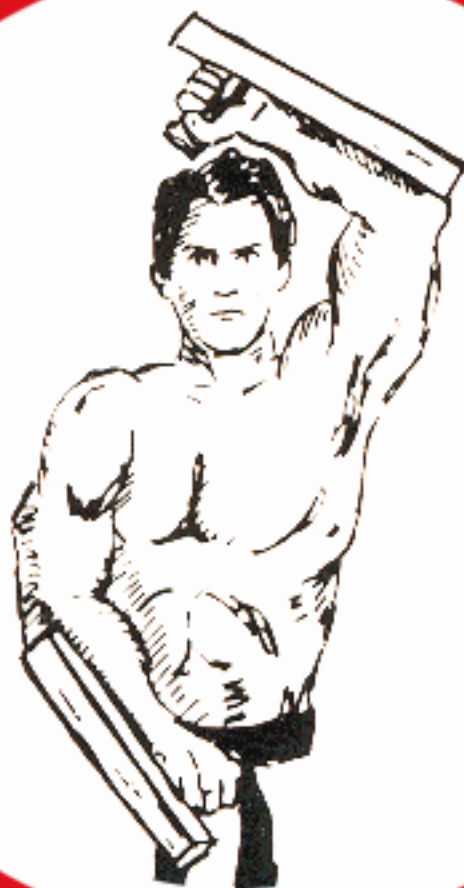


Mastering the Tonfa



Dr. Ted Gambordella



Introduction

I began my training in the martial arts over fourteen years ago in the little town of Alexandria, Louisiana. From the first I was interested in weapons, but I had great difficulty in finding any but a handful of people who knew anything about weapons. For many years I was only able to acquire little bits of weapons training from various teachers here and there. I tried to learn all that I could from books, but found that the number of books on weapons is almost as short in supply as the number of instructors with a knowledge of weapons. I also found that most of the books about weapons were written by the same man and were incomplete in their depth, for no books were available on the tonfa or the yawara, and only a few were available on the staff, the bo, and the knife. There seemed to be numerous books on the nunchaku, most poorly done, and a few books on the sai; but all in all the books available for the martial art student who was interested in weapons were few and far between.

So I decided to write my own books. I spent the last four years doing research and training with weapons, learning their use and applications. I was able to achieve a fourth degree black belt in weapons (kubojitsu), I had already written four other books and a movie script, "The Leopard," so I was familiar with what was necessary to write a good book. I wanted my book to have techniques that a beginner could learn, but that a teacher could also benefit from. I wanted to make the book easy to follow by avoiding any overuse of photos or confusing text. I wanted to include a basic practice Kata for each weapon, as well as techniques for the weapon's offensive and defensive use. Finally, I wanted to write a book that would serve as a manual on weapons for years to come—a book that a student or a teacher would be proud to own and would refer to whenever they had a question on weapons or wanted a new technique.

I feel that I have accomplished all of these goals in this book, The Complete Book of Karate Weapons. It is a book that I am proud of and one that you can be proud to have in your library. If you will read this book with an open mind and follow the techniques and exercises described herein, you can make yourself one of the few experts with weapons in the world today.

I could never have written this book without the help of many friends and fellow martial artists who appear with me in the instructional photos, both as technique partners and technical advisers. These men, some of the most outstanding black belts in the South, include: **Keith Yates:** fourth degree black belt. Winner of many kata championships and weapons kata championships at the top tournaments of the South. A master artist who also designed the cover of the book.

James Toney: fifth degree black belt. Teacher extraordinaire and tournament champion for many years. One of the most respected teachers in Texas.

continued...



Barry Guimbellot: third degree black belt. Probably the most successful teacher in Dallas, an outstanding example of character and leadership in karate.

Steve Weiss: second degree black belt. A modern jiu-jitsu expert who is also an expert in karate.

Ross Comerski: first degree black belt. A giant of a man and a giant of a teacher.

Finally, I must thank all of my teachers through my years of training for their help and knowledge, such great men as: Soke R. Sacharnoski, Soke A. Church, Soke K. Marx, Master HeYoung Kimm, Shihan B. Pearson, Dr. J. Marler, and Sensi B. Hathorn. These great men and excellent teachers gave the knowledge and training that enabled me to get to where I am today. I am forever grateful to them and their arts.

Last, let me take a moment to thank the most important force in my life, my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Who gives me the strength and ability necessary to write this book and to share my knowledge with my fellow martial artists.

Dedication To Keith Yates, Jim Toney, Barry Guimbellot, Steve Weiss, Russ Comerski, and Steve Rich, without whom this book would never have been written.

Photos by Steve Rich

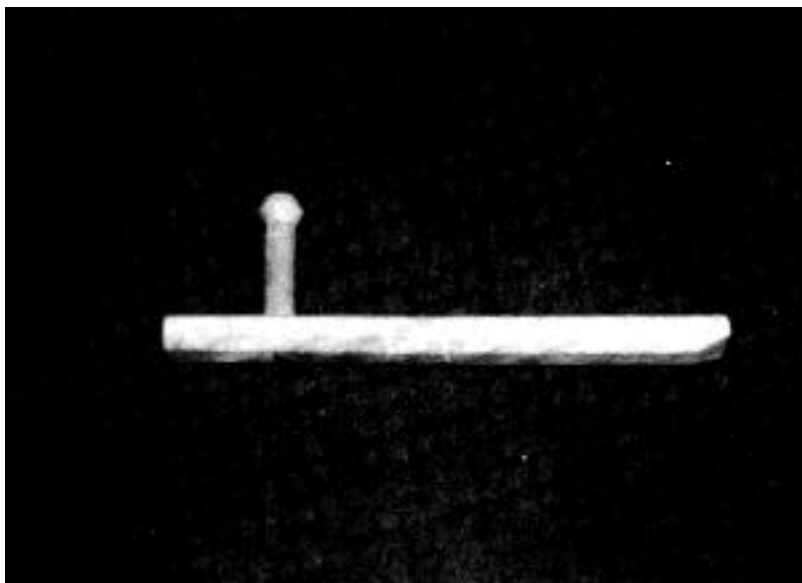


The Tonfa

The tonfa is often referred to as the "rice grinder" because that was the original purpose for which the stick was devised. The tonfa is still used today to grind rice in many parts of the world. It is composed of a hard piece of wood, usually white oak, and measures about seven- teen inches in length. The handle is approximately four and one-half inches, and the entire weapon weighs about one and one-half pounds. It can be used singly or doubly as a weapon both for self-defense and for attack.

The size and structure of the tonfa allow the user to combine speed and power together with his own agility and ability to become a dangerous fighting machine. Although it is extremely effective, it is difficult to master completely and so is often not taught to beginners. Its popularity has increased in the last few years, and because it is inexpensive and easy to maintain, I am certain that its popularity will continue to grow.

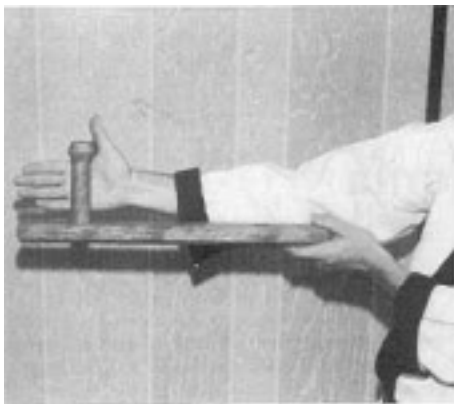
When practicing with the tonfa, one should take care to use as much control and focus as possible to generate the full power potential of the weapon. It takes practice to learn to swing and snap the weapon with force, but once mastered, the tonfa is a formidable weapon of defense.





Gripping the Tonfa

The tonfa should be gripped by the handle with a standard holding grip, and the length of the stick should extend down the forearm.



Steps: Take the tonfa and hold it down your forearm. Place the handle in the middle of your palm.



Close the grip around the tonfa, locking the thumb over the fingers and keeping the wrist straight so that the stick stays down the forearm.



Front view of the gripping.

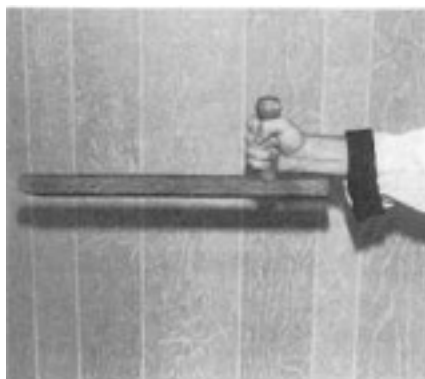


Flipping The Tonfa

The power of most strikes with the tonfa comes from flipping the sticks out and then smashing them into vital areas of the body. Thus, one should practice the flip until he masters it with both hands.



Now flip the wrist very hard to the right while you slightly loosen the grip to let the weapon turn in your palm.



When the stick is all the way out in front, tighten the grip and strike or block, then loosen.



Steps: Hold the tonfa in the right or left hand with the length extending down the forearm.

Then grip and flip the wrist again to the right, allowing the stick to return to the starting or holding position.



Blocks

The tonfa is quite effective when blocking and is simply used as an extension of the forearm when the standard karate blocks are performed.



The high block or rising block: raise the arm up quickly and forcefully in front of the face; be sure to keep the tonfa snug to the forearm.



The low block or groin block: snap the tonfa down across the groin.



The middle block: bring the tonfa across the body and snap it in front of the chest.

X block for groin: used to block a strong kick. Cross the tonfas in front of the groin.





Blocks



X block or rising X: used to block a strong shuto or weapon attack. Snap the tonfas up and cross them in front of the face.



Cat stance block: turn the left arm horizontally and snug the right arm to the body.



Side block: used to block a kick or punch. Snap the arm to the side, keeping the tonfa snug to the forearm.

Back block and strike: the tonfa is held and thrust to the back for a block and strike.





Striking Areas & Striking Positions



Double strike to sides of face:
both sticks are snapped into the
sides of the face.



Backward thrust: into the
abdomen or groin area.



Knee strike: snap the tonfa down
and smash the kneecap.



Groin smash: snap
the stick up into the groin.



Striking Areas & Striking Positions



Nose smash: use the heel of the tonfa and smash into the bridge of the nose.



Throat strike: swing the tonfa across the side of the neck.



Teeth smash: smash the handle of the tonfa into the teeth.



Face smash: use the heel of the tonfa to smash into the face and mouth area.

Techniques of Defense with the Tonfa



Prepare for the attack by holding the tonfa in both hands in a modified cat stance.



Block the punch with a rising block with the left tonfa...



...then counter with a throat thrust with the right tonfa.



Follow with a smash into the temples with the left tonfa...



...and finish with a smash of the right tonfa to the side of the face.



Techniques of Defense with the Tonfa



Ready for the attack; stand in a modified cat stance.



Block the strike with the left tonfa in a rising block.



Counter with a smash of the heel of the right tonfa into the attacker's stomach.



Follow with a heel smash of the left tonfa into the side of the jaw.



Finish with a flip and smash with the right tonfa into the teeth.

Techniques of Defense with the Tonfa



Ready for the attack with a cat stance.



Block the punch with a middle block across the body with the left tonfa.



Counter with a flip smash into the ribs with the right tonfa.

Finish with a smash with the left tonfa into the teeth and face, knocking the attacker to the ground...



... smashing the right tonfa across the side of the head.



Techniques of Defense with the Tonfa



Ready for the attack with a cat stance.

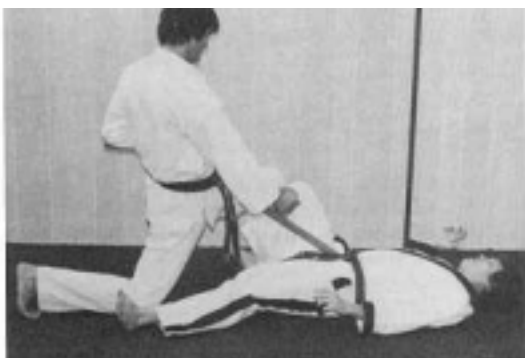


Block the snap kick to the groin with the tonfa in a groin block.



Counter with a smash with the heel of the right tonfa into the ribs and stomach.

Follow with a smash of the heel of the left tonfa into the throat, knocking your attacker to the ground.



Finish with a smash into the groin with the right tonfa.





Techniques of Defense with the Tonfa



Ready to block a kick attack.



Counter with a double smash with both tonfas into the eyes.



Block the snap kick with an X block in front of the groin.

Finish with a smash of the right tonfa into the side of the head.



Techniques of Defense with the Tonfa



Ready to block the roundhouse kick.



Block with a double middle block using both tonfas.



Counter with a flip smash with the right tonfa into the side of the head.

Grab the his gi with your right hand and lock your left leg behind his right and throw him to the ground.



Finish him with a smash with the right tonfa into the face.



Techniques of Defense with the Tonfa



Ready to block a side kick.



Smash the right tonfa down into the side of the leg, blocking the kick and causing your attacker to drop his kicking leg.



Counter with a flip smash with the left tonfa into the back of the head.

Techniques of Defense with the Tonfa



Ready to block the kick



Counter by spinning and thrusting the left tonfa into the stomach.



Block the roundhouse with the right tonfa against the shin, and use the left tonfa to block the punch.

Finish with a heel kick to the throat.



Using the Tonfa Against Other Weapons



Block an attack with the bo using the tonfas.



Block the overhead strike with an X rising block.



Counter by pushing the bo down with the left tonfa, and smash the right tonfa into the side of the head.

Finish by thrusting the heel of the left tonfa into the face and striking the back of the head with the right tonfa.



Defenses Against the Tonfa



Preparing to block the tonfas
by assuming a modified cat stance.



Block the strike of the left tonfa with
a pressing block with the right hand.



Counter and finish with a left
elbow smash into the throat.

Defenses Against the Tonfa



Preparing to block the tonfas
by assuming a modified cat stance.



Block the right tonfa with a
rising block with the left arm.



Block the left tonfa with a rising block
with the right arm.



Counter with a snap
kick to the groin.



Finish with a double shuto
to the collarbones.

Defenses Against the Tonfa



Preparing to block the tonfas.



Use a left crescent kick to strike the left tonfa and arm as he attempts to strike you.



Counter with a side kick into the throat.

Using a Bo to Defend Against the Tonfas



Prepare to block the tonfa with the bo by holding the bo in the right arm.



Block the right tonfa with a downward strike with the bo.



Counter by smashing the bo into the right side.

Finish by smashing the bo into the side of the head.





Using a Bo to Defend Against the Tonfas



Prepare to block the tonfa with the bo by holding the bo in the right arm.



Block the strike with the left tonfa with a side block with the bo.



Counter with a smash into the ribs.



Finish with a smash to the side of the head.



Kata





Kata

