

## Isliisaslii —Stone Lock



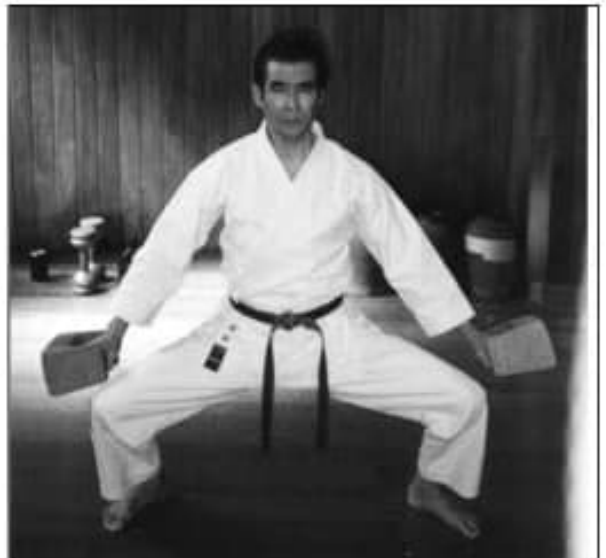
The original use of the sosirr can be seen in this photograph. Although these 'modern' sos/w are made from iron, in former times they would have been made from carved stones.



The author's teacher, Eiicfri Miyazato se/rsef, training in MrrcAfn knta 'with the js/rrsashf.



This ancient tsftr sosfrj, carved from solid rock, is on display at the Okinawa Karate Museum in Nishihara.



Tetsunosuke Yasuda sensei was in his 70's when this photograph was taken. How in his mid-eighties, he still trains in *karate*, *iaido* (the art of drawing the sword and making a cut), and yoga, and acts as the senior advisor to the Jundokan dojo.



Here Hisao Sunagawa uses the *rshisas/fi* to enhance his shoulder strength by recreating the postures and movements found in the *Goju ryu kata, shisoctiin*,



Hisao Sunagawa of the Jundokan *dojo*, Okinawa, uses the *rsbrsaj/ri* to help develop his excellent *shijko dadii* (low stance), as well as his shoulder muscles.



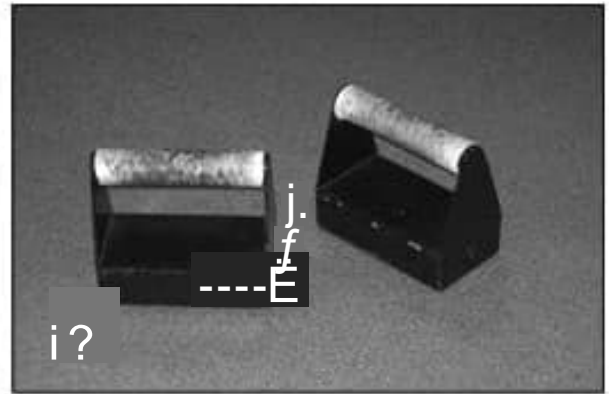
A single giant *rsfrsosh?* appears in this old Chinese martial arts manual, a copy of which was given to the author some years ago by Tetsuhiro Hokama sense?, the owner and proprietor of the Okinawa Karate Museum.



*Karate* teacher, historian and world renowned author, Patrick McCarthy discussing *hojo undo* with Masahiro Nakamoto at his home in Shuri, Okinawa.



The author strengthening his Legs with a heavy set of tetsu sashi at his Jinsekto dojo in Devon. England c. 1985.

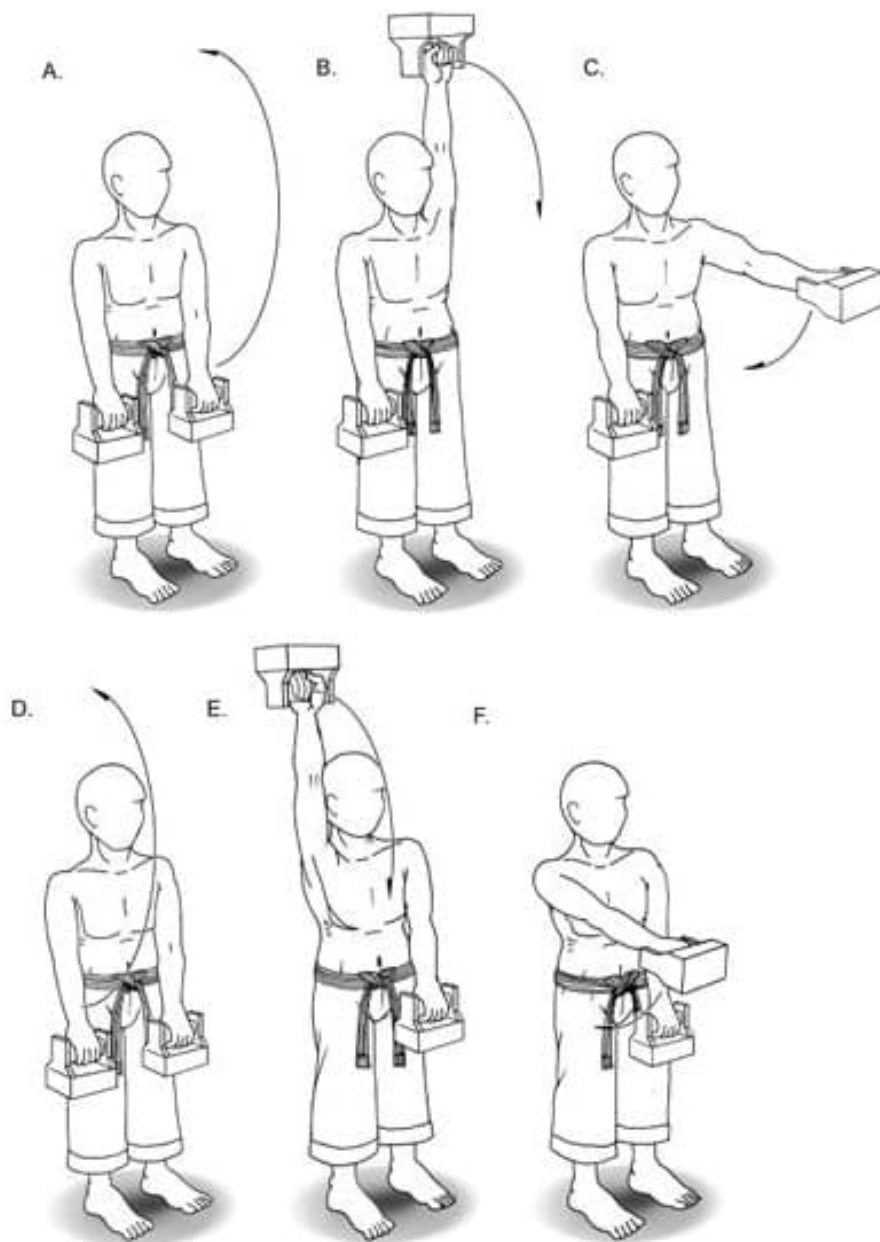


These tetsu sashi belong to the author.



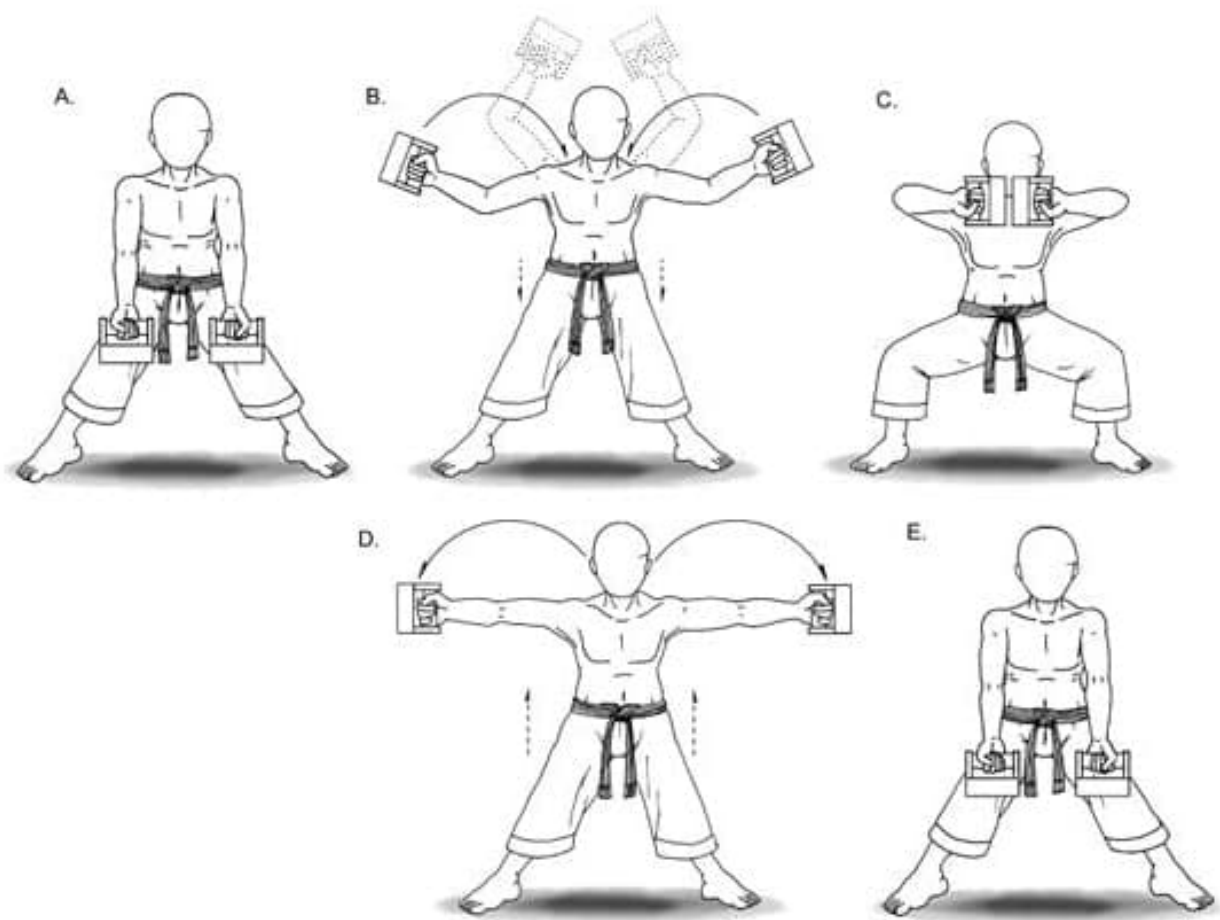
Tetsu sashi, sashi made from iron on display at the Okinawa Karate Museum, Nishihara.

As the name suggests, the *ishi* (stone) *sashi* (lock) is yet another example of the way nature and everyday items the *kamteka* found around them provided objects of resistance for Okinawan *karateka* to work with. Stone has always been in abundance on the rocky island outcrop and has played an important role in the local construction of buildings from the earliest days of settlement. The *ishisashi* was designed to fit on a door or gateway and acted as a locking mechanism by allowing a length of wood to be passed through the handles. A double doorw'ith a *sashi* on each one and a heavy post passing through the two of them made a very effective lock. In modern times, *sashi* made from stone became rarer and were replaced by door fittings made from iron. As stone locks fell from use they found a second life in the *dojos* being set up all over Okinawa. Today, however, finding stone *sashi* in a *dojo* is exceptional, as here, too, tools made from iron have replaced them. At the *Jundokan dojo* where I train when I am in Okinawa, many of the tools used came directly from Chojun Miyagi's *dojo*. The Miyagi family presented them to Eiichi Miyazato when the *Jundokan* was established in 1957. Three *sashi* carved from solid stone are still in use there today, and I never fail to work out with them during my visits. Even so, the material used to make these tools is not important. What is important is that each tool is made well and used properly. By following these two rules, *kamteka* are free to focus their attention on the training itself.



## Exercise 1

Standing in *heiko dachi*, hold the *sashi* in front of the body with the palms facing in toward the body as shown (Figure A), Keeping the arms straight at all times, raise the left arm in an arc until it points vertically above the head (Figure B). The movement should be matched exactly with an inhalation through the nose that starts and finishes with the lift. From there the tool is lowered halfway while half the breath is released (Figure C), A pause and brief moment of focusing both the arm and the breath is taken before continuing with the return of the tool to its original position, accompanied by the complete exhalation of the breath. From there, the action is repeated with the right arm.

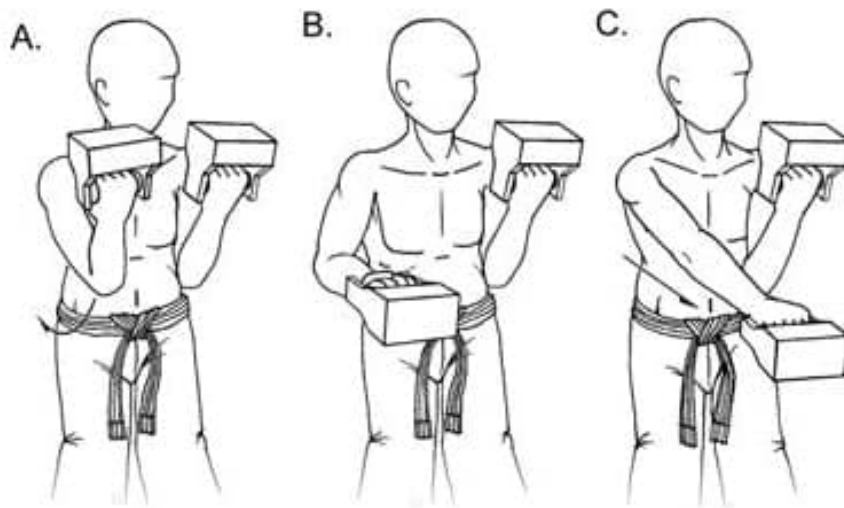


## Exercise Z

Standing with the legs open wide enough to sit into *shiko dachi* and with the palms of the hands facing outward away from the body (Figure A), swing both arms out to the side in a large arcing movement (Figure B) until the tools come together. At that point, and without a pause, the body drops into *shiko dachi* with the *sashi* coming to rest in the position shown in front of the body (Figure C). All this is accomplished on a single inhalation that should blend seamlessly with the movement. Hold for no more than a second or two before reversing the arm movement; standing back up and beginning the exhalation, stop the *sashi* at the halfway point (Figure D). The breath is also checked before the movement continues and the last of the outward breath is released when you return to the starting position (Figure E).

In both of the first two exercises, particular attention should be paid to the *latissimus dorsi* muscles (the “lats”<sup>1</sup>) when stopping the tool halfway through the exhalation. Bringing the tool to a halt by closing down the armpit and contracting this muscle is the desired objective and helps develop a strong feeling of connection to the techniques of *sanchin* and other *kata*. Being able to remember these exercises alone is not the same as gaining a lasting benefit from them. For that, you must develop a “feeling” for each

tool, and in much the same way as a weapon becomes an extension of a trained person's body, the tools of *hojo undo* should eventually fade from focus in the mind of the person using them. Only then can their manipulation become natural and without stress, and the degree to which a person's ability to withstand such stress becomes evident.

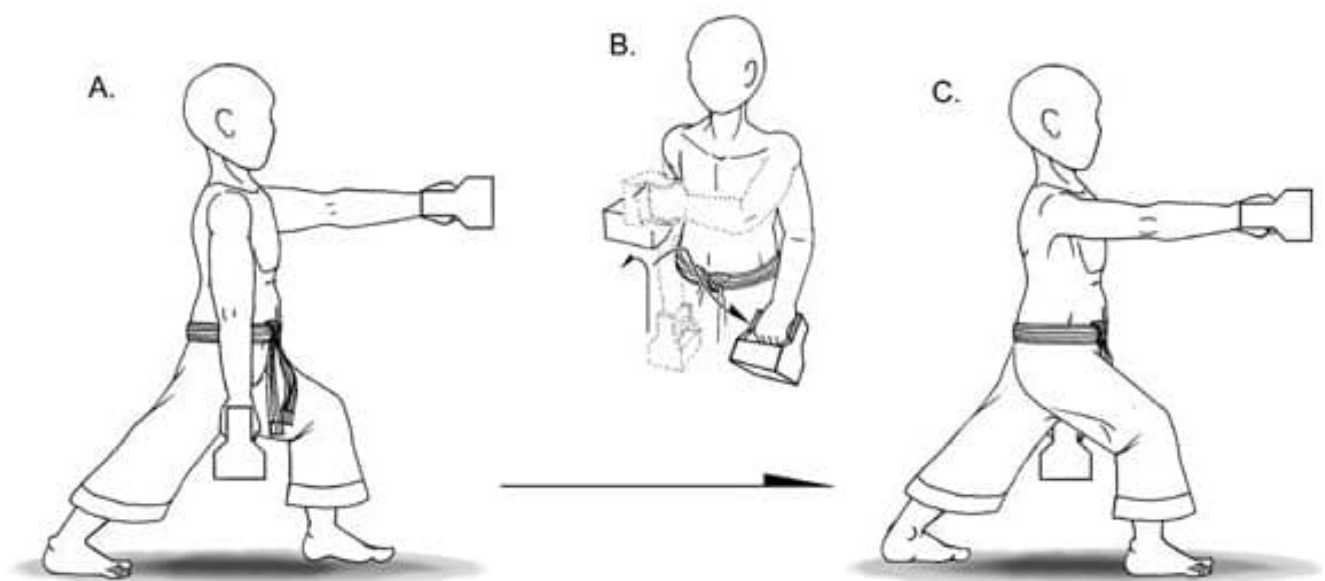


## Exercise J

Adopting *sanchin dachi*, left leg forward and making a double *chudan uke* posture (Figure A), the *sashi* is held tight and not allowed to slip through the fingers. Keeping the body of the tool in line with the forearm at all times works the fingers and the gripping action of the hand and may, at first, prove a little difficult. Perseverance is the key here; remember that it is the mind as well as the body being challenged.

Withdraw the right arm slowly as if pulling something heavy (Figure B) and inhale through the nose. Reverse the breath, this time through the mouth, and punch the arm out slowly and deliberately (Figure C), not forgetting to add the twisting action found in a normal *karate* punch. The punch and exhalation end together before the arm is returned to the *chudan uke* position. This return action, although a short one, should be accompanied by a faster inhalation and exhalation. Ending in the original start position (Figure A) at the end of an exhalation, step forward with the left leg and repeat the exercise with the right arm.

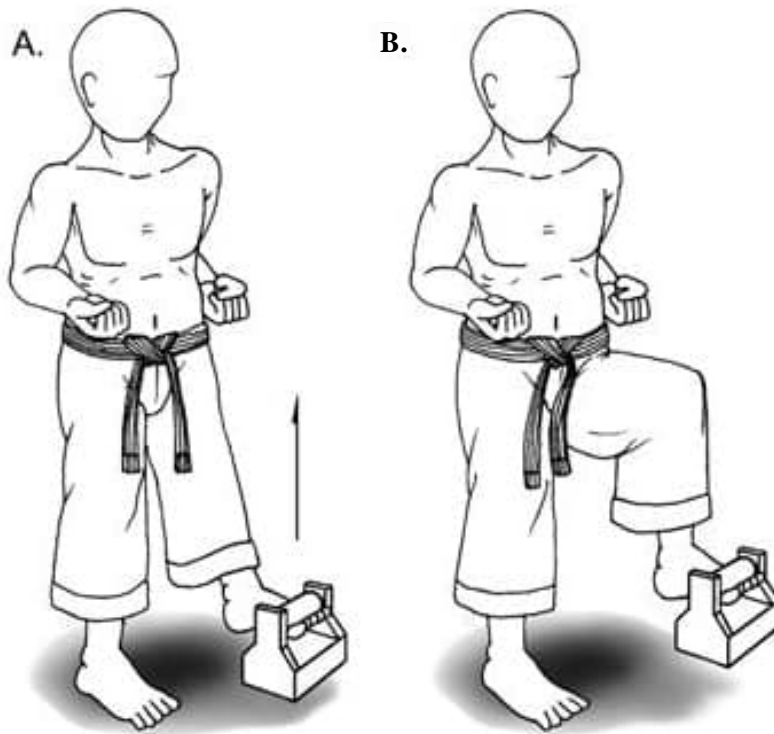
This stepping and punching can be continued in a straight line, or, as with the *nigiri garni*, the *embusen* of *sanebin kata* can be followed.



## Exercise 4

Holding a *sashi* in each hand, step forward into *zenkatsu dacbi*, punching one hand out to the kont while pulling the other arm down to the side (Figure A). Stepping forward, also into *zenkutsu dacbi*, the punching arm swings across the front of the body in an arc before coming to a stop at the side of the leg, while the other arm lifts up the *sashi* along the side of the body and thrusts to the front (Figure B) in a slow punching action. Both arm movements begin and end at die same time, inhaling for the first part of the movement before exhaling while the blocking arm swings across die front of the body and downward, and the punching arm thrusts forward (Figure C). At that point, the legs and body are momentarily tensed when the breath is fully exhaled.

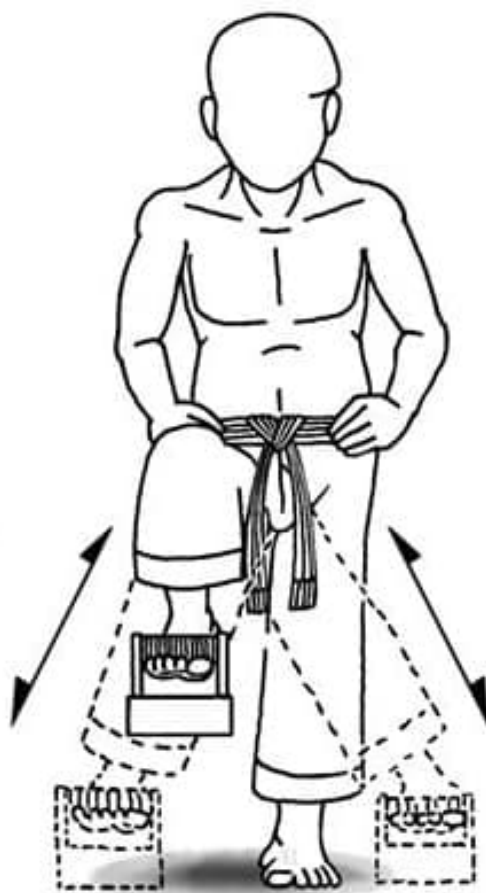
Relax the body and step forward into *zenkutsu dacbi* with the other leg while repeating the arm actions. Take only two or three steps in this fashion before changing direction either to the side or the rear by use of *mawate* (about face) turning. Walking backward is also practiced in this exercise, but regardless of the direction taken, the movements should be smooth and the breathing switching from inhalation to exhalation as seamlessly as possible. Keep the shoulders down, the armpits closed, and focus on the *tanden* to facilitate the breath.



## Exercise 5

Slipping a foot into one of the *sashi*, raise the knee and slowly lower it down again. This exercise is not only a workout for the muscles of the leg, but is a good test of your balance too. You will soon discover that a correct alignment of your body's weight is **an** essential precursor to this exercise. Simply by lifting the leg carrying the *sashi* up and down tests the balance of those new to such training while allowing a certain amount of acclimatization to the tool before moving on to more challenging exercises.

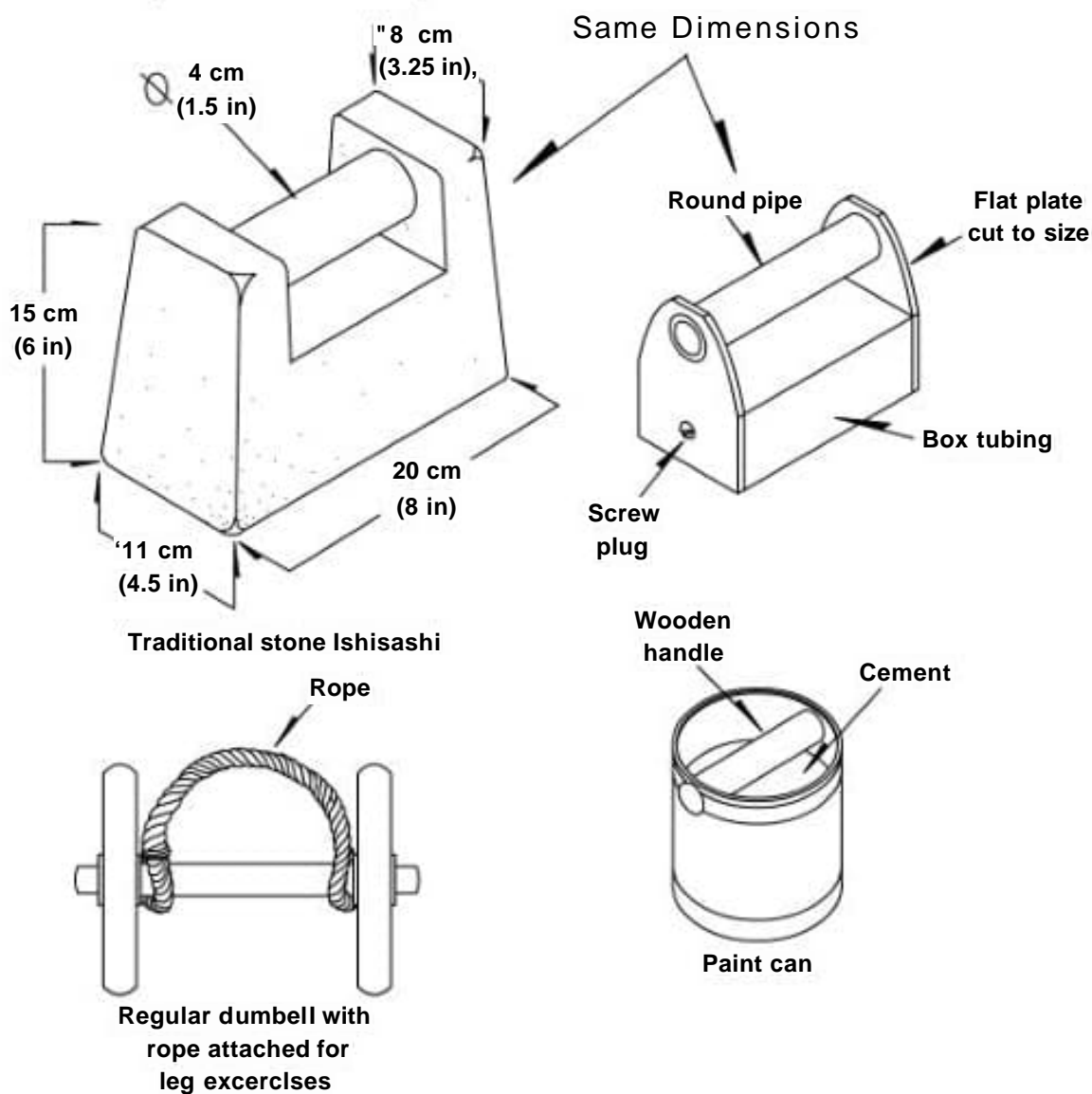




## Exercise 6

A similar but more challenging exercise with the *sashi* is to lift the tool with the foot as in Exercise Five; only this time cross the leg over the front of the body as if kicking with a low side kick (*yokogeri*) before raising the knee back up and then kicking out to the side in a similar fashion. The kick across the front of the body stimulates your sense of balance, while the kick to the side is the same as that required at the start of the *Goju ryu kata kururunfa*, and also found within *sanseiru*, and *seisan*,<sup>12</sup> when a low side kick is executed and followed up immediately by crossing the kicking leg in front of the body to place the foot back on the ground before twisting into a tight 180-degree turn.

## Ishisashi Construction Notes



Carved from stone or made from steel, regular weights and old paint cans will do the job too.

These tools take a little imagination to construct and access to a stonemason or someone with a workshop and abilities in welding. However, I have seen versions of *ishisashi* made from old paint cans filled with cement and given wooden handles, as well as house bricks with wire handles fixed to them. If it is not possible to fashion the traditional tools from stone or from metal, it is possible to train in all these exercises with a suitably weighted set of dumbbells. A short length of rope tied to the dumbbell facilitates the leg exercise. The *sashi* I use are made from lengths of steel box pipe, tube, and plate, welded together; they weigh 8 lbs. each (4.5 kg). A small hole at one end (plugged by a screw) allows sand to be added, increasing the weight of the tool.