



# The Canadian Isshinryu Way Everything Karate & Kobudo

Isshinryu.ca

Volume 2, Issue 1  
January 2006

## Second Year of the newsletter begins

The newsletter is now officially into it's second year of existence. I would like to thank everyone for their tremendous support.

I would like to invite everyone, no matter their rank to consider writing an article for the newsletter. You don't have to be a sensei to have something to contribute, in fact some of the most compelling reading doesn't answer questions, but instead asks them.

As well, questions are always welcome for the Ask a Sensei portion of the newsletter.

The newsletter will continue it's regular schedule throughout 2006, again taking a break in the summer. Please share the newsletter with all Isshinryu clubs. It's free for all to enjoy and hopefully benefit from.

This newsletter is slightly smaller than normal and does not have specific city pages. This is partially the fault of the company which hosts our website having a severe crash and losing all the updates sent in, and the fact that a full page of news every 2 months is a great deal of information.

This issue will have all city news on a single page and this may be the new style of the newsletter depending on contributions.

## Upcoming Events

### Seminars:

**March 11th, 2006—Shihan Albert Mady Seminar, Thunder Bay, ON.**

### Isshinryu Tournaments:

**32nd Annual AOKA World Championships. Hosted for the first time in Canada by Shihan Albert Mady. July 8th, 2006, Windsor, ON.**

### Open Tournaments:

Feb 19th, Thunder Bay Mini-Tournament.

March 4th, Kenora Isshinryu Open, Kenora, ON

March 19th, Thunder Bay Mini-Tournament.

March 25th, Winnipeg WKA Qualifier.

Apr 8th, MAC Open. Thunder

Bay, ON

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### Fifth Edition of new Canadian Isshinryu Newsletter!

- Valuable training information
- Important historical articles
- Promotion & Tournament Results

## Naihanchi - Part I

By Mike Fenton

### Isshinryu Karate Kata Background Part 5

Understanding the history of the Isshinryu kata can provide the Isshinryu Karateka with a greater knowledge of the kata and the techniques it employs. The origins of a kata can guide us toward understanding both the application of the technique as a student and a deeper respect for the evolution of the art as an instructor.

The information within this article is a result of research done as part of a book in progress. It is to represent a comprehensive resource of data concerning the art for all Karateka. While every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy of the information, any corrections or additional details are welcome from one and all.

#### Naihanchi Kata

ナイハンチ

#### The Name

Naihanchi's name is subject to a great deal of interpretation. The main reason for this is the loss of the original Kanji used to represent the Kata. The Japanese writing above denoting the kata is known as Katakana. It is a phonetic alphabet as opposed to the typical Hiragana which provides a deeper understanding to the meaning of the word.

In tracing the history of the kata, Motobu Choki stated in his book that the original name for the kata was Naifuanchin. Translating the original name leads to a number of possible alternatives.

#### Nai:

Inside or Inner.

#### Fuan:

The most contested of the words comprising the name of the kata. The following translations can be used to better understand the nature of the kata.

#### Walk or Progress:

Denotes the careful progression of techniques throughout the kata.

#### The Strip of Land between two rice paddies:

Marks two of the possible applications for the kata. The first being a fight in which lateral movement is the preferred direction given the terrain. The other being a battle taking place within knee deep water as is common in a rice paddy.

#### Half, split or divided.

A term used to describe the balance of techniques in the kata.

#### Chin:

A rather simple translation similar to Sanchin and Seiuchin referring to "War, Battle, Fight, Conflict, etc."

Combining the above portions of the name we can create many combinations to describe Naihanchi. Here is the most appropriate combination.

Internal Divided Conflict: Accurately reflects the careful balance between the internal and external techniques used in the kata. Alternates of this name include "Fighting within", "Half inside, Half outside".

The other important consideration is the update of the name to Naihanchi. This naturally changes the meaning of the syllables. While han varies from fuan the translation of half or divided remains, the significant change is that of the chin to chi. This may have been changed in the same vein that Karate-Jutsu became Karate-Do. Rather than focus on only the combat nature of Karate there was a shift to acknowledge the internal side of the technique. The term Chi, most are familiar with means Energy or Spirit.

Updating the original translation we now get Internal Divided Energy. This does not indicate an internal battle. The new understanding of the kata became the reservation of energy contributing to the inner concerns and strengths of the body rather than committing all energy to the external.

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*"It is a phonetic alphabet as opposed to the typical Hiragana which provides a deeper understanding to the meaning of the word."*

## Naihanchi - Part I Cont'd

### By Mike Fenton

*(Continued from page 2)*

Naihanchi also appears within the art of Shotokan as created by Funakoshi Gichin. When translating the forms to Japanese the name was changed to Tekki. Tekki translates directly as “Iron Knight” or “Steel horse riding”. The primary reason behind the name is a potential application of the form. The shotokan version is performed in a deep horse stance which can be seen as a method of combat while riding a horse. Additionally the lack of hip shifting as seen in Shotokan allows lateral combat without redirecting the horse.

#### The Myth's

Naihanchi has surprisingly few myths associated with it. The main one could be interpreted as true if one works hard enough. Many people view the kata as intended to be used with ones back to a wall. While there are only lateral movements within the kata, the bunkai frequently represents attackers to the front, back and on a 45 degree angle. The lateral movements only serve to emphasize evasive techniques to oblique angles of the attacker.

The second myth is actually more of a myth associated with the great master Motobu Choki. A common rumour was that he only knew a single kata and used it exclusively in all his fighting experience. While he did favor the kata and referenced it in great detail in his own book, clear evidence exists that he did in fact know many kata learned during

his time as a student of Matsumora Kosaku. While Naihanchi is an incredible effective kata ideal for fighting in close, balance of technique is required as with everything in life.

The final myth associated with the kata is that the name is derived from the capital city Naha. Unfortunately, the only evidence to this appears to be the close similarity between the first five letters of Naihanchi. This fact is also largely rebutted by the fact that no instructor of significance from the Naha area included this kata in their teachings.

I sincerely hope that you enjoyed reading this. The next article will continue the background of Naihanchi with the bulk of the article primarily on the kata's origins focusing specifically on the path the kata took on it's way to Shimabuku Tatsuo and it's incorporation into Isshinryu Kata. If you have corrections or comments regarding this article or any future article, please feel free to contact me directly.

Mike Fenton

[mike@isshinryu.ca](mailto:mike@isshinryu.ca)

This article represents part of an unfinished work by Trevor Warren and Mike Fenton. Nothing would have been possible without the many resources available both on the internet and via books currently available on Okinawan Karate. Additionally, special thanks must go out to Joe Swift, his research and willingness to share was an invaluable asset.

*“Flexibility is the key to preventing injuries to the muscles and tendons. “*

## Understanding Conditioning II: The Hand

### By Trevor Warren

#### Anatomy

The hand and wrist contain 35 bones, all of which are quite easy to break. The striking areas of the hand include the knuckles (heads of the metacarpal) and the edge (Triquetrum). The hand and wrist are supported by the ulna and radius bones of the forearm. Without proper conditioning it would be easy to break any or all of these bones while performing a simple Seiken Tsuki. As well the hand has 3 groups of muscles and many small tendons which may become injured during grappling or striking. Conditioning of the hand involves striking, stretching and strengthening.

#### Conditioning – Tendons

Flexibility is the key to preventing injuries to the muscles and tendons. Make sure to stretch your fingers and thumb for at least 20 seconds per hand. Pull the fingers back (or alternately push them against a wall) until you feel a stretch in the upper part of the palm. It may also be a good idea to work on grip strength which will be beneficial while grappling. Good grip strength exercises include squeezing a tennis or squash ball, reverse curls, twisting a weight attached to a rope and the “iron claw” style

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## Understanding Conditioning II

### By Trevor Warren

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of push up.

#### Conditioning – Striking

In karate the most common strike is the seiken tsuki or a slight variation, hitting with the first two knuckles closest to the thumb in a closed fist. In Isshinryu karate we have the thumb on top of the fist which positions the hand so that the knuckles are supported by the wrist and arm. The most common hand conditioning for strikes, and the first one that should be attempted, is the knuckle push up. Make sure that proper technique is observed while performing this exercise. Your first two knuckles should be bearing all of the weight with your wrists straight. Your fingers should only be touching incidentally and no weight should be on them.

After push ups comes striking the makiwara. Perform a tsuki and remain in contact with the makiwara for ½ a second. Start up light and work your way up. It is important that you do not injure yourself by hitting too hard too early. This would be counter-productive and only end in a weakened hand.

To condition the skin of the knuckles, twist your fist while it is still in contact with the makiwara.

#### Conditioning – Other parts of the hand

Other parts of the hand should be conditioned in a similar way. Always start off light and work your way up. Some popular conditioning techniques include sand (thrust your open hands into the sand to condition the fingertips), holding jars by the lid (grip strength) fingertip push ups (popular with volleyball players) and slapping water (alluded to in my previous article).

It is important to take your time and have patience while attempting any sort of conditioning. It takes a long time to properly condition, so do not be in a hurry. Remember, treat any injuries so as your conditioning and training may continue. Always be smart and be safe.

Next month – body conditioning.

## Isshinryu Kobudo—By Trevor Warren

Before I start this article, I would like to point out that I am by no means and my no definition of the word consider myself an expert in kobudo (art of weaponry). All of the opinions that follow are strictly my own and by no means is it my intention to offend anyone.

That being said...

I recently had the pleasure of attending a kobudo seminar hosted by Sensei Dinah Jung and Sensei Joe Rigato (Satori Dojo, Thunder Bay and Kokoro Dojo, Thunder Bay respectively). The head instructor of the seminar was Sensei Donald Shapland, currently of British Columbia, with assistant instructor Sensei Brant Ledoux of Dryden Ontario.

Most people in Isshinryu who have been around for a few years will remember Sensei Shapland from a few years back. He is a Shichidan in Isshinryu karate, but has for quite awhile dedicated himself to the study of Ryukyu kobudo.

The three day seminar was excellent. We were taught 3 sets of kihon (which included a bo-bo kumite and bo-sai kumite) as well as 4 weapons kata. The instruction also focused on how to use a weapon effectively, how to generate the most power behind strikes with the use of hip motion and why certain techniques are done a certain way.

After the seminar I began to seriously consider my Isshinryu kobudo. I came up with several of (what I see as) problems and difficulties with Isshinryu kobudo. I will be the first person to admit that these questions may be the result of my own ignorance, so if anyone has any answers, please forward them to me ([trevor@issheinryu.ca](mailto:trevor@issheinryu.ca)).

#### How many weapons kata are there in Isshinryu karate?

Under the organization that I belong to (AOKA) there are 5 weapon kata and 2 kumite. But there are other weapon kata that had been passed down by Sensei Shimabuku (which will be listed later). How do we make the determination of which

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## Isshinryu Kobudo—By Trevor Warren

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weapon kata should be included?

### What are the names of these kata?

From my understanding there are three bo kata, 2 sai kata and (possibly) 1 tonfa kata. The names of the bo kata as I understand them are as follow:

1. Tokomine no kun
2. Urashi no kun
3. Shishi no kun

I have also seen Urashi no kun written as Urashi bo and Shishi written as shishi no kun no dai. From my limited understanding of Okinawan, “no kun” means “bo of”. So Urashi no kun would translate as Bo of Urashi, which makes sense. Also I believe “dai” translates as “large” or “long”. Thus Shishi no kun no dai would translate as Large of bo of Shishi. But since Isshinryu does not have a “sho” or small version of Shishi, it would be logical to drop the no dai.

### Why are bo-bo kumite and bo-sai kumite part of Isshinryu Karate?

These kate were never taught nor (as again is my limited understanding) performed by Sensei Shimabuku. These kata were developed, by Angi Uezu / William Blond and Frank Van Lenten respectively, as routines to teach the basic kumite movements of the bo and sai. Yet they are an advanced testing requirement of many Isshinryu organizations. As far as I understand these are the only elements that have been added to Isshinryu that were not added specifically by O-Sensei.

### What about the Tonfa?

Is the Tonfa an Isshinryu weapon or no? There is a Hama Higa no tonfa, but some organizations do not teach it. Some teach it but do not require it for testing. Yet other organizations require it.

### What about the other kata?

O-Sensei studied Ryukyu kobudo under Taira Shinken. So, where are the other weapons? Did O-Sensei think that the only viable weapons were the bo and sai (and of course possibly the tonfa)? Ryukyu kobudo has many other formidable weapons including the Oar (Eku), Scythe (Kama), and spear and shield (Tinbe & Rochin). Why were these weapons not passed down with the other weapons?

If anyone has answers (or even conjectures) please let me know. I do have several possible answers, but none of which truly seem to fit.

As many of you know I have long been a proponent for the standardization of all Isshinryu. Perhaps the way to begin would be from the top down.

*“Start thinking about your questions. Ask a Sensei needs your help!”*

## Ask a Sensei

**Some Great questions this time. I look forward to more in the future.**

### Question: I did ask a question, where is it?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, when our server crashed, it took all of my e-mail along with it. Leaving me with no questions. If you did submit a question, please send it in again. It’s not that I didn’t want to answer it, but that I don’t have it to answer.

### Question: How do I ask a question?

**Answer:** That’s really simple, just e-mail your ques-

tion to the newsletter and I’ll find the best person to answer it and get an answer.

### Question: How do I ask a question?

**Answer:** That’s really simple, just e-mail your question to the newsletter and I’ll find the best person to answer it and get an answer.

### Question: So what’s the e-mail?

**Answer:** It’s newsletter(@)isshinryu.ca or mike(@)isshinryu.ca, Hint: It’s also on the last page!

## Improve your karate– Stances

Without question, stances are the most important aspect of karate. Without a good stance, you will find yourself unable to block, punch, or kick effectively. Unfortunately they are often not given the time they deserve.

In order to aid your in improvement in the stances I will focus on a few general points that are very important. These points apply to all stances we do in Isshinryu. While each stance is different they all have key points of which you should be aware.

### **Bend your knees!**

Far too often people like to stand tall. While figuratively it is favorable, practically it means your knees are straight and thus not ready to respond. Each stance requires the knees to be bent at a different height, but ALL require them to be bent. Seisan, Horse Stance, Cross Stance, Cat Stance, all of these stances require BOTH legs to be bent.

When practicing your stances place your feet on the ground where they belong and simply settle into your stance. Let your body become heavy and visualize yourself as a compressed spring.

### **Move your hips, Not your Feet.**

There are no “in-between” stances. You are either in the correct stance, or not. When turning to look in the kata, or just punching and blocking you must use your hips to generate the power without moving your feet.

Shuffling your feet even slightly while punching means that you do not have a firm base with which to punch. Focus on keeping your feet on the ground and using your hips to push, pull and twist to generate power.

A good drill to practice (if you don't have a partner to watch your feet) is to get into your stance and then place a few books around your feet so that if the foot moves the book moves. Now, do your basics. If at the end the books are in the same spot AND you used your hips, you've got it down.

### **Know the stance and don't be lazy!**

This is a two part point. Be sure you know all about the stances. Ask your Sensei. They will be happy to explain all the little details so that you know exactly what the stance should look like.

Once you know how to do the stance, make use of it.

I'm sure that every student has been corrected on their stance only to reply that they know how to do it. Knowing the stance, should mean that you do it correctly.

### **Practice constantly.**

If you want your stances to be great just remember what stance you should be in and do it. Place your focus on your stance, use the stances to help remember the kata.

Just by practicing your stances EVERYTIME you do your kata, and doing them the best you can EVERYTIME, in short order your stances will be outstanding. And if the stances are good, the technique will be as well.

*“Each stance requires the knees to be bent at a different height, but ALL require them to be bent”*

## Improve your Kobudo Tonfa Furi (Swinging Strikes)

The tonfa is by no means an easy weapon to start with. If you have do not already have the basics of the weapon down. Please do not start here. Talk to your Sensei or Shihan about teaching you the basics of the weapon and how it works before trying this. The tonfa can hurt a lot when small mistakes happen, and when the weapon spends half of it's time traveling towards you, accidents happen to you!

In order to improve your ability to effectively execu-

tive swinging strikes, I will focus on two key portions of the strike. The grip and the motion.

**The Grip:** Like all of our weapons in Kobudo, the key fingers are your bottom two fingers. They are entirely responsible for the grip of the weapon while the others act as a guide. When holding the tonfa, squeeze tightly with these fingers and remain relaxed with the remaining fingers and thumb under the point of impact. When swinging the tonfa, think

## Improve your Kobudo Tonfa Furi (Swinging Strikes)

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only of contacting and relaxing those two fingers and you will have a much easier time of allowing the tonfa to flow through it's swing.

**The motion:** In order to use the tonfa, it is important to realize that the center of it's actions and motions is not your hand. The tonfa should not be swung in a circle, or visualize as traveling around your hand, or even your arm.

If you want to properly use the tonfa to both generate power and maintain an advantageous position the tonfa must travel around your entire body. This does not mean throwing the tonfa behind your back or strikes behind you, but it does mean following through to the opposite of your body.

For example, a side strike, should start on the right

of your body, have a focal point directly in front of you, and continue to the left side of your body. At that time, it returns following the same path and upon reaching the right is retracted to the closed position.

The same reasoning applies for a downward strike, moving from the head to the leg height.

The key with the motion of the tonfa is that it must flow and following through. Tonfa techniques must be allowed to move through their full range of motion or their effectiveness and practicality are seriously affected.

**How To Start:** Start with a single strike, like the side strike I mentioned and perform the strike slowly and gradually build the speed until you feel the power in the motion.

## Training Tips

Running is something that I personally, don't overly like, but respect greatly for it's ability to condition the human body. Plus, as a Blackbelt in Isshinryu, I require it of my students for each test, and have an annual 5 mile run for myself and blackbelt students.

That being said, I run a lot.

The training tips for this newsletter will be more of a guide, as to how to improve your running. I know of a number of people who will be running shortly, and while this is most likely too late for them, others can benefit from it.

This guide will be specific to distance running. Training to run fast is very different. However, going the distance is very important and while doing it, you will improve your speed.

**Step 1: Commit to training.** If you want to be able to run distance, you must run at least twice a week.

**Step 2: Run the distance.** Whatever your goal distance is (1—5 miles) start by running it once, no matter how slow you go or how many times you need to take a break, finish it. This will help you judge your improvement later.

**Step 3: Alternate your workouts.** To improve at anything you must constantly be challenged. It helps greatly to trick the body by switching your workouts. If your legs don't know what to expect

they have to work harder.

The two workouts I recommend are time based and speed based.

**Timed Run:** Don't worry about how far or fast you are going, just run for a set amount of time. I recommend running the time to match your goal, ie, if you want to run 3 miles, 24 minutes, 5 miles, 40 minutes. I purposely try to not track how far I've run, this will help you to build the mental aspect to running and condition your body to running for long periods of time.

**Speed Training:** This doesn't mean running as fast as you can. It means picking a distance that you can run (and the distance should increase as your ability to run increases) and running it with the goal being to run it as fast as possible. You should still run it evenly. If you speed up and slow down a lot you will have a much harder time going the distance.

**Step 4: Stick with it.** Running isn't easy, and it's not overly fun. But if you can force yourself to train hard, the payoff is great. You will be able to fight longer and harder without getting winded and will be able to put more effort into all your karate training.

**Step 5: Really stick with it.** The worst part of running, is when you start running again after not running regularly for awhile. You can very quickly go from running 5 miles to struggling with a single mile. If you are in Karate (which you probably are) you will need to run annually as part of your karate training for a very long time. Keep running consistently and you will be ready anytime it's needed without having to struggle back into shape.

*“No matter how busy, you are, or think you are, you must make time to train. It's all up to you how good you can be”*

## Contributors



### Editor & Author—Chitora Dojo

Mike Fenton—Thunder Bay, Ontario

Mike lives with his wife Kyla and has been in Isshinryu karate for almost 20 years, and has been an instructor for the past 15 years. He is currently head instructor of Chitora Dojo in Thunder Bay, Ontario.



### Author—Chitora Dojo

Trevor Warren—Thunder Bay, Ontario

Trevor lives in Thunder Bay with his wife Maria. He has dedicated a great deal of his time to teaching and his own training with the realization that hard work is the key to success.

### Author

Requested—Anywhere in Canada

Someone willing to contribute their time to helping other Isshinryu karateka with their training or understanding.

*It is important to familiarize yourself with commonly learned Japanese words. Try to memorize all the words each time and you will soon have a large “karate” vocabulary.*

## Karate Terms in this Newsletter

**Barai**—Sweep

**Bunkai**—Application of Move

**Chitora**—Essence of the Tiger

**Chudan**—Middle Body

**Dachi**—Stance

**Dojo**—School

**Geri**—Kick

**Gojuryu**—Hard / Soft Way

**Isshinryu**—One Heart Way

**Kanji**—Japanese Writing

**Karate**—Empty Hands

**Karateka**—A person who trains in karate

**Kata**—Prearranged training techniques

**Kobudo**—Ancient Martial Way

**Jodan**—Upper Body

**Mandarin**—Chinese Language

**Miyagi Chojun**—Founder of Gojuryu

**Okinawa**—Japanese Island where all karate began

**Shimabuku Tatsuo**—Okinawan Master who created

Isshinryu. Extra Note: Japanese names are written Family Name, Given Name. We use this format when mentioning Okinawan Master out of respect for their traditions.

**Sandan**—3rd Level (Black Belt) Sensei Level. This rank denotes instructor level as such the title Sensei becomes the appropriate title for the individual at this rank.

**Shodan**—1st Level (Black Belt)

**Uchi**—Strike



# Everything in your City

## Recent Promotions

**Thunder Bay:**

Al Brown—Yellow Belt  
Justin Johnson—Orange Belt  
Plus new 5 Yellow Stripes.

**Kenora:**

A large promotion, the details of which I hope to have for the next newsletter.

*Continue training and practicing at home to improve your standings and to help ready yourself for promotion.*

## Black Belt Level Promotions

Each newsletter, we will attempt to recognize all Black Belt level promotions that have occurred since the previous newsletter.

Don't stop training now! There's always more to learn and improve upon.

Again like everything else in this newsletter, no guarantee of absolute completeness. If you know of one I missed, please let me know and I will include it for the next one.

**Completed Promotions**

## News

No news this time. Everyone must have been enjoying their holidays.

## Upcoming Events

Visit Isshinryu.ca for an archive of our newsletters and must more information about Isshinryu.

Photography by : Kyla Bass

### Story Submission

Stories are welcome from anyone and everyone. They can be about anything related to the Martial Arts, a technique you think is just great; A better way to do a technique; History of a Karate Master; a tournament trick that works well; ANYTHING!

All stories are appreciated as e-mail. You can send it to your instructor to proof read and send in, or directly to me. (Mike (at) Isshinryu.ca) or (newsletter (at) Isshinryu.ca)

You can even include pictures if it helps your article!

### Dojo Directory:

Any student is welcome at anytime to visit any dojo. Before class, always introduce yourself to the Sensei of the dojo and tell them who your current Sensei is.

For a full dojo list visit [www.issheinryu.ca](http://www.issheinryu.ca) We are getting too many to list here.

Affiliate Cities!

#### **Calgary, AB**

Contact: Charles Boyd

#### **Cookstown, ON**

Contact: Harri T. Makivirta

#### **Kenora, ON**

Contact: Steve Davis

#### **Ottawa, ON**

Contact: Tim Leonard

#### **Thunder Bay, ON**

Contact: Mike Fenton & Trevor Warren

#### **Windsor, ON**

Contact: Albert Mady