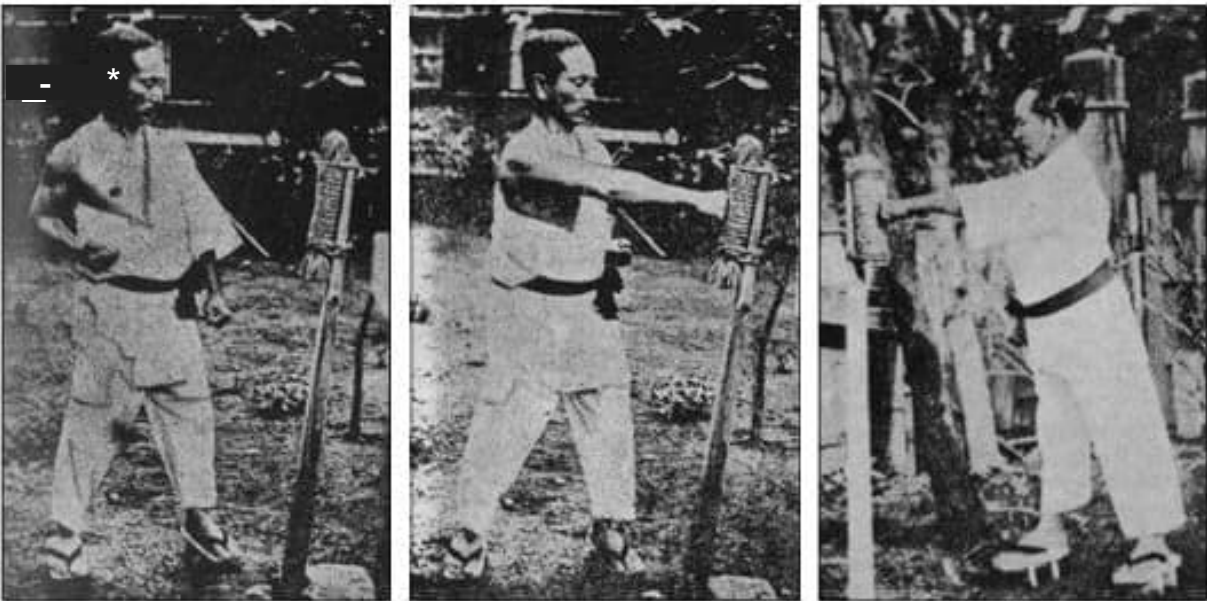


Makiwara - Striking Post



Gichin Funakoshi (1868-1957), with his ob-yi jacket removed on one side, perhaps to suggest the same solemnity as an archer in tyutfo (Japanese archery) adopts when facing his target (also known as a makiwara). He prepares himself for the punch.

The punch is thrown. Unlike kyuō however, in karate it is most definitely essential to hit the target.

A very rare photograph of Gichin Funakoshi training with the makiwara.



In 1965, a series of three postage stamps were issued, each one depicting an important part of karate training. This one clearly shows the importance of makiwara training and the makiwara in particular.



Surrounded by three makiwara, Giko (Yoshitaka) Funakoshi (1906-1945), the third son of Gichin Funakoshi who was according to many historians the person most responsible for modern Shotokan karate, uses just one of the tools to train his punch. Unfortunately he died tragically young at the age of 39.



Founder of the Matsubayashi school of Shorin-ryu karate, the late Shoshin Nagamine (1907-1997) can be seen in this rare photograph training his toes on a *makiwara* especially made for kicking.



Yuchoku Higa (1910-1994) was a strong believer in *hojo undo*. Even when he was in his 70's he would get up at 5.00 A.M. each morning and jog for 5 km before returning to the *dojo* to skip.



Eiichi Miyaiato (1922-1999), the late headmaster of the Jundokan dojo, still hitting the makiwara at the age of 72.



Meitoku Yagi (1912-2003), was a senior student of tojun Miyagi, the founder of *Goju ryu karate*. After his teacher's death, he opened his own dojo, the Meibukan. With many students in Okinawa, Japan, and around the world, he was a very important figure in Okinawan karate history.



Kosuke Yonamine (b. 1939) 9th Dan *Uechi ryu karate* and 8th Dan Okinawan *kobudo*. Note the lack of *hekite* (pulling back of the non-punching arm) in Yonamine's punching technique. This photograph was taken during his visit to the author's *dojo* in 1997.



Mono Higaonna (b. 1938) has trained on the *makiwara* almost all his life. Here he is conditioning the inside ridge of his hand by striking the *mo iwtra* continually with *heito ucii*.

Tettsui ucfr (hammer-fist strike) being used with full force by Mono Higaonna against the *mutóiw/iitr*.



At 70 years of age and with a lifetime of conditioning behind them, these were Mono Higaonna's hands as they looked when the author visited him at his *dojo* in Makishi, Okinawa in February 2008.



Lfraken (back fist) too is slammed into the target when Higaonna sense/ engages the msWora.



Hirokazu Kanazawa (b. 1931). Perhaps the most famous master of Sdotokan ta.Rttealive in the world today, he is seen here training on the author's mnknra/tr at the Shinseidokan dbjo in 198G.



A front cover for Stototo *Karate Magazine* (August 1996), Keigo Abe 8-Don. (b. 1938) a legend of the Japan Karate Association and now headmaster of his own school in Japan, here using the author's *makiwara* to practice his uraker? (back fist strike).



Students at the Jundokan dojo, Kazuya Higa, Hisao Sunagawa, and an unknown person use the rnnk/worato work on their empf technique, C. 2006.



While training at the Hfgaonna dojo in Kiyose, Tokyo, in 1986, the author Learned how to use this type of rmjkwtrra to practice block and punch combinations—something not really possible with the standard tool.



Punches...nothing fancy, just lots of them. Here the author works his way through the designated number of sets before training begins. Five hundred does not take long to say, but it is a different matter sometimes when the skin splits open.



A close up of Masaji Taira's hands indicate the level of training done on the *makiwara*. It should be remembered that large knuckles are not the aim of *matawara* practice, but a result of it.



Masaji Taira, 8th *Dan* from the Jundokan *dojo*, faces the *makiwara* daily. The power of his punch is legendary as is the shock delivered by his blocks.



Students of the late Yuchoku Higa training at the Kyudokan *dojo* with a portable *mawwara* constructed in the traditional Okinawan way.



At the Jundokan *dojo* in Naha, Okinawa. The *mawwara* has always played an important role in the student's karate education. This photograph was taken in 1973.



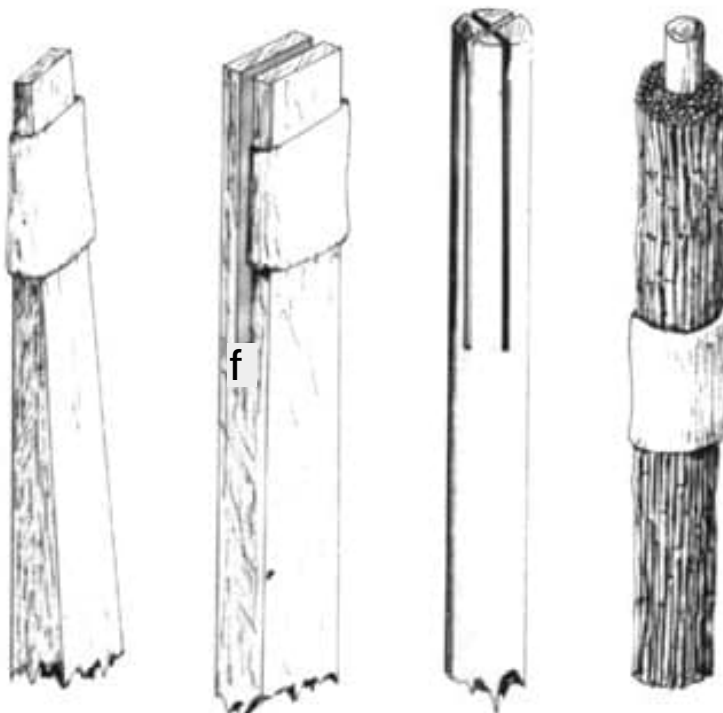
Notice the two different types of *makiwara* at the Kodokan. The tool in the foreground has been deliberately split down most of its length to increase the feeling of resistance.



In the entrance to the Kodokan *dojo* in Kume, Okinawa, stand two *makiwara* placed there by the late Shoshin Nagamine. The sign reads, "Shorin ryu, Nagamine Karate Dojo."



Just outside the entrance to the Shorinran *dojo* of Shugoro Nakazato (b. 1921) in Aja, Okinawa, the author found these two *makiwara* tucked away around a corner. Both looked like they were well used.



Four different types of *makiwara*, as seen here, allow a large variety of techniques to be worked on and present many opportunities to condition all four limbs.

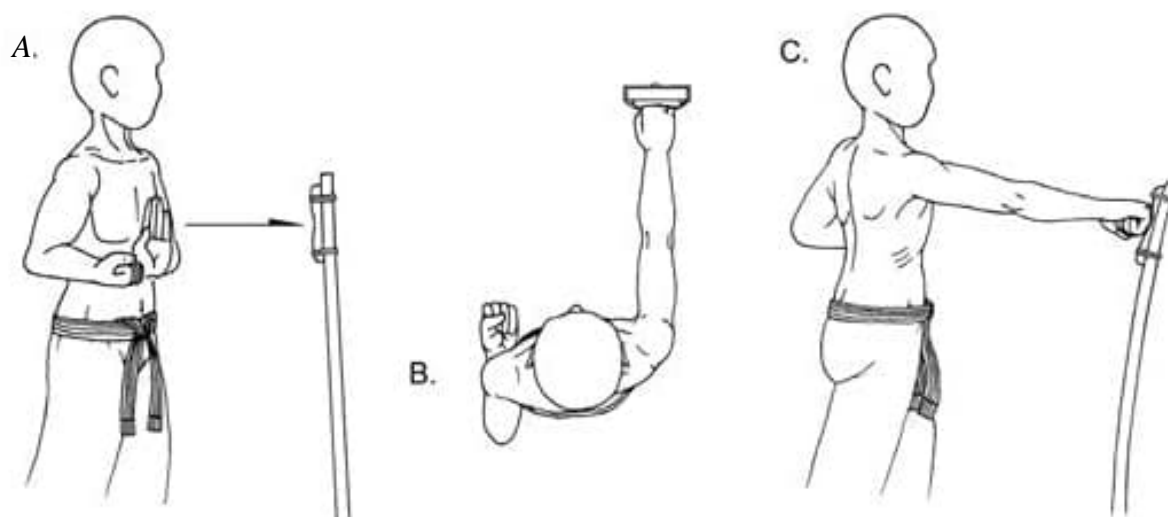
The *makiwara* is perhaps the most recognizable tool of all those used in *hojo undo* training today, and is one of only a couple the Japanese have used to any degree since beginning their push to absorb Okinawan *karate* into their own home-grown family of martial arts during the early years of the twentieth century. From Japan, *karate* spread worldwide and thus the *makiwara* has traveled with it. Still, this training device in its most recognizable form remains a truly Okinawan innovation.^{lfi} Originally, the name was related to the straw rope used to wrap around the wooden post. The straw was said by some to have had antiseptic properties that were released when the fist pounded it with continuous punches. When the skin of the first two knuckles of each fist began to bruise and even split, the oil in the straw was said to have helped keep the wounds clean. However, this theory is not backed up by personal accounts of people like Hirokazu Kanazawa, Shiro Asano, and Masao Kawasoe, *karateka* who still remember the agony of straw splinters being embedded in their flesh.^r Regardless of the veracity of such “therapeutic” claims attributed to the use of straw, people were using what they had at hand (no pun intended). These days, most striking pads found on *makiwara* are made of leather and are padded to a greater or lesser degree with materials ranging from industrial grade rubber to coiled springs. Hygiene too is taken more seriously. You should never use a *makiwara* if other people’s blood or skin remains deposited on the striking surface. At my *dojo*, the *makiwara* is cleaned after every use, regardless of any blood being spilt or skin being lost.



This makiwara is in the private *dojo* of Richard Barrett in Almeria, Spain and is typical of the construction methods used when installing a *rakworo* indoors.

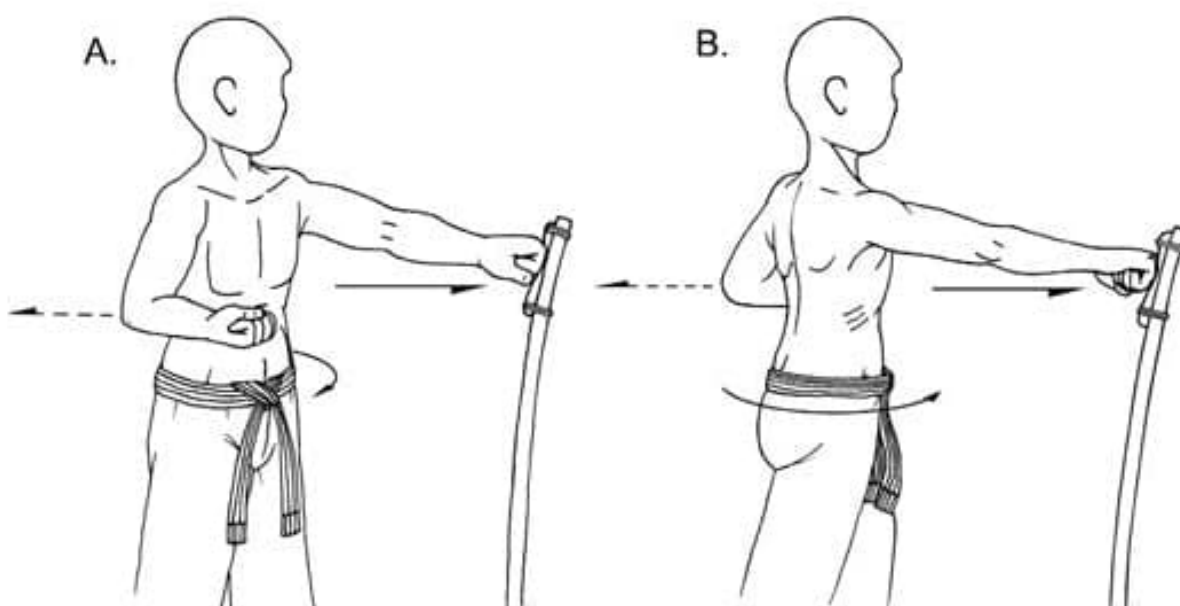
This tool can be freestanding, buried in the earth, or fixed to a wall. The modern portable *makiwara* (of the kind found in martial arts shops around the world) is, in my opinion, so detrimental to the health of the hands that in my mind this type doesn’t exist, and no further mention of it will be made. The traditional portable *makiwara*, however, is something entirely different. On Okinawa, two people hold a portable *makiwara* while a third person strikes it. However, because I do not have a portable *makiwara* in my *dojo* and therefore do not train with one on a regular basis, I will not cover its use in this book. Regardless of which type of *makiwara* you face, freestanding, fixed, or portable, it is important to remember the reasons you are standing before it in the first place. The results of

continuous training with this tool will leave signs upon the hands, and it has been known for some (immature) people to use the tool solely to achieve those signs. I am of course referring to the set of calloused knuckles found on the person who has become familiar with the *makiwaru*. It should be noted that calloused knuckles alone do not indicate the effectiveness of a persons punch. Nor do they speak to his ability as a fighter. They merely register that a lot of impact has occurred between the first two knuckles of the hand and a hard surface. If the tool is used inappropriately or without sincere effort, then, like the use of all the other tools found in *hojo undo*, it will lose any real value for the physical improvement of the person training, or for the development of that persons character. Therefore, you should always use the tool as it was intended to be used. Do not allow a lack of integrity to govern your reason for facing the *makiwam*.



Exercise 1

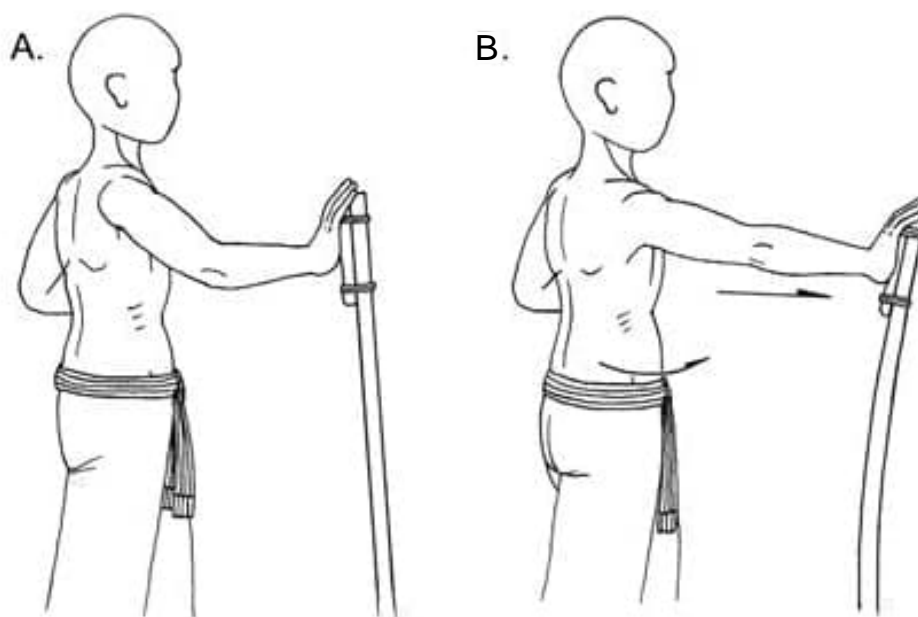
Stand before the *makiwara* with the left leg slightly forward of the right, with the right arm chambered ready to punch and the left hand beside the punching fist (Figure A), the right hip is lined up with the *makiwara* (Figure B) and the body is held relaxed. With a rotation of the hips and the right arm pulling strongly back across the body to the opposite hip, release the right punch toward the *makiwara* (Figure C). The fist is held tightly and should hit the target with the knuckles of the index and middle fingers only, this keeps the fist in line with the forearm and stops the wrist from buckling on contact with the tool. Inhale before punching and exhale with the punch, the breath and the punch coming to an end at exactly the same time. Return to the starting position and repeat the punch until the appointed number has been reached.



Exercise 2

Standing before the *makiwara* in a natural posture, with the left hip slightly forward, position yourself so that the tool is aligned with the center of the body. From this position throw a punch into the *makiwara* with the left hand (Figure A) and follow this quickly with a strong right punch (Figure B). The combination of punches should be done with a sense of relaxed speed and penetration, the feeling being to hit through the target and not to slow down just before impact is made. In fact, the punch should be accelerating when contact is made and is halted only by the resistance of the *makiwara*. It is this continual battle between the power generated in the punch and the resistance offered by the tool that improves your punching ability over time. Penetration is a vital element of a punch, and nothing is gained by snapping a punch on and off the surface of the tool. The body should support the punches by dropping your weight down slightly and by keeping the back straight and twisting into the punch instead of leaning into it. A strong exhalation too is sometimes used to bring the physical and mental aspect of the technique together. This is *kiai* (*ki*—energy, *ai*—harmony). Though it is not always necessary to take the roof off with a blood-curdling scream when *kiai* is being used, it is, however, necessary to focus the mind, technique, and breath onto one single point in the action. This should be at the point of impact and not a moment too early or too late. The ability to do even this may take some time to acquire. Take it slowly and work patiently toward improving all aspects of punching.

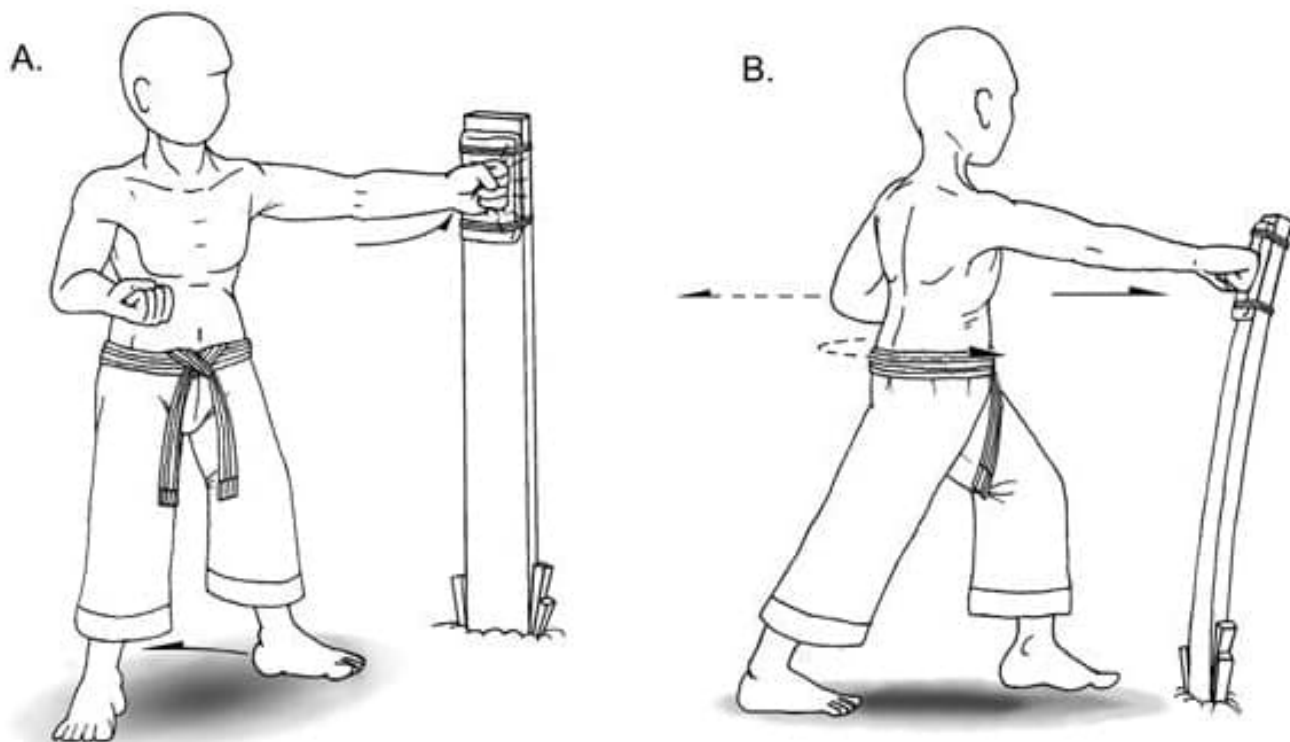
The term *kiai* (*ki*—your life energy and *ai*—harmony) speaks to the harmony of your mind (intention), your body (the physical technique), your spirit (breath), and the ability to bring all three into focus in the same precise moment. This



Exercise J

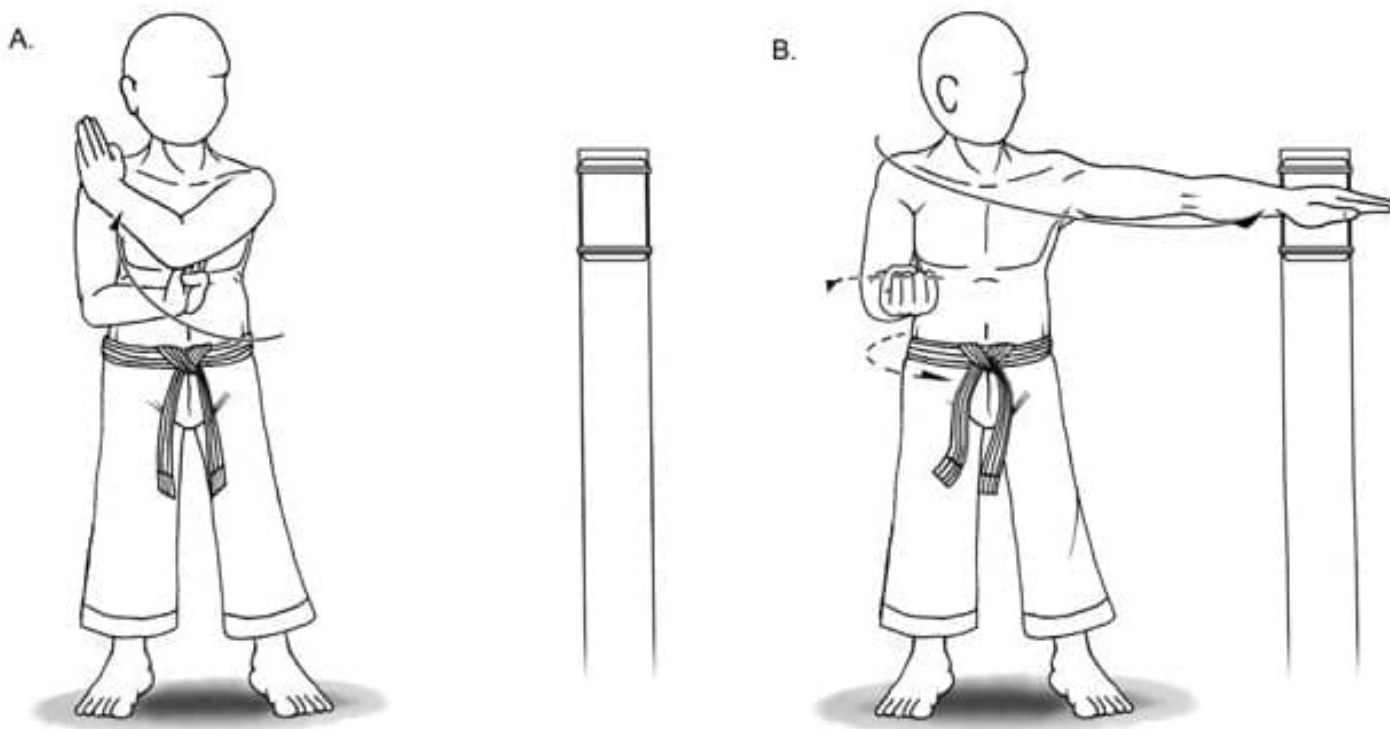
Stand before the *makiwaru* in a natural position with one side slightly forward and the opposite arm held out with the open palm lightly resting on the pad of the tool (Figure A). The other arm is chambered as if ready to punch. Bend the knees a little to lower your body weight and thus the center of gravity. Inhale calmly through the nose. Then with as much explosive power as possible generating from the hips, exhale and thrust the palm into the pad of the *makiwara* (Figure B) as if trying to snap the top off. At first the *makiwara* will no doubt return your energy and spring back just as hard as it was pushed, returning to its normal position without too much effort. Over time, however, it should be made to remain in a bent position for as long as the hand is in contact with the tool. This should not exceed more than a few seconds because the idea of the exercise is to build up a sense of explosive power over a short distance and not to see how long a bent post can be held back. Repeating the exercises on the opposite side ensures an equal progression of ability on both sides of the body. Using the same arm as the forward hip is another way to do this exercise, and all four versions of this exercise should be practiced. It should also be remembered that one side of your body is usually stronger or better coordinated than the other; therefore, more training should be done on the weaker side if you are to even out the progress being made.

has the effect of increasing the sum of the combined parts, making the outcome of the technique far greater than you might imagine. As a concept, *h'ai* is found in all Japanese and Okinawan martial arts and is noticeable most often during training by the loud shout issued at the moment a technique is delivered.



Exercise 4

Standing sideways to the *makiwara* (Figure A), throw an *uraken* (back fist) strike at the target and follow this immediately with a small backward step of the left leg, twisting the body into *zenkutsu dachi* (forward stance). Now facing the *makiwara*, throw a strong *gyaku zuki* punch (Figure B) and *kiai*. Repeat the combination to the desired amount, and then change over to the opposite side. Keep the body relaxed and concentrate on timing, breathing, and gaining a sense of impact.

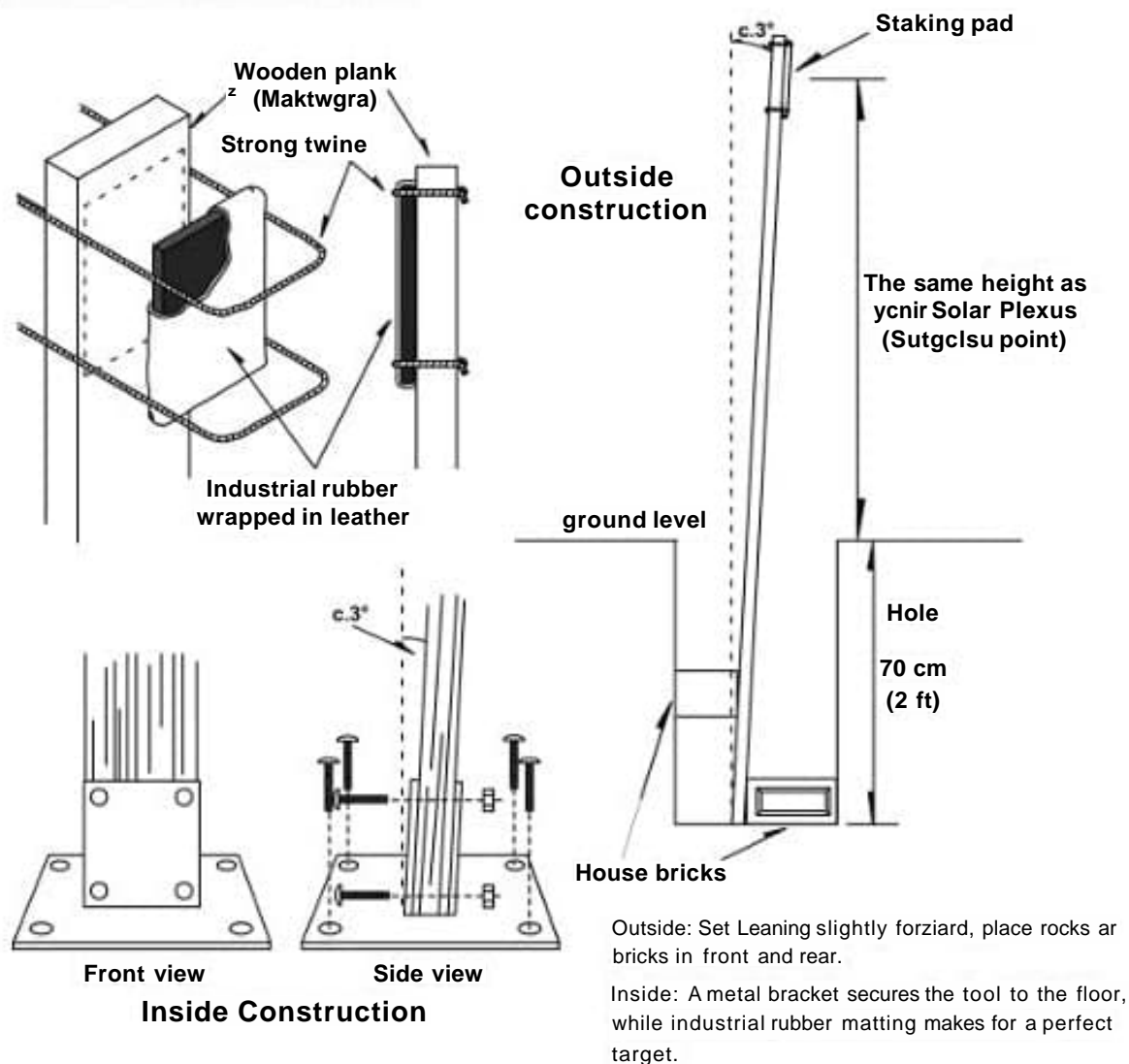


Exercise 5

Standing in a natural posture, with the *makiwara* off to one side, swing the open hand (*shuto uchi*) into the pad when you exhale (Figure A). Withdraw the hand and inhale before striking the tool once more (Figure B). The power behind this technique is generated through the legs and hips, and up through the body, whipping the strike into the *makiwara*. Keep the body in control and make it a part of the strike by employing a good posture and a well-timed sense of focus, the *hekite* (non-striking hand) is withdrawn and chambered on the hip. Again, repeat this exercise with the other hand from the opposite side of the tool.

There are a great many exercises that could be added to this small sample of how to work the *makiwara*, but it was never the intention of this book to cover every exercise that can be done with this or the other tools. To get the most from *hojo undo*, you must learn from a reputable teacher, and then explore for yourself the depth to which you can go with these ancient training methods.

Makiwata Construction Notes



This tool can be placed either inside or outside the *dojo*. Traditionally it was **found** standing in backyards throughout the length and breadth of Okinawa and is perhaps the island's one great contribution to the *hojo undo* orchestra. Even men who did not train in *karate* would gather to strike the *makiwara* and test their punching power?"

The important thing to remember when making a *makiwara* is that the center of the punching target should be at chest height to correspond with the *suigetsu* point (*solar plexus*) of the person building it. because this is the primary target for the basic *chudan ztfki* (mid-level punch) found in *karate* practice.

Outside

A *makiwara* usually measures about four inches (10 cm) in width and is made from hard wood similar to oak. It should be solid but flexible because a *makiwara* with no movement does more harm than good to the *karateka* who uses it. Plant it into a hole in

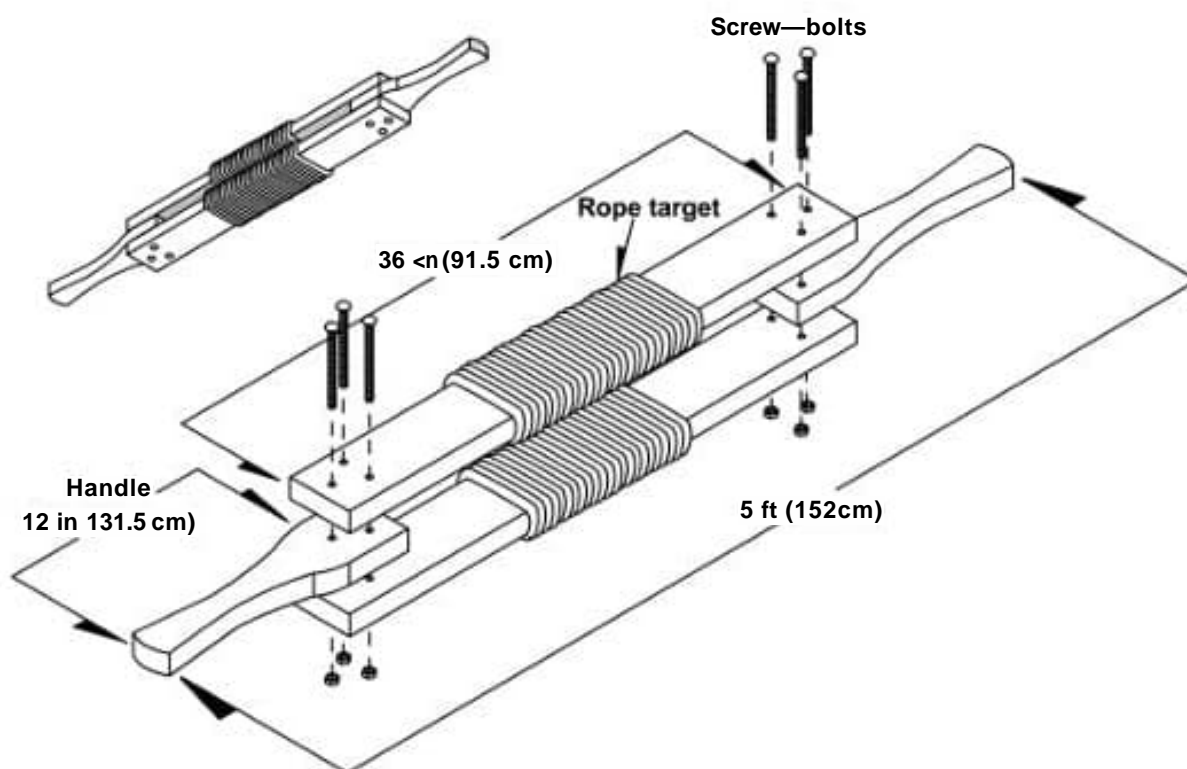
the ground about two feet deep (70 cm); house bricks or large stones are placed in front of the *makiwara* at the bottom of the hole before partly filling it with earth. Just below the surface, more bricks or stones are placed at the back of the *makiwara* before more earth is placed on top to close the hole level with the surrounding surface. The earth should be packed hard around the *makiwara* throughout the "planting," and wooden wedges are often required to complete the process of fixing the tool firmly with the ground. The impact pad is rarely made of straw these days and is more likely to be made of leather. It should not be overly padded! Nevertheless, it should be kept completely free of dirt, blood, or loose skin that may be deposited there during use. The post should lean slightly forward to encourage the index and fore knuckles of the striking fist to make impact on the target and add to the resistance offered by the tool. When not in use, keep the top of the *makiwara* covered and protected from the elements by some kind of hood. A traditional wooden cover is what I use on my *makiwara*.

Inside

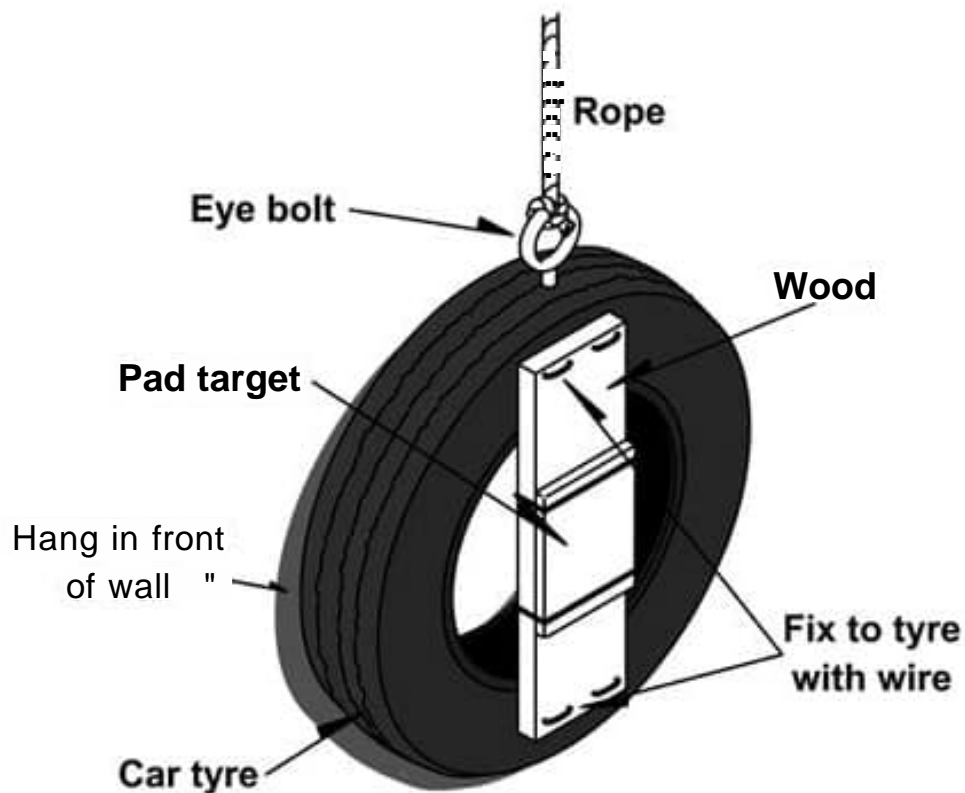
When a *makiwara* is placed inside the *dojo*, it is often impossible to excavate a hole in the ground. In such cases, fixing the tool to the ground by means of a strong metal bracket is often the next best option. Again, the height of the target should correspond with the user's chest. The bracket is fixed to the floor with screws and the *makiwara* is then placed securely in the bracket.

As well as the *makiwara* mentioned above, there are variations of the tool in use by karateka both in Okinawa and around the world. As already mentioned, I do not have a portable *makiwara* in my *dojo* and have used this alternative tool only sparingly in the past. However, I am providing a detailed drawing of how to make one and show a photograph of this tool being used in Okinawa. I would again remind those of you who embark on such a project to consider carefully the quality of the materials and method of construction you use. Poorly made tools or low quality materials may produce a 'nice-looking' tool, but such an approach is gambling with safety and runs contrary to the purpose and practice of *hojo undo*.

An alternative *makiwara*, made by using a car tire (tyre), offers extra elements to training that are not found when using the more traditional tool; this includes combinations of blocks, strikes, and kicks, coupled with movement of the tool itself. With the alternative *makiwara*, you will be able to execute techniques in a way approaching a more natural fighting manner. As well as the central target in the middle of the wood, the side of the tire is also struck (and kicked) with various combinations of techniques. For example, push one side of the tire away. The opposite side then swings in and is blocked or checked prior to a counter punch being thrown into the target. A slight adjustment in distance from the tool allows for kicks to be used too. In order to achieve this movement, hang the tool from a post or against a pillar of a wall, as seen in the photo taken at the Higaonna *dojo* in Kiyose, Tokyo. Should you wish to use it as a traditional *makiwara*, place it against a flat wall that is strong enough to take the repeated force of the impact.



Industrial rubber matting can be used as an alternative to a target made from rope.



Aung against a tree trunk or internal pillar, this tool allows for blocking and punching combinations to be practiced.