercept the  $\frac{3}{4}$  swinging arc of the assailant's attacking arm.**



**He follows through along both vectors. This simultaneous rising block and palm strike are representative of the more advanced levels of the basic block and counter techniques.**

## 4<sup>th</sup> Principle: Correct Breathing

Breathing must be controlled with the diaphragm- inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. Shuri-te styles like Shorin-ryu and Shotokan prefer to train using a natural breathing pattern. Naha-te styles like Goju-ryu and Uechi-ryu practice Sanchin, a kata that utilizes a forced breathing technique and dynamic tension to strengthen the body core. I have trained in each one of these styles and can attest to the fact that they all teach, inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth using the diaphragm.

When executed vocally, the kiai is a primal roar that emanates from the depths of the hara or center. When performed without the yell, Nodan's kiai manifests as a forceful rush of air on every focused technique (See the YouTube video, "Nodan Dagger Form").



**Correct Breathing uses the diaphragm (left photo), not the intercostal muscles in the upper chest (right photo). Boxers, players of wind instruments, and opera singers are specifically trained to breathe using the diaphragm.**

## 5<sup>th</sup> Principle: Soft and Hard

Soft and Hard refers to the sequential contraction and relaxation of the major skeletal muscles in the body. For example, in the reverse thrust punch, the legs, abdominals, and hips are contracted first, while the muscles in the upper body remain relaxed. Next, the torso and arms rotate into the target and the entire body focuses hard upon impact. Immediately after the strike, the body again becomes soft, prepared for a follow up technique.

Developing proficiency in Soft and Hard requires many thousands of repetitions until the transitions within each technique flow without tension. The application of Soft and Hard is illustrated in the YouTube video, “Nodan Dagger Form,” where 89 focused movements are executed in 65 seconds.

### Soft and Hard street application



**WARNING!** Wear safety goggles when practicing eye strikes.



**Nodan deflects the knife thrust using a bent wrist block.**



**With continuous soft and hard movement, Nodan executes a spear hand strike to the attacker's eye.**



**He follows with a continuous motion snap punch that applies Soft and Hard to maximize speed.**



**Nodan's punching hand snaps back to ready position.**

## Soft and Hard Combination Break



**Nodan's first strike is a snapping back fist, in which his lower body is focused hard as the hips throw out the striking hand. During this movement, his upper body stays soft until focusing hard on impact.**



**The second strike flows from the first. The Soft and Hard principle quickens transitions between techniques and the elapsed time between the breaks is about .2 of a second.**

## Kicking Techniques

Kicking techniques also follow The Five Principles. For street defense, the middle and lower level applications of the front, side, and back kick are the most practical. Lower level kicks are easier and safer to perform and are more effective against un-trained street criminals.

### Front Thrust Kick

In the front thrust kick, the hips are rotated 45 degrees as the knee is raised. This opening of the hips releases the hamstring muscles, which allows for greater speed and flexibility of movement. The knee should be raised higher than the intended target, because a “down and in” motion gives the front thrust kick its power.





**5 Board Break with Front Thrust Kick**



**Nodan raises his knee above the intended target.**



**The down and in trajectory gives the kick its power.**



**Nodan's leg extension reveals concentrated Follow Through.**

## Front Kick Defense



**Yohan waits for opponent to commit to punching attack.  
Timing is critical in defending against a moving assault.**



**Yohan kicks to solar plexus while maintaining center.**

**Joint Hold with Knee Kick**

**Against a knife hold up, Yakov applies a joint hold and follows up with a knee kick counter. (The knee kick is an un-extended front kick.)**

## Low Back Kick Defense



**As Nodan turns, his lead hand feigns a strike toward the attacker's face and then transitions into a block.**



**Head to heel, Nodan follows through the 4 board stack.**

## Blocking Techniques

Blocking techniques also follow The Five Principles. The formal downward, middle, and rising blocks are examples of striking techniques that hit with the entire body and not only with the arm and shoulder.

These blocks apply the “unbendable arm,” in which the arm is extended in a soft/hard state of tension using the triceps muscles in back of the upper arm and the latissimus dorsi muscles that run along the upper sides of the back. The unbendable arm means the arm will not bend once it is in the desired position. This can make the arm feel like, “a slightly bent steel rod wrapped in cotton cloth.”

The formal karate blocks use the full range of motion to develop proper form. With practice, karateka learn to project strength into the shorter and quicker street applications of these formal kata techniques.

### 5 Board Break with Formal Downward Block



**Nodan uses unbendable arm technique to reduce power loss through elbow joint.**

## Downward Block Street Defense



**From a surrender position, Nodan patiently waits.**



**He steps slightly back and to his right and intercepts the front kick using a shorter and quicker downward block.**



### Formal Rising Block



**The blocking arm moves to the front and the hips are rotated.**



**Nodan lifts his blocking arm using the shoulder muscles and the latissimus dorsi muscles on the upper sides of his back.**

## Rising Block Defense



**Nodan steps in against an overhead knife attack and adjusts his rising block outward, in order to intercept the swinging arc of the attacker's arm.**

## Formal Middle Block



**Step 1-** As the hips rotate, his arm moves naturally.



**Step 2-** The hips are fully rotated (left photo) before blocking arm engages. Nodan maintains an “unbendable arm” as he turns his torso and executes a focused outside forearm block.

## Middle Block Defense



**Nodan defends against a thrusting knife attack by using an angle step with abbreviated middle block and hook punch to the head.**

## Self-Defense

I first became aware of karate's existence in the early 1960s, when I came across an advertisement in a weightlifting magazine. I was familiar with Western boxing and wrestling, but karate seemed especially well-suited for street defense. After high school, I attended college and joined a traditional Okinawan karate school.

From the beginning, I did not believe the sport karate being practiced in the 1960s was realistic. For me, karate was an exercise in survival and my main interest was in learning how to apply the techniques to real street situations.

While attending classes at the dojo, I also trained with a college classmate who practiced combat jujitsu. Tex brought a metal training knife to our first session together and succeeded in stabbing me a number of times. Afterwards, I had large red welts all over my body. This convinced me that street defense was different from the traditional instruction I was receiving at the dojo. My formal blocks were too slow, my body was out of position, and I lacked a strategy for defending against a skilled knife fighter.

Tex taught me wrist locks and joint holds that were useful in close quarter situations involving guns and knives. We practiced against the kinds of grabs and holds street criminals were likely to use and against moving knife and club attacks. This early jujitsu training was an important influence on my future approach to the martial arts.

Today, mixed martial arts (MMA) have taken center stage as an entertainment blood sport. At the professional level, world class athletes compete for fame and fortune in heavily promoted cage matches. This latest expression of the martial arts, however, is not self-defense. For example, practical tactics like striking to the eyes and throat, grabbing the groin,

and biting are prohibited in sport. In addition, competitors do not have to defend against armed or multiple attackers, where grappling skills are much less useful.

In order to be effective as self-defense, a martial art cannot be programmed to only respond to competitive sparring techniques. Rather, practitioners must take into account the psychology and predatory nature of street criminals, and then adapt their art to respond to specific kinds of street assaults.

### Street defense requires strategy



**After raising his hands in surrender, Nodan subtly moves his head out of the line of fire and applies wrist lock. He executes head strike using the 1-2 Timing to throw his head sideways.**





**An unseen armed assailant approaches Yohan from the back.**



**As he is grabbed from behind and a knife is held to his throat, Yohan feigns surrender as his right hand prepares to counter.**



**Yohan hooks his fingers over his adversary's wrist, pulls down hard and pins the weapon hand against his chest, then reaches back to attack the groin.**



**Yohan grabs the testicles to weaken the attacker and prepares to elbow strike the assailant's jaw.**





**After striking to the jaw, Yohan reaches across and grasps the attacker's weapon arm with both hands.**



**He pivots away while maintaining a firm joint hold on attacker's wrist and counters with a front kick.**

## The Two-fold Gaze

The “two-fold gaze” of perception and sight enables one to see the big picture and not be distracted by small details or sudden feints. Perceptually, this slows down the adversary’s movements. With a clear mind devoid of anticipation, the opponent’s strength and intention can be better perceived.

The two-fold gaze can have an intimidating effect on street thugs because it offers no opening for attack. The saying, “the tiger’s claw has no place to enter,” is an apt metaphor for the gaze’s psychological effect on an aggressor. I once used it to diffuse a road rage incident between a middle aged couple and an overly aggressive young man, who was threatening them. When I stepped in and faced the enraged bully, he became confused and didn’t know how to respond. I quoted the martial art proverb, “No fight, no blame,” and he immediately whirled around and hurried back to his car, all the while cursing back at us as he went!



**Nodan sees everything simultaneously and does not focus on the details. He perceives his opponent is about to launch an attack.**



**Nodan preemptively counter attacks with a sweeping block.**



**He continues stepping through, prepared to strike.**



**He executes a palm heel thrust to his attacker's jaw.**



**Nodan's palm heel strike breaks the 3 board stack.  
See how his rear leg and spine form a straight line.**

### **Defending against a machete attack**

Every year people are assaulted by a variety of non-weapons, such as machetes, hatchets, pitchforks, and baseball bats. Practicing to defend against these kinds of assaults is an essential part of realistic self-defense training.

Defending against a slashing machete attack is similar to confronting an overhead or side arm club assault, in which the weapon is large enough to require a slight hitch in the attacker's swing. (**CAUTION:** This may not apply when facing a skilled knife fighter or swordsman, who has been trained to wield rather than swing a live blade.)



**Nodan keeps a strategic distance that enables him to move in or out, depending on the movement of his adversary.**



**As the attacker hitches his swing to begin his assault, Nodan steps in with back foot to close the distance.**



**Nodan executes a front kick as he simultaneously blocks assailants's weapon hand. He follows with a reverse elbow strike to the adversary's throat.**

## Defending against a pitchfork attack



**Nodan takes a position just out of thrusting range.**



**He uses a covering block technique as he begins to spin outside his adversary's line of attack.**



**Nodan continues to spin behind his assailant. The long weapon makes it hard for attacker to turn and counter.**



**Spinning techniques must move in center, in order to finish in position for an effective counter attack.**



### **Appearances can be deceiving**

This gun defense from eight feet away seems impossible, which is what makes it effective. The maneuver works using the element of surprise that gives a gunman little time to react without jerking the trigger and missing his shot. I have used this technique many times against unsuspecting students and skeptics, who most often freeze without pulling the trigger. This defense would only be used in a do or die situation where a defender believes the gunman intends to shoot, and a zigzag running escape is not a viable option (for example, the defender may be with a companion).

The strategy is to surprise and misdirect, and move one step faster than the gunman's reaction time. It takes a split second to head feint and move out of the line of fire and only another half second to stride in and block the weapon hand.



**Initially, Nodan raises his hands in surrender to give gunman a false sense of confidence.**



**He head feints, as if moving to his right, in order to take advantage of the elements of surprise and misdirection.**



**Nodan moves to his left and out of the line of fire.**



**He strides in and prepares to block the weapon hand.**



**As Nodan blocks, he avoids the gunman's line of fire.**



**He strikes the gunman's ribcage with a reverse punch.**



**It takes slightly more than 1 second to head feint, traverse the 8 foot distance, and break 3 boards.**

### Gun hold up from behind



**Yakov first raises his hands in “surrender” when a gun is held against his lower back.**



**He spins out of the line of fire, jams the weapon arm against the assailant’s body, and strikes.**

## Defending against multiple attackers

Street attacks are fluid and unpredictable, and often require on site adaptations by the defender. In addition, a ferocious fighting spirit and “one strike” power are key factors in successfully defending against multiple attackers, especially if the assailants are carrying weapons.

The self-defense examples portrayed in this book have been staged to show potential applications of “one strike” power. It should be noted that these techniques are not intended to kill or maim an attacker, but rather to stun him long enough to escape or execute a follow up strike. In reality, few martial artists will develop the kind of “one strike” power that can stop a determined or drug-crazed attacker with a single blow.



**Nodan is held and threatened by two opponents. He will feign nonresistance and take advantage of the element of surprise.**



**The sudden force of his punch to one attacker's solar plexus breaks the other assailant's hold.**



**He turns and strikes the second attacker in the jaw.**



**Nodan's first strike was a punch to the solar plexus.**



**In less than a second, he breaks both 3 board stacks.  
In multiple attack situations, speed is of the essence.**



## The Best Martial Art

Debates over which is the best martial art should begin with the question, best for what? Ultimately, the best martial art is the one that best addresses *your* needs and goals. Those who seek instruction should research and visit their local schools, because every art has strengths and weaknesses, and good and bad instructors exist in every style.

Few martial artists will develop the striking power to stop a determined attacker with a single blow. Developing “one strike” power requires above average strength and athletic ability, serious makiwara training, and expertise in The Five Principles. Karateka who were not trained in the Proper Bone Alignment and 1-2 Timing may find that learning these “new” basics can be a difficult task. For others, this training may be unavailable, too expensive, or too time consuming.

One practical alternative is to take a self-defense course and carry pepper spray, which is available in handy pocket size containers. This street defense tool is relatively safe, inexpensive, and legal in most countries. As with any weapon system, users must become familiar with its proper use and application. Just as a new gun owners go to the range to practice handling and shooting their firearms, those who carry pepper spray should practice arming and discharging live canisters in both indoor and outdoor settings. This is especially relevant when out of doors, because variable wind conditions can make outside use unpredictable.

Finally, there is this for consideration. Sensei’s students once asked him about those martial artists who were deluded into thinking they could protect themselves when, in reality, they had never been properly trained in real self-defense. Sensei answered, “God takes care of those people.”

## Black Belt Test

After my enlightenment experience in 1985, I stopped training for seven years. I was brought back into karate by two young men, Yohan and Yakov, who requested self-defense lessons. They trained with me without receiving any rank. After five years, they were tested by an independent panel of judges for black belt in Shotokan Karate Jutsu.

The test evaluated blocking, kicking, and striking power, along with their performance in two Shotokan black belt katas, Jion and Kanku Dai.

Lastly, they were required to defend against a series of street attacks that included a variety of armed and unarmed assaults. This last phase of testing culminated with free-style sparring against an opponent armed with a knife.

An edited version of their 30 minute black belt test can be seen in the YouTube video, “Nodan Students.”



**Yohan, “the bull”  
(Jion kata)**



**Yakov, “the hammer”  
(Kanku Dai kata)**





**Free-style sparring against an armed opponent**





**Yohan and Yakov are awarded black belts.**



**After testing, Yohan and Yakov pose with their judges.**

## **YouTube Videos**

### **Nodan Karate (20:01)**

Comprehensive overview of The Five Principles and “one strike” street defense applications

### **Nodan Self-Defense (4:07)**

“One strike” self-defense applications against a variety of armed and unarmed street assaults

### **Nodan Makiwara (4:52)**

Instructions on building a flexible indoor makiwara and board holder from materials found at most home improvement centers

### **Who is Nodan? (1:59)**

A short summary of Nodan Karate with breaking and self-defense

### **Nodan Five Principles (8:41)**

Summary description of The Five Principles

### **Nodan Teacher (1:23)**

Nodan's most influential karate teacher,  
Quan Li, performs Heian IV and V

### **Nodan Students (3:46)**

Edited version of 30 minute black belt test  
for Nodan's students, Yohan and Yakov

### **Nodan Board Testing (3:51)**

Nodan establishes a uniform standard of  
board strength for breaking experiments

### **Nodan Slow Motion (00:59)**

A number of Nodan's suspended horizontal  
power breaks are viewed in slow motion

### **Nodan Katas (2:44)**

The Five Principles are applied to one  
kata from three different striking arts

### **Nodan Dagger Form (2:19)**

The Five Principles are applied and ten  
defense applications are demonstrated



## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bruce D. Clayton, Ph.D., *Shotokan's Secret*, Ohara Publications Inc., c. 2004, p. xii-xiii

<sup>2</sup> Morihei Ueshiba, *Budo*, Kodansha International, c. 1991, pgs. 13-14

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 28

**website: [nodankarate.org](http://nodankarate.org)**



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