

Tetsu Geta —Iron Sandal



The author's tetsu *geta* weigh around 12 lbs., or 5 kg.



This remarkable photograph shows the extraordinary lengths to which the Okinawans went to enhance their *karate* by utilizing the resources they had around them as in this case the local stone and some old fence wire. Nothing was ever 'store bought'!



Iron *geta*, like their stone counterparts, can be made as heavy or as light as required. This old pair on display at the Okinawa Karate Museum shows they do not always have to be very heavy.



Perhaps he was just posing for the camera or perhaps not? Either way the Jicaratorin this photograph, taken at the Kenkyukai dojo in Naha, c. 1923, has a lot to deal with while he uses both the *rihrseshi* and *ishi geta* at the same time.

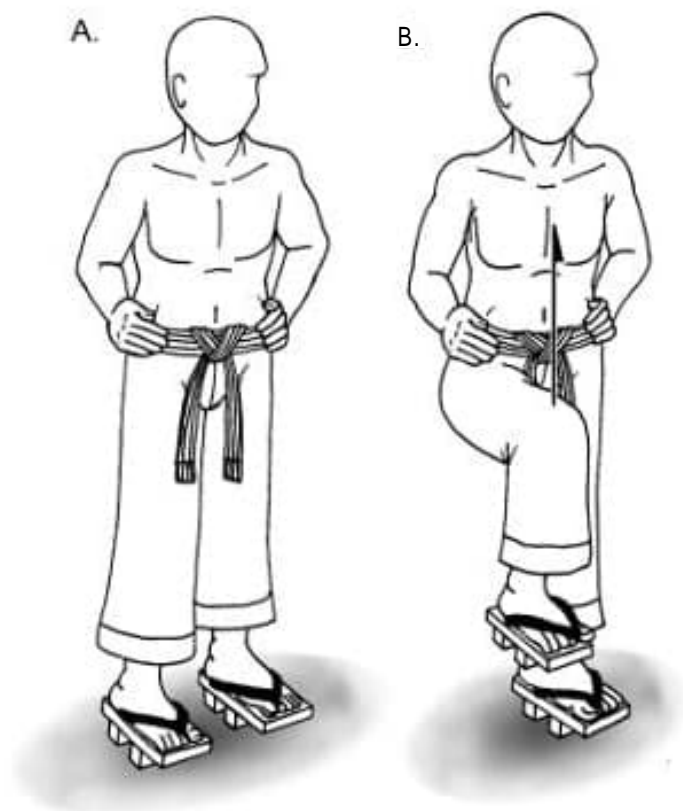
These days, you rarely find this training tool made out of its original material: stone (*ishigeta*). Instead, those who still use it, train with sandals made from iron (*tetsu geta*). The varieties of exercises you can do with this tool are limited, and most of them can be done just as well with the *ishisashi* or with the use of modern ankle weights. Where the traditional *geta* made from either stone or iron still holds its own, however, is in the nature of the focus it brings to bear on the toes. When kicking your height, for example, the toes must grip the cord tightly to avoid the effects of the centrifugal forces involved from throwing the heavy *geta* from the foot. Using the *geta* also helps develop your balance, and this, along with the increased strength in the leg muscles, gives value to the continued use of this tool. All the kicks found in traditional *karate* can be practiced, with various levels of modification, while wearing the stone or iron *geta*. However, I would recommend that great care be taken until you get used to the challenges this tool presents to your balance. Slow and steady progress is the key.



A beautiful old chnshi stands next to two different pairs of *tetsu geta* at the Okinawa Karate Museum.

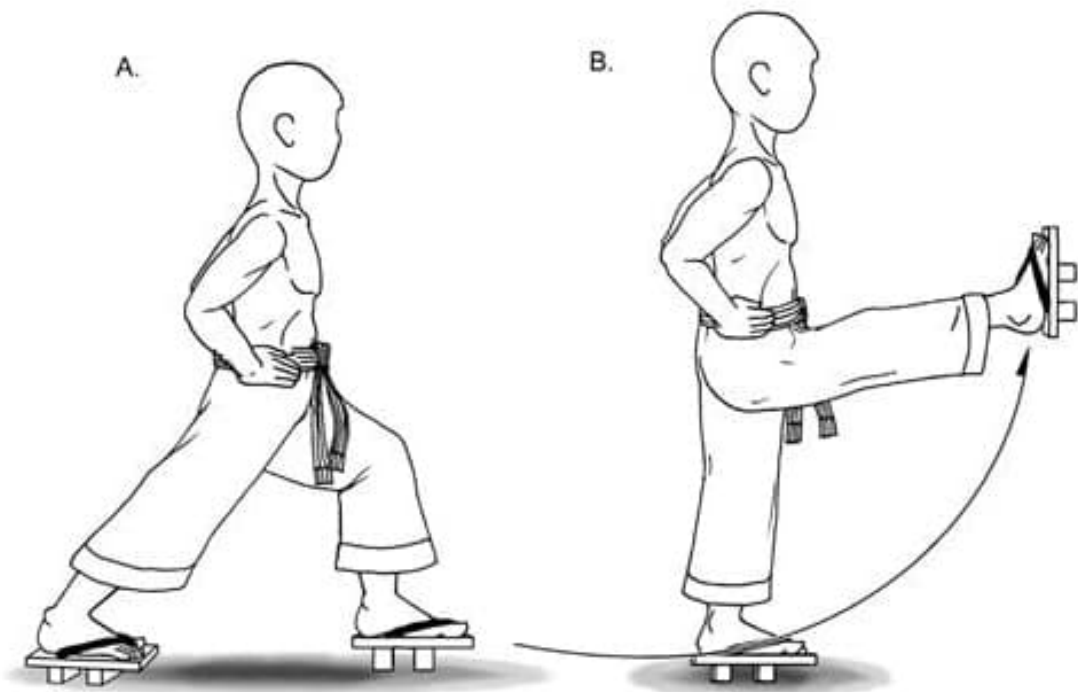


Compare the *karate ishi geta* on the left, made from stone, with the normal *geta* on the right made from woven straw. Both are on display at the Okinawa Karate Museum in Nishihata.



Exercise 1

Wearing both *grta* and with the hands on the hips (Figure A), lift the knee as quickly as possible, as if kicking using the *heizageri* (knee kick) technique (Figure B). Repeat this in three sets of ten before changing to the other leg. This exercise is not done in the same relaxed manner as Exercise Five with the *ishisashi*. Instead, grip the *c/rt* with the toes and use the legs as if you were kicking with the foot exploding from the ground as fast as you can move it.

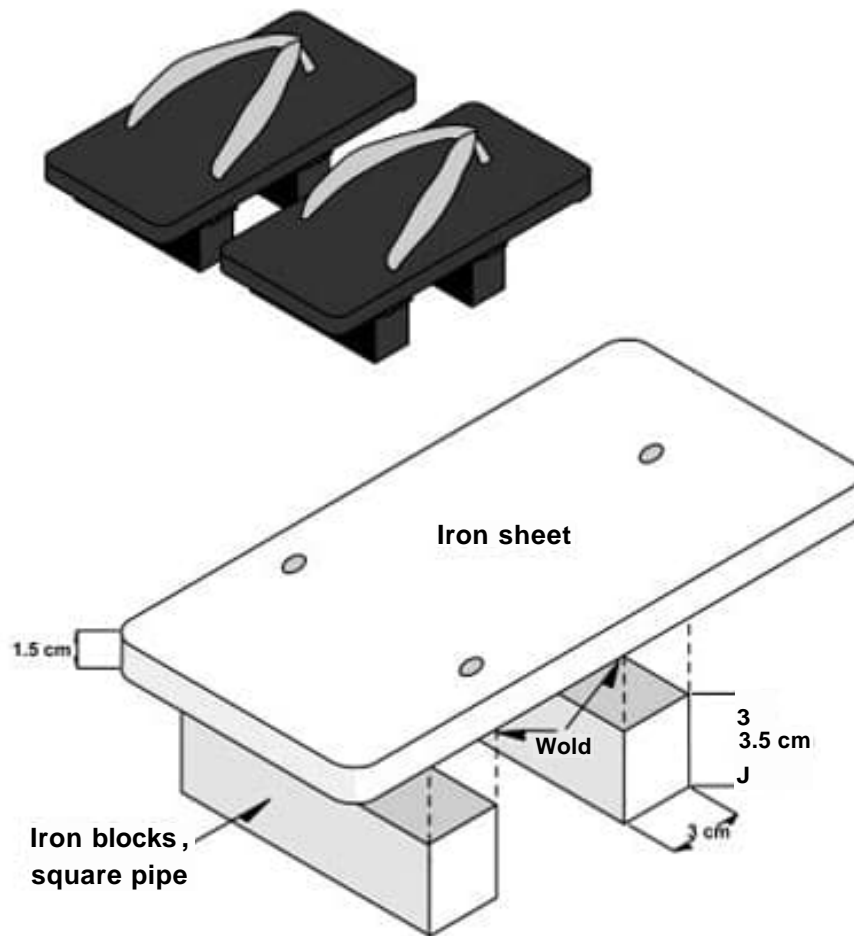


Exercise 2

Standing in *zmkuisu dacht* (forward stance), again with the hands placed on the hips (Figure A), proceed to swing the rear leg up and to the front while keeping it straight (Figure B) as if kicking your height. Again, repeat this in three sets of ten before changing sides.

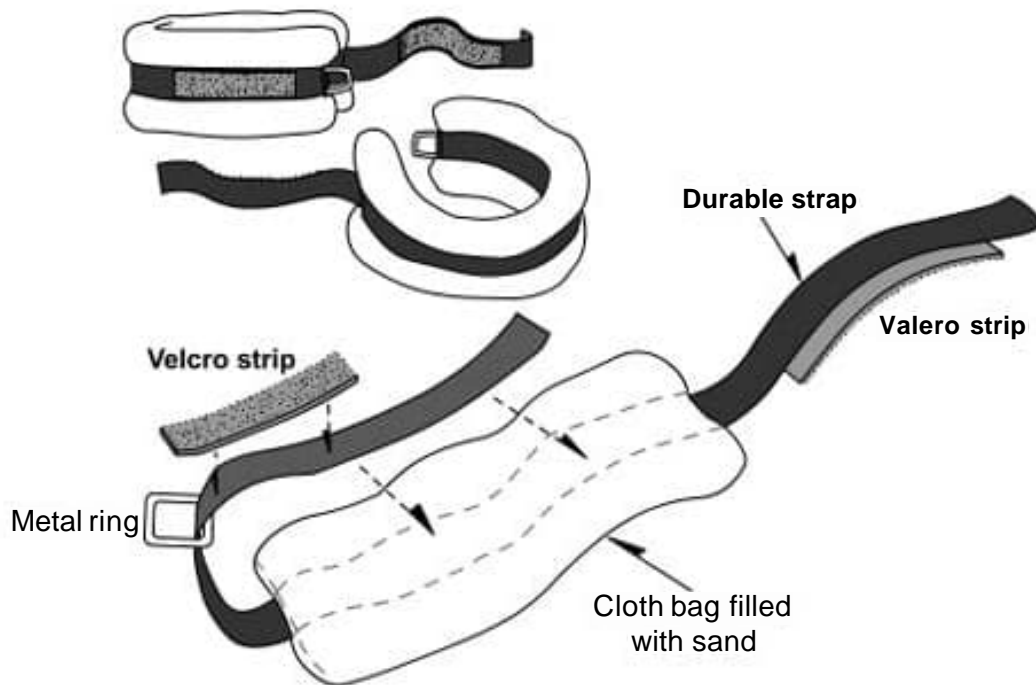
It is, of course, also possible to repeat with the *geta* the same Leg exercises done with the *ishisashi*. However, with the extra grip afforded by the straps on the *geta*, their main worth is found in the practice of quick, explosive moves and the increased need for good balance that comes with wearing the *geta*.

Tetsu Geta Construction Notes



Traditional *geta* also develop the gripping power of the toes.

Have two rectangular pieces of steel plate cut to size (this depends on the size of the users own feet) and drill three holes as indicated on the drawing. Take care to position the top hole in line with the gap between the big toe and the next. Two lengths of square steel rod, equal in length to the width of the rectangular plate being used as the *geta*, are then welded to the plate. Once the metal has cooled completely, the cord should be threaded through the holes from the top and then tied oft in a strong knot. Where the cord from each side comes together between the toes, bind the cords as one with more cord or electrical tape. The *ftó* can be made with a weight that suits the user, but for the average male adult they should, like the pair in my *dojo*, weigh around 12 lbs. (5 kg).



Setting anything at all on the ankles will build leg strength.

Should it prove impossible to make a pair of iron *geta*, a heavy set of ankle weights approximates the challenges posed by this tool. Unfortunately ankle weights do little to help strengthen the gripping ability of the toes. Nevertheless, it is important to remember a basic tenet of *hojo undo*, we use what we have at hand to help improve our *karate*. If ankle weights are all you have available to you, then use them.