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The Power of The Way



A Spiritual Journey

by Nodan

Lighthouse Productions

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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

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Introduction

After training in a variety of martial arts for 16 years, I began to study with an “enlightened” master, who we called “Sensei.” Sensei showed me that karate could be practiced on two distinctly different levels. The first is physical, in which only one’s natural ability is used. This is *karate jutsu* (empty hand technique), and the board breaking demonstrations in my YouTube videos at the **nodankarate** channel were all performed at this level.

The second level is spiritual, where enlightened adepts like Sensei display extraordinary psychic power and superhuman strength. This is the highest level of *karate-do* (empty hand Way), an occult path that leads to enlightenment. In my quest for “powers” like Sensei, I engaged in occult practices and spent many hours in Zen meditation. The last time I trained with Sensei, he told me, “You can get power from the dark side or the light.” Indeed, two weeks later I experienced the terrifying “dark side” of enlightenment.

In 2004, I began filming board breaking demonstrations for a DVD warning martial artists not to seek enlightenment through their arts. At that time, I created the make-believe karate master, “Nodan” (no rank), as a disguise to protect the identities of people who, understandably, may not want to be associated with my occult past. To that end, I have changed their names without altering any facts. This includes all quotations attributed to individuals, which I have taken verbatim from my original notes.

Quest for Enlightenment

My quest for enlightenment began in earnest after I met Quan Li in early 1981 and became his student and training partner for five years. Quan received his black belt from Sensei in the 1970s and taught me Sensei's "one strike" Shotokan style.

After training with Quan for a year, he took me to meet Sensei, who had stopped teaching karate in favor of aikido and weapons. Sensei explained that he had made the switch to aikido, because he believed his ferocious striking art no longer fit in a civilized society.

Quan and I would continue practicing karate together after I made the momentous decision to join Sensei's aikido school to benefit from his spiritual wisdom.



Quan taught Sensei's "one strike" Shotokan from his home dojo.

Although Nodan's buffoonish persona is a fitting parody of my misguided quest to become a great master with "powers" like Sensei, the board breaking is real and uses the empirical method to measure relative board strength. Thus, karateka can replicate my breaking demonstrations by following the "Breaking Protocols" beginning on pages 46-48.

This book describes two Ways. Part I, "The Way of The Spirit," tells the story of my occult journey to the "dark side" of enlightenment and superhuman strength

Part II, "The Way of Technique," describes Nodan Karate's method that applies five striking principles to flexible post makiwara training to develop "one strike" power.

4-board break using the "weak side" bent wrist strike



This shows how flexible post makiwara training can help develop "one strike" power. A 4-board stack can support a 520 lb. barbell placed over the centerline running parallel with the grain (p. 47).

Nodan Karate YouTube Videos

Nodan Karate (20:01) A comprehensive summary of Nodan Karate's "one strike" training method with SD applications

Nodan Five Principles (8:41) This is a concise summary

Nodan Makiwara (4:52) Instructions on how to build an indoor flexible post makiwara and board holder

Nodan Self-Defense (4:07) "One strike" street applications

Nodan Board Testing (3:51) board testing using a barbell

Nodan Students (3:46) Edited version of a black belt test

Nodan Katas (2:44) Tekki Shodan, Seisan, and Onsum

Nodan Dagger Form (2:19) Advanced Chinese/Okinawan form that features rapid-fire focused techniques

Who is Nodan? (1:59) A short video montage

Nodan Teacher (1:23) Quan Li performs Heian IV and V

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**Lighthouse Productions receives
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YouTube's *nodankarate* channel.**

PART I

The Way of The Spirit

The Dojo Spirits

I begin the story of my misguided quest for enlightenment with Gogen “the cat” Yamaguchi, a 10th degree Japanese Goju-ryu master, who is considered one of the great karate masters of his generation. In the 1970s, I learned the first eight katas of Yamaguchi’s system that incorporates Zen Buddhism with Shinto and yoga. In the 1976 documentary, “Way of The Sword,” Yamaguchi is seen in his dojo kneeling before a crystal ball and conjuring up the spirits. The film’s commentator translates the master’s words:

“In my crystal ball, I conjure up spirits of past and future. I talk to the samurai warriors of old and to the fighters who are yet to come, and the secrets they tell me I pass on through my karate school.”¹



Kongorikishi are two wrath-filled guardians of the Buddha and the most powerful demon gods of the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon. Statues of these gods guard the entrance to Yamaguchi’s dojo in Tokyo, Japan.

Traditional Japanese Dojo

The traditional Japanese dojo (Way room) is where the departed spirits of the masters meet with the followers of the Way. Portraits of these masters occupy the kamiza (high seat of honor), and before and after each class students are led in a ceremonial kneeling bow before it. This ritual includes Zazen (sitting meditation), which is intended to open the mind to make it more receptive to the spirits.

For most Western practitioners, bowing down before a kamiza is a symbolic act of respect that has nothing to do with contacting the spirits of deceased masters. This was my perspective, until I added a kamiza to my home dojo and began to experience strange phenomena.



Quan Li's dojo kamiza displayed portraits of departed masters.

Zazen (sitting meditation)



In Japanese dojos, Zazen and a formal ceremonial bow is performed at the beginning and end of every class.

Traditional Ceremonial Bow



Quan trained to perfect his techniques and wisely did not seek enlightenment and superhuman strength.

My Home Dojo

Following Quan's example, in 1981 I set up a traditional dojo with a kamiza in my home. Quan came once a week to train and showed me the Shotokan workout that Sensei had instituted when he taught the art. The workout was designed to burn away the ego, which was essential for reaching enlightenment. Special emphasis was placed on the katas, because they functioned as "moving Zen," and we practiced many repetitions of the Shotokan forms using tempos that ranged from slow motion to full speed.

Strange Phenomena

We used a kiai yell on every focused technique and without realizing it, I began using the sacred Hindu word "om" (pronounced ah-oom) as my kiai yell. At the time, I was unaware of the subtle spiritual influences operating in the workout, which functioned as martial arts yoga.

During our workouts we routinely experienced baffling phenomena. For example, when practicing prearranged three-step sparring a mysterious dynamic caused our arms to barely make contact, even though our blocks were easily deflecting the full power punches we were throwing. One time the dojo was filled with such energy that the wooden floor vibrated beneath our feet, and on two occasions the 2x4 post cracked at its base during makiwara practice.

The power I was experiencing was exhilarating and steeled my determination to reach further and further beyond my

natural strength. During the week I practiced the workout on my own and spent many hours in Zen meditation. Ironically, I could not see that rather than burning away my ego, the workout was subtly inflating it with the pride of becoming more and more powerful!

One evening as we were training, the energy seemed exceptionally strong, so I asked my wife to come in to see if she could feel anything unusual. Kay entered the room and was immediately drawn to the right side of the kamiza. With outstretched hands she traced the outline of a “presence” standing in the corner. When Kay realized what she had done, she became spooked and rushed out of the room.

Later that evening Kay confided that the “invisible man” in the corner stood about five feet tall, which just happened to coincide with the height of the diminutive Shotokan master, Gichen Funakoshi, whose portrait graced the kamiza. I do not know if Master Funakoshi’s spirit was in the dojo that night, but I believe the “presence” was in some way associated with the spirit(s) that we contacted during an incredible Ouija Board séance shortly afterwards.

The Séance

My senior black belt, JD, came to visit with Deedee his girlfriend. Deedee brought a Ouija Board, and after Quan and I finished our evening workout we all decided to take the channeling device into the dojo to ask it some questions. Deedee was the only one of us who had ever used a Ouija

Board and I was more than a little bit skeptical.

I placed the board on the floor in front of the kamiza and Kay lit several candles. We turned off the lights and sat down in a circle around the board. With pen and paper in hand, we were ready to begin.



Spiritualists use spirit boards in their religious practices to communicate with the dead.

Deedee and Kay placed their fingers lightly over the planchette and asked, “Is Master Funakoshi’s spirit in this dojo?” To my surprise, the planchette began to move and pause briefly over specific letters on the board’s alphabet. JD and Quan acted as spotters and I wrote down the letters as they called them out. ONLYFORTWO. When we divided the letters into words the message read, “Only for two.”

We asked, “Which two is he here for?” When the spirit answered, “For true believers,” Quan and I assumed it must be referring to us.

Quan asked, “Is Master Ueshiba here?”

When the spirit answered, "All are here if you learn the truth. The truth is in this room," my skepticism came to an end and I inquired, "Are we following the right path?"

The spirit answered, "Many have trained. Few will develop the gift given by..." The planchette abruptly stopped moving.

We persisted, "Given by whom?"

"It must start from within."

At this point, Kay became unnerved by the weirdness of the channeling sensation and stopped using the planchette, but Deedee continued and asked, "Who is speaking to us?"

The spirit gave an evasive Zen-like reply: "Like the sky, all is open. The sword moves with wisdom."

Sensei believed in reincarnation and had once told Quan that they had trained together in previous lives. Quan asked, "Does Master Funakoshi live in the flesh?"

When the spirit responded, "I, you, he," Kay gasped and exclaimed that Funakoshi's portrait on the kamiza had just morphed into a three-dimensional image and projected itself out at her. Quan noted that Sensei once told him that Funakoshi's picture did that sometimes, but Kay had seen enough. She sprang to her feet and ran out of the room declaring, "I'm out of here!"

After Kay's departure Quan asked, "Will Jay and Quan become masters?" The spirit gave another evasive answer.

"All will be known when each level is attained."

Unsatisfied with this noncommittal response, Quan asked, "What kata level should Quan be training?"

The spirit responded with a rather curt, "Good-bye."

Undeterred by the rebuff, Quan asked about his future in karate: "Is Quan destined to teach in the future?"

The spirit answered, "Giving is receiving the ki."

Deedee was puzzled when she saw this written out on paper and asked why the word "key" was spelled "ki." She had never heard of this Japanese word denoting energy. I had watched Deedee on several occasions to see if she could be choosing the letters, but she was not even looking down at the planchette as it glided effortlessly back and forth across the board.

Deedee asked a follow up question, "What is the ki?"

The spirit answered, "Look to yourself."

Then Quan asked, "Will karate-do die with Sensei?"

"Like the seasons winter sleeps. Slowly spring comes. Have..." For a second time the planchette stopped moving.

We asked, "Can you finish this statement?"

The spirit appeared to have had enough and responded, "Greed is given to all. I give to two with much to learn."

With that the séance was over... or so I thought. In fact, Deedee repeated her earlier question, "Who is speaking to us?" This time the spirit shocked Deedee and JD when it answered, "the Devil." I repressed this last communication to the point that I have no memory of it ever happening. To be sure, the séance had convinced me that a spirit realm did exist, but I was not prepared to accept the possibility that an evil supernatural being called "the Devil" could be real.

The Medium

Shortly after the séance I went to see an old Spiritualist minister named Gert, who gave psychic readings. In practice, mediums summon up spirits who temporarily speak through them by taking over in a benign form of possession. I visited her on four occasions, hoping to gain additional insights into the workings of the spirit world.

Gert knew details about my family that she could not have known beforehand and I have no doubt she was in contact with the spirit realm. Moreover, on two occasions I took other people for readings to validate her legitimacy and she easily passed the test. But when I asked her opinion of our Ouija Board séance, she became very angry and proceeded to denounce Parker Brothers for trivializing the board's significance by marketing it as a parlor game. Gert believed the spirit board could put an uninformed public at risk.

Ironically, the well-documented case of possession that inspired the 1973 block buster movie, "The Exorcist," began shortly after the thirteen-year-old boy (not a girl as portrayed in the film) was introduced to a Ouija Board by his aunt, who was herself a practicing Spiritualist!²

In Hindsight

Looking back, I realize there was no way to know for sure who or what Gert was channeling, or whether all the information was accurate. This applies to our Ouija Board séance as well. While mediums and objects such as kamiza

and Ouija Boards have no power in themselves, they can become portals for spirits to come through. It is because of the potential dangers posed from the demonic realms that occult practices are prohibited in the Tanach (Old Testament) and New Testament writings.

The highest goal of Eastern disciplines like yoga, Zen, and the martial arts is enlightenment, so these arts have occult underpinnings that carry spiritual significance. To be sure, some forms of meditation can help relieve stress, yoga can develop strength and flexibility, and martial arts can be good for exercise and self-defense. My warning is to those who would use these disciplines as a path to higher consciousness and enlightenment.

Since the 1960s, the West has experienced a proliferation of occult themes in gaming, books, and the arts that is causing some to think the spirit realms are only a fantasy. But this could not be further from the truth. Whenever we alter our consciousness by abusing drugs or alcohol, or by engaging in a host of popular occult practices, we risk opening a door for spirits to pass through.

As I would learn several years later, once an occult spirit has entered, it can be very difficult to expel.

The Enlightened

After training for a year with Quan, I wanted to meet his former karate teacher, Sensei, who was operating an aikido dojo. Quan had regaled me with many fantastic stories about Sensei and I wanted to see the “enlightened” one for myself.

Upon first meeting the master, I knew at once he was everything Quan had said about him. His presence was different from that of other men, and when he performed his art a powerful energy flowed through him that seemed to transcend this physical world. Now I knew what kind of “enlightened” master I wanted to become.

I asked Sensei if he would give us private lessons in his karate-do, but he was skeptical and said, “You’d have to be a saint to find the Way through karate today.” His misgivings, however, did not discourage us from going back to see him several months later. After class he invited us onto the mat.

As we kneeled before him, he looked at me and said, “Jay, everything you know is wrong.” Though Sensei, by his own admission, had barely finished high school and I was a psychologist working for a prestigious university hospital, I knew he was referring to more than my knowledge of karate.

Straight away the master set about proving his point. First, he moved behind me and instructed that I not look back until I could sense that his fist was close to the back of my head. I waited until I could feel him almost touching me. To my amazement, when I turned around Sensei was standing at least ten feet away!

I tried again. This time I was confident he was some distance from me, because I did not sense anything close. But when I turned to look, the side of my face lightly grazed his extended fist. Somehow, he was able to extend and withdraw his ki (vital energy) at will.

Next, he faced me in a relaxed front stance with his arms hanging loosely at his sides. He said, "Attack me." I shifted into a fighting stance and cautiously looked for an opening. There was none. It was as if he could anticipate any attack I may have been considering.

After these mind-boggling experiences, I became more motivated than ever to pursue enlightenment that would give me "powers" like Sensei, and six months later I made a momentous decision. Quan and I would continue practicing karate, but to access Sensei's spiritual wisdom I joined his aikido school. The three-hour-round-trip commute limited the number of classes I could attend, but studying aikido and sword with Sensei over the next three and a half years transformed my understanding of the martial arts.

While the dojo was the main focal point for Sensei's spiritual connection with his martial arts, astrology and the *I Ching* (Book of Changes) were also important to his occult practice. *I Ching* is a mystical Chinese divination system, and one evening after class I observed Sensei having a reading done by an expert in that esoteric art. This was surprising, because some years earlier Sensei had advised Quan that consulting Ouija Boards, mediums, and psychics was risky,

because there was no way to determine if all the information being provided was accurate.

Nevertheless, Sensei himself had remarkable psychic abilities. One time during class, he suddenly stopped and announced he could feel the presence of Mike Dunn, a former student who had moved away from the area more than a year earlier. To our amazement, in less than a minute Mike Dunn came walking through the dojo door!

During his classes Sensei claimed to receive revelations about the techniques, which he believed were gifts from the “Martial Spirit.” Referring to his martial arts, Sensei once remarked to Quan Li, “This is my religion.”

Sensei and the Martial Spirit

I asked Sensei how he had acquired his extraordinary physical prowess and martial arts ability, and he told me about the life-changing visitation he received from the Martial Spirit sometime in the 1960s. He explained how he had been suffering with serious health issues, but that he was determined to find the ultimate “Truth” (enlightenment) or to die trying.

As he was practicing the Heian Godan kata one day, a tremendous energy suddenly entered his body and he heard an audible voice ask, “Do you want it to stop?” He recalled that he had but a split second to answer or the miraculous power would be gone. When Thomas Fox chose to accept the Martial Spirit, he became “Sensei,” the most powerful

martial artist I have ever seen.

After this profound spiritual experience, Sensei believed he had become invincible, because he could see beyond the kata and uncover any weaknesses in the techniques.

Sensei's Strength

When Sensei taught karate, he equipped his dojo with free weights and could power snatch a 150 lb. dumbbell overhead with one hand. Perhaps even more impressive, he could lift and press a 150 lb. student overhead with relative ease.

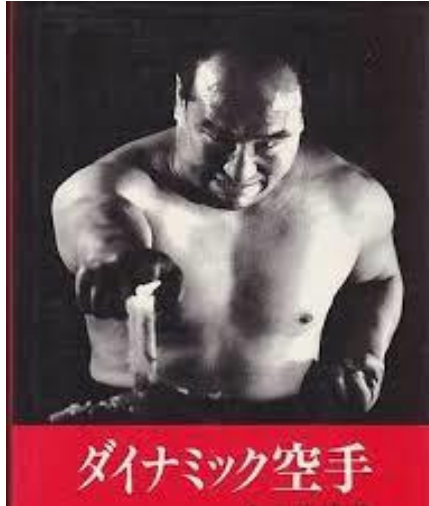
But Sensei's awe-inspiring physical strength was nothing when compared to the spiritual power he could project, and he once gave Quan a demonstration. The master instructed Quan to touch his collar bone and Quan received a strong "electric" shock. Sensei explained that the "little" jolt was only a fraction of the power he could project. On another occasion Sensei told Quan, "If I hit you, you should be dead before you hit the floor," and, "Once you have the Martial Spirit, no one will ever fight you."

Aware of these fantastic claims, I asked Sensei how he would compare his strength as a martial artist to that of the legendary Kyokushin karate master, Mas Oyama, who was considered the strongest karateka of his generation. Oyama had become famous for fighting bulls with his bare hands, his spectacular breaking demonstrations, in which he broke bricks, roofing tiles, wood, and ice, and for his incredible sparring prowess, where he fought 100 consecutive matches

matches without being defeated!

Sensei paused briefly to consider my question, and then said matter-of-factly, “We’re about the same strength.”

Mas Oyama (1923-1994)



Sensei compared his martial strength to that of this iconic karate master.

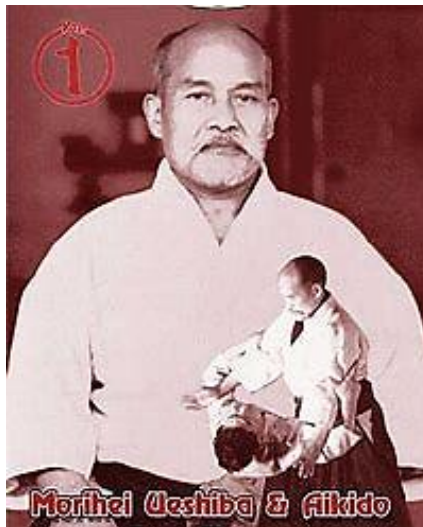
Morihei Ueshiba, the Founder of Aikido

Sensei taught his own version of Morihei Ueshiba’s aikido based on his background in judo, aiki jujutsu, karate, and kendo (the Way of the sword). Sensei’s encounter with the Martial Spirit was comparable to Ueshiba’s experience following a contest with a skilled swordsman, in which he defeated the man without fighting. Morihei accomplished this by anticipating the path of his opponent’s attacks.

Afterwards, Morihei described being bathed in a “golden light” from heaven that was a “rebirth.”³ Like Sensei, he believed he had become invincible. While Sensei had been infused with power by the Martial Spirit, Morihei believed he was indwelt by Izunome, the “Angel of Purification,”⁴ a Shinto goddess like India’s kundalini (the serpent), who is associated with energy, fire, and enlightenment.

The late aikido researcher and archivist, Stanley Pranin, penned the article, “Channeling the Power of the Gods,” in which he noted that Ueshiba’s early students talked about his superhuman strength, and that the master often spoke about “channeling the powers of the kami or dieties.”⁵

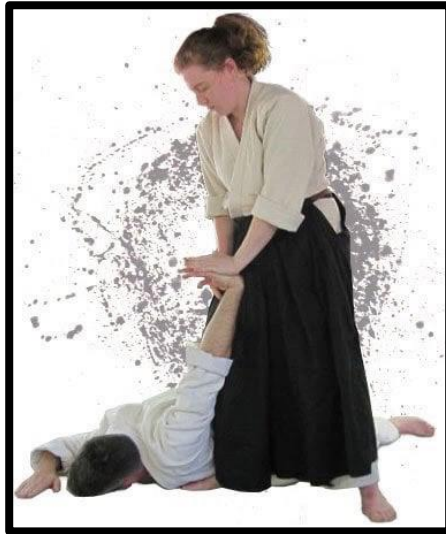
Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969)



**Master Ueshiba urged his aikidoka to,
“Move on toward enlightenment.”⁶**



At Sensei's dojo, I studied aikido and kobudo (sword and jo). My brother, wielding a jo, has practiced aikido more than 25 years.



Aikido is a throwing art designed to inflict as little injury as possible.

Sensei believed he was the reincarnation of the last true samurai, Saigo Takamori (1828-1877), whose life was lionized in the Hollywood movie, “The Last Samurai.” Takamori’s role in restoring the Japanese emperor to the throne made him a national hero, but his subsequent rebellion against the state turned him into a traitor. Sensei claimed that he had been allowed to remember his past life as Takamori, and that this had caused him much sorrow.



Sensei bore an uncanny resemblance to Takamori, whose bronze statue stands in Tokyo’s Ueno Park.

Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645)

Sensei embraced the Zen philosophy of the 17th century samurai, Miyamoto Musashi) and was a master of Musashi's two swords style (Niten Ichi-ryu), in which both swords are wielded simultaneously. According to legend, after becoming invincible Miyamoto retired to a cave and practiced Zen until he reached enlightenment and wrote his famous treatise on strategy, ***A Book of Five Rings***.

The first time I trained with Sensei he used the “twofold gaze”⁷ to thwart any attack I was considering (p. 17). The gaze sees distant things as close and close things as distant, which has the curious effect of perceptually slowing down an opponent's movements. After learning the gaze, I found it very useful in defending against moving armed assaults.



18th century artist's rendering of Miyamoto's self-portrait.

Sensei believed that yoga, Zen, and the martial arts shared the same goal of enlightenment, which is attained when the ego has been annihilated and the illusions of this physical world disappear. The emerging divine soul is no longer bound to endless cycles of birth and rebirth, but has been absorbed like a drop of water in a vast cosmic ocean. One becomes One with the universe. This pantheistic philosophy, that we are divine souls inhabiting a divine universe, is very different from the Judeo-Christian understanding of a Creator God who transcends the physical and spiritual realms.

Sensei understood karate-do and aikido to be forms of martial arts yoga. In fact, all yoga styles are based on kundalini,⁸ the Indian snake goddess, whose dominant characteristic is energy infusion or possession. Kundalini manifests as an indwelling corporeal energy coiled at the base of the spine. When awakened, kundalini fire spirals up the spine to the crown chakra to bring on enlightenment.



kundalini fire spirals upward.

The goddess Kundalini can be likened to Morihei Ueshiba's Izunome, the Angel of Purification, and is representative of the goddess motif that appears in many cultures around the world. It symbolizes the divine within each of us. Sensei had both an intimate knowledge of the kundalini and a strong aversion to ever discussing it.

Zen master and provocateur

I understood Sensei as a self-styled Zen master, who made provocative statements on a range of subjects. In particular, Jesus Christ and Christianity were often the targets of his sarcastic wit. For instance, when Pope John Paul II was nearly killed by an assassin's bullet in 1981, Sensei declared, "He ought to be shot!" Another time he pointed to the biblical account of Jesus feeding the five thousand with only two fish and five loaves of bread and sarcastically quipped, "That boy should've been a baker." Then referring to Jesus' crucifixion he looked heavenward and sneered, "That boy's out there running around looking for a way to come back and do it all over again."

Pulling wrists with the "Big Guy"

Quan told me about a bizarre, yet revealing incident that happened years earlier when Sensei was still teaching his Shotokan karate. One night during class he announced that he wanted to pull wrists (arm wrestle) with the "Big Guy," and that he had asked the Big Guy if he could be head demon

over the United States. If not, could he be the head demon over the East Coast? And if that exalted position was not available to him, could he be the head demon of his home state? Barring that, could he at least be the head demon over his home town? Quan recalled how he and his fellow students were too flabbergasted by Sensei's confession to know what to think.

Far and away, the most shocking thing we ever heard Sensei say concerned his comparison of the power of Jesus Christ to the highest power of the martial arts. On several occasions he told us, "Boys, if you think the power of the martial arts is something, grab ahold of Jesus Christ. There's a power that'll knock you right on your ass!" How startling it was to hear this from Sensei, who spoke with the authority of someone who had firsthand knowledge of the fact.

A man without hope

I once gave Sensei a small token of appreciation that evoked a stunning response. It was a small brass plaque in the shape of the kanji symbol for "hope." He reached out and took the gift with both hands and mournfully opined, "I have no hope." At the time, I could not fathom his melancholy response. Besides possessing superior martial arts ability and superhuman strength, Sensei operated a successful commercial dojo, had a live-in disciple who attended to his every need, and a loyal student following that revered him as a great master.

Sadly, at the end of his life Sensei became paranoid and alienated from his family and many of his friends. By his own admission, Thomas Fox died without hope.

The Sensei Mystique

For those of us who trained with him, Sensei was the proverbial riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. Some believed his mystique came from using hallucinogenic drugs, while others thought him mentally ill or possessed. None of us doubted his brilliance as a martial artist.

In retrospect, I do not know to what extent Sensei may have been under the influence of occult powers, because spirit possession progresses in stages and by degrees.

* * * * *

In his book, *Riders of the Cosmic Circuit*, Tal Brooke exposes the reality behind three of the 20th century's most famous Indian gurus. He spent two years in India in search of the right guru and eventually became a favored devotee of Sai Baba. Brooke explains the true nature of the alien possession that takes place at "Explosion," which for a guru represents the ultimate enlightenment experience:

"Enlightenment is the ultimate initiatory giving over of the identity- the mind, spirit, and soul- to another power to become the occupant. It is self-annihilating surrender. The new occupant is no longer human but is operating on a superhuman level of intelligence. And it uses strategy, deception, and power. . . "9

Enlightenment

The curious imposition of Damien Wilson into my journey to enlightenment sheds light on how the occult can work. Damien was related of one of our neighbors and heard that I practiced karate. He expressed interest in learning the art and asked if he could train with me. Damien had never studied a martial art, so I took him to a training session at Quan's dojo to try our karate.

During our drive to Quan's dojo, Damien told me he had grown up with the occult and that he was very psychic. He claimed to experience astral projection (soul travel) while sleeping, and that he could take thoughts out of people's heads. Then he made several stunning pronouncements. He said, "I know where Sensei's power comes from," and then boasted, "Now that I'm going to be training with you, you're going to see the real power of the martial arts."

By the end of the workout, Quan and I agreed that Damien Wilson was the weakest and most uncoordinated man we ever saw try to learn a martial art. We concluded that his grandiose claims were nothing short of delusional.

Damien wanted to meet Sensei and I arranged for him to accompany me to a class. Sensei had always been friendly toward visitors and would often sit with them and give explanations of the workout while a senior student took over the class. Yet, when I introduced Damien to Sensei, neither man seemed to acknowledge the other. In fact, I doubt they spoke a single word to each other during the entire evening.

They sat on opposite ends of the visitor's bench and ignored one another.

After class Sensei invited Quan and me onto the mat as Damien watched from the visitors' bench. Sensei began to impress upon us the kind of serious commitment required to find the ultimate "Truth." He said that to access his kind of power, we had to want it more than anything in the world and expect to receive it. After this he made two startling statements. First, he warned, "You can get power from the dark side or the light," and then added, "My power comes from God" (At the time, I did not think to ask him, which god?). Sensei's face and demeanor changed as he pointed at me and said, "Jay, you're going to get this, and when you do, you're going to come back at me, 'you goddamn son of a bitch!'" I was too dumbfounded to respond.

On our drive home, I asked Damien what he thought of his meeting with Sensei, who had completely ignored him. To my amazement, Damien expressed his genuine satisfaction with the visit and smugly boasted, "Me and Sensei have an understanding." Say what? I was completely flabbergasted by the incredible things I had heard that evening.

The transfer of power

Damien accompanied me one more time to Quan's dojo where we were joined by another black belt, John Bauer, who operated his own Shotokan school. During the workout, I witnessed several extraordinary events. First, I watched as

Damien sidled over to Quan and stood face-to-face with him, no more than a foot away. In a flash, Quan pointed his finger in Damien's face and chided, "That's not going to work!" Damien showed no visible reaction to Quan's strong rebuke and slowly moved away.

At the first opportunity, I took Quan aside and asked him what the incident with Damien was about. Quan retorted, "Oh, he was trying to go right down into my one-point," which refers to the energy field located in the hara or "center," a point approximately two inches below the navel.

The second odd occurrence happened when I paired off with John Bauer to practice formal three-step sparring. As we bowed to one another, John suddenly sprang back, as if he had seen a ghost. (Several weeks later, John admitted he had been startled by my "piercing black eyes.")

The third incident brought our workout to an abrupt end. It happened as Quan and I engaged in the same three-step sparring exercise. After I had blocked Quan's third lunging punch, he stopped and exclaimed, "Jay, you're killing my arms!" He rolled up his sleeves and exposed large welts on both his forearms. This was incomprehensible to us. Quan and I had been practicing this exercise together with full power punches and blocks for five years, and neither of us had ever suffered so much as a minor bruise. On my drive home with Damien, I tried in vain to think of possible explanations for these bizarre occurrences.

Things became even stranger after I returned home. As I

lay in bed that night, an eerie “presence” manifested in my lower back. It was a cool bundle of energy about the size of a softball, and it undulated slowly up and down my spine. Unbeknown to me, after Quan had rejected it, I had been infused with an occult power by Damien.

To be sure, Quan’s charismatic personality, exceptional teaching skills, and superior technique would have made him the ideal choice of an occult spirit to manifest itself as an “enlightened” Sensei with extraordinary psychic power and superhuman strength. As I left Quan’s dojo that night, I was unaware this would be our last workout together.

Is this Enlightenment?

Two weeks later, at around 10:30 in the morning, Sensei’s prediction came true. It began when I looked into my dojo mirror and the eyes staring back at me were not my eyes! They were black and piercing, and projected an alien intelligence of their own. Without thinking, I beckoned to them and demanded, “Okay, show me the kundalini fire.”

The cool, softball sized “presence” manifested again in my lower spine and began intensifying as it radiated throughout my body. The surge of supernatural strength that I felt was thrilling, but terrifying. As I watched in the mirror, Sensei’s face superimposed itself over my own and morphed into a monstrous demon of enormous ferocity and power. It leapt out at me with a thunderous roar, and only later did I realize what I had witnessed had come out of me. It was horrifying

to see the real source of Sensei's power. I stepped back and declared, "If this is what it is, I don't want it!"

As the kundalini fire receded back into my lower spine, I was seamlessly transported into the outer darkness of the void, where I existed as a disembodied consciousness. My veil of self-deceit was lifted, revealing that despite trying to do right by my family and friends, on a deeper level I had been living out of pride and self-interest. The ghastly vision soon faded, but not before I passed judgment on myself.

For the rest of the day, I contemplated how I might rid myself of the alien "presence" that now undulated slowly up and down my spine. Later that evening the idea came to me that nothing purges like fire, so I gathered up things associated with my martial arts and began burning them in our living room fireplace. These included rank certificates, books and magazines, portraits of the masters, and a prized personal letter from Sensei.

"Do you love me more than these?"

After a while the most astonishing thing happened. Out of the blue, in my mind's eye I saw Jesus sitting in a chair across from me asking, "Do you love me more than these?" My heart dropped into my stomach. Like many Americans born after World War II, I had been raised in the church and knew the story of Jesus. But as an adult, I had studied the writings of numbers of contemporary bible scholars and concluded that Jesus may have been one of history's great

sages, but nothing more.

Apart from this, my ego identity was firmly wedded to my karate. I had trained for twenty years and had developed extraordinary power in my techniques, and now Jesus was asking me to give it up for him? I knew saying “yes” would mean certain ego death, so I stalled and continued to search out more things to burn. Among the items found was my first black belt, whose well-worn edges had turned white, a witness to many years of dedicated training. Even so, I cut the belt into pieces and sacrificed them to the flames.

Yet, as the evening progressed, I came to the realization that the alien spirit could not be purged by fire or expelled by force of will. My mind kept recalling Sensei’s hopeless despair and the terrifying encounter I had with the demonic earlier that morning, so the choice should have been easy. But the ego is a stubborn and rebellious master and I continued to delay making-a-decision for several more hours. In the end, albeit reluctantly, I chose hope.

The moment I said “yes” to Jesus, I could feel the occult spirit, along with my ego identity as a karateka, literally drain out onto the floor. I became empty and despair engulfed my soul. This psychic death was far worse than any physical death I could have imagined. I was abandoned and alone.

Within seconds, however, a miraculous thing happened. A wondrous *Spirit of Love* poured in from above and filled the void with sublime peace that cannot be described in words. Now I *knew* Jesus was a real, life-giving Spirit and Friend, who

loved me enough to deliver me from spiritual darkness. He forgave me for the many years I had rejected him and accepted me with unconditional love.

Hence, my relationship with Jesus is personal and not grounded in religious doctrines or theological abstractions of belief, but in the mystical encounter I had with him during the evening of December 2nd, 1985.

The Aftermath

The occult spirit had been driven out of me, but over the next ten days Kay and I would experience many demonic manifestations, such as our house lights flickering on and off and the toilets mysteriously flushing on their own.

On one occasion, Kay felt her foot pulled out from under her as she started down our front steps. She took a frightening tumble down the stairway, but amazingly landed softly and sustained no injuries.

There were vibrations emanating from the kamiza wall in the dojo, which we had quickly converted back into a bedroom, and Kay felt a negative energy in our bedroom that she described as feeling like being stabbed in the back. After several days I remembered that a wicker chair in the corner of our room had been used in a small commercial karate school I operated back in the 1970s. We now realized that demonic energy could attach itself to inanimate objects, so I gathered up things that were too big to burn in the fireplace and took them to the city dump.

With each passing day more manifestations appeared. At times these were accompanied by the pungent odor of sulfur, which smells like rotten eggs. We saw the demonic enter our cat on several occasions and were privy to a shocking incident involving a relative's dogs that were living 1500 miles away. These incidents showed how the demonic can affect animals and is not limited by time and space.

But to describe all the bizarre things that happened to Kay and I during my five-year journey to enlightenment would only serve to give the "dark side" more notoriety that it deserves. Our home had become infested and we were not sleeping well. A fellow martial artist and friend heard about our plight and promised to pray for us, and after about a week he called early in the morning to see how we had slept that night.

Indeed, the malaise we had been feeling for ten days was gone and our home felt normal again! Then Josh told us that he and the deacons at his church had prayed the previous evening for our complete deliverance from all the demonic presence in our home. For us this was a testament to the power of group prayer, for which we were most grateful.

Lessons Learned

My enlightenment experience showed me that a spirit realm exists that transcends our physical world, and that supernatural evil is real. While in the void, I learned that consciousness survives death and everything I do in this

life, both the good things and the bad, will be subject to judgment. Finally, I discovered Jesus can be encountered through a sincere act of the will, and that true “enlightenment” is to know him as a life-giving Spirit and Friend.

Following Jesus

Among the things Jesus taught his followers was that they should love their enemies and be forgiving and merciful; be peacemakers and not pass judgment on others; maintain a humble spirit and not accumulate wealth, but rather to be generous towards the poor.

Although I often fall short of these lofty ideals, striving to live in union with Jesus’ *Spirit of Love* makes me the best I can be, which I find more satisfying than all the wealth, and power, and fame this world could ever offer. Besides, in the next life these worldly ambitions will be meaningless- a chasing after the wind.

Peace be with you,



“whom he chose”

In 2004, I asked my Lord for help in writing a few concise words that would sum up my encounters with the kundalini fire, the outer darkness, and Jesus (Jeshua). The following poem came to me, as if out of thin air, which was all-the-more astonishing since I am not an accomplished writer, much less a poet!



PART II

The Way of Technique

One Strike Power

After meeting Quan in December 1980, it did not take long to realize that his speed, power, and precision form made him the best traditional karateka that I had ever seen. Fortunately, Li was as good a teacher as he was a martial artist, and my descriptions of the five principles are based largely on insights I learned while training with him.

Quan emphasized upright, “centered” stances with proper bone alignments, powerful hip rotations, and the extension of ki. He taught Sensei’s “Shotokan Karate-do Workout” and did not deviate from his master’s “one strike” style, which Sensei claimed was based on the Okinawan *Shuri-te karate jutsu* that Funakoshi introduced to Japan in the early 1920s.

Nodan Karate is “one strike” karate jutsu

Nodan Karate has no kata system and is not a *style* of martial art, but rather a striking method for developing “one strike” techniques for street defense. The method utilizes five striking principles and flexible post makiwara training to forge “one strike” power. As such, Nodan Karate is *karate jutsu* (technique) rather than *karate-do* (the Way), because it does not seek to lead practitioners to enlightenment and superhuman strength.

The following examples illustrate how the five principles, when applied to flexible post makiwara training, develop “one strike” power. To highlight this point, I used my “weak side” left hand to break the thickest board stacks.



I built this flexible post makiwara in 1992 to protect my students from hand injuries. I trained on it for 13 years before filming my breaking videos in 2004-05 (See the video, “Nodan Makiwara”).

5-board break with “weak side” reverse punch



All the boards must break *before* the bag begins to move.



Layers of soft rubber padding provided additional protection.

5-board break with “weak side” elbow strike.



Each 5-board stack could support a 650 lb. barbell positioned across centerline running parallel with the grain (p. 46-47).

5-board break with “weak side” circular palm strike



Developing “one strike” techniques from a neutral stance position can be especially useful in close quarter self-defense situations.



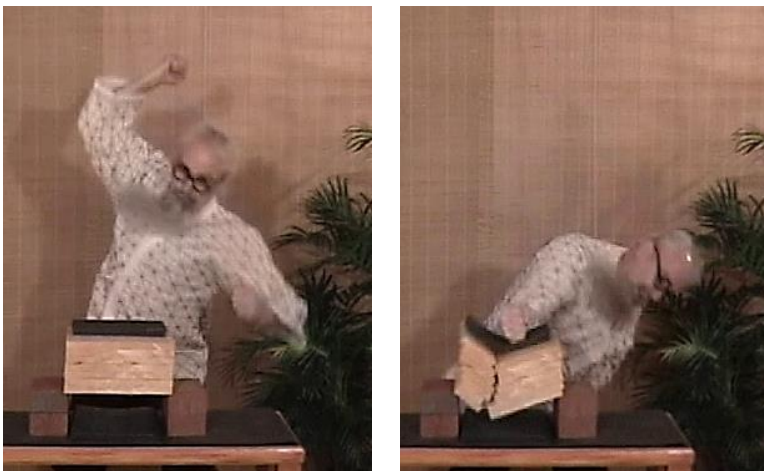
“One strike” power is intended to enable an escape or follow up strike to stun, not kill or maim the assailant. Accordingly, except for kicks, self-defense examples are limited to 3-board breaks.

Training Both Sides

Training both sides is essential, because an injury can occur to either side before or during a street confrontation. Street assaults are fluid and unpredictable, and having the option of using either hand is a major strategic advantage. Master Funakoshi, for example, advised students to practice the opposite side “double” when training on the makiwara.

Left and right 4-board palm breaks



7-board downward break with “weak side” left hand**7-board downward break with “strong side” right hand**

Despite practicing more with the “weak side” left hand, my “strong side” broke a 7-board stack with much greater ease.

Breaking Protocols

Materials: 1x12 inch-wide #2 common white pine donor boards (actual mill size .75 x 11.25 inches) were cut into 1x12x10-inch-wide pieces. Knots along the centerline were spliced out, because their circular grain patterns make the boards much more difficult to break.

Measuring Board Strength: Board breaking is meaningless without an empirical method for measuring board strength. One 10-inch-wide test board was chosen from each donor board and a 130 lb. barbell was gently lowered across the centerline, running parallel with the grain. The full weight of the barbell was left on the test board for 1 full second before being lifted off. If the board held, the weight was raised to 135 lbs. If the test board broke with 135 lbs., the donor board met the protocol standard of 130-134 lbs.

Board testing using a barbell



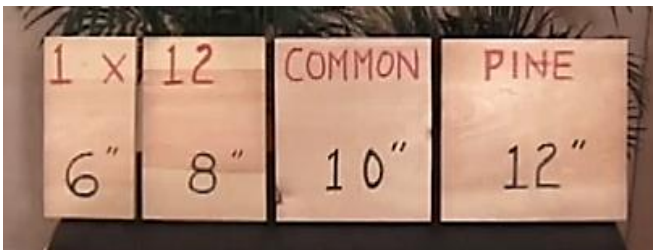
See YouTube video, "Nodan Board Testing."

Breaking Methodology: Suspended, unspaced horizontal board breaking was used to give evidence of “one strike” power. When assembling a board stack, the boards were arranged with their grains facing the same direction, which helps them break in a fairly-straight line. It is critical to strike along the centerline of the board stack, because the force of the strike must be evenly distributed over the “floating” supports of the suspended board holder.

Pine boards can vary widely in strength depending on moisture content. To ensure consistency, a board from each donor board should be tested just prior to breaking.

Proportional Resistance: breaking resistance increases proportionally as boards are added to a stack. A 3-board stack could support at least $3 \times 130 = 390$ lbs.; a 5-board stack should hold at least $5 \times 130 = 650$ lbs.

Adjusting Board Width: For filming purposes, I used only 1x12x10-inch-wide boards that conformed to the 130-134 lb. protocol standard. But board width can be adjusted to meet the protocol standard. For example, If a 10” wide test board breaks with 150 lbs., a 9” wide piece from the same donor board should break with the protocol standard of 135 lbs.



Downward vs. Suspended breaking.

Downward board breaking has the advantage of moving with gravity and generating the maximum speed and body weight transfer. In addition, the rigid supports typically used in downward breaking more efficiently transfer energy than the soft “give” of a suspended bag.

When spacers are placed between boards, they break one at a time in rapid succession, which requires far less force. My un-spaced 5-board stacks could support at least a 650 lb. barbell placed across the centerline running parallel with the grain, whereas each individual board in a spaced 5-board stack would break with 131-135 lbs. of weight.



The 5-board stack attached to the suspended bag on left would be much harder to break than the 5 supported boards on right.

The Five Principles

The five principles are not new to the martial arts and do not represent a definitive list. Rather, they are the result of reverse engineering my breaking demonstrations to determine the critical factors in their success. As a result of that analysis, the following five striking principles emerged as being most important. These principles can be applied to most striking arts to improve striking power.

1) Proper Bone Alignment

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

2) The 1-2 Timing

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

3) Follow Through

Mentally *follow through* (extend ki) with every technique, “all the way to infinity”

4) Correct Breathing

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

5) Soft and Hard

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

1) Proper Bone Alignment

Proper bone alignment is foundational to all martial arts. Whether stances are high or low, their center of gravity must be located or “centered” in the hara, a point approximately two inches below the navel. This establishes a stable stance.

The ability to “move in center” is vital for the transfer of maximum power through the hips, which assume a slight pelvic tilt position. The mind is “located” in the hara or “center,” which I call, “thinking from the center.”

In the demonstration below, Nodan is assisted by Yakov “the hammer” and three former students, who will attempt to push Yakov out of his one-leg crane stance.



From left to right: Yakov “the hammer,” Nodan, JV, JD, and SS.



Yakov maintains a “centered” crane stance as the three men try to push him backwards. Using the proper bone alignments, Yakov redirects their energy into the floor.



By “moving in center,” Yakov drives the men backwards.

“Moving in center” with a spinning defense

Attackers can use a variety of “non-weapons,” such as a baseball bats, machetes, and pitchforks to name a few.

Defending a pitchfork attack is similar to defending a thrusting sword or staff assault. A good strategy is to use a quick head-feint to surprise the attacker long enough to make a preemptive spinning defense. The object is to spin behind the attacker and come to a “centered” full stop, ready to counter attack with a reverse thrust punch.

A “spin and run” maneuver is an effective escape strategy when surrounded by multiple assailants, because a spinning body is difficult to grasp. It is noteworthy that rugby players and football running backs and receivers often use this tactic to spin out of the grasp of would be tacklers.



Nodan assumes a defensive fighting stance just outside the attacker’s effective thrusting range.



He utilizes a quick head feint to momentarily freeze opponent and then begins to spin outside his assailant's line of attack.



Nodan momentarily comes to a full stop "centered" stance. It takes him less than two seconds to spin into a "centered" stance, which leaves his adversary no chance to counter.

“Moving in center” with a lunging forward step



Nodan will use Shotokan’s signature lunging step to execute a preemptive defense against the attacker’s knife threat.



He uses a head feint before stepping in with his front foot and blocking away the attacker’s weapon hand.



Nodan holds an upright “centered” position as he strides in to execute a palm heel thrust to his adversary’s jaw.



Note how a straight line extends from Nodan’s back heel, up through his “center,” and up to the palm heel strike.

2) The 1-2 Timing

The 1-2 Timing utilizes the “centered” bone alignments of the 1st Principle to generate speed and power through the hips, which accelerate the striking arm. In Step 1 (below), his hips are rotated sharply *before* his upper body is *actively* turned toward the target.



Step 1- The hips are rotated sharply towards the target as his upper body remains relaxed and turns naturally.



Step 2- The upper body rotates sharply towards the target, after which the punch is *actively* extended into board stack.

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. This must be studied well, because most striking techniques use a 1-2 timing within the larger 1-2 Timing principle. These actions spiral the energy generated by the legs and hips, up the spine and out the striking arm. In Japan, this technique is known as the “double whip” or “returning wave,” and karateka should *consciously* separate the movements within the 1-2 Timing until they become a natural part of every technique.

Note how his fore fist forms a slight angle upon impact. This enables his elbow to remain “under” throughout the punch, which reduces power loss through the elbow joint.

Thrust vs. Push

Yakov executes a simultaneous downward block/reverse thrust punch, a striking technique that requires a higher level of skill.



The bag caroms off his fist like a pinball, which is what distinguishes a properly leveraged “thrust” punch from a much weaker “push” that does not use 1-2 Timing.

1-2 Timing in the lunging elbow strike

Nodan steps into a “centered” straddle stance with his hips cocked at 45° angle (left). Step 1- he rotates his hips toward the target (right).



Step 2- He rotates his upper body and the elbow follows. This is 1-2 timing within the 1-2 Timing.

1-2 Timing in the back elbow strike



Nodan is grabbed in a choke hold from behind. He drops into a "centered" stance and applies 1-2 Timing in reverse direction.



**Step 1- Nodan's hips are sharply turned backwards.
Step 2- Shoulders and upper body are rotated back towards the target and his elbow follows.**

3) Follow Through

I originally learned this concept from Quan Li as the “extension of ki,” but found that Western practitioners more easily understand the “follow through” principle taught in sports that throw, hit, or kick a ball. Follow through is somewhat akin to the Eastern notion of “extending ki,” in that the energy of every block, strike, and kick is *mentally* extended or projected, “all the way to infinity.”

Follow Through is essential for breaking multiple un-spaced board stacks, because the kinetic energy of a strike dissipates as it meets the resistance of successive boards. Thus, the function of the 3rd Principle is to maintain speed and momentum all the way through the target, whether that be a multi-board break or an assailant’s body.



The “graduated resistance” of the flexible post makiwara helps facilitate the development of the Follow Through principle.

Follow Through with the “push” break

This is a safe, but difficult demonstration of the 1-2 Timing hip rotation and Follow Through principles. The challenge is to push against a single board with enough speed and body weight transfer to break it before the bag moves. This is a zero-inch break, because the hand remains in contact from the beginning to the end of the technique. (This should more accurately be called a “zero inch” break.)



Above, Nodan first rotates his hips sharply towards the target. Next, he rotates his upper body and arm through the board (right), while following through “all the way to infinity.” Before the hip rotation (left), his stance is relaxed, the spine is straight, his head is held erect as if suspended on a string, and the elbow is turned under to reduce power loss through the elbow joint.

The following 3-board bent wrist break from a cat stance was executed from a “weak,” cross-chest position using the “weak side” left hand. This breaking technique required a more refined 1-2 Timing hip rotation and a concentrated Follow Through, “all the way to infinity.”



4) Correct Breathing

Correct Breathing uses the diaphragm- inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. It is fundamental to Eastern disciplines like yoga, Zen, and the martial arts.

When executed vocally, the *ki ai* yell is carried on the breath and manifests as a primal roar emanating from the depths of the hara or “center.” When Nodan executes *ki ai* without a vocal yell, a loud and forceful rush of air can be heard on every focused technique. Correct Breathing is vital for executing rapid-fire focused movements and helps facilitate the application of the 5th Principle, Soft and Hard (see the YouTube video, “Nodan Dagger Form”).



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

5) 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 are contracted first, followed by the abdominals and hips (hip rotation), while the muscles in the upper body remain relaxed. Next, the upper body and arms are sequentially contracted and the entire body is focused hard upon impact. Mastering the 5th Principle requires many thousands of repetitions, until the *transitions* between movements flow without tension.

In defending against multiple attackers, surprise, speed, and “one strike” power are factors in an effective defense. Soft and Hard is also vital for maintaining proper form and maximizing speed and body weight transfer.



Nodan is initially Soft and offers no resistance to his assailants.



He abruptly turns his hips and strikes one of the attackers.



His relaxed (Soft) transition following this first strike will maximize speed and body weight transfer into the next.



Nodan rotates his hips and strikes his second assailant.



The ability to become Soft in transition enables Nodan to break both 3-board stacks in slightly more than 1 second.

Blocks and kicks

Blocks and kicks utilize the five striking principles. The downward forearm block is an example of a “one strike” technique that hits with the entire body, and not only with the arm and shoulder. Blocks use an “unbendable arm” technique, in which the arm is extended with soft/hard tension using the triceps and latissimus dorsi muscles that run along the upper sides of the back. With the application of the “unbendable arm,” the blocking arm becomes like a slightly bent steel rod wrapped in cotton cloth.

Formal blocks use the full range of motion to develop proper form. With training, however, karateka can project strength into the shorter and quicker street adaptations.

5-board break with formal downward forearm block



Abbreviated downward block defense



To defend against a thrusting knife attack, Nodan will block with power from a surrender position.



Nodan drops into a “centered” stance and thrusts his blocking arm downward to intercept the knife attack.

Formal middle level forearm block



As his hips begin to rotate (left), the blocking arm moves naturally. The hips are rotated (center) before the block makes contact (right). (Note 45° angle of the block as he applies the “unbendable arm.”)

Abbreviated middle level forearm block defense



Nodan defends a knife thrust using an angle step and abbreviated middle level block. He counters with a hook punch to the head.

Rising forearm block defense



Nodan jams an overhand knife assault and adjusts rising block outward to intercept the attacker's arm. His block forms a 45° angle as he applies the "unbendable arm."



He lifts blocking arm using his shoulder and latisimus dorsi muscles on the upper sides of his back. The palm thrust to an imaginary attacker's jaw breaks 3 boards.

Kicking Techniques

For self-defense, the middle and lower-level applications of the front, side, and back kicks are the most practical. Lower-level kicks are easier and safer to perform and are more effective against relatively 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 and allows for greater flexibility of movement, which maximizes speed. The knee should be raised higher than the intended target, because a “down and in” trajectory gives the front thrust kick its greatest power.

5-board break with reverse front thrust kick



Nodan confronts a knife threat from a front fighting stance.



After blocking the attacker's weapon hand, Nodan's hips rotate as he raises his knee to execute kick.



He breaks 5 boards using a "down and in" trajectory.

Preemptive low back thrust kick defense



Nodan feigns surrender before launching preemptive counter attack against the knife wielding assailant.



As he abruptly turns, he strikes toward attacker's face and then transitions the strike into a guarding block.



Nodan's hips are cocked as he executes a low back kick to the knee. Note that his blocking hand obscures his kick.



Note how a straight line runs from his head through his "center" and down through the 4-board stack.

Street Defense

From the beginning of my foray into the martial arts, I did not believe the “point” sparring approach practiced in sport karate during the 1960s was realistic. For me karate was an exercise in survival and my main interest has always been learning how to apply the techniques to real street situations. The training at my Uechi-ryu dojo, however, did not teach practical self-defense. Fortunately, a college classmate who knew combat jujitsu showed me street defense strategies that could be used in conjunction with karate techniques.

Today the mixed martial arts (MMA) have taken center stage as an entertainment blood sport. At the professional level, highly trained world class athletes compete for fame and fortune in heavily promoted cage matches. But this latest expression of the martial arts is very different from reality street defense. ***There are no rules in the street.*** Striking the eyes, throat, and groin are among the tactics prohibited in sport competition, while biting is a strong deterrent against grabs and holds. Sport competitors have a warmup time, hand protectors, mouth guards, and a referee to control the action, and they do not fight armed or multiple opponents where grappling skills are largely irrelevant.

To be practical as street defense, a martial art cannot be programmed to only respond to competitive fighting techniques. Practitioners must understand the psychology and predatory nature of street criminals and adapt their arts to respond to different kinds of assaults.

Armed assaults are fluid and unpredictable and often call for a preemptive response. Preemption is at times initiated from a “surrender” position, which takes advantage of the element of surprise and the attacker’s “false” sense of confidence that comes from having a weapon.

Seven street scenarios in this book feature knife assaults, which can be difficult to defend. A knife becomes part of the hand, which makes it harder to track. This is especially true if the assailant pulls a knife out at the last moment.

The twofold gaze⁷

Martial artists whose main focus is on practical street defense should learn the “twofold gaze of perception and sight,” a combat technique utilized by the samurai. The gaze enabled them to perceive the strength of an opponent, while having the uncanny effect of “perceptually” slowing down the opponent’s movements.

The gaze sees distant things as close and close things as distant, which makes it especially useful against moving knife assaults. By seeing the big picture, a defender does not have to anticipate the path of an opponent’s attack. With the mind devoid of anticipation, a defender has the “mindless” clarity to react naturally in real time. Thus, the gaze acts as an early warning system by enabling the defender to detect and evaluate an opponent’s slightest movement.

For street defense examples, see the YouTube videos, “Nodan Self-Defense,” and “Nodan Karate.”

Preemptive defense against a knife threat



Nodan assumes a front fighting stance against a knife threat.



He may use a quick head-feint before preemptively leaning in and executing a “one strike” block to the assailant’s weapon hand.



Upright and “centered,” he cross-steps toward attacker with his blocking arm positioned to strike to the throat or head.



From a straddle stance, he breaks 3 boards with a knife hand.

Defending against a machete attack

The machete is an essential tool that is used throughout the world. Nevertheless, when used against a person it can be a lethal weapon. For instance, in the Rwandan genocide of 1994, countless thousands of Tutsi civilians were hacked to death by Hutu militia groups using machetes.

Defending a machete assault is similar to confronting an overhand or side arm attack from an opponent using a club or hatchet. These weapons are large enough to require a “hitch” in the assailant’s swing. One strategy is to step in quickly as the attacker begins to hitch his swing, and jam the weapon hand before it can generate enough speed and leverage to cause serious injury.



Nodan assumes a relaxed front fighting stance position.



After a head feint, Nodan begins to step in to jam the attacker's weapon arm, just as he begins to "hitch."



The momentum of his "centered" lunging step, block, and palm heel thrust stops the attacker in his tracks.

Defending against a gun hold up from behind



Nodan gives gunman false confidence by raising his hands in “surrender” and saying, “Okay, take anything you w...”
Compliant words can psychologically “disarm” attacker.



Before finishing his sentence, Nodan abruptly swings his arm back, which turns him out of the line of fire.



He continues to pivot around and “wraps and traps” the gunman’s weapon arm firmly against his side.



Nodan assumes a “centered” straddle stance and throws a hook punch to the gunman’s temple. With practice and the element of surprise, this is easy to execute against an unsuspecting mugger.

The Best Martial Art?

Debates over which is the best martial art should begin with the question, “best for what?” There are traditional throwing and striking arts, competitive fighting styles like sport karate and mixed martial arts (MMA), and reality-based self-defense systems like combat jujitsu and Krav Maga. Each of these arts develops its own strategies and techniques.

Ultimately, the best martial art is the one that best addresses *your* goals. Those who would seek instruction should research and visit their local schools, because there are good and bad teachers in every style, and each art has its strengths and weaknesses.

In reality, not all practitioners will have the strength or athleticism to develop the “one strike” power necessary to stop a determined attacker with a single blow. Furthermore, for many people “one strike” training may not be available, or may be too expensive or time consuming to pursue. A practical alternative is to take a hands-on self-defense course and carry pepper spray (mace), which is available in handy pocket size containers. Pepper spray is relatively safe, inexpensive, and legal in most countries.

As with any defensive weapon, users should become familiar with its proper use and legal application, and should practice arming and discharging live canisters in both indoor and outdoor settings. Fortunately, there are numerous good YouTube videos showing the proper use of this under-utilized self-defense tool.

A Brief History

The 1960s

I lifted heavy weights for seven years during the 1960s, which was a factor in my ability to break thick board stacks, especially when using my “weak side” left hand.

I began studying Okinawan Uechi-ryu during my first year of college. This in-fighting style practices the Sanchin kata, which uses an hour glass stance for maximum stability. The art is characterized by open hand techniques and makes extensive use of circular blocks and snapping kicks and punches. It specializes in attacking the opponent’s pressure points with the finger tips, thumbs, and single knuckle strikes.



In the video, “Nodan Katas,” the five principles are applied to the Seisan kata, which gives the form a uniquely different expression.

Combat Jujitsu

My interest in karate was for self-defense, but my school did not teach street applications. Fortunately, I met a college classmate, Tex Barnes, who was proficient in combat jujitsu. Tex brought a metal training knife to our first practice together and succeeded in “killing” me numerous times, which left large red welts all over my upper body. My formal blocks were too slow, I was always out of position, and I lacked a strategy for defending against a skilled knife fighter. This was a wakeup call, exposing the fact that reality street defense was very different from formal dojo training.

Tex taught me how to defend against the kinds of assaults that street criminals were most likely to use. This training, along with karate, became foundational to my practical approach to street self-defense.



My students, Yohan and Yakov, practice a twisting joint hold defense that I learned from Tex Barnes during the 1960s.

The 1970s

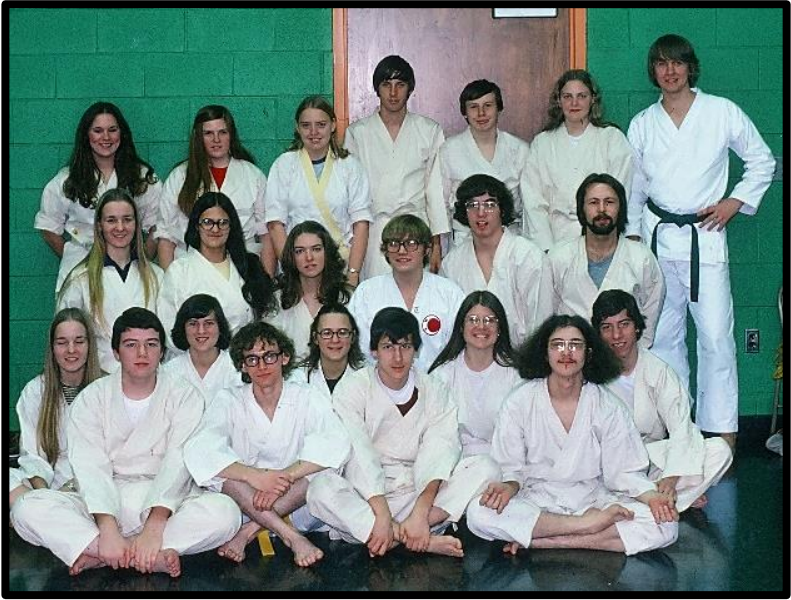
After graduating from college, I moved away to pursue graduate studies in psychology. There were no Uechi dojos in the area, so I joined a school that taught a hybrid style of Gichen Funakoshi's Shotokan karate that included judo, and elements of Shorinryu karate and Chinese kempo.

This eclectic style was very different from the Uechi-ryu I had studied. The breathing pattern was natural and the training stances were deeper. The katas were close to the official forms endorsed by the JKA (Japan Karate Association), and the school offered private self-defense courses, many of which I taught due to my training in jujitsu.

After receiving a dojo charter, I relocated to work as a psychologist for a large city hospital and began teaching Shotokan/self-defense at community centers and colleges.



**The founder of Shotokan karate,
Gichen Funakoshi (1868-1957).**



My senior student, “Big Ed” (far right), helped me teach this college course in the '70s. By 1980, I had trained seven men to black belt.



My first black belt, JD, opened his own dojo.

1980-1985

I trained with Quan Li in Sensei's "one strike" Shotokan style, and with Sensei in aikido and weapons (p. 6-38).

1992-1996

I taught Shotokan karate/street defense to Yohan and Yakov for five years. When they were ready, I had them tested by a panel of judges for the black belt in *Shotokan Karate Jutsu*. Besides Sensei's basics, the test emphasized street defense and required defending against a variety of street assaults, which culminated in having to defend against random freestyle knife attacks. (See the YouTube video, "Nodan Students," for an edited version of the test.)



Yohan and Yakov (front center) receive their black belts in *Shotokan Karate Jutsu* and pose with the judges.

DVDs, Videos, and Books

1999-2004

I taught karate/street defense to Rowdy, a former track athlete who became an excellent training partner. Rowdy and I trained together once a week for five years, which helped keep me strong in karate into my late fifties. Rowdy reached the brown belt level and successfully broke three suspended boards with a reverse thrust punch, a feat that would challenge many high-ranking karateka.

In **2004**, I purchased a video camcorder and began filming breaking experiments for a DVD warning martial artists not to seek enlightenment through their arts. At that time, I created “the five principles” to identify the key factors in the board breaking success. The critics rightly savaged my effort, calling it “cheesy” and pointing to the awful acting and poor production values. I concluded that Nodan and my message were dead.

In **2009**, I discovered YouTube, which presented a new opportunity to use my Nodan video demonstrations. This time I wisely hired a professional videographer to help edit videos for the **nodankarate** channel, which began posting on YouTube in March, 2009.

In **2011**, I completed the first edition of ***The Power of The Way: A Spiritual Journey***. which is a free pdf at the website, nodankarate.org.

END NOTES

- ¹ “Way of The Sword,” c. 1976, distributed by Coe Film Associates, #65 E 96th Street, New York, N.Y. 101286.
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- ³ Morihei Ueshiba, *Budo*, Kodansha International, Ltd., First edition, c. 1991, p. 13-14
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29
- ⁵ Stanley Pranin, *Aikido Journal*, “Channeling the Power of the Gods,” June 20, 2015
- ⁶ *Budo*, p. 28-29
- ⁷ Miyamoto Musashi, *A Book of Five Rings*, The Overlook Press, 1974, p. 54-55
- ⁸ Hans Ulrich Rieker, *The Yoga of Light: Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, Seabury Press, c. 1971, p. 101
- ⁹ Tal Brooke, *Riders of the Cosmic Circuit*, End Run Publishing, c. 1983, 2002, p. 187



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