

# Okinawan Iron Body Conditioning

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**To read is to imagine,**

To watch is to wonder,

**To practice is to learn!!!**

### FOREWORD

#### APPROACHING THE ART OF OKINAWAN IRON BODY CONDITIONING

The routine of body conditioning and the performance of *Sanchin* is complementary such that the practice of both enhances the performance of each. The term *Sanchin* has been translated as "three conflicts" or "three battles," popularly interpreted as "mind, body and spirit." Kanbun Uechi, the patriarch of *Uechi-ryu*, stressed that "*All is in Sanchin*". This comment implies that *Sanchin* offers the karate-ka all of the tools necessary to become proficient in classical Okinawan karate. *Sanchin's* seeming simplicity belies its complexity: experienced practitioners believe that *Sanchin* unites the mind, body, and spirit.

Few martial arts systems incorporate the use of body conditioning and *Sanchin*. *Sanchin* is the most important *kata* (form) of a number of southern Chinese and Okinawan civil combative traditions. If there is one unifying thread that characterizes Fukien boxing styles it is reliance upon a form of the *kata Sanchin* to teach the salient precepts of the system. Sensei Patrick McCarthy recognizes *Sanchin* (alternately *Saam Chien*) as common to five Fuzhou Crane Boxing styles: Dragon boxing, Tiger Boxing, Dog Boxing, *Arhat* (*Lohan* or Monk Fist) Boxing, and Lion Boxing. Additionally, the recently popularized *Ngo Gyo Kun* style relies on a version called *Sam Chien* as the backbone of the system. The *Hakka* style of Southern Praying Mantis (which possesses more than a casual resemblance to *Uechi-Ryu* and *Goju-ryu*) also relies upon an initial form that has been compared to *Sanchin*, *Som Bo Gin* (Three Steps Forward.)

There are two main classifications of body conditioning: *Kote-Kitei* (arm conditioning) and *Ashi-Kitei* (leg conditioning) - each of equal importance. The term, *Sanchin-Kitei* refers to conditioning or striking in *Sanchin* thus including the entire body. The majority of exercises found within these pages are typically performed with a partner. As partners are not always available, we have also included a section on solo conditioning.

Although used in the dojo for conditioning purposes, the drills presented are very well suited for delivering highly explosive street valid techniques. As each partner gains experience in the conditioning drills, increased combative realism will aid practitioners in transitioning to effective attacks and defenses.

### *The Difficulty in Data Collection*

The physiologic mechanisms for body conditioning remain unknown; nor are they likely to become known. This ignorance persists not merely due to a lack of interest. Limited research funds and the impression that conditioning represents a specialized aspect of an extreme activity play a part. Nevertheless, the requirements of proper investigations prohibit them. Few, if any, practitioners pursue conditioning to the exclusion of any other activity, and many methods of conditioning exist. A conclusive study must control for all of these and other variables. Even if investigators could standardize the methods, as well as control for multiple variables such as age, sex, and initial body habitus and health, they then face prohibitive ethical constraints. Physiologic studies require comparisons of the tissues between those who

do and do not condition. Such comparison would require serial biopsies of skin, fascia, muscle and bone. An ideal study would compare conditioned and unconditioned extremities on the same practitioner with sufficient subjects studied over months and years to reach statistically significant conclusions.

Animal studies prove equally unfeasible. While one of the authors confesses a “gallows humor” in considering the image of inflicting *kote-kitei* on the family cat, the dark comedy underscores the problem. As with human investigations, animal studies prove expensive. One may imagine sufficient informed human volunteers interested in discovering the basis of conditioning; this does not apply to animal experimentation. Proper conditioning requires informed consent and communication between participants, which proves impossible with animals. Not surprisingly then, Medline searches reveal no conclusive or significant research on the physiology of conditioning

### *Possible Mechanisms*

The absence of hard evidence encourages speculation, which ranges from the reasonable to the hilarious. While it is reasonable to speculate based on what we know about physiology, one must avoid the temptation to heap “reasonable” speculation upon “reasonable” speculation to construct conclusions as solid as a veritable house of cards. This caution may appear excessive; however, one can speculate their way into useless, counter productive, injurious, and even dangerous practices.

Bones do remodel and require physiologic loads. It is reasonable to suggest that conditioning results in some degree of increased bone strength. The degree and quality of this increase remains speculative. Increased bone strength cannot explain abdominal muscle conditioning, and the authors doubt that it explains all of the effects on limbs.

Increased muscle mass and tone also appears a reasonable mechanism. One could then argue that conventional exercises exist to increase muscle mass and tone which renders body conditioning exercises unnecessary. Practitioners do report conditioning has an effect beyond other exercises. Indeed, all of the authors practice muscle building from moderate to serious degrees and contend that muscle-building exercises prove insufficient.

Two other possible mechanisms may play a part. Chapman speculates that conditioning strengthens the fascial planes secondary to repetitive stress (Chapman, 1995). Again, no hard evidence exists for this. He also suggests an increase in pain tolerance. The authors and their many fellow practitioners agree with this, however, pain physiology remains poorly understood, and what is understood is frightfully complicated. Many competing and complimentary peripheral and central influences exist, and the pain experienced ultimately proves subjective. While perhaps a reasonable suggestion concluding that body conditioning directly increases pain tolerance remains unproven.

### *Reasons for Caution*

As “obvious” and “reasonable” as testimonials seem, no proven physiologic mechanism exists to justify them. Practitioners must understand and accept this unfortunate fact, for one can cite “reasonable” and “obvious” testimonials to support disproved and even dangerous practices and therapies. Belief in non-physiological mechanisms can justify some potentially dangerous activities. The authors had thought the groin obvious to avoid. Apparently, some male practitioners have followed the directions contained in Qi Gong texts to suspend weights from their genitals. The practice results in damaged testicles. Evolution simply did not design the structures contained in the scrotum to withstand such physical abuse. Given that adherents exist who advocate this idiocy, the authors feel compelled to list other “obvious” areas to avoid. These include the face and eyes, head, trachea (windpipe), elbow and knee joints, and the spine.

Adherents of Western philosophy should not chortle and think themselves immune to similar delusions. The authors have heard many unfortunate claims based on how practitioners “think” the human body responds to injury. Some extend the possibility of raising the pain threshold to attempt damaging the sensation itself. As difficult as this is, practitioners need to remember that pain protects the body from damage. A review of the literature concerning the complications suffered by patients who lack sensation from injuries should dissuade readers from this practice.

Damaged tissues generally do not “regenerate” in the sense that they reform the complicated structure necessary for function. Some cells, such as nerve and muscle, do not divide to replace lost ones. Instead, tissues tend to heal by scar formation. The authors have heard that the function of conditioning is “tearing”

or otherwise damaging the tissues so they may "grow back stronger." This belief can lead to serious injuries, especially to joints. This includes extreme practices such as striking hard surfaces repeatedly with full force. Trauma to joints leads to a weakened and painful structure at best and a painfully deformed and non-functional structure at worse. While very little evidence exists to support the belief that injury promotes rheumatoid arthritis, degenerative arthritis can develop.

### *Women and Conditioning*

If bizarre mythology exists in the martial arts, it is particularly great with respect to women. Whether or not women should engage in body conditioning stirs up legitimate concerns and outright silliness. While the men may secretly share smirks and chuckles at the expense of the "fairer sex," the authors all know and have practiced with women who can inflict painful exception to these jests and prejudices. Women can and do achieve impressive levels of conditioning. Separating practitioners by sex leads to erroneous assumptions. Men have the potential edge in size and strength in the extremes; however, just as not every man achieves the same level of success, many women achieve better results than men. Practitioners need to remember the relative goals of conditioning and tailor the level of practice accordingly. Those who seek invincibility against the real and imagined threats of the world need to accept that no method can render their bodies "bullet-proof".

While it should prove obvious that the female breast is not a target for conditioning, women practitioners acknowledge that they do receive strikes in the region frequently. While damage to the breast tissue can result in fat necrosis, no evidence exists that this promotes or increases the risk of breast cancer. One should avoid strikes to the female groin. Again, one would think this obvious; however, the authors are aware that a myth exists that women do not suffer consequences from groin strikes. They do.

Women do practice under the myth that conditioning the abdomen will damage their reproductive organs. Blunt trauma serious enough to damage internal organs does not tend to damage the reproductive organs. The liver, intestines, spleen, pancreas, kidney, and bladder of both men and women suffer a far greater risk. Pregnancy changes everything, of course.

Beyond the mythology concerning women in the martial arts lies the vast emptiness of information concerning children. As pediatricians remind their colleagues who treat adults, children are not miniature adults. Indeed, childhood represents many different physical, intellectual, and emotional milestones. Compound this with the absence of credible data, individual variability, and the desire to include children in a traditional art that promises them many benefits, and one may understand why teachers may just give up on conditioning.

The two significant questions concern whether or not conditioning poses a danger to children and at what age may they begin conditioning. With respect to the first question, specific dangers do exist; however, they are not unique to conditioning. Until their bones mature, children risk damage to their growth plates. Such maturity does not occur until after the growth periods in the early teen years. An immature body simply cannot withstand the stress expected by an adult body. Yet, one would not expect adults to inflict adult-level prearranged or free sparring on a child. Thus, in a way, common sense answers both questions. Clearly, a nine year-old cannot and should not engage in adult level conditioning. A teacher should not condone any significant contact on a child who has not reached the early teens. The authors hope no teacher requires enlightenment to this or the need to grade his training to the level of the practitioner, including a child. Martial arts always involve degrees of training. Adults are not built the same. Many adults will require a measured and progressive approach to conditioning as well as other aspect of training. This applies to children. Finally, no practitioner who lacks the maturity of mind to work respectfully with a partner should engage in partner conditioning drills.

While this paper addresses adult-level conditioning and how practitioners may approach basic exercises in a manner that promotes conditioning, one can reverse the conception. Children can and do benefit from soft conditioning which focuses on proper posture and position. The described procedure of *Sanchin shime* (testing) can be altered to soft touching that guides a child into proper position. Indeed, adults benefit from a “soft *Sanchin* test” as well. Since martial arts requires a spectrum of physical skills, abilities and techniques, readers should not conclude that the authors present the “only” way to practice, or that practice must “always” involve conditioning.

Conditioning involves a gradual and progressive process. Injuries should not happen if practitioners practice responsibly and listen to and respect one another.

## THE BASICS - STANCES

Prior to describing the conditioning exercises we will elaborate several important stances. The authors recognize that readers may have full comprehension of certain postures common to many combative styles (i.e. kiba-dachi) and will, therefore, limit extensive description to those postures which may not be as familiar to the reading audience.

### *SANCHIN-DACHI*

*Sanchin-dachi* is utilized extensively in performing many of the exercises described herein. This stance is one of the oldest *Kamae* (postural structures) within the martial arts and is found in many karate styles and most Fukien based southern Chinese Gung-Fu styles.

Proper lower body posture (1.) may be achieved by:



- standing with feet at approximately shoulder width with the knees slightly bent,
- adducting toes (point in toward the groin) at an approximate 30 degree angle,
- pivoting on the ball of one foot (which becomes the rear foot) so that it is oriented with toes straight to the front,
- stepping forward with the other in a semi-circular fashion making sure to foot glide along the floor, and
- posting the front foot in an adducted position such that the heel is on a line parallel with the toes of the rear foot

Proper upper body posture [ 2.] is characterized by the following criteria:



- shoulders should be sunken (relaxed),
- chest empty (following the lead of the back),
- back straight,
- head lifted as though suspended from a string (which tucks the chin) ,
- waist stable to connect the upper and lower parts of the body, and buttocks tucked slightly to aid in straightening the spine, and elbows sunken to protect the flanks.



## *UECHI-RYU* FIGHTING STANCE

The fighting posture of *Uechi-Ryu* is a modified *Sanchin-dachi*. It is the same in all respects save one, the orientation of the fighter to his opponent is that of a slight oblique angle. This posture allows the full use of the fighter's attributes (e.g., all four extremities may be deployed). Additionally, at close range it permits the use of elbows, knees, and head butts, egress to evasive *ashi sabaki* (footwork), and facilitates the fighters' protection of sites of physiological vulnerability, such as the groin and medial aspect of the thigh and leg.

## KIBA-DACHI (HORSE STANCE]

Practitioners of arm conditioning exercises may readily employ the horse stance familiar to most martial artists.

## **BODY CONDITIONING**

### **SANCHIN SHIME**

[3] – [10]

The practice of *Sanchin* and body conditioning prove inexorably entwined and remain the heart and soul of *Uechi-Ryu*, *Goju-Ryu*, *Isshin-Ryu* and other traditional Okinawan martial arts systems. Proponents of these styles contend that there is no karate without *Sanchin* and there is no *Sanchin* without proper body conditioning. The practice of *Sanchin* promotes superior stability, mobility, economic movement, and explosive generation of power through efficient structural alignment of bones, tendons, and muscles. Such practice also provides the prototype of all movements of deflection. Additionally, correct structure and *Sanchin shime* (testing) trains practitioners to properly accept, absorb and redirect the inevitable blows of real fighting. The root of all conditioning is found in *Sanchin shime* .

*Sanchin shime* also educates the practitioner in *mushin* (“no-mind”). The development of *mushin* intrinsically supports the application of martial arts to real-life combat scenarios. *Shime* provides practitioners the opportunity to discipline the mind so that it may remain calm in the midst of furious action. Sadly, this aspect of martial arts training is often given short shrift in the quest for belt ranking, medals, and trophies. Each successive stage in martial arts training forms a link to a warrior's mind-set. Without the development of *mushin*,

practitioners will likely be unable to progress successively to advanced levels of training. Without a foundation in *mushin*, concepts such as *shibumi* (poise) and *maii* (distancing) may be forever lost to the trainee.

Through *Sanchin shime*, the instructor systematically assesses the structure and stability of the karate-ka's posture. The testing procedure can be gentle or extremely intense. An experienced examiner can derive all the information necessary to diagnose the status of the karate-ka's *Sanchin* through a few superficial pokes and prods. The procedure when performed with a senior student can also be extremely intense and frightening to an inexperienced observer. The student may be assailed with a barrage of punches, slaps, and kicks during the performance of his *Sanchin*. *Shime* must be done at a level commensurate with the level of experience, focus, and conditioning of the student. Instructors must be sensitive to variations in a practitioner's general level of health and vigor as these variables may change from day to day or even within a single training episode. Just as the over-enthusiastic and misguided conditioning practices condemned previously threaten serious harm, *shime* does not represent the student's willingness to withstand the sadistic punishment of the teacher. The student is not a "human makiwara," *Sanchin* testing is not a "discipline exercise" in corporal punishment, and the process should not demonstrate "how tough" the teacher's dojo is. Instead, a comprehensive *shime* will assess the student's ability to maintain focused concentration and mastery over the degree of tension and relaxation demanded of the various agonist and antagonistic muscle groups in each aspect of the posture.

*Uechi-ryu Sanchin shime* is normally initiated by assessing the status of the Uechi-ka's upper extremities and shoulder girdle. The opening posture achieved by Uechi-ka requires that after the initial bow, they draw the hands alongside hips with both wrists performing a small semi-circular movement. Palms should face each other during this movement with thumbs tucked alongside the heel of the hands as in a *nukite*, or "spear-hand." Hands should come to rest just alongside the hips. Uechi-ka then enter into either a left or right *Sanchin* stance as described previously. At the conclusion of the opening step, the Uechi-ka performs a double fingertip strike to the lower gate with palms facing each other. At the conclusion of the strike Uechi-ka clench the straight hands into fists, supinate their forearms as they flex their elbows. Uechi-ka utilize dynamic tension during this move, and the feeling is that of lifting a heavy object. Uechi-ka keep elbows close to the body with just a

roll of the elbows inward to assist in the rising of the arms to proper position. When clenched hands reach shoulder height and elbows are 1-1.5 inches -roughly one fist's distance away - from the midsection, Uechi-ka open their hands into a *nukite* (*spear hand*) with thumbs tucked to palms and fingers held tight against each other with wrists straight and fingers pointing at a slight upward angle and tightened.

The instructor first applies simple pressure to the *nukite* [3.] then strikes the fingertips with his palms. The instructor seeks to “feel the floor” when pressing down upon the student’s fingers. This “feel the floor” concept results from the proper stability of the entire *Sanchin* posture. Any “break” in focus, such as a lax elbow or improper posture results in structural collapse at that point. Counteraction of the finger flexors and extensors, with the thumb actively pulling towards the heel, stabilizes the palm and fingers in a proper *nukite*. The student stabilizes wrists and elbows by balancing the relevant flexor and extensors. Once the student achieves proper arm, hand, shoulder and trunk structure, the instructor should find that the student’s hands feel as though they are attached to a pliable yet enormously strong structure.



The instructor tests the stability of the shoulder girdle by stoutly striking the arms posed in *Sanchin kamae*. Should the shoulder girdle feel slack, the likely deficiency is insufficient tension in the latissimus dorsi rather than the deltoids. Beginners often interpret the focus of *Sanchin* as an “all or nothing” choice. As an exercise, *shime* teaches proper focus at the point of initiation and completion. In order to move and strike, the student must learn when, where, and to what degree to relax. The shoulders, for example, require relative relaxation to serve as hinges upon which a powerful strike may pivot to completion and *kime* (focus).



The instructor tests the abdominal and pectoralis major muscles to assess the student's structural integrity and balance [4]. As with all of the strikes discussed, these assist the practitioner in developing a conditioned or “iron” body and will. The instructor assesses and conditions the thigh muscles-- the rectus femorus and the quadriceps -- with a *mawashi geri* (round kick) [5]. The instructor similarly tests and conditions the muscles lateral to the shin, the peroneus group].



The instructor progresses in this systematic way particularly with beginners. *Shime* is not a game to “fool” the student or teach him to “guess” where the instructor will test him. With



completion of the test of the anterior portions of the student's body, the instructor continues with the posterior aspects. The instructor begins with the trapezius shoulder regions. The instructor may first palpate the trapezius or apply a measured strike to test the tone. The instructor tests the shoulders with an open hand slap. This conditions the shoulders as well as insures that the student does not raise his shoulders in anticipation of testing. When the shoulders are slapped, the hands should have the same feeling as is derived from slapping a properly inflated basketball. If a ball does not have the proper inflation, the hands will "sink" into it. [6] & [7]



The latissimus dorsi pull down and stabilize the shoulder girdle. The instructor checks the latissimus dorsi with three measured *seiken tzuki* (closed fist) strikes. [8]

Depending on the level of the student, the instructor may test the gastrocnemius (main upper calf muscle) will either gentle pressure or a *sokuto geri* (snap sidekick). [9]

Finally, the gluteal area and the external oblique muscles should be prodded to assure that the hips and waist are appropriately tensed to facilitate the pelvis tuck necessary to stabilize the spine and consolidate the posture. [10]

### **IRON BODY CONDITIONING DRILLS**

The authors have drawn primarily from their experience in *Uechi-Ryu* in presenting these drills. Where experienced or known, drills from other systems have been described. We wish to specifically acknowledge Goju-Ryu Sensei Steven Wilson and Uechi-Ryu Sensei Rick Wilson for their contributions. The authors encourage readers to share their knowledge of conditioning drills with either Sensei Dave Elkins at [shugyo@rosenet.net](mailto:shugyo@rosenet.net) or Sensei Michael DeDonato at [mgdcgb@speakeeasy.net](mailto:mgdcgb@speakeeasy.net)

### ***EN GUARDE -- THE TIGER KAMAE***

[11] – [12]

Critical to effective attack and defense a classic *Uechi-Ryu* hand position is often employed during the following drills. The reader would do well to harken back to Kanbun Uechi Sensei's admonition, "*All is in Sanchin.*" To elaborate, relative to the structure of the upper extremities in the fighting posture, the elbows are "sunken" approximately one inch from the floating ribs, the forearms are angled out slightly and the hands posed in a classic tiger claw mold. Both hands are turned outwards,



thumbs tucked in against the heel of the hand, fingers tightly held against each other and slightly clenched. The tips of the fingers should not extend past the flat of the palm. To accomplish this, the karate-ka must keep the second knuckle of each finger only slightly bent and should focus wrist and forearm muscles to a point of rigidity.

One obvious utility of the tiger *kamae* is that of promoting great tendon strength in the hands (particularly the thumb), wrists, and forearms. The concentrated focus of the tiger *kamae* contributes significantly to the development of one of the primary weapons of Uechi-Ryu, the *bushiken* (coiled thumb structure.) The tiger *kamae* described above is a training medium, not necessarily a structure to be employed when the karate-ka is engaged in real fighting. The hand, wrist, and forearm tension inherent in the *kamae* is necessary to achieve strengthening, however, totally undesirable from the perspective of the relaxation needed to launch lightning fast attacks or deflections with the upper extremities. A maxim of *Uechi-Ryu* is "*fast hands and a glare in the eyes.*" This ideal would be incapable of realization if the karate-ka's hands were frozen in a tense *kamae*.



The actual fighting structure of the hands of a *Uechi* practitioner is similar to that described, however, tension is conspicuously absent. The practitioner has the option of "packing" (clenching) the fingers. The primary advantage of packing the fingers is reducing the probability of injury to the digits. Advanced practitioners will frequently eschew the clenched structure [11] to gain additional relaxation allowing faster strikes, deflections, and clawing/ripping movements. [12]

All *Naha-te* systems utilize a form of *wa-uke* (circle block) as a primary defensive measure. The hand and wrist strength developed by *Uechi-ka*, *Goju-ka*, *Isshin-ka* and similar styles is utilized at the conclusion of the *wa-uke* block to grab the opponent and pull him into a striking technique or drag him to the ground. Such defensive techniques require a rooted structure at the appropriate moment.

### ***KOTE-KITEI (ARM CONDITIONING)***

#### **ARM RUBBING**

##### Variation 1 (*Uechi-Ryu*)

Traditional *Uechi-Ryu* arm rubbing promotes correct posture, balance, stability, and foundation. As a basic exercise it prepares the arm for conditioning. Practitioners may develop it along the lines of classic gong-fu “*sensing jin*” or *chi sau* (“sticky-hands”) exercises.

In a typical *Uechi-Ryu* class, this exercise serves to warm up the forearm, deltoid, latissimus and trapezius muscles. In a practical sense, this exercise promotes muscle and tendon strength through a reciprocal exchange of forward energy. It requires no equipment other than one's own sense of sociability and willingness to provide mutual and respectful feedback to their partner.



Both partners assume right *Sanchin dachi*. Beginners place their left arm in chambered position, while the more experienced maintain an elbow level guard position as described previously. Partners position right arms along side each other with their right wrists touching. The right arms remain in classic *Sanchin* position, with the elbows approximately one fist's distance from the rib cage. As in *Sanchin*, the right arms are angled slightly lateral. Partners position hands in either a *nukite* or *seiken* (closed fist) with palm supine. The *nukite* fingertips or *seiken* knuckles should, ideally, be at shoulder height. [13]



Partners slowly push their arms out against one another, pronating their forearms. Each should imagine delivering a slow punch with resistance against their partner's slow punch. Partners should extend their slow punches past each other's ears. Practitioners stabilize their shoulders by maintaining tension in their latissimus dorsi. At completion of thrust, partners' fists or spear hands will face palm down, or prone. Partners retract arms by reversing the thrust. [14]

This reversal is the same as in *Sanchin*. The forearms and hands follow the elbow back into the *Sanchin* position and supinate. This action returns the arms to the beginning position. [13] Partners repeat this drill from twenty to thirty times, switch stances and start again with their left arms.

During the return, practitioners should not lean on their partners' arms. They must also avoid a strength competition. All of these exercises involve a mutual desire to develop each partner's fullest potential. The authors stress that such competitiveness has no role in any traditional martial arts training.

Advanced practitioners seek to de-emphasize their arm movement in this drill. Rather than focus upon moving the arm, the advanced student will generate movement in the arm from the body's core or *dan tien*. The ability to generate explosive movement from the abdomen is the nucleus of short-range power.

As trainees become proficient with the basic arm rubbing drill, they may improvise by adding footwork. At more advanced levels, practitioners may exploit perceived weaknesses in their partners' structure by trapping and attacking spontaneously or utilizing various seizing and grappling maneuvers. This game is similar to the push hands of *Taiji*. Again, these become exercises to learn, exploit, and correct weaknesses, not establish juvenile dominance.

#### Variation 2 (Goju-ryu)

Partners face each other with right feet forward. They place extended right hands palm to palm against each other's chambered left hand. Each push with their rear left hand against resistance from his partner's extended right hand. Partners repeat this pressure until both are taxed.

#### *ARM POUNDING*

#### Variation 1 (Uechi-Ryu)

[15.A] – [15.D]

For purposes of description, partners will be referred to as P-A (partner A) and P-B (partner B).



- i. P-A is in left *Sanchin-dachi*, P-B is in right *Sanchin-dachi* P-A steps through into right *Sanchin-dachi* and executes right middle punch to P-B's chest. [15.A]
- ii. P-B steps back into left *Sanchin-dachi* and executes a left inside to outside middle block with forearm. [15.A]
- iii. P-B follows through with a right outside *wa-uke* (circle) block bring P-A's right arm down and finishing with right hand grab of P-A's right wrist. [15.B]
- iv. P-B then executes a *tetsui* (left hammer strike) to P-A's outside forearm. [15.C]
- v. After striking, P-B releases control of P-A's arm, and steps into right *Sanchin-dachi* executing a right middle punch to P-A's chest.



- vi. P-A steps back into left stance, executes a left inside block to P-B's inside right forearm, performs a right outside *wake* block finishing with right hand grab of P-B's right wrist and executes a *tetsui* to P-B's outside forearm.



Partners exchange a number of times and then switch stances and perform the techniques with opposite arms. Note that this drill stresses movement, deflection, and striking with rooted power. Although the final *tetsui* strike is a convention of this drill, it is by no means the only possible weapon. Practitioners may use the *shuto* (knife hand), iron palm slap, or the smash with the ulnar aspect of their forearm.

The authors re-stress the intent of these and all conditioning exercises is to build-up rather than destroy or injure. Striking the same spot will either injure the region or result in pain that limits practice. Practitioners should imagine dividing the limb into regions. One can divide the dorsal forearm, for example, into the region encompassing the bulk of the extensor muscles just distal to the elbow, the region between that and the wrist, and the wrist. With each repetition, practitioners should target a different region. Furthermore, the striker needs to grade his strike with consideration of the target. The wrist, for example, cannot accept the same intensity as the more heavily muscled proximal forearm. Similar considerations exist for the lower extremities and all other regions.



### *THREE STAR SET (Hung Gar, Choi Lai Fat, Naha-te systems)*

[16.A] – [16.C]

- i. P-A and P-B assume *kiba-dachi* facing each other.
- ii. Each clash forearms by performing a *gedan-barai* (low sweeping block) from outside to inside. The non-clashing upper extremity is posed in a chambered position or in middle guard. [16.A]
- iii. After completing the movement, each performs a *chudan* (middle) block pronating their hands to clash forearms once again. [16.B]
- iv. A low outside to inside *gedan barai* to again clash forearms follows this movement. [16.C]
- v. Partners perform the same set for their other arm.

It is important to clarify that the term "block" is used for ease of communication. Its use is not to suggest that practitioners view these movements as blocks. Quite the contrary! Practitioners should view each movement in the curriculum as simply a





vector of energy that has the potential to manifest as a deflection, strike, grapple, or throw. The application of these blocks to iron body conditioning should ratify their utility as strikes. An adage heard in many dojos is “*All blocks are strikes and all strikes are blocks.*” One purpose of conditioning arms and legs is to develop the ability to block a strike with the confidence that such blocks would disable an attacker’s limb.

### *FIVE STAR SET (Wing Chun)*

Same as three star set with partners continuing to complete set by extracting arms, pretending to “wipe” the sweat off their brows by bring their hands to their foreheads with palms out to a point where hand is held vertical at ear height followed by inward *shuto* (chop) to clash against each other’s inside forearm. After clash partners would roll wrist inward to point where fingers are pointing to self and then rotate wrist to that external forearms clash against each other.

### Goju-ryu variation

P-A and P-B are in left stance with right arms crossed at chest level. Each performs an outside to outside *chudan yoko uke*, then simultaneously executes *gedan barai* to clash arms, as described above in three star set, followed by simultaneous *ude-uke*, inside forearm strike by swinging almost straight arm together on the inside, continuing to the outside with *chudan yoko-uke*, while shouting “*Kiai!*” Partners then switch arms and repeat routine with first strike as *ude-uke*, followed by *chudan-uke* level (inside to inside), *gedan-barai*, *ude-uke* with arms in downward position striking inside of forearm bone, *chudan yoko-uke*, striking outside to outside. Partners switch arms and start again.

### *FAST SET*

- i. P-A and P-B encounter each other in a neutral or same side forward *Sanchin-dachi*.
- ii. Both perform a right chest high outside to inside middle block clashing arms by supinating their hands. Elbows stay down and close to position.
- iii. Clash the left arm with same block.
- iv. Immediately both perform a clashing low sweeping right block and then repeat that movement using the left arm.
- v. The pattern is then repeated by engaging the right arm for another chest area block -- the left arm for a chest area

block -- the right low sweeping block and the left low sweeping block.

- vi. Participants should aspire to perform this drill quickly with a continuous flow of energy.

### *Wa-Uke Challenge*

[17.A] – [17.C]

- i. Partners assume right *Sanchin-dachi* with right wrists touching in classic *Uechi tiger kamae* (*en garde* position). [17.A]
- ii. P-A performs an inside to outside *mawashi uke* (circular down block). [17.B]
- iii. P-B employs resistance against this movement.
- iv. This sequence should be performed slowly and with reciprocal forward, spiraling energy.
- v. P-B then performs the movement and P-A provides resistance. [17.C]
- vi. Partners switch stances and repeat



### FOREARM BLOCKS

Forearm Drill: P-A receiver protects his head with upraised forearms. P-B swings both a left and a right inside forearm strikes at P-A's head. P-A blocks these with their outer forearms



### KICKING VARIATION 1

- i. P-A and P-B face one another in left *Sanchin-dachi*.
- ii. P-A executes a high right round kick.
- iii. P-B defends by deflecting the shin of P-A with an inside to outside left circle block. The movement involved in this deflection is a small circle rotation from inside to out.
- iv. P-B reciprocates and partners reverse stance and repeat the drill.

This variation also provides a degree of shin and/or instep conditioning.

### KICKING VARIATION 2

- i. P-A stands in left *Sanchin-dachi* with the left arm fully extended but not locked in place. The arm remains slightly flexed in the service of reducing vulnerability to elbow

- hyperextension. The left-hand forms closed fist. It is irrelevant as to which of the four aspects of the forearm is exposed, as ultimately they will all be conditioned.
- ii. P-B stands perpendicular to P-A's outstretched arm and strikes P-A's forearm with a rising in-step or shin kick
  - iii. After striking for the agreed upon number of repetitions, P-A turns his/her arm exposing the next quadrant of the forearm.
  - iv. The drill continues until P-B has kicked all four aspects of P-A's outstretched arm. At this time the participants may change roles or P-A may reverse his/her lead leg and condition the right arm.

### ASHI-KITEI (*Leg Conditioning*)

#### VARIATION 1

- i. Both partners assume a left *Sanchin-dachi* or other forward facing stance.
- ii. P-A executes a right *mawashi geri* (rear round kick) to outside of P-B's left thigh.
- iii. P-B returns the same kick to the outside of P-A front thigh.
- iv. P-A kicks the outside of P-B's front leg (calf) with the rear round kick, and P-B reciprocates.
- v. P-A executes *shomen-geri* to P-B's thigh of front leg. This kick can be performed with either in-step, shin, or in the case of advanced practitioners who can both kick with greater focus and accept a kick to this vulnerable area – toes (*sokusen*).
- vi. P-B reciprocates.
- vii. P-A executes a lead leg round kick to the inside of P-B's lead leg (i.e., calf).
- viii. P-B reciprocates.

This drill could also be performed as one complete set by each partner (e.g., P-A would execute all of the kicks and then P-B would follow suit). Partners would then switch stances and repeat.

#### VARIATION 2

- i. P-A & P-B pose in left *Uechi-ryu* sparring stance or other forward facing sparring stance.
- ii. P-A executes a right reverse round kick to outside of P-B's front thigh and then steps into right *Zenkutsu-dachi* (leaning stance), simultaneously striking P-B's right shoulder.

- iii. P-A then grabs P-B's *karategi* (uniform) with the right hand and then follows through with left punch to the torso.
- iv. After completion of this set, P-A returns to starting position and P-B completes the set.

### VARIATION 3

- i. Both partners assume a left stance.
- ii. P-A executes a *sokosen shomen geri* (snap front toe kick) to the frontal thigh of P-B.
- iii. P-B reciprocates.

### Traveling Exercise

- i. Both partners assume a left *Sanchin-dachi* or other forward facing stance.
- ii. P-A executes a right rear round kick to the forward outside leg (calf) of P-B and then steps back into the starting position.
- iii. P-A then steps forward using an advancing footwork and uses the left foot to kick P-B's rear leg.
- iv. P-B then steps back and P-A delivers a left round kick to P-B's right outer thigh.
- v. P-B retreats again and P-A advances delivering a right round kick to P-B's right outer thigh.
- vi. P-B then steps back again raising the left arm enough for P-A to perform a right round kick to the latissimus area.
- vii. P-B then steps back and P-A advances and performs a left round kick to the latissimus area.
- viii. Finally, after retreating once again, P-B remains in *dachi* and accepts two punches to the abdominal area.

This drill encourages a quick tempo that assists in consolidating movement, terminal postures, and of course, developing the capacity to hit hard and accept incoming blows - the iron body of Uechi-Ryu Karate.

### VARIATION 4 (Goju-ryu)

P-A executes a right *mae geri* (sidekick) to middle gate. P-B traps P-A's extended leg followed by a *ude-uchi* (inside forearm strike) to P-A's inside of calf. P-B then executes *gedan barai* (low block) to P-A's outside calf area and strikes down on P-A's shin with *tettsui*.

## *LATISSIMUS DORSI*

The reader may wonder, “why condition the latissimus?” Intuition would not suggest that this large and relatively well-protected muscle serve as a target for assault. The reason for drills involving the latissimus is found in *Sanchin-shime* where the latissimus is struck. Striking the latissimus is done for body conditioning, and, more importantly, to test its engagement and tone.

The latissimus extends, adducts, and medially rotates the arm. It functions as a prime mover and a stabilizer for the smaller muscles of the shoulders and arms. From this perspective the latissimus proves central to the structure of *Sanchin-dachi* and plays a key role in any striking, deflecting, grappling, or throwing movement. Therefore, the latissimus is tested in recognition of the importance it plays in most karate movements. Finally, any rotary powered kick, such as a *mawashi-geri* or reverse *mawashi-geri*, which penetrates the defender’s middle gate defenses will likely strike the latissimus. We also condition the latissimus area for that very practical reason.

### VARIATION 1

- i. Both partners assume a right *Sanchin-dachi* or other forward facing stance.
- ii. P-A executes a left round kick to P-B's latissimus.
- iii. P-B reciprocates.
- iv. Partners endeavor to strike the entire length of the latissimus. The ribs are often struck in the performance of this drill. Appropriate care is taken to reduce the intensity of the blow when the ribs are struck. A bruised or broken rib or damaged intercostal nerve is slow to heal and can, at the very least, diminish the trainee's enthusiasm for their practice during the period of recovery.
- v. Partners then reverse stance and repeat the drill.

### VARIATION 2

- i. Partners face each other in left *Sanchin-dachi* or other forward stance. P-A places his/her hands in a high guard exposing their flank.
- ii. P-B uses *tenshin* (moving footwork) to enter obliquely to P-A's right side and strikes the full length of P-A's latissimus with his fist or palm heel.

iii. Switch sides and repeat.

### VARIATION 3

- i. P-A and P-B face each other in left *Sanchin-dachi*.
- ii. Both partners hold their hands in a high guard opening their middle gates.
- iii. P-A executes *shuto* to P-B's latissimus.
- iv. P-B reciprocates.
- v. Partners switch hands and repeat *shuto* strikes to other side of body.
- vi. Strikes are performed to the entire length of the flanks (care is taken to avoid injuring the ribs).

### *SANCHIN-KITEI*

The importance of *Sanchin-kitei* is such that without the ability to withstand blows to the body, a practitioner will likely be unable to withstand a determined and vicious assault. The authors believe that the ability to deliver and withstand hard knocks lies at the very essence of traditional Okinawan karate. It is irrational for martial artists to expect that they will be able to withstand and evade determined aggressors without having engaged in realistic physical engagements. In the authors' experience, the advantage in unarmed combat given to hardened and well-conditioned practitioners has, and will continue to, prove itself in real life and death struggles.

### ABDOMINALS

The paired rectus abdominus muscles and the laterally placed obliques, maintain the abdominal contents. Laxity of these muscles not only results in protrusion of the abdomen but force greater extension of the spine to maintain balance. This condition compromises posture and renders the proper use of body mechanics all the more difficult. *Karateka* are strongly urged to strengthen the entire abdominal musculature in addition to whatever degree of involvement in conditioning they choose.

### VARIATION 1

- i. P-A & P-B face one another in a left sparring stance.
- ii. P-A performs a scissors step (shuffle step) following through with right reverse punch to P-B's abdominal area.
- iii. P-B follows suit.
- iv. Partners switch stance and repeat the set.



### VARIATION 2

- i. P-A and P-B face the same direction -- side by side -- in a slightly angled reference so that their abdominals describe an approximately 45 degree angle.
- ii. P-A performs an iron palm slap to P-B's obliques using either the back of the hand or the outside of the forearm.
- iii. P-B follows suit.
- iv. Partners switch sides and repeat.
- v. An additional partner on the other side of the center player makes for interesting combinations of drills such as simultaneous strikes, chain strikes, double strikes, etc.[19]  
[19]



### VARIATION 3

- i. P-A poses in right *Sanchin-dachi*.
- ii. P-B stands at a 90-degree angle to P-A and executes right round kicks to P-A's torso.
- iii. Partners switch sides and repeat.

### VARIATION 4

- i. P-A and P-B stand in left *Sanchin-dachi*.
- ii. P-A executes a right *shomen geri* (snap front kick) with the *sokusen* (big toe kick) to P-B's abdominal area.
- iii. P-B accepts the kick and steps back into right *Sanchin-dachi*.
- iv. P-A completes kick by stepping into right *Sanchin-dachi*.
- v. P-B executes a left *shomen geri* with the *sokusen* to P-A's abdominal area.
- vi. P-A accepts the kick and then steps back into *left Sanchin-dachi*.
- vii. Partners continue to exchange kicks using an advancing and retreating footwork pattern.

### *IRI KUMI, full contact kumite (Goju-ryu)*

The following drill provides for a gradual build-up of intensity. It is specially designed to test the participants' spirit, mental and emotional control, conditioning level and ability to effectively defend against a skilled opponent. All reasonable and prudent measures should be undertaken to ensure safety for both participants.

- i. Partners face each other in natural *jiyu kumite* (sparring) stance, as described previously.
- ii. One partner hits the other one to the body with a hard, slow, heavy feeling.
- iii. Partner returns favor by hitting partner back with a hard, slow, heavy punch or kick.
- iv. This exchange continues, slowly, until both partners find an acceptable level of contact. The chest, stomach, thighs, arms, and calves are targets.
- v. Partners put on headgear with face guard.
- vi. Free fight including open hand and punching to the face guard with medium power and above agreed upon hard contact to the body and legs. Grabbing, throwing, sweeping, leg whipping, and knee strike are all allowed.
- vii. Fight for two minutes continuously.

### OTHER VARIATIONS

The following multiple partner drills address several learning needs. Many practitioners find that it is difficult to find time to train *kihon* (basics) incorporating balance, targeting, power, speed and form while conditioning. The following drills facilitate all of these practice elements.

The drills are performed with either three people in a triangle or four people in a square. These configurations allow observation of partners' technique and provide an opportunity for constructive feedback.

All of the following drills start in left *Sanchin-dachi* for clockwise flow and right *Sanchin-dachi* for counterclockwise flow. This allows each player an opportunity to condition the two adjacent persons who have provided him with conditioning. When performing these conditioning sets, all involved are keenly aware that reciprocity is guaranteed. The series of kicks are done for five repetitions on each side. All but one set is delivered to the front leg.

This drill requires three participants.

- i. P-A and P-B face each other left *Sanchin-dachi*.
- ii. The third participant stands is behind one of the players (this person becomes the "middle-man") in right *Sanchin-dachi*.
- iii. P-A performs a rear mawashi geri (round kick) to P-B's lead left leg.
- iv. P-B then does a turn to the rear, which references him/her



- frontally to the third participant.
- v. The third participant unleashes a left (rear leg) *mawashi-geri* to P-B's right lead leg before he/she has fully terminated the movement of their turn.
  - vi. P-B then performs another turn and is kicked by P-A's rear leg round kick
  - vii. P-B continues to turn and accept kicks from the other two participants until the agreed upon number of repetitions are completed. The outside participants performing the kicks will vary their strikes between the leg and thigh/inside and outside gates. This one requires some practice (as well as fortitude.) It is excellent for enhancing movement, focus, and once again development of great striking power and the conditioning effect.

The following drills developed by Uechi-Ryu Sensei Rick Wilson, introduce an element of flow into the conditioning process. They also require multiple players.

- i. Rear Leg Front kick:  
P-A executes *shomen-geri* (front kick) middle gate or slightly lower P-B raises their front leg into *Tsuro No Kamae* (crane block) P-A executes a delivers the kick to the shin and then to P-B's thigh, followed by kick to P-B's abdominal area. *Uechi-ka* would most likely utilize *sokusen* for the delivery.
- ii. Rear Leg Roundhouse kick:  
P-A executes rear *mawashi-geri* to lower gate of P-B. P-B blocks via kick with front leg by assuming *Tsuro No Kamae* (crane) posture. Turning the shin out to contact shin to shin is an option for the well conditioned. P\_A executes *shomen geri* to P-B's thigh. P\_B then raises their arm so that they can be kicked in the ribs. Care should be taken to avoid injury. Targeting should be either the latissimus dorsi, which wraps around the ribs or the pectoris. The fourth kick, the only drill with four kicks, is thrown at the head. P-B can either challenge it with their forearm or practice a dead arm block that absorbs the power.
- iii. Rear Leg Side Kicks:  
P-A executes *mawashi geri*, which is blocked by P-B by assuming *Tsuro No Kamae*. The kick is delivered directly on the shin. P-A executes *sokusen* to P-B's thigh and them follows with a *shomen geri* or *sokusen* to P-B's

abdominal area.

iv. Lead Leg Roundhouse Kick:

P-A executes low *mawashi geri* to inside of P-B's shin of front foot. P-A should strike with instep. P-A follows with instep kick to inside of P-B's thigh and P-A executes a *shomen geri* to P-B's abdominal area. We recommend turning the body towards the kick slightly, so that the kick comes up into the stomach and not the floating rib.

v. Combination:

P-A executes a *mawashi geri* to P-B's thigh, P-A should not chamber back to original position with rear leg but should, instead, place it down close to the P-B. P-A subsequently follows with a short front kick delivered with the heel to the inside thigh of the receiver's rear leg. The toes are angled out on this kick to maximize its potential to connect. The last kick is a front leg sidekick to the receiver's stomach.

vi. Extra Body conditioning:

vii. This drill begins with a left kick; reverse for the second set in the opposite direction. P-A kicks the P-B's outer thigh. After the kick, P-A plants his foot close to the receiver in a right stance. Using momentum from the kick, P-A delivers a left downward strike to the P-B's solar plexus. By pivoting from the right stance into a left P-A uses mass to deliver a right uppercut into the left side of the P-B's abdominal area. P-A then pivots back into a right to deliver a left upper cut into the right side of P-B's abdominal area. P-A pivots once again to deliver a downward right hand strike to P-B's upper chest. P-A pivots one final time to deliver a downward left-hand strike to the other side of P-B's upper chest, going lighter when striking over the heart.

viii. An additional variation in non-stop conditioning features the receiver striking the deliverer's body after every strike except for the stomach front kick, all side kicks, and the last body conditioning hand strikes. This variation conditions and provides an opportunity to coordinate breathing with movement, as the action is fast and furious.

## SOLO CONDITIONING

Aside from constant practice of the tiger *kamae*, Uechi-Ryu adherents develop wrist and hand strength via supplementary exercises such as finger tip pushups and regular practice with classic Okinawan training equipment such as *kan* (weighted



jars) otherwise known as *nigiri game* (stone filled jars) [20], *chishi* (Okinawan stone tipped lever), *Ishi Sashi* (stone padlocks) and the training stones of *Uechi-Ryu*. The *Uechi* stones are little known training devices of Uechi Kanbun Sensei's teacher, Chou Tzu Ho Sifu. They are a matched pair of rectangular stones weighing between 50 and 250 lb. in which recesses have been chiseled to allow access to the extended fingers. The stones are then lifted and carried with extended arms through the pattern of *Sanchin* kata .

*Uechi-ka*, *Goju-ka*, *Isshin-ka* and the like, are notorious for the creativity and resourcefulness they demonstrate in finding, fabricating, or improvising implements with which to further advance their body conditioning. Most *Uechi* or *Goju* dojos feature a wall or corner in which an array of these devices may be found. The following list of solo training implements, while extensive, is by no means comprehensive:

#### ITEMS USED TO STRIKE SELF



- Tree branches; axe/hoe/pick/and hammer wooden handles (these are frequently wrapped with cotton rope near one end to provide varied striking surface) [21]
- bowling pins
- wooden mauls of all sizes and weights, hard and soft rubber mallets
- hammers ranging to three pounds in weight
- proprietary devices such as the "Iron Arm"
- baseball bats
- clubs and truncheons
- a roller bar fabricated from cast iron pipe and filled with lead shot
- small canvas sacks filled with sand, gravel, or ball bearings and
- canes

Frequently, the presence of these implements in the dojo is a source of astonishment to the uninitiated. In all candor, styles such as *Uechi*, *Goju*, and *Isshin-Ryu*, enjoy using their conditioning implements as not only a tool of *shugyo* (austere training) but also as a source of humor. One of the authors' dojo contains two wooden hammers that are presented to students at auspicious moments. The first of these is a percussion instrument mallet that weighs 2.5 ozs. with a head approximately 3x1&1/8". The second, a rare carnival sledge, weighs in at 15 lbs. and has a head that is 10x8". The first tool is provided for the "conditioning challenged". The utility of the

second tool is its capacity to provide a humorous reminder of the legendary Icarus to students who believe they can fly before they are capable of walking.

These implements are used somewhat interchangeably largely as a function of their relative size and what body part is being conditioned. The sectors of the body to be conditioned are generally the following: four aspects of the forearm; the flanks and abdominal areas; the two frontal and inner aspects of the thigh; the outside aspect of the leg; the frontal and inner surface of the shin; and the instep. Ambitious trainees or those who are preparing for knockdown fighting also condition the back of the thighs and calves to temper those areas to kicks and sweeps.

The bowling pin is considered non-pareil for the forearms. Likewise, it is also used for the trunk and lower extremity training. However, its short length renders it less desirable for those areas. Its construction - wood with plastic coating - makes it a quite useful conditioning tool. Rope covered tool handles are frequently used for the forearms as is the "Iron Arm" tool.

The weighted roller bar - a three foot section of cast iron tubing, capped and filled approximately 3/4 capacity with lead shot - is rolled on the radial aspect of the forearms while standing in *Sanchin-dachi* trains the arms and also contributes to consolidation of the posture.

Trunk training may involve any of the previously mentioned tools as well as mallets and hammers of varying weights. A soft wooden mallet is good to begin training while some advanced practitioners regularly employ a three-pound hammer in their torso conditioning. Again, the media employed is entirely a function of the practitioner's level of conditioning.

The thighs and legs are usually conditioned with longer implements simply for convenience. This is helpful especially for older trainees and those with chronic lumbar difficulties as it obviates the need to bend and twist the lumbar spine. The walking cane is an ideal conditioning tool for the lower extremities. The martial artist who regularly carries a cane will find it a uniquely convenient implement.

The instep is traditionally conditioned with a rubber mallet. The great toe may be conditioned with any of the aforementioned tools.

Body conditioning demands a disciplined regimen of training for desired results. Practitioners should begin their solo training with 5-10 light blows administered daily to each of the target areas described. As training progresses, the student should add light repetitions until they are at a substantially higher number of repetitions (i.e. 100). At that time, the trainee may decrease the number of repetitions and increase the intensity. A famous Okinawan master known for his iron body conditioning skill once replied to a question regarding the proper number of repetitions with, "Ten memorable blows." One of this master's "memorable blows" would have occasioned the discomfort of even a highly trained practitioner!

Inaccessibility or disinclination to utilize implements noted above does not preclude a determined martial artist from engaging in solo iron conditioning activities. One may choose to self-condition as follows:

Assume natural stance with feet shoulder width apart and swing arms loosely about one's body. The rear hand should slap very lightly at the flank area while the front hand should slap at the side of the abdominals. Moving down the body the practitioner may choose to slap him/herself simultaneously on the front of both thighs. As the thighs become conditioned the practitioner should clench fists and use both fists to beat his/her thighs, abdominal area and *tetsui* hammer strikes to each forearm. Additionally, using the inside of clenched fists, one may deliver blows to the back of his/her thighs and calves.

*Uechi* practitioners regularly condition the great toe. The *Uechi-Ryu sokosen* or toe kick is a true toe kick and requires proper conditioning. Senior *Uechi* practitioners have done *tameshiwari* with the *sokosen* breaking a stack of six, one-inch pine boards.

#### FORMING AND TRAINING THE UECHI-RYU SOKOSEN

- i. Kick downward into floor using the tip of toe.
- ii. Kick any convenient wall with tips of the toe.
- iii. Cut an old tire in half, form a strip of tread area on the top and bottom to facilitate fastening it (bolt or duct tape) to a wall, post, or *makiwara* -- kick it with the toe.
- iv. Strike the tip of the toe repeatedly with a piece of wood (the Iron Arm works very nicely for this drill).
- v. Find small trees and kick them (*Uechi Kanbun* and *Uechi Kanei O'sensei* were said to train their toe kicks in this manner)

- vi. Stand upright and use your toes to pull yourself across floor in the manner of a snail by flexing, gripping, and pulling
- vii. Assume a prone position, place your hands under your chin, and elevate your body using elbows and toes. Hold this position for increasing periods of time. In addition to strengthening the elbows and toes, this posture contributes to abdominal and shoulder girdle strength. Take care when performing this movement that lumbar spine is held as straight as possible and not allowed to "sag".

AND FINALLY-

#### Zygoma-maxillo-mandibular Conditioning

- i. P-A stands in a very focused stance, glare in the eyes
- ii. P-B stands in front of P-A, forms a *seiken tzuki* and .....  
Just kidding!

#### **IN THE IMMORTAL WORDS OF (KYOSHI) YONAMINE KOSUKE SENSEI:**

*"Condition arms, condition legs, and everywhere else!"*

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No text written about Uechi-Ryu Karate-do would be complete without appropriate deference to the father of American Uechi-Ryu, Sensei George Mattson, Nanadan (9<sup>th</sup> Degree).

Sensei Ahti Kaend has practiced and taught Uechi-Ryu for over 30 years. In 1998, he earned the rank of Hanshi-Hachidan (8<sup>th</sup> Degree) in Okinawa.

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