

# Okinawan Bubishi

## What did karate look like before 1900?

*By Stanić Miloš (4. dan)  
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I started with my karate training in traditional *shotokan* club. Back then, karate was meant for self-defense, wherefore *kata* was principle method of training. However, several years later, I began to realize that a new, competitive karate, was taking place. Wining medals became the goal and *gyako tsuki* became main technique, without even thinking of self-defense, while *kata* practice was considered unnecessary. Soon, karate became empty – to commercial and without essence. By no means, I could not reconcile with the idea that *katas* are some sort of “mediaeval combat dances” which have no value and therefore I decided to go on with my research by myself.

My research of the ancient Okinawan karate began with thorough reading of Funakoshi’s “Karate do Kyohan” and history of karate. Only then did I realize that I knew nothing at all. I had my hands full of questions and I did not have any answer. What did the ancient Okinawan *Tote* look like? In what way was it different from today’s karate? To make things worse I had no one to ask that. Still, luckily for me, I found translation of Bubishi. I never imagined that all answers to my questions were written down on Okinawa long ago.

When I first saw the translation of this ancient manuscript, I did not know it would have such influence over my training as well as understanding of the karate art. Here I am about to present a brief analyses, but before I do it, I would like to say that my conclusions are limited by my knowledge, my opinions and my experience. I am practicing *Shorin ryu* karate and therefore this is view on Bubishi from *Shorin ryu* perspective. In my research, I have been using English translation by Mr. Patrick McCarthy.

### *The secret manuscript*

The author of Bubishi is unknown as is the date of its making, but with certainty we can say that it existed on Okinawa prior to 1900. It is a sort of compilation of articles on techniques, tactics, vital points, traditional Chinese medicine and ethical code in martial arts. It is unknown whether it is a copy of Chinese book or martial arts school manual. Books like this were quite popular in XIX century China, as today modern self-defense books.

It is certain that many karate masters knew of this book. I will only mention Chojun Miyagi (founder of *goju ryu*), Gogen Yamaguchi (Japanese *goju ryu*), Kenwa Mabuni (founder of *Shito ryu*) and Gichin Funakoshi (“father of modern karate” and founder of *Shotokan*). There are solid evidence that even great masters Itosu and Higaona possessed Bubishi. However the most plausible source of these writings is probably a Chinese, the master of White Crane<sup>1</sup>, Wu Xiangi (1886-1940), better known as Go Kenki. It is a nickname given out of respect meaning “Great respected master”. He lived in Naha and was a close friend and the teacher of Mabuni, Kyoda, Matayoshi, Hanasiro, Kinju Kana and others. Between 1920 and 1930 there was a substantial interest for the origins of the karate art. A group of advanced practitioners gathered around this Go Kenki and studied Chinese system of fighting in order to improve their knowledge. It is possible that Bubishi is a sort of script collected by this group. To support this conclusion I would mention fact that Go Kenki travelled together with Chojun Miyagi several times on Fukien to help him find useful book on self defence and to introduce him to significant masters of Quan fa<sup>2</sup>.

The book was kept in utmost secrecy, those who knew of it, copied it by hand. Many illustrations in the book are without description, while the names of the techniques were often written in symbolic poetic language, therefore some parts of it are almost impossible to translate. Even if you spoke Chinese, you wouldn’t understand, because the techniques were not described, but often their symbolic name like “...tiger rushing out from the cage.”

The text is written in Chinese, with very wide usage of old characters that are no longer in use. Back then Chinese was spoken and written only by inhabitants of Chinese colony *Kumemura* and highly educated people,

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<sup>1</sup> White Crane is Quan Fa style, which made greatest influence on development of Okinawan karate.

<sup>2</sup> Quan Fa is general term for various kung fu styles and traditions. Wu shu is term used to name modern styles developed after Chinese communist revolution.

members of the upper class – *pechin*<sup>3</sup>. Some of them served as translators in government institutions, for example master Ankoh Itosu was king's secretary. Why was Bubishi written in Chinese? Perhaps it was a kind of protection from unwelcome curiosity or perhaps out of respect towards Chinese master.

Originally, the chapters in the book are scattered but the book can be divided into four sections: (1) Quan fa origins, history and philosophy; (2) traditional Chinese medicine; (3) vital points and (4) fighting techniques. I'd like to say right away that the part in traditional Chinese medicine has no practical use in martial arts today, therefore I want to take it into consideration. However, it is obvious that this book had modelled both theory and practice of the ancient Okinawan karate.

### *The Origins of Karate*

Before I begin with analysing the origins of karate art, I would like to point out that in the past, Okinawan karate didn't look at all as today. Talking from a historical point of view, there are three basic forms of karate: The first one is today's sports karate, focused on tournaments. This highly popular and commercial form of practicing developed a few decades ago and has almost no practical value in self-defence.

Then, if we move further into the past, we'll come across traditional karate (*karatedo*) with its principal aim – recreation, pre-military preparation in Japan before WWII. For the development of *karatedo*, masters Ankoh Itosu and Gichin Funakoshi are the most deserving ones. It appeared around 1900 and presents a very efficient system of self-defence focused on its applying in practice. Bubishi therefore talks about *Tote jutsu*, i.e. karate before it became *karatedo* and before it became sport. *Tote jutsu* is Okinawan method of self-defence, kept in secrecy being taught only to individuals strictly within the *pechin* class, which relied equally on punches, joint locks, throwing techniques and usage of weapons. This method was modelled by generations of men who practiced it – warriors, by combining traditional Okinawan method of fighting (*te*) and different Chinese styles or fighting from neighbouring Fukien province. And out of which style was karate formed?

By studying Bubishi we can easily draw a conclusion that the basis of karate is the White Crane style. The creation of this style as a combination of the techniques of the Crane and Tiger styles was described at the very beginning of the book. This was even illustrated in the article #28, where a woman was presented while performing *Hakutsuru no kamae*<sup>4</sup> while a man was presented in position characteristic for Tiger<sup>5</sup> style. This symbolic uniting of female (soft, *ju, jin*) and masculine (firm, *go, jang*) style resulted in creation of a perfect method of fighting, according to manuscript. Bubishi however isn't only about White Crane style, but also mentions such styles as: Monks Fist, White Monkey, Tiger and Drunken Man. This as a definite proof that karate is an eclectic system, i.e. a combination of most efficient techniques and principles of several *quan fa* styles. This hypothesis is confirmed by many prominent masters in their writings (Ankoh Itosu, Chojun Miyagi, Gichin Funakoshi, Kenwa Mabuni).



Illustration of the article #28, a woman is presented in the position of the crane, whereas man is in the position of a tiger. The picture symbolizes the metaphysical unity of these two principles of fighting.

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<sup>3</sup> Historian Patrick McCarthy has proved that stereotypical conception that "subject peasants" had developed karate is unlikely. It had been done by members of *Pechin* class (noblemen, king's guard, village militia, prosecutors...).

<sup>4</sup> *Hakutsuru no kamae*, the position of White Crane can be found in many katas of Shorin ryu as in other Okinawan styles.

<sup>5</sup> This position is typical for kata *Useishi* (the modern name is *Gojushiho*), whose name when translated means "54 footsteps of the Black Tiger". This is actually opening movement of this kata.

It may be concluded that karate was formed by combining five most famous *quan fa* styles of that time (Crane, Tiger, Monk Fist, Monkey and Drunk man style). This also corresponds to esoteric principle of Chinese numerology (five elements or style of five ancestors).

I would like to comment on the basic idea of karate, i.e. the uniting of the Crane and the Tiger. This is described at the very beginning of *Bubishi*, namely in the duel between Fang Jinyang (a woman who was a master of the Crane) and Zheng Chisu (the famous master of the Tiger), nobody won Fang used evading, deception and precise blows into vital points, but didn't have enough strength to beat Zheng, who was stronger. On the other hand, Zheng used direct punches, powerful techniques, but couldn't give any efficient blow. Eventually, love was aroused between them and they created the invincible style White Crane, which benefited from the good principles of both styles. This story shows that a style based on one sort of techniques exclusively cannot be perfect.



Fang Jinyang attacks the crane with a pole and by observing his reactions she adopts the principles of style White Crane.

### 36 vital points

There are several articles in Bubishi, which are referring to punching painful points of human body - *kyusho*. The text mentions Bronze man<sup>6</sup> statue, so we can conclude that this sphere of fighting was regarded with great seriousness that is a scientific method of that time was applied by relying on traditional Chinese medicine. The positions of the vital points were described by using a specific acupuncture point on the statue.

The whole chapter is full of legends of circulation of life energy (*ki*), of punches with delayed reactions (*shichen*) or “touch of death” (*dim mak*). It's very difficult to say whether it is a sort of encrypted text impossible to translate today, or the written material is full of myths, owing to limited knowledge of physiology of human body at that time. The chapter is not homogenous, for example, one article is about classification of vital points according to acupunctural points, another is about points based on experience and observation, while third article names the points that can be activated only by means of weapons<sup>7</sup>.

There are several versions of Bubishi manuscript and all of them differ among themselves more or less<sup>8</sup>. It is most visible in the chapter on vital points. Some versions have certain articles excluded whereas in some only the points mentioned are different. Number “36” is very important in Chinese numerology, but in reality it is not final number of vital points. The interesting thing is that the text itself doesn't describe precisely how to punch a vital point, which leads me to conclusion that the author was already familiar with the information, that is, the article served as a kind of script or reminder. The differences between some of the versions occurred probably because of difference in understanding and applying of knowledge in reality. In this article, also, I've give a list of vital points limited by my understanding, opinions and experience.

There is almost no applying of knowledge of vital points for majority of today karate clubs. Instructors basic concern is “...how to win a match?” and therefore “almighty” *seiken* surface is primal weapon with only a few of simple techniques practiced. To make things worse, fist punch to chin is often thought as basic technique, which is very dangerous in reality because one may easily break the bones of the hand.

To understand this section of karate correctly, it is necessary to observe things from the perspective of practical self-defence. In the street, as a rule, the attacker is stronger than you are, so you must make your punch worth twice as strong. You will achieve this if you cunningly hit the opponent in the most painful points. Therefore the knowledge of basic anatomy and physiology of human body is essential. Apart from knowing the spot where to hit, one should know how and with what to do so. Random punching with fist won't do any good. The greatest efficiency is achieved when the striking surface and technique are adjusted to the vital point. Besides the fist, it includes the use of palm, ridge hand, finger pokes, tearing, pinching, and pressing... This is described particularly in the article #20, “*Six hands of Shaolin*”. There are suppositions that the article had inspired master Chojun Miyagi when he formed *Tensho* kata out of some longer Chinese kata.



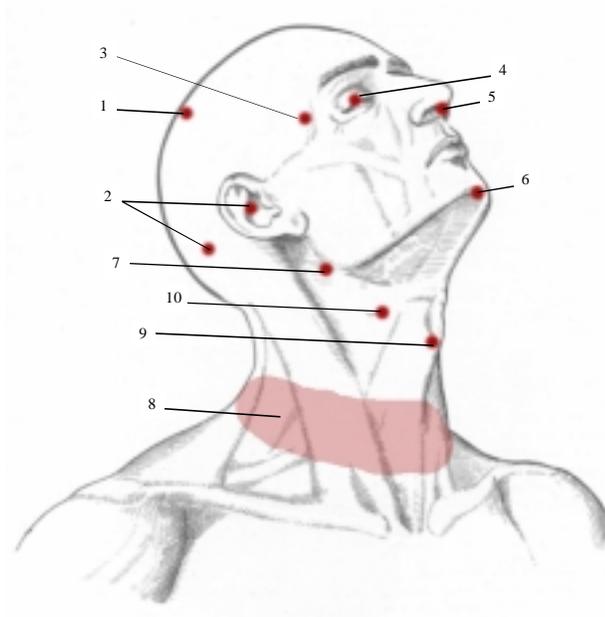
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<sup>6</sup> Chinese emperor Ren Zong, ordered court chief physician in 1026 to make two precise models of man, on which, acupuncture points and meridians could be precisely presented. In that way was created a standard for the whole Chinese empire, which is still in medicine use today.

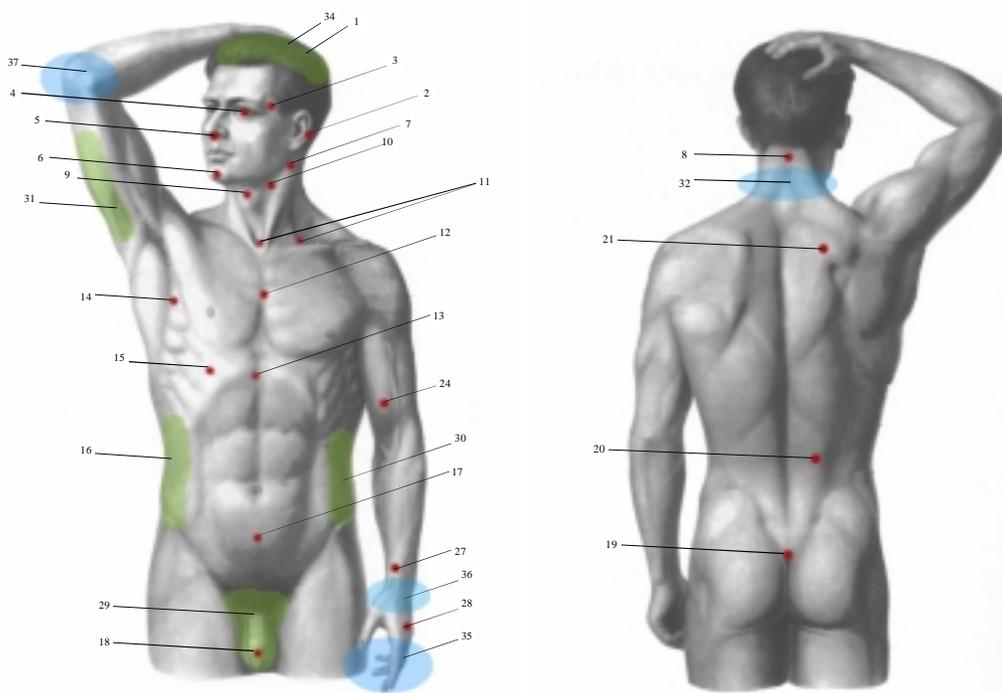
<sup>7</sup> Fernando P. Camara, Analysis of the Okinawan Bubishi (October. 1997.)

<sup>8</sup> According to the analyses of Joe Swift and Victor Smith

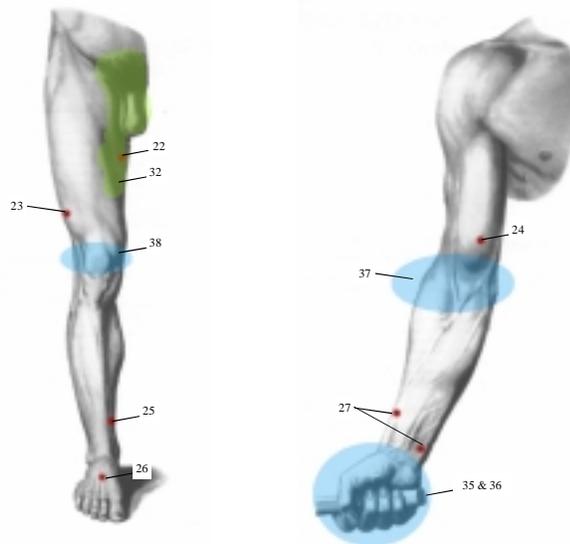
| Vital point                       | Application                                                                                     | Sources                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Top of head                    | Hammer fist strike ( <i>tetsui</i> )                                                            | Karate do Kyohan – <i>tento</i><br>Bubishi, article #24 “ <i>Bronze Man Statue</i> ”, GV22                 |
| 2. Back head and ears             | Open hand slap ( <i>teisho</i> )                                                                | Bubishi, article #24 “ <i>Bronze Man Statue</i> ”                                                          |
| 3. Temples                        | Ridge hand ( <i>shuto</i> ) strike and one knuckle fist ( <i>shoken</i> )                       | Karate do Kyohan – <i>kasumi</i><br>Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, GB3                                        |
| 4. Eyes                           | Finger poke                                                                                     | Karate do Kyohan – <i>gansei</i><br>Bubishi, article #17, “Seven Restricted Locations”                     |
| 5. Nose ( <i>philtrum</i> )       | Hammer fist strike ( <i>tetsui</i> )                                                            | Karate do Kyohan – <i>uto</i><br>Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, GV26                                          |
| 6. Chin                           | Forceful open hand thrust can dislock jaw or injure neck ( <i>teisho</i> )                      | Karate do Kyohan – <i>gekon</i><br>Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, CV24                                        |
| 7. Mastoid process                | Hammer fist ( <i>tetsui</i> ) strike or ridge hand ( <i>shuto</i> ) strike                      | Karate do Kyohan – <i>dokko</i><br>Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, TH17                                        |
| 8. Posterior midline              | Head manipulation or neck breaking techniques (1-2 vertebrae)                                   | Karate do Kyohan – <i>keichu</i><br>Bubishi, “36 Vital Points” & article #17, “Seven Restricted Locations” |
| 9. Throat                         | Choking technique ( <i>shime</i> ) or forceful grab can seriously hurt person ( <i>nukite</i> ) | Bubishi, article #17, “Seven Restricted Locations”                                                         |
| 10. Neck ( <i>carotid sinus</i> ) | Ridge hand ( <i>shuto</i> ) strike and finger stab ( <i>nukite</i> ).                           | Karate do Kyohan – <i>matsukaze</i><br>Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, ST9                                     |



| Vital point                               | Application                                                         | Sources                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11. Jugular and sternal notch             | Finger jab "Cranes beak" ( <i>kakushiken</i> )                      | Karate do Kyohan – <i>murasame &amp; hichu</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", CV22 & ST12 |
| 12. Breast bone ( <i>angulus sterni</i> ) | One knuckle fist ( <i>shoken</i> ) or elbow smash                   | Karate do Kyohan – <i>tanchu</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", CV18                      |
| 13. Xiphoid process                       | One or two knuckle fist ( <i>shoken or hiraken</i> )                | Karate do Kyohan – <i>yosen</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", CV15                       |
| 14. Armpit                                | One knuckle fist ( <i>shoken</i> )                                  | Karate do Kyohan – <i>kyoei</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", HT1                        |
| 15. Ribs                                  | Knuckle fist ( <i>shoken; hiraken</i> )                             | Karate do Kyohan – <i>genka &amp; denko</i> , Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", GB24         |
| 16. Floating ribs                         | Open hand thrust ( <i>teisho</i> ) or hammer fist strike            | Karate do Kyohan – <i>inazuma</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", LIV13                    |
| 17. Abdomen                               | Thrusting kick ( <i>sokumen or teisho</i> )                         | Karate do Kyohan – <i>matsukaze</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", ST9                    |
| 18. Groin                                 | Upward kick ( <i>kinteki geri</i> ) or palm smash ( <i>teisho</i> ) | Karate do Kyohan – <i>kinteki</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", LIV11                    |
| 19. Tip of the Coccyx                     | Knee kick ( <i>hiza geri</i> )                                      | Karate do Kyohan – <i>bitei</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", GV1                        |
| 20. Lumbar area                           | Knuckle fist ( <i>hiraken</i> ) or knee ( <i>hiza geri</i> )        | Karate do Kyohan – <i>ushiro denko</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", BL51                |
| 21. Above shoulder blade                  | Ridge hand ( <i>shuto</i> ), hammer fist ( <i>tetsui</i> )          | Karate do Kyohan – <i>hayauchi</i> Bubishi, "36 Vital Points", BL43                    |



| Vital point                | Application                                                             | Sources                                                                    |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 22. Thigh (inside)         | Thrusting kick ( <i>sokumen</i> )                                       | Karate do Kyohan – <i>yako</i>                                             |
| 23. Thigh (peroneal nerve) | Snapping kick ( <i>sokumen geri</i> ) or knee kick ( <i>hiza geri</i> ) | Karate do Kyohan – <i>fukuto</i> ; Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, GB31        |
| 24. Biceps                 | Ridge hand ( <i>shuto</i> ) strike                                      | Karate do Kyohan – <i>wanjun</i> ; Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, LU3         |
| 25. Shins                  | Snapping kick ( <i>nami gaeshi</i> )                                    | Karate do Kyohan – <i>kokotsu</i> ,                                        |
| 26. Foot                   | Stomping kick ( <i>fumikomi</i> )                                       | Karate do Kyohan – <i>soin</i> ; Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, LIV13         |
| 27. Forearm                | Ridge hand ( <i>shuto</i> )                                             | Karate do Kyohan – <i>sotoshakutaku</i> ; Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, LI10 |
| 28. Back of the hand       | Knuckle fist ( <i>hiraken</i> )                                         | Karate do Kyohan – <i>shuko</i> ; Bubishi, “36 Vital Points”, TH2 & LI4    |



| Vital point      | Application                                                       | Sources                                            |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 29. Testicals    | <i>Tuite</i> technique, grab testicles, twist and pull.           | Bubishi, article #17, “Seven Restricted Locations” |
| 30. Abdomen side | <i>Tuite</i> technique, tearing of abdomen (“love handles”) skin. | Bubishi, article #17, “Seven Restricted Locations” |
| 31. Triceps      | <i>Tuite</i> technique, tearing of triceps skin.                  |                                                    |
| 32. Inner thigh  | <i>Tuite</i> technique, tearing of inner thigh skin.              |                                                    |
| 33. Neck         | Control ( <i>shime</i> ), various choking and holding techniques. | Bubishi, article #17, “Seven Restricted Locations” |
| 34. Hair         | Easy way to control your opponent is to grab his hair.            |                                                    |
| 35. Fingers      | Finger locks ( <i>kansetsu</i> )                                  |                                                    |
| 36. Wrist        | Wrist locks ( <i>kansetsu</i> )                                   |                                                    |
| 37. Elbow        | Elbow locks ( <i>kansetsu</i> )                                   |                                                    |
| 38. Knee         | Knee locks ( <i>sokuto geri</i> )                                 |                                                    |

### 48 fighting techniques

According to the opinions of many experts, the article “48 techniques” is one of the most important ones in the whole *Bubishi*. However, the understanding of this text is not easy at all. Firstly, the sketches of the techniques are sometimes obvious, but sometimes it is almost impossible to understand what they are about. In few places the techniques appear repeated. I believe this is a mistake done while copying the book, because the logical conclusion is that the author wouldn't repeat the same techniques. Their names are symbolic and have no connection with modern karate terminology.

The illustrations of 48 techniques are very inspirative and without any doubt everyone devoted to karate will benefit from studying this article. This chapter could be named “*Bunkai catalogue*” because the article presents the techniques, ideas and principles of fighting found in all Okinawan katas.

Last 9 illustrations, in my opinion, are different from others. They don't show actual combat applications, but describe basic principles. So, illustrations 40-48 are “*ABC of fighting*”: vital points (*kyusho*), body change (*tenshin*), distance (*maai*), formlessness, focus (*kime*), simplicity, control, decisiveness (*zanshin*) and feints.

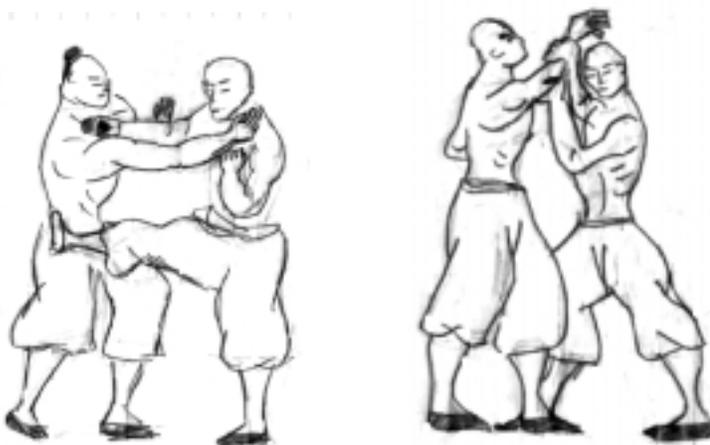


Illustration #1 (“48 techniques”, #26), the point is to let opponent to pass and then taking him down.

Illustration #2 (“48 techniques”, #14), arm bar.

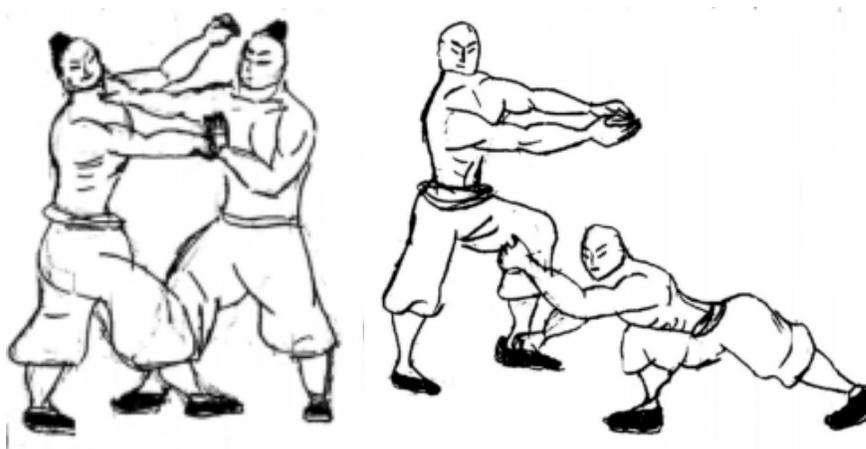


Illustration #3 (“48 techniques”, #13), shows seizing opponent's larynx.

Illustration #4 (“48 techniques”, #18), seizing the leg and take dawn (*ura kamae*).

| <i>Picture no.</i> | <i>Shorin ryu</i>   | <i>Goju ryu</i> | <i>Comments</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.                 |                     | Seiunchin       | Escape from bear hug.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 2.                 | Patsai              |                 | My personal understanding is that this is the opening movement of kata <i>Patsai</i> . An attacker grabs your arm and you respond with knee to groin and wristlock.                                                                                                                            |
| 3.                 | Unshu               |                 | Vary basic technique when you are on the ground. Entangling of opponents legs and taking him down. This technique can be found in kata <i>Unshu</i> .                                                                                                                                          |
| 4.                 | Patsai              |                 | Taking opponent on ground by head manipulation technique or breaking of neck.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 5.                 | Niseishi            |                 | Throwing technique by knee lock or grabbing of opponents leg and sweeping of other leg.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 6.                 | Kushanku            |                 | Side stepping out of direct attack, raising both arms in defensive position. This is movement just before <i>soto shuto</i> technique in kata <i>Kushanku</i> .                                                                                                                                |
| 7.                 | Chintou             |                 | Simultaneously block and punch.<br>(Reference: <i>wari uke tsuki</i> in “ <i>Essence of Okinawan Karatedo</i> ”)                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 8.                 | Patsai,<br>Kushanku |                 | Close distance situation, attacker is holding you and is trying to hit you. Firstly, you should block incoming attack, then execute arm lock and take him down.                                                                                                                                |
| 9.                 | Kushanku            |                 | This is similar to illustration #3; just this time attacker is coming from your back.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 10.                | Seisan              | Saifa           | Attacker is trying to catch your leg and take you down. Intercept him by slapping his ears or poking his eyes with your thumbs and/or knee smash.                                                                                                                                              |
| 11.                | Kushanku            | Seipai          | Throwing technique, which can be found in Funakoshi’s “ <i>Karate do Kyohan</i> ”? It is called <i>sakatsuchi</i> and is technique from closing sequence of kata <i>Kushanku</i> .                                                                                                             |
| 12.                | Kushanku            | Seiunchin       | Here is illustrated how to take opponent down by grabbing his legs, when he is reaching for you. This principle is also described in article #16, “ <i>Grappling and escapes</i> ”. In addition, this technique is very similar to throwing technique, which Funakoshi refer as <i>Udewa</i> . |
| 13.                | Kushanku            | Seipai          | Grabbing of ones throat is very basic combat technique. Kids in school use this when fighting and is often followed with headlock. When you see <i>osae uke-nukite</i> , then this is it.                                                                                                      |
| 14.                | Patsai              |                 | Arm locking technique. Use three steps and redirect opponent’s energy so that you can apply arm lock.                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 15.                | Patsai              |                 | This is obviously <i>tomoe tsuki</i> from kata <i>Patsai</i> . When someone grabs you hair, you can counterattack with grabbing his testicles and throat.                                                                                                                                      |
| 16.                | Patsai              | Suparimpei      | <i>Suirakan no kamae</i> , “Drunken man” position from “ <i>Essence of Okinawan Karatedo</i> ”, applied in kata <i>Patsai</i> . You leave opening in your guard and wait for attack, this puts you in good position for effective counter attack.                                              |

| <i>Picture no.</i> | <i>Shorin ryu</i>                 | <i>Goju ryu</i>      | <i>Comments</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 17.                | Kushanku                          |                      | This is similar to picture #4. However, leg position convinces me that this is basic throwing technique <i>osoto gari</i> (reference: <i>Karatedo Kyohan</i> , Throwing techniques – <i>byobudaoshi</i> or <i>kubiwa</i> ).                                               |
| 18.                | Kushanku                          | Sanseru<br>Kururunfa | When attacker tries to catch you, suddenly sink down, grab his leg and take him down. (Reference: <i>Ura kamae</i> from <i>Essence of Okinawan Karatedo</i> ).                                                                                                            |
| 19.                | Patsai                            | Kururunfa            | <i>Sagurite</i> , technique from kata <i>Patsai</i> , eye-gouging technique. (Reference: <i>Essence of Okinawan Karatedo</i> ). In addition, this is basic application of <i>shuto uchi</i> . When Funakoshi talked about <i>hente</i> , I think he referred to this.     |
| 20.                | Naihanchi                         | Seipai               | When twisting opponent's wrist, his balance is upset so you are in position to sweep his leg. Application of leg technique <i>nami gaeshi</i> .                                                                                                                           |
| 21.                | Patsai                            | Seiunchin            | Possible defense against kick followed with punch. Seize kicking leg and then you can sweep other leg. Application of <i>gedan barai</i> technique, found in kata <i>Patsai</i> .                                                                                         |
| 22.                | Wanshu                            | Shisochin            | When dodging a front kick attack, you could seize a leg and push upward. In this way, you will make opponent fall. Maybe, opening sequence of kata <i>Wanshu (Empi)</i> .                                                                                                 |
| 23.                | Kushanku                          |                      | <i>Ryu-no-shita no kamae</i> (reference: <i>Essence of Okinawan Karatedo</i> ). Feints are very useful in fight. You should purposely leave opening in your guard, so that opponent's actions are predictable. This position can be found in kata <i>Kushanku</i> .       |
| 24.                | Unshu                             |                      | When attacker tries to catch you, you could throw him by sinking down on ground. This is very similar to <i>judo</i> sacrifice throw <i>tomoe nage</i> .                                                                                                                  |
| 25.                | Kushanku                          |                      | Deflection and simultaneous attack with both hand and possible application of <i>mawashi uke</i> (reference: <i>Essence of Okinawan Karatedo</i> , <i>tomoe shotei ate</i> ).                                                                                             |
| 26.                | Wanshu                            | Seisan               | Against one-sided punch and kick, you could go to outer side and catch his leg and arm, then quickly turn your body and throw him. This is <i>bunkai</i> for closing sequence in kata <i>Wanshu</i> . This is very similar to <i>yaridama</i> in <i>Karatedo Kyohan</i> . |
| 27.                | Seisan                            | Pechurin             | Defense against rear bear hug. This easily can be application of double <i>kake uke</i> in kata <i>Seisan</i> .                                                                                                                                                           |
| 28.                | Kushanku<br>Patsai<br>Pinan godan | Kururunfa            | Blocking of opponent downward strike with "X-block" ( <i>juji uke</i> ), twist arm and throw him. This is very similar to <i>tani otoshi</i> throw in Funakoshi's " <i>Karatedo Kyohan</i> ".                                                                             |
| 29.                |                                   | Kururunfa            | Possible <i>bunkai</i> of this sequence is throw ( <i>ura nage</i> ), taken from kata <i>Kururunfa</i> , described in Mabuni and Nakasone's 1938 <i>Karatedo Nyumon</i> .                                                                                                 |
| 30.                |                                   | Seipai               | This is obvious presentation of <i>kyusho</i> application. It is simultaneous block and attack. Question is: which point we should use? My best assumption is that we should use <i>shoken</i> on breast bone ( <i>sternum</i> ).                                         |
| 31.                | Naihanchi                         |                      | Dodging towards the outside, then catching the forearm, pull and sweep the leg. Possible application can be found in <i>Naihanchi</i> (double punch). Also, this can be <i>bunkai</i> of <i>shuto uke</i> .                                                               |
| 32.                | Wanshu<br>Patsai                  |                      | "Phoenix spreads its wings" is possible meaning of preparing position ( <i>hiki te</i> ) for <i>shuto uke</i> . Many <i>Shorin</i> katas use this technique.                                                                                                              |

| <i>Picture no.</i> | <i>Shorin ryu</i> | <i>Goju ryu</i> | <i>Comments</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 33.                | Patsai            | Suparinpei      | Basic idea of this technique is to poke opponent's eyes, grasp his testicles and pull him on the ground. This theme is presented in <i>Patsai</i> .                                                                   |
| 34.                | Niseishi          |                 | Same technique is in opening sequence of <i>Niseishi</i> kata. When opponent reaches toward your chest. Block with both hands and counter attack with phoenix fist ( <i>shoken</i> ).                                 |
| 35.                | Useishi           |                 | There is similar sequence in <i>Useishi</i> kata ( <i>Gojushiho</i> ).                                                                                                                                                |
| 36.                | Kushanku          |                 | Using <i>Ura kamae</i> ("Cheating fighting posture") is good way to surprise your opponent by dropping your body. Then you can smash or seize opponent's testicles.                                                   |
| 37.                | Kushanku          |                 | Possible implications from <i>Kushanku</i> . Move away from the line of attack, block and seize opponents fist ( <i>uchi uke</i> ) and then counter.                                                                  |
| 38.                | Patsai            | Shisochin       | Escaping technique when opponent is holding your lapels. Description of this technique is very similar to <i>Patsai</i> kata sequence.                                                                                |
| 39.                | Pinan sandan      | Kururunfa       | Pull opponent off balance, strike his ribs with elbow and set him for throw by locking his elbow.                                                                                                                     |
| 40.                |                   |                 | <u>Principle</u> – you can make your techniques more effective is you use knowledge of vital points ( <i>kyusho</i> ).                                                                                                |
| 41.                |                   |                 | <u>Principle</u> – it is essential to adjust distance during fighting ( <i>maai</i> ).                                                                                                                                |
| 42.                |                   |                 | <u>Principle</u> – the best way for defense is to move away from line of attack ( <i>tenshin</i> ).                                                                                                                   |
| 43.                |                   |                 | <u>Principle</u> – you should not limit yourself with strict form, instead you should act accordingly to situation (difference between <i>kata</i> and <i>kumite</i> ).                                               |
| 44.                |                   |                 | <u>Principle</u> – if your stance is unbalanced ( <i>dachi</i> ) or movement of your hips is weak ( <i>koshi</i> ), then there is no focus ( <i>kime</i> ) and therefore your techniques do not have enough strength. |
| 45.                |                   |                 | <u>Principle</u> – you should choose which technique to use carefully and according to situation. Do not use attractive techniques.                                                                                   |
| 46.                |                   |                 | <u>Principle</u> – it is necessary to be calm and wise, if you act wild then there is good chance to miss your target ( <i>fudoshin</i> ).                                                                            |
| 47.                |                   |                 | <u>Principle</u> – do not hesitate, when fight is started. Be serious and act confidently ( <i>zanshin</i> ).                                                                                                         |
| 48.                |                   |                 | <u>Principle</u> – use faints to defeat your opponent, because there are no rules in fighting.                                                                                                                        |



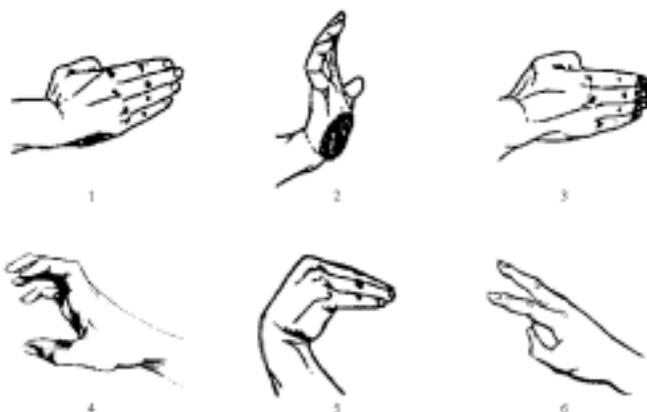
Illustration #5 ("48 techniques", #4) shows how to use head manipulation technique.

### What did the ancient karate look like?

By careful examination of Bubishi, we are able to reconstruct the ancient Okinawan karate – *tote jutsu*. The most useful information are in the section dealing with vital points, then in the article on 48 techniques, as well as in article #16, “*Grappling and Escapes*”<sup>9</sup>. I took liberty to illustrate a few techniques, which are in *Shorin* katas with applying of principles from Bubishi. Therefore what useful information can we draw from this article, in order to apply them in our training?

In ancient Okinawan karate, hand techniques are apparently the most important. To support this I mention an old name for karate – *tote*, (“*Chinese hand*”). When executing hand techniques, almost all surfaces are used: (1) fingers (four fingers – *nukite*; one finger – *ipon nukite*; “cranes beak” – *kakushiken*), (2) palm (*teisho*), (3) ridge of hand (*shuto*), (4) fist (knuckle fist - *hiraken*; one knuckle fist – *shoken*; hammer fist - *tetsui*), (5) elbow – *empi*, as well as grabbing techniques (*torite*) by testicles, throat, hair, triceps or thigh.

It is interesting that the use of fingers and palm surpasses the use of the fist. The predominant use of the fist today is probably a result of the changes made by master Itosu, when karate was included into the educational program on Okinawa. Namely, the palm and the fingers are very efficient, but the use of the fist decreased the possibility of injury of younger trainees. Special attention is given to practicing of techniques with open palm in the article #20, “*Six hands of Shaolin*”.



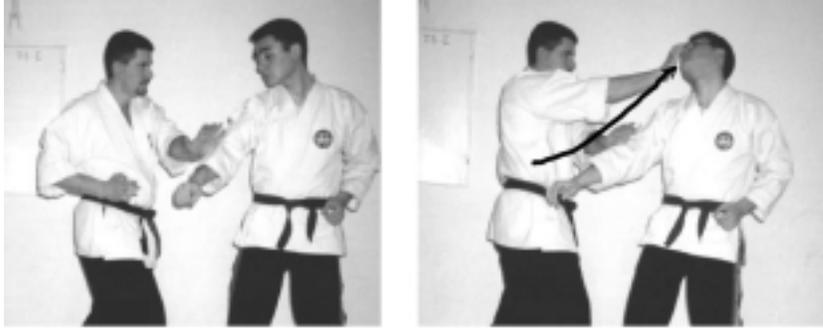
*Rokkusho*, that is “6 palms of Shaolin” presents:

- (1) ridge hand (*shuto*), (2) palm (*teisho*), (3) fingers (*nukite*), (4) “grabbing hand”, (5) “Cranes beak” (*kakushite*) and (6) one finger poking technique (*ipon nukite*).

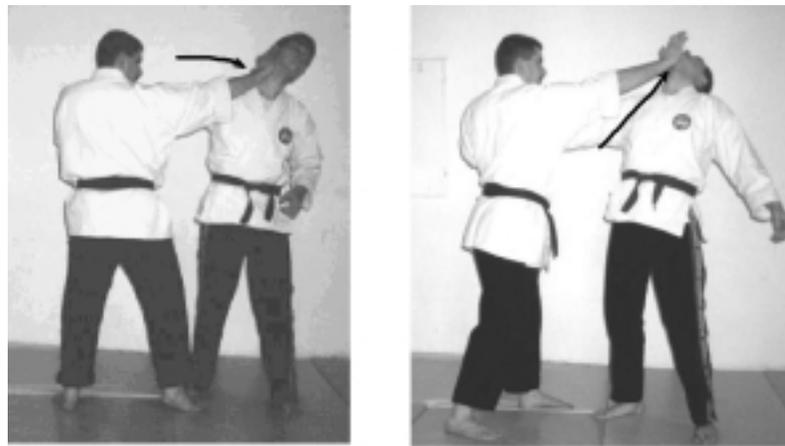


Picture 1., The technique is used to demonstrate the defense against the most usual type of attack, when the attacker reaches his arm in order to hit, seize or push. Arms are raised in a defensive position and moving away from the direction of attack is performed, then comes grabbing and a hit with ridge hand (*shuto*) into the neck (*carotid sinus*). In my opinion, this technique is presented in Bubishi, “48 techniques”, #6 and is drawn from kata *Kushanku*.

<sup>9</sup> According to Patrick McCarthy this text as a whole is in Funakoshi’s, “*Karate Do Kyohan*”, namely at the end of the chapter “*Maxims for the trainee*”, there is a part in old Chinese, Tsutomu Ohshima said that he was unable to translate. That whole text in Chinese was actually taken from Bubishi (article #16).



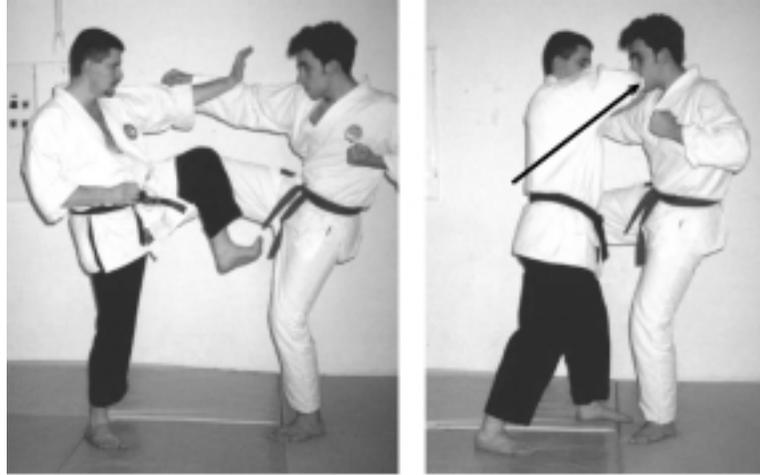
Picture 2., "Phoenix spreads his wings" ("48 techniques", #32), a very interesting technique, showing the use of the fingers in a fight parrying of opponents punch/grab and then thrust with fingers into the eyes. In my opinion, this technique is found in many katas. Here presented sequence is drawn from kata *Patsai* (*Kyan no Patsai*).



Picture 3., the use of ridge hand (*shuto uchi*) and the base of palm (*teisho tsuki*) are widespread in *tote jutsu* and shown in *Bubishi* (#19, #31, #35).



Picture 4., The smash or tearing of the testicles are amongst the most efficient techniques of Okinawan karate. Here are shown two different techniques. In first one, grabbing is done from the outside while holding the opponents arm, which prevents the attack by other arm. In the second, picture a sudden attack shown in the kata *Kushanku* (*ura kamae*). This technique is shown in *Bubishi* (#36).



Picture 5. Okinawan karate makes use of the elbow in several different variants. Almost all katas contain elbow strikes and proof for this can be found in Bubishi (technique #39). Here is presented sequence from kata Kushanku. Firstly, one parries the opponent attack with an arm or knee, and then he grabs opponents back of the head and smashes his face with elbow.

It is interesting to see that leg techniques were not considered very efficient. Support for this statement lies in fact that the attacker always loses when he tries to kick the opponent (illustrations #5, #13, #21 and #16). I think that kicks were thought of as supplemental, being done to ease the performance of the arms. Still, it could be concluded that knee (*hiza geri*) and front kick (*mae geri*) as well as different ways to put opponent out of balance (#3, #9, #20 and #31) were used. What can be observed with certainty is the absence of attractive kick such as *mawashi*, *yoko* and *ushiro geri*, so widespread presented in karate today.



Picture 6. Regardless of being shown explicitly in the article on "48 techniques" kicks are also mentioned in the article #16 "*Grappling and Escapes*" (#15, #17, #18 and #23), so it could be concluded that different variants of *mae geri* and *hiza geri* were two most important leg techniques. Beside this *tote* makes use of stomping kicks.

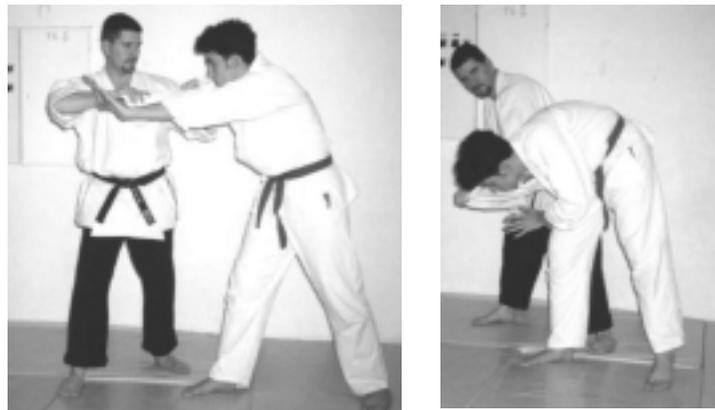
It is important to perceive that in *tote jutsu* there is a wide applying of techniques that are absent from karate sport today: *joint locks*, *throws*, *chokes*, *grappling*, *ground fighting*... Actually, the whole article on 48 techniques is some kind of recommended frame or concept of ancient fighting art, that is techniques, as well as situations and fighting principles, are shown. Regardless of the style, tradition or kata you are practicing, you can look in for *bunkai* (practical application of kata movements) in the article on 48 techniques or the article #16, "*Grappling and Escapes*". I think this is very important, because now we can positively see that joint locking, throwing and grappling are essential part of karate.

When talking of joint kicking techniques there are: lock on the wrist (#2), lock on the elbow with pressure, over the shoulder or by twisting the arm (#8, #14, #28, #31 and #39) and lock on the knee (#18). A great

number of techniques making use of specific vital points to cause pain to the opponent by pressing or tearing are being used (*tuite*<sup>10</sup>). Firstly, there is eye gouging (#19, #32 and #35), tearing of the larynx (#13 and #15), grabbing of testicles (#36, #33, #27 and #15). Also there are less dangerous, but equally painful actions: pinching by the skin on the triceps (#14), skin tearing on side of abdomen (#30), ribs below the nipples (#40), skin tearing of inner thigh (#12) and hair pulling (#4 and #33). There is substantial number of throwing usually done by taking opponents leg when he tries to kick (#5, #21 and #22) or by simple catching of the opponent's leg when it is possible (#12). Also, a few classic throws are demonstrated (*sukui nage* #11, *osoto gari* #17 and *ashi barai* #31), also sacrifice throw (*tomoe nage* #24) and entangling of the legs while laying on the ground - "scissors throw" (*kani basami*, #3 and #9). I would especially mention the technique of head manipulation, which can be used to knock the opponent down; but if done forcefully becomes a lethal technique – breaking of the neck (#4).

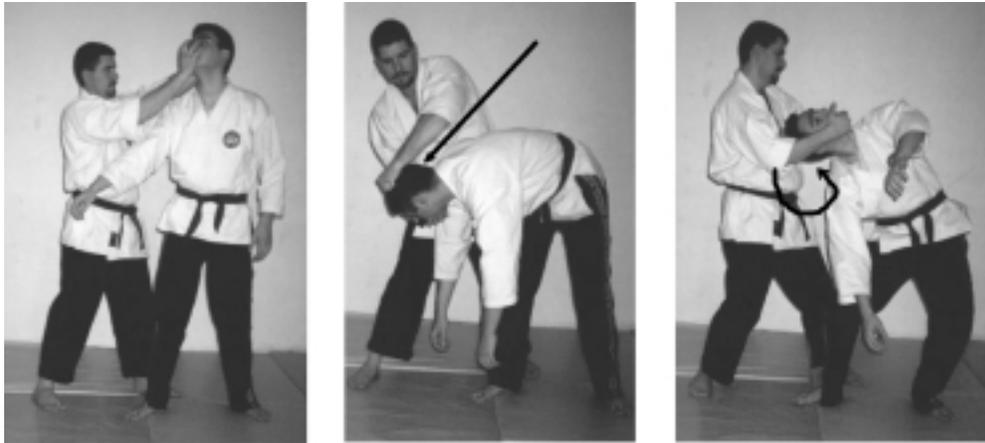


Picture 7. This is my personal interpretation of the illustration #2 ("White monkey stealing fruit – Black tiger rushing from the cage"). I think that the correct explanation of this technique is similar to the situation shown in the opening movement of the kata *Patsai* and that is escaping technique when opponent is holding your arm.



Picture 8. Elbow locking technique (variation), shown in *Bubishi*, "48 techniques" (#26).

<sup>10</sup> *Tuite* is a term used by many martial arts enthusiasts for very painful hand techniques of finger poking, pressing, tearing, pinching and grabbing.



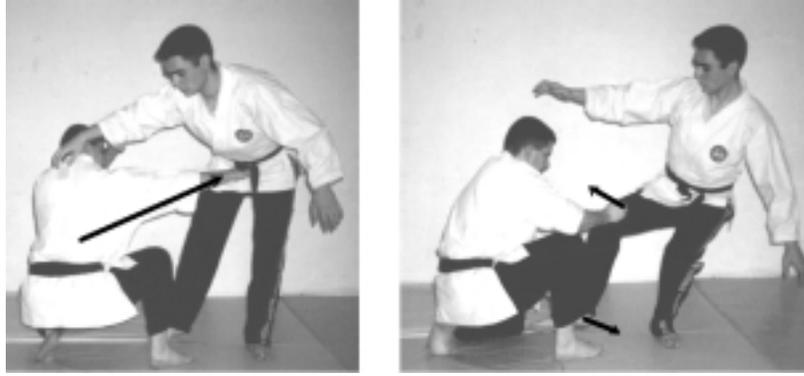
Picture 9. Head manipulation technique ("48 techniques", #4) is an efficient way to bring your opponent down. This movement can be found at the beginning of kata *Patsai*.



Picture 10. One of basic throws in karate. The popular name is *osoto gari*, also Funakoshi uses Okinawan name *byobudaoshi* (*Karate do Kyohan*) and there are several different variants of this technique. Bubishi, "48 techniques", #17, also can be observed in kata *Kushanku*, *Naihanchi* and *Wanshu*.



Picture 11. The throw that I prefer to call *sukui nage* is variation of throw presented in Bubishi (#11 or #22). It can be done by grabbing opponent's testicals, also. Similar throw is in kata *Wanshu* (*Empi*), (*kosa dachi – gedan tsuki*, and then *gedan bara*).



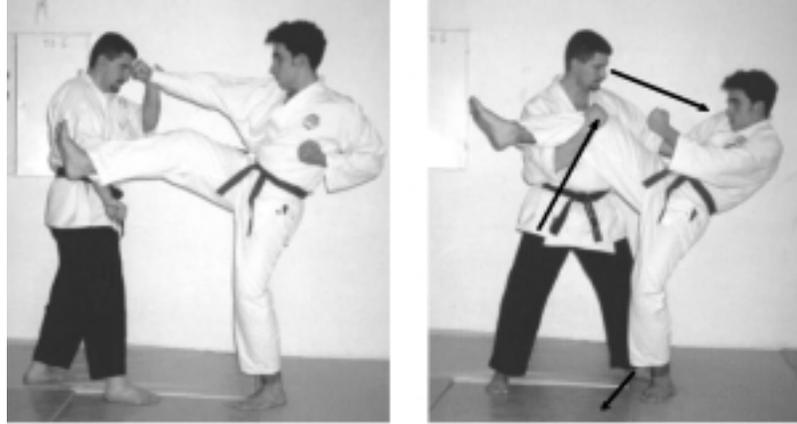
Picture 12. The throw by grabbing the opponent's leg. It is in kata *Kushanku* and is shown in *Bubishi* (#18). When the opponent hits the ground, you should hold his leg in your hands and stomp on his groin.



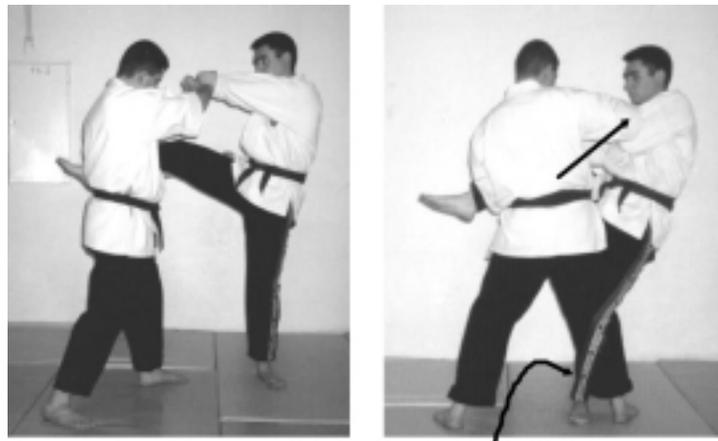
Picture 13. When the opponent attacks from behind, firstly you should attempt to grab his genitals ("*48 techniques*", #27) and then step behind him and throw him down ("*On grappling and escaping*").



Picture 14. This is my interpretation of technique from kata *Unshu* (*Unsu*), therefore I call it *unshu geri*. It is presented in "*48 techniques*" in two variants; the first one is shown here (#3) and the other one is when attacker comes from behind (#9). Firstly, a shock kick into the groin is used and then there is entangling technique to bring opponent down.



Picture 15. This is demonstration of throwing when the opponent's leg is captured during the kick. This is actually the applying of the simple *gedan barai* and can be found in kata *Patsai*. In *Bubishi*, there is an illustration #21 (or #22).



Picture 16. This technique is variant of previous one (*gedan barai* – kata *Patsai*), but executed from inside. Leg is usually followed by a punch with an arm, it is important to grab both the leg and the arm, so that you can safely throw your opponent.

# 唐手

At the very beginning the Okinawan peoples were using a term "*tote jutsu*" for karate. Translated it meant "*the method of the Chinese Hand*", which is common name for Chinese *quan fa*.

Bubishi confirm the theory that karate is civilian fighting art, i.e. karate as a method was not meant to be used in the battlefield, because that would make training methodology completely different from as it is today. It was not supposed to serve to the Okinawans to defend against a samurai armed with katana, because it is equally pointless as training of bare hand defense against the attack of fully equipped US marine. The goal of karate training is to teach how to defend yourself against the most usual types of attack.

Most often, the attacker is someone familiar to us, most probably a friend, an acquaintance or a member of a family. Therefore, the attacker is someone not professionally trained for fighting (like a member of the army, riot police or samurais). The most common type of attack a couple hundred years ago on Okinawa is the same

as the common attack today. So, karate as self-defense system can be used today as it was on Okinawa several centuries ago. Article “48 techniques” represents these acts of habitual physical violence: **punching** (#12, #31, #30, #34, #36), **pushing** (#14, #40), **seizing and punching** (#13), **hand attack combination** (#12), **kicking** (#5, #21, #22), **kick and hand attack** (#26), as well as escaping techniques when opponent tries: **bear hug** (#1, #4), **arm holding** (#2), **leg catching** (#10), **hair pulling** (#15), **headlock** (#33), **bear hug from behind** (#27), **seizing lapels** (#38). All instructors should consider these situations when teaching basic *kumite*.

The conclusion is that karate, as we know it today is different from the original style before 1900. The examples and proofs for this are in Bubishi. Since the history of this martial art is incomplete owing to oral transmission of knowledge and secrets, the value of this document is immeasurable. We can say that the essence of the ancient karate is forever preserved in Bubishi. This unsystematic collection of different articles from history, vital points, traditional medicine and practical applications is best reference for studying the history of karate. Just as we can look in the cooking pot and see all the ingredients we can treat Bubishi as a kind of receipt, rough sketch or script and say that rightfully deserves name – *The Bible of Karate*.

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### ***Contributors and Credits***

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