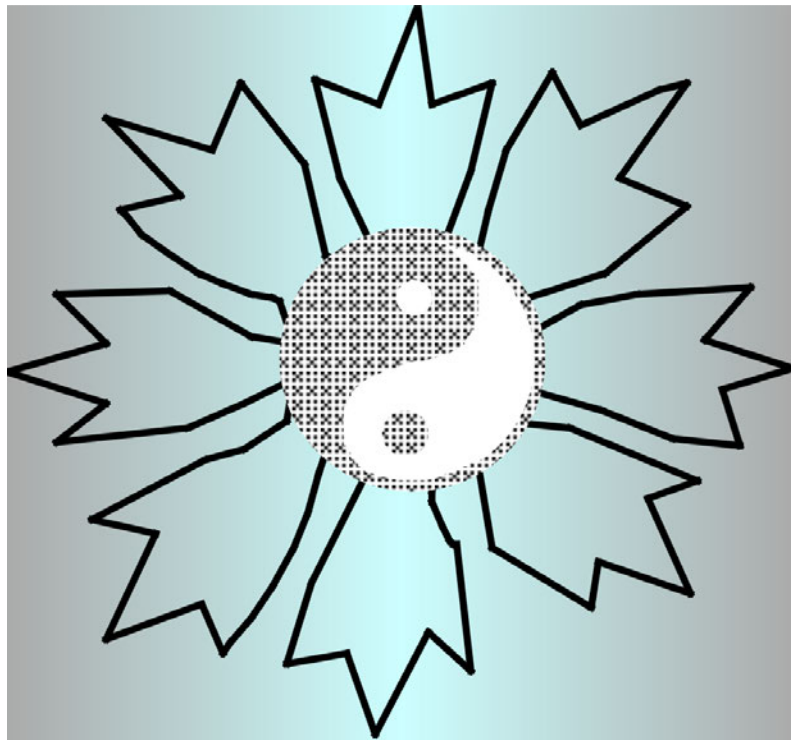


WEAPONS

Deadly Truths

Bringing reality back into
Martial Arts Weapons



Based on the **Quan Li K'an** style of Martial Arts

By

Bruce Everett Miller

Simply put, misconceptions about weapons can get you killed on the street! You may think that you know weapons. You may think you had been trained. But have you really? This book will definitely put your knowledge and understanding to the test.

This book is about the reality of weapons and weapon training. There is not a more realistic look at how to use, defend against, or understand weapons anywhere on the market.

This book is about the real principles behind real weapons. It teaches the principles about how to understand the strengths and weakness of each class of weapons. It also covers how to turn your training, into realistic sessions, which hopefully will improve your odds of surviving on the street against weapon attacks.

If you are even the slightest bit interested in working with, learning about, or defending yourself against weapon attacks, then you **NEED** this book.

Don't bet your life that you know weapons unless you understand the principles behind the weapon.

Weapons use for the Martial Artist

DEADLY TRUTHS

Bringing reality back into martial arts weapons

Based on the **Quan Li K'an** style
of Martial Arts

by

Bruce Everett Miller

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© 2014 - 2nd edition

This second edition contains revisions which the author hopes will make the content easier to understand.

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The material contained herein is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for instruction by a qualified instructor.

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And Now

Ignorance can be cured though education.

ONLY death cures stupidity!

General / Opening Notes

The purpose of this book is my **attempt**, to get you to think about and understand the principles of weapons use. I have no intention of trying to teach you weapons forms or katas, for several reasons.

I also have no intention of telling you the ways that **MUST** be followed. Or in proclaiming, I am some sort of **EXPERT**! As with most aspects of Martial Arts, what works for **YOU** is what is important! However it is my belief that the more you understand about the principles behind what you do the better you will be in doing it!

please understand that I really do not believe you can learn any form or kata from a book or tape correctly without a horrendous amount of work **AND** great insight into the understanding of what the kata is trying to accomplish. (If I spent that much time and room I would only be able to talk about one weapon.) Secondly, I believe that what is needed on the market is a book that teaches the overall principles of weapon use and defense, and that cuts out the nonsense and tells it as it is.

Therefore, to that objective I have tried to give my views and explanations about different weapons. I have tried to cover the major classes of weapons so that you can take what is said and use the principles in your own weapon training regardless of what weapons you use. I admit though that I have not touched on some variations of weapons (for example, I didn't talk in depth about exotic weapons). Still, you should be able to take what is said and use it with other examples.

I also believe that this book will make a lot of people who teach weapons mad. That is not my intent with this book, but I will not apologize for it either.

It is my personal opinion that many people who use and teach weapons are out there just swinging things around in very fancy patterns and acting tough as if their show of force will scare away the opposition. Well, it might scare away the novice but that is not the type of person you have to worry

about anyway. The truth is that it is the experienced street fighter who will hurt you and they will not be impressed with show. Therefore, flashy techniques and exotic weapons mean little, nothing or worse on the street. They merely advertise that you don't know what you are doing! Furthermore, it is well known that I have never been a tournament fan but what I have seen at tournaments leads me to believe that those people who receive such instruction under the guise of learning how to use a weapon are being set up for a very bad fall ...called reality.

Therefore, if you are interested in hard line reality about the principles of use and defense of weapons then read on... if you are interested in glitz / tournament weapons book... go get a glitz book. This book is definitely not going to give you what you think you want! If on the other hand you are interested in street survival, then I believe you will find this book is exactly what you want and it might even be interesting.

First off, in my opinion there is nothing more revolting than the garbage, which passes for, weapons competition at tournaments. My general disdain for tournament fighting pales in comparison for my feelings about the absolute garbage, which passes for weapons competition.

Nothing could be further from the truth than calling this malarkey, weapons competition. So-called tournament weapons competitions are NOTHING more than fancy dance patterns made up of illogical, impractical and non-working moves (I refuse to call them techniques) which have absolutely NO value on the street.

At least you might argue that a tournament fighter would have some chance on the street of using their fighting techniques... at least against someone who wasn't well trained. That cannot be said for this collection of dance moves where NO attempt to preserve actual contact principles are made.

Therefore in my opinion, the NONSENSE that passes for weapon moves will do nothing but get the person attempting such, in trouble against even a beginner, let alone an experienced street fighter. In fact, the only way that the nonsense which tournaments call weapons techniques would help someone on the street is unless opponents fell over laughing and knocked themselves out! (If you think I am merely contemptuous, you vastly underestimate my feelings!)
SO

Enough of that!! On to some important stuff.

GENERAL RULES

Throughout this book there are several principles that you need to keep in mind. These principles apply to every weapon discussed, whether it be the Nunchaku, the sword, the knife or the club. I will cut to the chase here and tell you flat out ... Ignore these principles at your own risk. This is reality, folks, like it or not!

- 1) There is an inverse relationship to the mass of a weapon and the speed at which it can be swung. Thus if you want to be fast, chose a light weapon!
- 2) Yes, bigger stronger people can make larger/ heavier weapons move faster than smaller people can. That is a fact of life that smaller people, myself included, have to accept.

However, the concept here is not the bigger gun theory but rather the right size gun.

Choosing a weapon, which is too large, will not give you an edge either. In fact, the smaller person with the smaller weapon may just clean your clock before you can even get your gigantic, super impressive, deadly killing weapon up to working speed. The truth is that the Rambo style weapon doesn't work well on the street because this type of weapon is just too large and clumsy. Again, sure they will work against an amateur... so will enough garlic, on your breath. It is the pro you need to learn to deal with here, not some moron who thinks he is the latest answer to the turtles!

- 3) The amount of damage a weapon does is not only related to its mass but also to the velocity it has at the time of impact. And of course the target AND penetration but more on those points later. In regards to force delivered, the rule of mass times the velocity squared applies here. This means that if you have two identical weapons; one of which is moving at a certain speed and the other twice as fast, the faster weapon will have four times as much damaging energy upon impact. Therefore bigger is not always the better. However, you have to have

enough mass so that the force is delivered directly into your opponent and not deflected away. This is why a plastic Nunchaku that can move extremely fast can deliver a very strong stinging strike but really won't do much damage.

The formula $KE=1/2MV^2$ applies.

The reason is of course that there is NO mass and what little kinetic energy (KE) the Nunchaku does build up in that incredibly fast swing is also absorbed by the Nunchaku as it deforms (bends) and vibrates upon impact. (I will get into this again later in the chapter on flexible weapons). Thus you should choose a weapon, which has as much mass as you can handle without compromising your speed potential.

4) The amount of damage caused by a weapon strike is directly related to the amount of energy delivered divided by size of the impact area. I don't want to turn this into a math class but you can quickly see that the point of a spear, having far less surface area will cause much more damage than the end of a Nunchaku pushed with the same force. Therefore, when you chose your favorite weapon, figure out where the impact points are. For example, if you like the stick and like end-on jabs, then a stick with tapered points would be more effective than one with a flat end.

5) Damage done is directly related to the amount of energy ABSORBED. Meaning glancing blows don't work as well. While that should be obvious, it obviously is not, as most people do not angle weapons strikes so as to penetrate, instead weapons are just swung without any consideration of the angle of IMPACT. Thus the weapon does it best damage when it strikes at a 90 degree angle to the point it is hitting [yes that extrapolates to knives because the point and the blade are in fact at 90 degrees from each other].

6) I see so many people that just swing at a person when they should be targeting hands or directing the force of their weapon strike at the organs below where they are hitting. In EITHER case you are going to do dramatically more effective damage than just hitting in general!

7) The effectiveness of any weapon is NOT served by swinging it behind your back your legs, or parts of your body that do not face your opponent. Other moves like rolling on the ground, swinging the weapon high over your head or holding it out in front of you to impress your opponent are worse than worthless because they remove the weapon's danger potential (against your opponent) while causing you to spend your energy re-establishing control of yourself and your weapon while your opponent has time and opportunity to play a tune on your head.

In short, ALL weapons techniques should be done short, fast, aimed directly to the point of causing damage to your opponent and not done to impress anyone else. You should not be trying to impress anyone with your weapons skills. (If you are into that nonsense, try Hollywood.)

8) If you have to get into a fight where weapons are used you need to be very conscious that someone (probably everyone involved) is going to get hurt! BAD! Fights, which involve weapons, should be always avoided like the plague. The best way to win is not to be there.

Even if you win, the chances are very good even if you do not get physical injury you will wind up in a court of law and your ability of being able to convince the jury that you just had to do all that damage to protect yourself is much less likely when the police reports state that you have this big bad Rambo weapon in your possession.

There is an old Chinese saying which I will probably use again in this book but which definitely applies to weapons fighting. "When two tigers fight, one is killed-the other maimed." Weapons are not toys! If you need something to impress your girlfriend then go buy some stylish clothes. This is not some sort of game. Reality, boring though it may be, is what counts in staying alive!

One of the things you should notice as this book progresses is that the chapters get shorter as the book progresses. That is not because I have less to say about the weapons in the back of the book. Instead because the principles, which I have already covered will apply to the new weapons and there is no sense wasting my time and boring you with repetition.

In short, think about the principles I have already covered, try to apply them to the new weapon and then read the chapter to get areas of differences and special principles which apply to that weapon class.

Reality has an inverse relationship to ego.

Basic Weapon Theory

When I was younger I was walking home one day, through an alley that I probably shouldn't have even been in, when out of the shadows stepped what appeared to be an older teenage boy with a pair of Nunchaku.

"Give me some money," he demanded, swinging the Nunchaku in my direction menacingly.

My reply was less than polite, as I informed him into which prominent part of his anatomy he could put the Nunchaku.

Determined to convince me of the error of my ways, he swung at my head. I sidestepped his swing and added a comment about his ancestry to help him increase his well-controlled calmness.

He swung again and missed, really getting angry at my snicker. On his next swing, I sidestepped him again, but at an angle that crossed his body. He missed me all right, and with the momentum of the swing he struck the side of his own knee. Favoring that knee, but still on his feet, he paused, his hand holding the Nunchaku in front of his body for a bit too long of a period of time. So, being the nice guy I am, I added a kick to return the working end of the Nunchaku back into action. With him still holding onto the other end. The Nunchaku resumed its swing and struck him right in the face, raising a huge welt and causing a cut.

He had obviously had enough for he dropped the Nunchaku and took off on a wobbly run down the alley as fast as he could navigate, my laughing adding insult to his injuries.

The point here is not how good I was (because I wasn't!), but how bad he was. In fact, this is merely an example of how bad most people are who swing weapons.

Time and again, I see people put their faith in (and their mouth behind) their supposed ability in some weapon, based solely upon techniques they have only marginally learned in their dojo. Worse,

most of those techniques were probably taught by someone, who didn't have the faintest idea of the theory behind the weapon - IN COMBAT.

IU am going to Note RIGHT HERE that there is a DRAMATIC different between swinging something in the air and being able to make contact with something [or someone] IN A USABLE WAY. Just hitting someone may merely piss them off. And the time you took to do that may cost you your life! Effective use of weapons is FAR more complicated than the BS put out by Hollywood.

Oh, these so called instructors were someone who can swing the weapons with amazing (at least in their own mind), speed and agility through the air. Rarely, however, have these so called experts ever practiced real combat with any of the weapons in which they claim expertise.

NOTE REAL weapons have both significantly different weight and balance and frequently have sharp edges that will get you cut if you do something dumb!

In fact, most of these self-pronounced experts, have never made any contact (against anything at all, including a bag) with their weapon, but have only learned to swing these weapons against empty air. Furthermore, the better these so called experts can swing a particular weapon, the better they think they are with every weapon!

That statement is going to make many people mad. I don't care; it's absolutely true! There is absolutely no relationship between combat use of a weapon and the garbage that passes for tournament-style and movie weapon use nowadays.

The truth of the matter is that there is a big difference between understanding how a weapon is supposed to work and merely being able to swing it in a fancy pattern or with "blinding speed." Weapons respond completely differently when they are making contact with other weapons or your opponent than they do when swung through empty air. Anyone who has not had experience with a weapon contacting both other people and other weapons should not make claims of expertise with that weapon.

The fact of the matter is that trying to use a weapon without understanding the theory behind that particular weapon is worse than doing a form without understanding what the moves of the form are for. say worse, because if there is a particular move, or moves, in a form that you don't understand,

you are probably not going to try to use that move on the street. That is because you lack the confidence in the move working. Therefore, you have the good sense not to try the particular move in a dangerous situation. With a weapon, however, good sense seems to go out the window. For some reason, people seem to think that weapons make them invincible. The faster and fancier these self-proclaimed experts can swing a weapon, the more confidence they place in the weapon as a final solution.

So what happens when they run up against someone who is better trained in taking a weapon away than they are in using it? They get hurt, that's what happens.

Let me reiterate for the record, there is a big difference between someone who is an "expert" at swinging a weapon or "weapon forms" and someone who has been taught the theory behind weapons. For example, the user will probably know all the fancy moves. They will also probably be able to execute those moves faster. What they won't know is how to use the weapon when there is someone on the other side who is fighting back.

-

For example, let us examine the short stick.

BEFORE WE START I WANT IT CLEAR THAT I AM ONLY ADDRESSING BASIC AND NOT ADVANCED WEAPON THEORY IN THIS CHAPTER.

Every martial art that uses any weapons includes, under some name, the short staff/stick.

Maybe you have had some training with this weapon. If so, compare what you already know to the following principles and I am certain you will understand what I mean.

First off, there is the main principle of the strength of the weapon. By this I mean how much energy/emphasis you put on the weapon.

Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.
Abraham Lincoln

There is No rule that is meant not to be broken.
Except that I will win

QLK proverb

RULES [?]

Rule #1) NO weapon should receive more than 20% of your emphasis.

When you put too much emphasis on one particular technique or weapon, it is really no different than just using one leg or one hand with which to strike. You may have a very powerful, deadly blow with that arm or leg, but if that's all you've got, then all your opponent has to do is get around that technique and they can attack you anywhere else.

Note: By getting around that technique, I mean you should do exactly that if facing someone with a weapon: try to get around the weapon. Don't attack against their strength; attack against their weakness. Side-step your opponent and strike their back or knees or any of the areas they have left open because they thought the weapon would do it all for them. Simply there is a combat rule of take them apart piece by piece BEFORE you move in for the kill. NO it is not as fancy or elegant as Hollywood but it is a philosophy will keep you alive against a trained opponent that is trying to kill you too!

Rule #2) Never change from your normal fighting stance because you have picked up a weapon.

This is the most common mistake I see. The person may have developed the ability to move easily in a certain stance. They can protect themselves from anything within their sphere of influence. Generally they can also attack anything that crosses into the same range.

Suddenly, as soon as their hand closes on a weapon, they totally give up all the skills they have developed. They just face their opponent, weapon in hand, and expect their opponent to fall over dead with the first swing.

Note: The correct method is to learn to use the weapon so that you can do all the weapon's techniques while in your normal stances. This is why in Quan Li K'an lower belts don't touch weapons. How can you possibly learn to integrate a weapon into a correct technique if you haven't even mastered the technique yet?

Rule #3) Don't let the weapon detract from your normal abilities.

Learn to do all your normal techniques with just as much grace with the weapon in your hand as you can without the weapon. There will come a time, especially when you are sparring with someone else who has a weapon, where your weapon will be tied up with theirs. At that point, both weapons are nullified and who ever can perform their normal techniques the fastest and best will be the winner.

Note: Especially learn to do the spin turns and kicks because these techniques will help you to slip the force and free up your weapon again without being driven backwards by your opponents force.

Rule #4) Learn the various zones of your weapon and use each correctly!

This is another area of horrendous misinformation that is overlooked by most so-called weapon "experts." Each weapon, no matter what it is, has different zones that work best for different things. Now, we had chosen the short stick or staff for our discussion and many people (who don't know better) would say that a stick is a stick and it is all the same. Well, a stick is just a stick, at least until you pick it up. Then that stick suddenly has four different zones.

Please Note: Each weapon has its own unique zones and strengths. Do not extrapolate from one weapon to another. Each weapon is different. Learn the theory offered in this chapter and then figure out the characteristics for your weapon yourself, if there is no one to teach you correctly. At least that way you will have some idea of how to use the weapon correctly should you need to do it for real.

Note: These rules are for one-handed techniques. There are slightly different rules when you are using two-handed techniques. Two-handed rules are based on the differences in leverage and once you understand the theory of single-handed techniques you can easily adapt the same principles to two-handed techniques.

5) Watch edges - They bite back!

This should be obvious! In the olden days, weapons like the Sai had EDGES. They cut not just trapped! So much of the nonsense I see today is total BS. You don't do something that shoves a sharp edge against your own skin if you are smart. I am not going to say more.

ZONES

NOTE: This bit of information applies to MOST WEAPONS

Zone 1: This is the distal 1/4 or the tip of the stick. This area moves the fastest as you swing your stick. That makes it the best area to use for fast, stinging, cutting blows without a lot of hard muscle power behind them. You should not even try to put much muscle behind this area. The lever action is against you and muscle power will just slow down the speed advantage. This is also the area of fast jabs with the end of the stick. Again, don't try to put tremendous power behind the jab, as the lever action will nullify any major muscle strength you apply. Use this area to jab the soft points of the body, like nerve areas, eyes, or the solar plexus.

Zone 2: This is the middle portion of the stick. This area starts where Zone 1 leaves off and goes to about three to four inches in front of your hand. This area is used for moderately hard blows. Here you can use muscle power to add force to your blows. Use this area to strike your opponent's extremities, or their weapon with the intent of driving it aside, etc.

Zone 3: This is the area from Zone 2 to where your hand starts. This area is for capturing. This is a slow moving area and one with the most muscle leverage available for capturing and deflecting your opponent's weapon. This is the area to use to deflect a strong blow aimed at you. If you use Zone 2, there will still be a significant lever action working against you. Use Zone 3 to deflect blows and move your stick in small circular motions once you have made contact with your opponent's weapon so that you can nullify their strength without compromising yours.

Note: Some Chinese styles are particularly good at using this area and their tactic is to block your weapon at this point and then use sensitivity to roll around your weapon and attack you with the tip (Zone 1) of their weapon.

Zone 4: This is the few inches from the back tip of the weapon to your hand. This area is frequently over looked, by most people, who claim that they know how to use weapons. This is the strongest area you have for delivering power blows. This is best used by doing a spinning technique and then pulling the back tip of the weapon into your opponent, an example of this would be similar to a spinning back elbow.

Rule #5) Learn the weakness of each particular weapon.

Each weapon has its own individual weakness. One weakness of the stick is that it leaves your hand vulnerable, which makes it, therefore, an attack site. If you are fighting someone who has a stick, aim for their hand, and, obviously, try to keep your opponent from doing the same. Another weakness of the stick is that unless you block heavy blows (say a baseball bat or a lead pipe) at an angle, the stick will probably break. Any stick, that is so large that it doesn't break, is called a club and is used differently than a short Stick. Short sticks are not designed to stop a powerhouse blow, side on, any more than you want your arm or leg to be. Angle the blow so that the force slips off. Move your hand out of the way by trading control to the other hand at the appropriate time.

Note: By the way, the more complicated a weapon is, the more weaknesses it has. It is no different than any other technique. Fancy doesn't impress those who know what they are doing.

Rule #6) Practice actual striking, with your weapon.

All too often, the fancy weapon expert thinks that all they have to do is strike their opponent with the weapon and the fight is over. Rarely is that true for a non-edged weapon and with a knife this only holds true if you have done something like cut their inside open or decapitated them. Even the average stab wound doesn't incapacitate someone immediately. They may easily live long enough to kill you, if you give them the chance.

Another perfect example is the Nunchaku. The fancy experts know how to swing them in the air but have no experience with how they will rebound on contact, especially from a glancing blow. Therefore, once they have hit their opponent, there is a dead time while they are trying to regain control of the weapon. Want to guess what your angry, but not incapacitated opponent is going to be doing during that time? Practice hitting a bag, not just your sparing partners stick!!!

In fact, you should practice with every weapon against both fixed and semi-fixed objects. A fixed post and a movable heavy bag (not a speed or lightweight punching bag) would be examples of these. This practice is crucially important because it allows you to learn these vital bits of information:

- 1) You will be able to determine the amount of force you will actually be able to deliver.
- 2) The speed at which you can move the weapon.
- 3) How quickly you will be able to get the weapon back into action after you strike.

and especially...

- 4) The weakness of that weapon i.e. how you can be attacked while trying to hit your opponent.

If you learn to abide by the basic rules I have just given you, plus learn to understand your weapon's strengths and weaknesses, you will be a much more successful martial artist. You may even survive on the street against someone who has gone up against the real thing before.

Ode to the rice flail. We may have been better off, with just the rice.

We definitely would have been better off without the movie version of this weapon.

Nunchaku

From the first chapter, you might think that I am against the Nunchaku as a practical weapon. This is both true and false. The fact is that I really do not see the Nunchaku as a practical weapon for the street. Mostly because you are rarely going to have one in your hip pocket when you need one AND the fact that in most states it is illegal to be carrying one unless you are going to or from a martial arts class and can prove that fact. In short, flash a pair of Nunchaku around and your friendly neighborhood cop is going to give you a room without a view with good reasons. (It also gets back to only the criminals having weapons.)

Actually though, the Nunchaku does have usefulness beyond the pure historical point of view. And that reason is training. Proper instruction and learning of motion principles by use of the Nunchaku teaches techniques which can be applied to a great deal of weapons. It also (with a competent instructor) begins to teach you the limits of the weapon and how weapons can be taken away from an attacker or from you.



Note: I will probably make some people mad with this statement, but the fact is, in my opinion, unless someone can teach you how to take a Nunchaku away in mid-flight then they have NO business teaching the Nunchaku except for historical reasons. The truth is that these “instructors” are not competent with the fighting aspects of the weapon. What they are trained in are movie concepts. FAR different than what you are going to run into on the street!

Therefore, proper training with the Nunchaku should be first learning to swing the weapon while in a proper fighting stance. Here I mean the normal fighting stance you use, NOT just the front on stance. Unless you really plan to fight that way, and very few people really are trained to do so, you are going to have to sacrifice your normal defenses to kicks and punches. Not a very good trade off if you ask me.

You do what you Trained ... so you should Train what you will do

The second thing you should learn is to do your kicks, elbows, and every other technique that you do from a fighting stance while adding the swinging portion of the Nunchaku. Thus you will be able to do your normal attacks and blocks while simultaneously using the Nunchaku. As I said earlier you should only count on the weapon to extend your range and increase your fighting ability by about 10 to 20 percent. Sure, it will be more effective against someone who is not trained, but then if they are not trained, you really don't need a weapon against them, do you?

Comment: This is not the movies! Unlike the movies you are not going to be able to strike someone (hard) in the head and have them get up for another round. Neither are you, going to be able to reach out for that perfect swing. To survive a fight with a competent opponent, especially one who has a weapon of their own, you must choose your tactics carefully. Luckily, even holding a weapon most people cannot defend themselves against multiple simultaneous attacks. Therefore your main choices are:

- 1) Get your opponent busy defending themselves from your kicks and punches and then swing the weapon to finish the job.

or

- 2) Get them busy defending themselves against the weapon and use another technique to finish the fight!

The bottom line is that this is NOT a game! This is not some fancy tournament where you are judged by the number of points you make or how pretty your techniques are. You are judged by one thing and one thing only: did you survive?

NOTE: ALL fights, and especially fights with weapons are a matter of hurting or maiming your opponent until they cannot continue. Because weapons can severely increase the amount of damage you do, they should be considered ONLY as a last resort because you are not going to be able to end it with a simple bruise or two (except in rare cases against amateurs) and someone is going to be seriously hurt before it is over. ONLY proper realistic training with the real understanding of the weapon potentials and limitations will keep the someone, who gets hurt, from being you!

One more comment.

Time and time again, I see people training with the Nunchaku who think that they are going to jab someone with the weapon's ends. Usually these people even seem to think they are going to hit with the both of the middle ends at the same time. I will admit that it is theoretically possible and may work against an absolute beginner.

The truth is the move takes FAR too much time to accomplish and it has no real power anyway (at least compared to other techniques). If you really want to jab your opponent with one of the ends, then get in close enough and use one of the back (outside) ends (zone 4), which are held closest to your hand! Yes, this is a backhand technique and therefore the power and leverage you have will make the strike extremely effective. Strike hard with the other (far) end and you are going to have the Nunchaku twist on you as you strike and probably sprain your wrist (because of leverage problems).

So, even if you do any damage to your opponent, you are also probably going to hurt yourself. Not a good trade off in my book. Yes, you can do wrist exercises or if you are a person with especially strong wrists you can do the technique, but it still takes far too much time because you need to move both hands simultaneously, which is dramatically slower than moving just one!

WARNING: Wear a motorcycle or other protective helmet during this kind of practice. HEAD injuries are FOREVER! And they accumulate!

The last thing you should learn is to take the weapon away from your attacker. (I mean that you **should** learn it!) Because there are some people out there who will ask how to take a Nunchaku away from someone who has swung it at them, and because you should know how to do this, I will include it in this section.

(Please note that this explanation is the best as I can do in words. Someday I hope to have a video on weapons, which will demonstrate the technique better than words can describe. Unfortunately it is harder to describe than to do.)

Basically there are two techniques for stopping the Nunchaku. Neither of them includes letting the Nunchaku hit you and then grabbing it. There is no point if your head is already bashed in. At that point the only thing you are going to grab is the ground. You also aren't going to grab the Nunchaku if they break your arm first, so let's forget that nonsense also.)

The first method is to throw a circular movement with your hand in a reverse knife hand technique (a ridge hand technique), which strikes the chain. This, of course, will cause the chain to bend at that point and dramatically change the point of impact usually diverting it to the point where it strikes only thin air or your opponent (the one who swung it at you in the first place, so no pity there).

The second technique requires a modification of the first technique where instead of hitting the chain you basically grab and then twist the chain. (This is a Snake Technique, for those of you who understand.) If you twist rapidly and with a fair amount of pressure it will cause severe torque on your opponent's forearm and pain withdrawal reflex will force them to release the Nunchaku.

Please note here that you should not reach the Nunchaku in a straight-line fashion. The best method is to move in a small circular arc with your hand winding up grasping the chain or rope connecting the two sticks.

The reason to grab the connecting chain/rope is simple ... trying to grab the sticks as it moves means you have to move your hand MUCH faster AND then deal with the force of the momentum of the stick once you do grab it. There is no reason for that when the connecting chain/rope is only moving at the speed that the (opponent's) grasped stick moves and there is VERY little force in the chain/rope to deal with.

The reason to move your hand in a circular motion towards the chain/rope rather than a straight line is from experience ... The opponent WILL be moving the stick they are holding ... Thus a circular arc is far more likely to intersect the path of the chain/rope than a straight line motion will ... and thus your hand may initially move straight but you then have to move it to play catch up with the chain/rope ... better IMHO to move so that it comes to you.

Obviously the second technique is much harder but definitely not impossible because I can do the technique and I am not particularly fast. The reason for this is because you must hit a small target (the chain) with a smaller object (your hand) while that original small target is rapidly approaching

your head. In the first technique it doesn't matter if it is your hand, forearm, wrist or whatever that hits the chain, as long as something does. This causes the flight path of the Nunchaku to be diverted and it should be your opponent who gets hit and not yourself.

Of the two, the first technique is the one that can be learned the easiest and should be practiced first. Not until you get the first technique down should you even try the second technique. The second technique is the best one, however, because it gives you the best control and actually gives you the weapon.

You will notice in your practice, however, that you really need to get good at both techniques, for if the person who swings at you is any good, there will be times when you do not have the time to move your arm through a large arc and get to the chain before it hits you. However, you almost always will have time to reach out with your hand and directly grab the chain.

Note: See the note on pads at the end of this section. The only way to learn these techniques is for your sparring opponent to try and hit you - not close to you - you! Work with foam Nunchaku and proper protection or you will be very sore and very sorry!

Other notes about the Nunchaku:

- 1) There is an inverse relationship to the weight of the weapon and the speed at which you can swing it. The lighter the weapon the faster you can move it. I have been told (I have no first hand knowledge, but I believe it) that most movies use plastic Nunchaku because they are EXTREMELY fast and can't hurt anyone.
- 2) The flashier the swing the less effective it is! Especially do NOT do swings around your back or your legs! The only way that is going to hurt your opponent is if they fall over laughing! Forget the flash and learn simple, effective techniques.
- 3) Use rubber ball-bearing chucks when you are learning! The ball bearings are important because while string/rope/straight chain ones are more historically correct. They will not always swing true. When you are learning you should give yourself every advantage you can. Once you are good, then you can move on to do whatever you like.

4) Practice striking against a bag. Then you will understand how to accommodate the rebound so that you can return the Nunchaku into effective motion. You will never learn this technique with a mid air swing.

5) Practice against a fixed post. The rebound will be different than with a bag and you need to be able to handle both types of rebound.

6) Advanced technique is with Nunchaku with a moderately long chain so that you can strike and wrap around your opponent's arm (especially a knife wielding arm) or neck. (See also the chapter on flexible weapons.) Do Not assume you are going to do a two handed block against a knife on the street - it won't work! [Well you obviously can but you will regret it!]

7) DO NOT practice under arm captures! It only creates more bad habits than it's worth. If you do a capture technique then it becomes patently obvious to your opponent which hand to attack. I do not care how fast or fancy you get you are just setting yourself up to get your weapon hand blocked by your opponent. Why? So that you can look cool?

8) If the Nunchaku are moving too fast, it decreases the force of the strike. One major problem with the Nunchaku is that the second (unheld) stick is always lagging behind the held one as it is swung. This becomes a real problem when you strike because most people trying to strike move their hand past their intended target. The second (unheld) stick however is pulled along by one end, and thus does not strike the object squarely. Instead it strikes the object an angled glancing blow, which significantly decreases the force that is delivered.

(The formula appropriate here is that **delivered force = Cosine of the angle of impact times the pulling force.**) Thus to maximize the impact force, you should stop several inches before you strike your intended target so that the momentum will carry the second stick into the target.

Note that because the first stick has stopped the second stick will be pulled back into a perpendicular line and strike your target square on.

The closer you get to stopping your hand parallel to the intended target, the more efficient your strike will be because the pulled stick will hit the object perpendicular.

Note: Do not suddenly retract or try to snap the Nunchaku like a whip because unless you impact EXACTLY on the far end of the Nunchaku you will only decrease the impacting force.

Wear a protective (full face covering) helmet whenever you begin to practice the Nunchaku or begin to work with a new pair. You may think this is silly but I guarantee that if you follow this safety precaution you will thank me after the first couple of swings. Even a rubber Nunchaku can raise a very nasty welt and produce a serious headache. Furthermore every pair of Nunchaku has its own weight and swing characteristics. There is enough difference between brands and weights that you will have to adapt to each. It is best not to adapt by bouncing your Nunchaku off your own head!

Wear pads (football or hockey pads work great) on the shoulders, arms, forearms and hands and a groin guard, even though you are not trying to hit each other. Accidents happen and you will wish you had the pads once you have been hit - even if it's a pair of foam Nunchaku! Be safe!

A good technique for learning how to catch correctly is to feel the Nunchaku strike the point where you want it to land before it actually begins the swing. This automatically causes your body to concentrate at moving the Nunchaku in the proper alignment and angle to land where you want it to.

In summary I think that the Nunchaku is a useful weapon for training but not for street combat. I train my students in weapons by starting with this weapon because of the foundation it give them in good principles. They move on from there much better prepared, even though I fully know that in reality they would most likely never touch a pair of Nunchaku in a real fight even if they had the chance to get their hands on them. For they have also learned how to take them away!

Three Section staff

I would be remiss if I did not include a section on the three section staff. The three section staff is a weapon which seems to almost exclusively belong to some Chinese martial arts but one, never the less, which seems to hold a fascination for many martial artists no matter what their background. Being a cross between the Nunchaku and the staff it has properties of both and enough flash to keep the movie crowds interested. Hence its appearance in many B grade Chinese movies. [The Chinese love their martial arts movies. Reality only limits the entertainment.]



Actually as a weapon goes, the three section staff has a lot of good points. Obviously it is not one that will be found lying about on the street, nor will you find anything that resembles it. So that concepts of practicality or usefulness are nonexistent. What makes the three section staff useful, as a weapon is that when held properly, the center section retains most of the defensive properties of the staff whilst the end sections have the striking ability of the Nunchaku.

However unlike the Nunchaku the range of the three section staff is dramatically longer for it is primarily a weapon designed to keep you opponent at bay. Unlike the Nunchaku it has the ability to suddenly extend its strike range up to three times of its normal swing range.

Like every weapon the three section staff also has drawbacks. The main drawback is that it requires both hands and significant training to get used to the dynamics of both sections swinging. Yes you can swing it with one hand but not with any power.

ALL weapons (except projectile weapons) which expect to stop the opponent at a range before the opponent comes into their strike range NEED both hands on them to deliver enough force to topple

the opponent. Also because it takes fairly significant concentration to operate, it has a tendency to take the practitioners mind off using other parts of their body for fighting, rather than just standing there swinging the thing. (Thus it violates the rule I stated earlier about a weapon not getting more than 20% of your concentration) Finally, because of the increased mass of each section it is much harder to get the weapon back into action once it has struck something than with a lighter mass weapon. The same rules for practice against fixed and moving targets apply here as they do for other weapons.

Another problem with the three section staff is its difficulty to make a major change in direction fast, this is necessary against a trained opponent. Now this is not a unique problem as any weapon of mass has this problem but it means that unless you are prepared for it, sudden changes in the angle of attack of your opponent can leave you worse than just unprepared, it can leave you tied up with a weapon which has both of your hands occupied. This of course is how to attack someone wielding such a weapon.

However, despite these difficulties, I do recommend the three section staff for training purposes because with proper instruction the student can learn to flow with the weapon. They will have to work hard at learning this and it will enforce the concept with other weapons. Secondly one can learn to use its variable range fairly readily and the ability to think of striking in both long and short term ranges at the same time definitely does improve the students mental ability to flow with the battle.

Bottom line: The three section staff is more than useful for dojo training, but not practical for the street, UNLESS you spend CONSIDERABLE Time training with it, and figure out some **magical** way to keep on in your pocket. [Yes I am being sarcastic]

“Life is rough. Stupidity makes it rougher.”

John Wayne, ‘The Green Berets’

Short sticks

Single stick

The short stick is one of my favorite weapons. The reasons are the possible usage of such a weapon on the street, (versus for example a Katana, which while very effective, is hardly ever available when you are being mugged), and the fact that the versatility is high!

We have talked about the principles of the short stick so I will not reiterate that. Instead I am going to add some comments on the actual usage of the short stick in combat (fighting) situations.

Probably the biggest mistake that most people make when they are using a short stick is to get into a power struggle with the weapon. They begin thinking that the weapon is some sort of baseball bat and that they are going to be able to take their opponent’s head off with the thing. **A short stick is NOT a cudgel!**

We already addressed how the tip of the weapon is very deadly in the chapter on basic weapon theory (it can easily shatter concrete blocks!), if used correctly but that does not mean that you are going to do anything but get yourself in trouble if you use it like a club. Let your opponent get their hands on the weapon and its effectiveness is worse than useless. The only correct thing you can do in such a situation is to abandon the weapon and attack them before they can begin to use the weapon against you!

The stick is in the classification of light weapons. Meaning that it has relatively small mass and it is NOT a club! Like all light weapons, the stick is best used when it is moving at a high velocity.

Thus the formula:

$$F=M*V^2$$

Where F is the force you deliver, M is the mass of the stick and V is the velocity you impact your target with.

As you can see, if you double the mass of the stick you can deliver twice the force. However, if you keep the mass the same (relatively light is better) and double the velocity you deliver four times the force to your target. (You can make that force nine times more by tripling the speed.) By the above formula it is much more effective to work with a light enough stick that you can move it very quickly.

Let me caution you about one thing, though. There is a trade off and that is you must have a material that is strong enough to hold up on impact with your opponent. It does no good to hit something only to have the weapon disintegrate because;

- 1) You will not have a weapon anymore

And

- 2) That disintegration will absorb much of the energy of impact rather than impart it to you opponent.

Therefore the appropriate technique for using a short stick is to keep your distance and use fast stinging attacks, especially at pressure point and poison hand areas until the person becomes disabled, then close in and use the point (zone 1 or zone 4) of the weapon at mid range to inflict more damage and finally use the stick against a pressure point area to apply increased pressure and thus control your opponent.

An example of this would be pressure point and poison point strikes to the; arms, knees, thighs and legs followed up by an end strike (zone 1) to the solar plexus followed by a pressure point capture which drives your opponent to the ground. Such an attack should take a matter of 3 to 7 seconds, well within the average length of time for a real fight.

Double Sticks

A comment about double sticks. First off, I agree that a person trained correctly in double stick fighting is approximately four times as deadly as a person who can use only one stick. (Equivalent quality of training assumed).

However, there are a lot of people who think because they can swing two sticks quickly they are well trained. They wish ... Nope, not true! Swinging two sticks without knowing how to hit makes you about a quarter as effective as really knowing how to handle a single stick.

Bet you knew I was going to say that. The comments I made earlier about the difference between swinging in mid air versus a live target hold true. However, there is an even more important point with double stick training is that many people learn by practicing with a partner...not a bad idea in itself, but instead of practicing to hit the body (lightly, of course, I do not recommend you beat the @#*&^ out of your sparring partner), they practice looking for and striking their opponent's weapon. There is NO value to this type of practice. Well there is ... you are practicing being a target (call that fresh meat) for anyone that knows what they are doing

The problem is that if you are facing another person, learning to look for your opponent's stick has little or no practical value in looking for body targets. You will not take your opponent out the action by hitting his stick. (Unless you are facing an amateur). Much worse is the fact that those who practice like this usually do their training face to face with their partner. The problem with this is that extremely few people learn to effectively use a straight on fighting stance (not the same as standing straight on and getting nailed). Why? Because they never practice this way.

Note: Fighting in a straight on stance is NOT the same or even close to fighting with your body tipped towards your opponent at 45 degrees. That is a disastrous mistake!!! If you don't know why this is so wrong read my other books or get my videos--especially the book and video on Advanced Fighting Techniques!

They are free on the Quanlikan.com website so?

So if you are one of those martial artists who do practice sparring in a straight on stance, then you are far ahead of the majority of martial artists and please disregard the last part of my comments. For the rest of you, why would you practice stick fighting in a stance you would not want to use on the street?

The crux of the problem is that unless you're dealing with an amateur you have made no consideration for the fact that your opponent on the street will be adding kicks, elbows and everything else they can into the fight. (Again back to the 20% rule.) The truth of the matter is that you need to practice in the stance you intend to use on the street. Secondly you need to practice against an opponent who will throw punches kicks, elbows, and their entire body against you, especially when you are trying to do a trap.

Note: I have seen a lot of good trapping techniques for double sticks but most of them fall apart when the person doing the trap receives a well-placed kick to the knee or groin. Do you realize how easy it is to abandon your weapon and spend your energy in placing a kick while they are still trying to recover from the sudden acquisition of your weapon? Again, I will gladly give my opponent my weapon if it gives me the time for a good clean shot at them.

Back to the matter at hand. The way to practice is to learn your stick techniques using your regular fighting stance and then start adding kicks and elbow and every other technique you know into the practice. Practice throwing elbows when your stick(s) have been stopped by your opponent's stick. I admit that it is controversial with some people claiming that another stick hit will hurt, but in my opinion, a well placed elbow to the head or throat will end the fight completely whereas a stick strike will hurt but will definitely not stop you unless it is placed to the same areas. (Note: as you step in to do the elbow, you automatically limit the target your opponent can strike, making your throat or head unlikely targets.)

Dreams are nice, but in the long run reality is far safer!

The Staff

Like most stick-type weapons the staff has a lot of street applicable uses. In fact, the possibility of being able to obtain a long stick (of some length or other) and using it in a street encounter are only second to being able to pick up a short stick. Therefore, I truly feel that time spent on learning the staff is well spent.

Like most weapon training, however, I have noticed that students who practice the staff tend to concentrate on movements that do not have street applicability. Probably the most glaringly obvious example of this is swinging the staff around the back. Again, techniques such as this may win you some points in the local tournament where they award them for fancy moves, but on the street, one has to admit that it takes time to maneuver a staff around your back and that during this time both hands are temporarily busy and thus your center line is WIDE open for attack. (Once again I blame the movies for their unrealistic portrayal of the time you have in a fight. If you had that much time, you would have the time to walk away!)

Another problem is the same as with other weapons. That is, students learn to practice by trying to hit their opponent's weapon. Just step back and watch students practice some time. Because of a combination of wanting to stay in control, trying to be nice and improper practice pads, students never seem to try to hit their opponent. They are content to hit their opponent's weapon. This, of course, creates four problems. The first is that on the street the bad guy is not going to be trying to hit your stick, he is going to be trying to hit YOU! If you are only used to trying to block someone who is used to aiming for your stick/staff then you will be used to blocking blows that are not directed towards your centerline. You had better believe that your opponent on the street is going to be trying to get to your centerline. That is where the major damage points are and where they can hurt you the most! So of course they are going to go for your centerline. And if you are only trained to reach out and hit your opponent's staff then your reflexes have taught you to reach away from the center line, and to only try to hit his weapon. In short, everything you learned is going to get you deeper into TROUBLE!

Note: Right here and now I need to publicly state that I do NOT believe in contact weapon practice without FULL and EXCELLENT padding. No, I do not mean just a few foam pads for the hands and legs. I believe that anyone who is going to do any serious weapon training especially with any type of stick weapon should be wearing hockey gloves and a motorcycle helmet plus FULL coverage for every part of the body that may even possibly be hit!

I don't care if it does make you look like some cross between Darth Vader and some alien from the fifth dimension. Full padding will not only keep you safe, it will allow you to train in a realistic style. I don't mean that by wearing pads you now have permission to try to beat your opponent in submission, because you can get hurt and hurt others through those pads.

It is just that with pads on, you can aim your strikes where they will aimed on the street. Like it or not, you learn what you practice. If you don't practice for real, how do you expect to be able to handle reality when it sticks its ugly nose in your face!

Problem number two with this type of dojo practice is that you never learn to protect your hands if someone is not trying to smash them. You had better believe that the very first thing your street opponent will do is smash your hands. You can't hold that weapon if your fingers are broken.

Especially with a staff, this is exactly what will happen because after the first contact of their weapon against yours, they are going to slide their weapon right down the shaft of your staff and see if they can catch your fingers. Believe me, that is exactly what I will do. A good street fighter is no less talented!

General problem number three is excessive force! For some reasons students seem to believe that if they strike hard enough they can drive their opponent's weapon out of their line of defense and then they can have a clear shot at their opponent's center line.

Well, sorry, folks, it doesn't work that way at all! Not only does trying to put a lot of force into a blow take more time to initiate (meaning you are slower and more likely to get hit before you even start), it also causes you to overreact if your opponent does not meet your blow with hard force. Here is how the scenario goes. You strike hard at an opponent who has their weapon held somewhat loosely in their hands. However, instead of your weapon striking their weapon hard, it barely touches it and

the line of force of your weapon is redirected. Suddenly all that force you placed behind the blow is causing you to over swing and as you see yourself opening up you realize that the tip of your opponent's weapon is headed directly at your... whatever.

You get the point. The moral is that too many people have it in their mind that because they have a weapon in their hand that can increase the force they deliver and that they should add their own muscle energy into that equation. WRONG.

The truth is that the best way to handle a staff is with sensitivity! Use the weapon lightly until you know you have an opening that you can reach before they can block. Then, and only then, deliver full force. In short, be very careful that you don't over commit yourself!

Problem number four is to not be fancy. (Yes, yes, I know I am repeating myself. My Alzheimer's is acting up. But if you try fancy moves in a fight with a staff, you will have Alzheimer's too... from head trauma!) Especially with a weapon that has a fair amount of mass you need to learn simple direct blocking techniques.

The KISS rule definitely applies here! There just isn't time to do fancy rolls or twists. By the time you have done something fancy, you have gotten nailed hard by your opponent's weapon.

The best thing you can do is to hold your staff at a 45-degree angle from straight up and down and 15 to 45 degrees out (head out foot in) from you and then to practice blocking by moving the staff sideways.

No spin or twist, just move both hands to the side simultaneously. When you get good you should add the body movement that moves exactly opposite to what your hands do when they are performing a blocking maneuver.

(Notice I said, "blocking" not "striking." In striking you use your body to accentuate your movements. See the other books I have written on efficiency and fighting techniques for deeper and better explanations.)

One last comment. Unlike in the movies, it takes a lot of force to knock someone off their feet. A simple one-armed swing will not topple your opponent unless you are exceedingly lucky and catch

them in a very unbalanced state! In fact even a two-armed swing will not knock the average person over, let alone a martial artist who has a concept of a good strong stance.

The truth is that if you are going to sweep someone with a staff, you must use both hands and have the close end of the staff against your own hip so that you can use your hip and body as the fulcrum. (Meaning you had better be in a good stance yourself or it will be you who winds up on the ground.)

I don't care how fast you swing the staff, if you don't have a good solid fulcrum to support the staff when contact is made, all that velocity will do is cause pain (possibly significant pain but there is a big difference between pain and making an object of mass move). But fall over... hardly!

Flexible Weapons

Probably one of the more intriguing weapon classes which is not really thought much about by most non-Chinese martial artists is the class of flexible weapons. By this I mean the class of weapons that includes the chain, whip, rope and so on.

One of the reasons why, is the misunderstanding of the potential of these weapons. Most people who have seen such weapons in action, whether the action portrayed has been in real life or the movies, realize that such weapons can wrap around a person. This then gives you something to pull against. The typical movie ploy is that the weapon wraps around the opponent's feet, which are then promptly pulled out from under him. Unfortunately most people believe that this is the extent of the usefulness of this class of weapons. No so!

Like many things that Hollywood has touched, the reality or potential is far from what is portrayed. If that were all the potential of these weapons they would not be very useful. Most of the time the person can simply side step such attacks. Even if the person doesn't side step, the power required to pull someone off their feet (unless the weapons is placed exactly and your opponent cooperates by keeping both feet together and having their balance too high) will be too much for most people to accomplish quickly enough to be usable on the street. (Sure, you may be able to do it if you take the time to plant your feet and put your back into it, but what is your opponent going to be doing during this time? Playing tiddlywinks? Maybe with your head.)

The real potential of this weapon class varies dramatically depending on the weapon itself. For example, let us look at the whip. Besides reaching out and wrapping, the whip (as ridiculed above) is usually thought of by most people, or as only a prop, for a western movie. As a cute, but impractical toy or a joke for a sadists tool.

NOTE as kid on a farm I had to use a whip - not for show but to help with herding cattle out of the brush. It is not as fun or as easy as it seems!

In reality the whip is designed as a cutting weapon. As you jerk the whip forward and then suddenly backwards, the tip accelerates faster than the speed of sound that is what causes the popping sound. At this high speed the energy applied to a surface area is tremendous, and since the tip has little mass there is little deep penetration of the target. Therefore the skin (or what ever the contact area is) bears the brunt of the force of the attack... producing lacerations... and in trained hands severe ones!

Also, at this speed the tip of the whip is moving far faster than the eye can possibly see, so unless you can follow the part that is being held in the hand, you are going to get hit.

Note: Since your opponent is drawing their hand away from you as the tip of the whip is moving towards you, it is extremely hard for your brain to follow such motions anyway, because all their actions translate to movements by the whip in opposite directions to which their hands move.

The truth is that a short whip in the hands of a trained person is an extremely deadly weapon! It can easily and very rapidly reach out and cut a deep gash in whatever it touches. IT can also be used as a wrapping weapon in close range!

The long whip (defined as 4 feet long or longer), however, does fall into realm of Hollywood props because to move the whip takes so much time that your opponent can usually reach you and tell you personally about their dislike of the idea of you cutting them.

CHAIN

Another weapon in this class is the chain. Besides being a wrapping weapon, the chain has a lot of kinetic energy built up in it as it is swinging. This is due to the increased mass of the chain compared to a rope or whip. Therefore, when you are struck by a swinging chain you get all the energy slammed into you at the point of contact plus all the energy contained in the chain from the contact point to the end of the chain.

Worse, as with any flexible material, when it strikes something and bends around it, the tip of the flexible material accelerates dramatically. Thus the speed of the tip is going to be dramatically higher that when you first made contact with the material.

This can be shown, by looking at an ice skater, doing a spin. As the skater pulls their arms inward their rotation speed increases dramatically! This is the same thing as happens to the tip of the chain, when it wraps around something.

By the simple math equations of

$$KE = \frac{1}{2} MV^2$$

KE= Kinetic Energy, M= mass, V= Velocity

This shows the kinetic energy of the chain as it moves, and you should see that the energy of any mass (a chain of any significant weight), can easily cause major bruises or possibly even broken bones as it wraps around an arm, leg or chest. At the very least you are going to get hurt.

Meaning once again that the Hollywood idea of trying to hit you with the tip of the chain, as seen in the movies, is not the best way and that if you do reach out and grab a fast moving chain of any mass, you are going to wish you hadn't.

ROPE

The rope is probably the least effective of any weapons in this class because it is solely limited to wrapping techniques. However, that does not mean that it is without merit because while it is not as effective of an offensive weapon, the rope can easily be accelerated due to it having less mass and can cause a very painful stinging action and can wrap around a knife hand to give you a second to reach in and express your vote on the matter. Now personally, I am not one to carry a rope with me. However, since many men and quite a few women do wear clothes that include a belt you have a rope-like weapon with you. And the Belt has been used for a Knife-defense weapon for centuries!

Please note that unless you are going to be able to finish the job once you close, you are far better running away, because the rope (belt or whatever) is not going to give you but a split second advantage. There is nothing wonderful here, but for a good martial artist, that is all they really need to change everything!

Note: Have no illusions here though, in most cases it takes far longer to get a belt out and into action than you think it might!

By the way the method to make a flexible weapon wrap around something on contact is to retract it slightly as it make contact. This causes the weapon to maintain a firm grip on what ever it is striking and thus wrap around it so that it can be pulled to you (or vise versa).

Once you get good at this you will also note that with several shakes you can make the weapon (except the chain) let go of what ever you had it wrap (assuming that it is not a whomever who has no intentions of letting you do the wrapping trick again).

Weighted Weapons

Besides the rope, chain and whip, the flexible class of weapons also has a sub-class of modified weapons called weighted weapons. The short definition of this sub-class is that a weight has been added to the end of the length of rope, chain, or whatever. This added weight dramatically changes the action and ability of the weapon and dramatically increases its potential for causing damage.

Now the mass that is placed on the end of the rope is usually not very large. Therefore the situation is not the same as with a chain strike. Like the chain, the weapon is swung and as soon as contact is made with an object it begins to wrap around that object. So far there is very little damage done, which is similar to a rope.



Like the chain and other flexible weapons, however, as the rope of lightweight chain begins to wrap, there is a sudden and dramatic increase in speed as the tip of the weight accelerates through an ever-decreasing radius of a spiral.

When the weighted tip finally strikes the target, though, there is a dramatic difference in what happens compared to a rope for now there is a significant mass (compared to a rope or whip) which is traveling at a very high velocity. This mass does have enough force to penetrate and unlike the whip will cause deep penetrating wounds and severe fractures.

In short, if the impact point is your head or a vital organ, you are in big trouble. If the point that is hit is muscle or bone you may (?) be better off than getting hit with a chain, in that you may sustain only a single trauma point. Note, however, that the severity of damage at that single point will be more intense than if it was spread out as happens with a chain. It depends on how you look at it. Personally, I plan to look at it from a considerable distance. If they can't reach me they have real trouble hurting me!

There is another factor that MUST be considered here. To assume that the weighted flexible weapon is like a lightweight chain is a wrong assumption. Yes, the weighted flexible weapon does have less mass than the chain, but that only makes it more deadly! Unlike the chain which has a lot of impact mass but takes a considerable time and effort to get moving at a high velocity and even greater effort to change the direction of strike, the weighted rope of light weight chain can be brought into action quickly and can change the angle of attack extremely rapidly! Thus since the weighted flexible weapon can produce significant damage like the heavy chain but is more versatile and responsive, it is a far deadlier weapon than the simple chain or whip.

If that wasn't enough, there is one VITAL fact that you must know about weighted weapons. That fact is that some people (myself NOT included) are good enough to cause the rope to temporarily wrap around the backside of their elbows as they swing the weapon. Then, as the weight picks up speed, they jerk their elbow out of the way and the weight, instead of crashing into their own arm, is sent shooting outward in almost a straight path rather than the circular path it had been on.

While this does not extend the range of the weapon beyond the distance that it would have reached if it had continued on its circular path, it dramatically changes the flight path of the weapon and makes it into a projectile type of weapon. This can be a definite problem if you were prepared to counter the circular path the weapon was previously on.

The real purpose of sword training is the destruction of the ego.

Sword

Let me start this chapter off with a public statement that I do not claim mastery of the sword. Yes, I have had some training, but not enough to be foolish enough to claim mastery. A WELL-trained person can filet their opponent... not merely skewer them as the typical Hollywood movie pretends.

In fact I do not even claim the sword as one of my main weapons of competence. So you will have to judge whether you value the following comments or not.

The problem is not that I haven't studied the sword. I have. It is just that to be good - really good - with the sword, you need to train under someone who is exceptionally good (and here I do not mean just able to swing the thing like a club), for a considerable period of time.

A short time just will NOT do. There are just too many subtle intricacies to learn, to be able to learn to do anything more than how to bash your opponent into submission in anything less than several years of study. True competence with the sword takes many years of training. ANYONE who tells you anything different has not seen a real master handle a sword. (I have seen such and KNOW I AM not anything compared to someone who is a real sword master.)



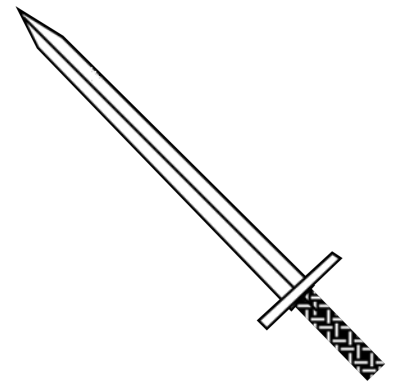
Now, I want to make it clear that in the last paragraph I am talking about real swordsmanship, not Kendo! In my opinion Kendo is a sport and like any other sport has very little value on the street. [I did not say NO - I said LITTLE]. I do not care if that makes Kendo practitioners or associated styles mad. That is my opinion!

So what value does "real swordsmanship" have on the street? Not very often are you going to have the chance to cut your opponent down with a sword you just happened to be carrying in your back pocket. Neither are you, going to be able to whip out your pocket sword and slice someone from

head to abdomen. Well, at least not without spending considerable time in some small rooms with bars on the doors and windows.

So if we both admit that you are not going to have a sword on the street then what good is it if you can't carry it? Why should you "waste your time" studying this ancient piece of metal which is not relevant to anything except the movies? I will give you three very good reasons why the real sword is relevant to the street.

1) The study of striking a surface with the sword very quickly teaches you about paying attention to the blade's angle. If you have ever tried to cut anything with a sword then you know that the very best sword, as sharp as it can get, will not cut very well at all unless you strike your target with exactly the right angle and continue that angle throughout the cut. This translates to the street in the fact that you very quickly become aware of paying attention to the cutting edge of any sharp weapon. This attention training is not wasted when anyone threatens you with a sharp object. For just like the sword the knife cannot cut with its flat surfaces.



Note: I am not saying that sword training is enough training for a useful knife defense, only that learning to pay attention to which parts of a weapon can cut you and which ones cannot is a very useful aid to staying alive should you ever need to defend yourself. Now, I freely admit you can get this experience from most any real edged cutting weapon with which you receive competent instruction but the sword is the classical weapon so I will address that here and you can use whatever comparison works for you.

2) The training of how to cut with a sword is more than just hitting a surface and letting things happen. In (see Advanced Fighting Techniques book & video), some of my earlier books I talk about after action strikes. I talk about paying attention to what happens after you have made contact with your target.

Learning how to cut with the sword teaches you both the applications of force because you are not going to get through anything even slightly solid even if you have a very sharp sword, unless you learn how to apply significant force through body position and motion. Here I do NOT just mean smashing something as hard as you can.

There is a great difference between appropriately applied force to a specific area and generalized muscle power. If you do not believe me then try an experiment. Take a bundle of rice straw and try to smash your way through it with a baseball bat. It is obvious that you can hit harder with the baseball bat than you can with the sword, (however, many people I see swinging a sword look as they believe they are holding a small baseball bat), but you will not get through the rice straw bundle. Why? Force per surface area and what the force does to the object on impact are why.

In order to get through the rice bundle you are going to have to learn to handle the weapon so that you apply maximum force in the correct cutting angle. Which, of course, means that you will have to learn how to place your body in proper alignment also. In short, the fact is that if you do learn to work with the sword correctly, you will develop the ability to strike in a way that maximizes your striking power and teaches you how to make that force continue on through the object you are striking. This is exactly what you must do on the street if you are going to stop an attacker.

3) Talking about proper strike angles. The sword is one of the major weapons classes which teaches proper foot alignment for striking. It always amazes me how much attention most people pay to stances when they are training for open hand fighting and then totally ignore that same subject when they pick up a weapon. The fact is that to develop proper force when you strike, you MUST be in the proper stance. Quite frankly it is not as simple as it is when you are fighting open handed because with weapons the force involved in a strike is usually multiplied. (One of the reason for picking up a weapon in the first place.) If you study the sword you will learn how to use a proper stance to maximize your power. (One of the reasons in some Japanese sword arts that they wear the Hakama, is to hide the foot position and the weight distribution so that their opponent can't tell what they are about to do.)

Therefore, although I have not had the opportunity to study the sword as much as I would like, I do believe it is a very useful training tool for street fighting. It has definitely helped my abilities!

Note: If you do not have a sword, and couldn't care less about ever owning one and don't plan to even practice with one then you may want to skip the rest of this chapter.

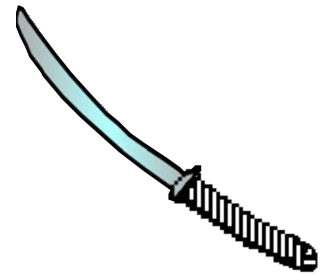
Balance [of the weapon]

One of the things which irritates the \$#%^ out of me is the commercial garbage which is passed off as a sword today. Now I will not comment here on the quality of the steel that makes up commercial swords. That is obvious, you pay for what you get and a stamped out sword is not expected to be as fine as a hand made, folded steel blade.

However, there is another CRUCIAL factor, which determines how well you use a sword, including even simple training, which could be controlled by the manufacturers but is not. That area is the balance of the sword.

I have handled a lot of swords in my day and I am constantly amazed on how variable the balance point is. Just from the feel of the way the sword rests in your hand you can tell if the manufacture stamped out this piece of metal, slapped a guard and a handle on it and sold it. Most manufacturers have never examined how a sword is supposed to feel.

What I mean is this. A sword is supposed to be a cutting instrument. It is supposed to move with extreme speed and cut when the blade is delivered against a very small sharp edge. What it is not, is a club. Therefore you do not want the mass of the entire sword behind the swing.



Why such a big deal about the mass and the balance of the sword? Well, the reason is that when you deliver the force of the sword swing against your opponent, you will be striking with a very fine edge (at least it is supposed to be a fine sharp edge).

By the rules of physics, the force of the swing will try to keep the sword mass moving forward as the blade edge impacts your opponent and from the resistance it encounters is slowed or stopped. When these changes in velocity happen, the blade tries to twist in your hand with the mass of the blade pulling the sword to the side, or the end with the greatest mass. (This always happens because there is no such thing as a perfect blade or a perfect swing, but balanced swords are much closer than stamped out junk!) The worse the balance, the more of this inertial effect you will have. Thus if you

are using a crudely stamped sword, it will most likely twist in your hand before you ever make a deep enough cut to dispatch your opponent. Not a good situation!

In short, when you start fighting with the mass of the sword, you are not swinging a CONTROLLED cutting instrument, instead you are swinging a club, albeit one with a sharp edge but a club none-the-less.

I will grant that every complete sword style pays attention to the gripping of the sword to counter to some extent the twist of the blade on impact. However if you are training with a poor blade then the extra energy you will have to spend to force it to do an acceptable cut will cause you to learn improper handling of the blade. In short, you will be learning how to fight the blade rather than learning how to make it do what it is supposed to be doing almost naturally. From my own training I was told time and time again that unless I had a properly constructed sword I would never learn to master the blade. After considerable time I came to understand why.

While you cannot change the characteristics of the metal of the sword you buy (unless you are a master blacksmith), you can do something about the poor balance of most of the blades on the commercial market.

The fact is that you can dramatically adjust the balance point of a blade by adjusting how much weight the handle has. Therefore you can add weight (as most commercial blades which I have handled have a balance point which is too far forward) to the handle and bring the balance point back to where it should be.

Now I will freely admit that there is no set standard and you should adjust the balance point to where it feels best and moves the easiest for you. (What is perfect for you will not be the same for me even if we are approximately the same height and mass. Every person is slightly different!) A good test is to listen to the blade as it cuts through the air.

A properly balanced blade swung in proper technique will make a distinctive cutting sound as it moves through the air. With the balance point wrong it will be almost impossible to generate this sound or the feeling of the blade “feeling” right in your hands.

Note: Those who have been trained can not only feel the difference in balance, they can hear the way a sword sounds as it moves through the air and tell whether the balance is good or bad. (I know I can and I don't even consider myself good.)

This is because you will not even be able to generate the proper sound from moving through the air without using considerable force. A poorly designed or balanced sword sounds like a club as it moves through the air. A well-balanced sword has a higher pitch, like it is cutting the air, not trying to bash it into submission. If you ever get your hands on a balanced sword listen to the differences and you will be able to tell from then on.

The way to adjust the balance point of the sword is to add or subtract weight from the hilt. Personally, my blades have been adjusted so that the balance point is about 4 inches in front of the guard. I say this not to set a standard for you, but only to give you some reference point to what I have personally found best for me. I will say again, each blade will be slightly different and handle slightly differently for each person who handles it. Which is the main reason why Commercial sword are [almost] NEVER the correct fit for a person.

In order to achieve the correct balance, you must spend time working with your blade, adjusting the balance in fine increments until it matches your own feelings for what is right for you. You will not regret the effort you spend!

Speaking of the hilt, one area that is overlooked by many, in their sword training, is the use of the hilt and the scabbard as a weapon.

Frequently in days of old, opponents would crowd in on their opponent trying to prevent them from being able to draw their sword. If that opponent was well trained, however, all they got for their efforts was the end of the sword hilt in their solar plexus. Sword masters are adept in using their scabbard both as a defense when their blade had broken and/or as a defense against a second blade. Please note that the cord, which suspends the sword and scabbard itself, are weapons and can be used as a flexible class weapon.

No one is so blind as those that cannot see what is in front of them.

Bokken

One area of sword training that I would be remiss if I neglected is the Bokken.

The Bokken is the wooden version of the sword. Now many people have purchased a Bokken, partly because the cost of a Bokken is obviously much less than the sword. Unfortunately, many of those people do not consider the Bokken as a serious weapon. They are wrong.

The truth of the matter is that the first swords were made of wood and it wasn't until much later that the metal sword came into being. THEY ARE REAL WEAPONS. Most people just don't realize it!

In fact, a sharpened wooden sword can easily cut someone seriously. Even more, the sharpened edge can easily produce enough force to break a bone or even produce a skull fracture.

Modern Bokken are made with their forward edges deliberately blunted to reduce the risk of causing damage but they are still very dangerous.



That said, I have to state that proper safety precautions taken, the Bokken can add significantly to your weapons training. Because the Bokken handles much like a real sword, techniques learned with the Bokken easily translate to the metal sword.

There are some significant differences that you should take into consideration. First off the Bokken is not as heavy as the metal sword (or at least a real fighting sword. Aluminum show pieces can even be lighter than a Bokken but they are absolutely worthless, except for tournaments and hanging on your wall!!)

Therefore, there are some changes you will have to make in your cutting techniques so that they will be effective when you pick up a real sword. Mostly you will have to adjust for the difference in force you need to produce the same velocity with the metal sword as you can with the Bokken. Secondly, the balance of the Bokken is quite different than that of a fine sword.

Again, as above, commercial bokkens are stamped / cut out so that frequently their balance is off, too. However, you can adjust the balance of the Bokken by changing the handle weight. You unfortunately cannot adjust the overall weight without radical changes to the Bokken, which are probably not worth the effort.

The third major difference between the metal sword and the Bokken, the rounded impact edge, can actually work to your advantage. While the change was made for safety, the fact that you do not have to mentally concentrate on keeping the correct edge forward translates directly into paying attention to the cutting edge of the weapon. Which in my opinion is one of the major reasons why you should be studying the sword in the first place.

Frequently I make students who have particular trouble concentrating on the edge of the sword paint a small white line on the Bokken in the appropriate place. Then I have them work on the bag.

While they all find this exercise simple and silly when they are swinging in the air they quickly change their tune when they are working on the bag and have to change positions and swing. Suddenly the ability to keep the proper edge, striking the bag, becomes a challenge. A challenge worthy of learning!

I have been able to break through some serious mindsets this way. Another thing that I get them to do is give up the concept of bashing the bag, which they all try to do at first. The concept here is to make an indentation in the bag before the bag moves. While this may be fairly easy with a very heavy bag, I suggest that you make it a little more interesting by using a progressively lighter bag. Finally, I use a piece of paper held loosely by two fingers. (The same concept as a speed break.)

The Reality of Knife Fighting

I hesitated a long time before I wrote this chapter. The reason being that I knew that I really didn't like the way this chapter was going to come out. The more I thought about the subject, the less I liked the outcome.

The subject, of course, is the knife. That is obvious from the chapter heading. The short story is that when you mess with someone who has a knife, you are going to get hurt - maybe fatally.

I don't care how good you think you are, nor how bad they are... even an idiot will get lucky and cut you if you get in close, and you can not finish a knife fight unless you get in close. Hence you are going to get cut ... it is only a matter of degree, but that is the important factor which brought me to include this chapter.

Let me say right here though that **There is a major difference between getting cut and getting stabbed!**

Now, I know that almost every style and martial arts school teaches some sort of defense against the knife. There seems to be a great fascination with edged weapons in the world today and the knife is by far the most useful, practical weapon and general tool around. Which, of course, is why the knife has lasted throughout history with very little change in the basic concept.

We need to take a look at that basic concept for a minute to understand knives and knife fighting. In short, a knife is a short piece of cutting material which does not have so much mass that it becomes a burden and yet presents enough of a cutting edge so that it can slice whatever you intend it to slice. I will admit that there is a great deal of controversy by knife enthusiasts over what combination of edge versus weight versus angle of the blade, etc. is best.

Still, for the martial artist who is trying to defend themselves from knife wielding opponents, the esotericism of the knife debate does not mean squat. What is important is that the knife is highly mobile and can slice you easily.

In fact, the knife is so deadly that, I have been assured, by people who are in the business professionally, that **more police officers are killed every year from knife wounds, than from gunshot wounds.** This is an important statement that NEEDS to be paid attention to!

I also need to make clear that I am talking about the situation where someone is ATTACKING you with a knife. If all they are doing is THREATENING you with a knife, then you have the possibility that you can negotiate your way out of there. Do they want money... give them your wallet. Do they want your car... give them your car keys. If the knife is being used as 'negotiating' tool then you have a chance of only losing stuff.

'Stuff' can be replaced and your 'bruised' ego will heal. Death is permanent ... and even if they only slash you ... well healing from a cut tendon or ligament is a lot more painful than replacing a few thing. Serious cuts leave serious damage and serious scars ... you will never regret NOT having pain from a nerve injury if you avoid being cut

Now we come on to looking at 'knife defense techniques' - AND NOTE IMHO almost all of them do not work. Even I have been guilty of teaching my students techniques for defense of the knife, knowing that the odds of getting out of a knife fight without a significant cut are extremely small. But I tell them that up front ... I NEVER leave them with the idea that you are going to get into a knife fight and not get cut ...

I know full well that the carefully controlled practice and the lunges made by practice opponents do not represent the reality of the street. Obviously, though, if you cannot leave (always the best option!) you are not going to give up when someone pulls a knife on you. So you had better do something--fast!

It comes down to two major styles of knife fighting which have to be responded to in completely different ways, if you are going to survive a knife encounter. The first style of opponent is the one who is portrayed in the movies. This sort of attack pattern constitutes the bulk of martial arts dojo knife defense practice. The guy makes a wide swing or a lunge at you with the knife.

This type of person can be defended against, with the proper practice (and training, of course) by many different techniques that first deflect, and then capture the knife-wielding arm. The trick here is

two-fold. One, make sure your timing is correct so that you wind up blocking the arm instead of the cutting edge of the knife. Two, ensure that you follow the block up with capture techniques (note the plural), which totally binds up the knife arm and destroys the balance of your opponent. The object is simple: to wind up with your opponent being placed in a position where they absolutely cannot move due to either pain, broken bones, or worse.

The second type of knife fighter is by far the more dangerous. This is the person who has had formalized training, or at least extensive practice in knife fighting. This person will not make the mistake of making an uncontrolled lunge at you with a knife. Neither will they make the wide slash, which opens up their arm hand for a block. Instead they will make small controlled moves, frequently circular, that will be designed to take pieces out of you. The aim of this person is to pick you to pieces, until they can get a clear easy target at a fatal organ. **THIS PERSON WILL KILL YOU.**

The deadliness of this mobility is especially apparent when the trained knife fighter user touches their victim. Even if that touch is supposed to be against a block by the defendant, the trained knife fighter will quickly rotate the point of the blade through a small circle, moving it from where you thought it was, to where it will cut you. Because this movement requires such a small change in distance and angle, it **WILL** happen **BEFORE** you can react. I don't care how good you think you are, the extremely short distance they have to rotate through (only a relatively few degrees versus inches for you) makes it easily possible to return the knife back into cutting position faster than you can possibly react!

This last reason is why I didn't like writing this chapter. There is no good defense against this type of attacker and I really did not like saying that but it is a reality so I will say it again. There is no good unarmed defense except not being there!

As I said, there is no good defense against a person trained in this style of knife attack. Therefore, the best you can do is to retreat. Fast! If you cannot retreat, however, then there are some things which you are going to **HAVE** to do if you are going to survive. The object here is to stop this person as fast as possible to minimize the time they will have to cut on you.

NOTICE: I did not say stop the knife. Unless you have a coat or something else - in your hand - to temporarily bind up the knife, the worst thing you can do (and most likely the last thing you will ever do) with a trained attacker is to get the idea that you can take the knife away from them. We

have already said they can move the cutting edge faster than you can possibly respond to an opening, so you are not going to win that way.

The best thing you can do is to try to move away from the knife-edge as best as possible until the person gets into close enough range that you can execute a short, fast, deadly attack against their body. YES, I said BODY. Again, I did not say knife. It comes down to the fact that you are going to have to take this person out of action, fast, before they can do any more damage to you. I say 'any more damage' because it is extremely doubtful that you will get into the necessary range without getting cut, probably seriously.

Does that mean you will die from the cut? Possibly, it depends on how good you are at deflecting the blade away from your arteries! There is a real danger of dying here! But let me make this real clear: if you do not stop this person, you WILL die. That is not in question. Therefore you are faced with the unenviable and inevitable choice, them or you. If you hesitate, the decision will be made for you!

The last sentence may seem like a very obvious statement, but many people who entertain the concept of knife fighting, think they can get out of a fight, with a well trained opponent with only minor scratches or insignificant cuts. They believe they will be able to stop an attacker without having to kill or seriously maim the person. **These people are wrong!** Most likely they are going to be dead (wrong) when they find out the truth on the street.

It comes down to developing that state of mind where, when it counts, you are willing to do whatever it takes to stop your opponent. This means you are willing to take the cut and drive a blow into their throat, etc., intending to kill the person, not stun or knock them out. The truth is that if you hesitate or give the person a second chance, if your technique even has the possibility of failing, then you are as good as dead.

In order to survive you **MUST** do something that is guaranteed to stop the person **IMMEDIATELY**, before they have time to do any more cutting on you. Your survival depends on you being able to take the time to put pressure on any serious bleeding veins or arteries you have. You cannot do that if you have to contend with your attacker, even a little bit. Therefore, this is a situation of total self defense, them or me, kill or be killed and you must make up your mind **NO!** Who you want to be the survivor.

If this seems harsh, then too bad. Neither you nor I get to pick what reality is! Ignore reality at your own peril. This is not the type of situation you should ever try to be in. I ALWAYS recommend that my students try to extricate themselves from anyone who has a knife and get as far away as possible, **as fast as possible**. There is no excuse for any heroics here. Staying around means that you are taking the chance of having to kill someone, not a justifiable situation if you had any option of leaving earlier. I am sure the courts would agree!

An Educational Game

For those of you who have any doubts about the validity, of what I am writing, let me recommend/encourage you to try a game. It is not a unique game to my style or even one that I invented. Still it is a game that will show you what I am talking about and one which may stimulate a understanding of reality that you cannot get any other way. Thus this “simple” game may very well save your life!

Now for how this game is played. Take two sparring opponents and give one or both of them felt tip pens, with the covers of the marking ends off. (Personally I like the color red for this because it gives a more dramatic concept of what is happening but any color will do.) Now let the two opponents have a go at sparring (This needs to be pretty much ‘full contact’ - no pre-arranged ‘light tap-tap stuff.’) with each other and see what happens.

Especially see what happens when one of them tries to take the pen away from the other or tries a “classical” defense move. VERY rapidly you are going to be able to see red marks all over the extremities of the defensive opponent in DEADLY places (or both of them if they both have pens).

Now take a look at how many of those marks are over arteries, nerves or ligaments and imagine what you would be looking at if they were holding real knives instead of felt tip pens.

Actually you really have to participate in this game to get the real feeling for it. From the outside it is too easy to play Monday morning quarterback and criticize. Therefore, I really suggest that you take your turn playing this “game”. You will find that it is a real eye opener even if you are very good at other aspects of martial arts... even weapons!

“Criticism is where the critic tries to guess themselves into a share of the artist's fame.”

George Jean Nathan

When You are the one that has a Knife

Earlier we talked about being on the receiving side of a knife attack, implying that you did not have a knife and your opponent did. Here we will talk about how to use a knife and a little about double knife usage.

First off, I want to define what the purpose of using a knife as a weapons is... to cut without exposing yourself to being cut in return. Now, I flat out state that everything I said in the last section is true and still holds. The same dangerous situation still exists when you also have a knife. In this situation your opponent is going to be more careful about approaching you, for fear that they will be cut. While this can be an advantage as it may give you more time to retreat (and I believe you should ALWAYS retreat if given a chance), it also makes it harder to get within close range and end the situation.

As I just said, the purpose is not to get yourself cut. Seemingly, an obvious concept, but one that is completely overlooked by many people, especially with all the nonsense, shown in the movies.

For example, one concept, which has gained popularity with the glitz crowd lately, is to hold the knife (front hand knife) with the blade pointing backwards along the forearm. That way you conceal your weapon. I give this an A+ for stupidity. Point blank, this way of holding a knife dramatically slows down the cutting edges movement, especially circular movements, by locking the wrist joint.

Since this extremely quick ability to move and rotate the cutting edge is the what makes the knife so deadly, you have basically thrown away one of its best assets. Worse, because you now have to make dramatically large movements to do any cutting action, your chances of being blocked by their blade are much higher. You also have to open up your chest and/or abdominal areas every time you swing which allows your opponent the possibility of slicing a fatal target.

Flat out, there is no reason to conceal a weapon. If you are facing someone who is going to get careless and let you have an opening because you have hidden a knife in that manner, then you are facing a rank amateur and you should be able to get away without having to get into blows in the first place.

Secondly, if you show them that you are serious, they may think twice about whether it is worth pursuing their course of action and leave you alone. Yes, I will admit that I said earlier that showing your opponent a knife will make them more cautious about approaching you, but I also said that an experienced knife fighter is not going to get careless and rush in anyway. They are going to try to pick you apart until you can no longer defend yourself. They will not change this approach whether you are armed or not. This is what makes them good (read that as very, very dangerous).

The only valid reason I know of for holding a knife so that the blade is pointed back along your forearm is when you are using double knives.

NOTE: By this I mean the second knife. Do NOT hold your only knife in the backhand like this. In this situation, the back hand is used 90% for blocking and thus mobility is not a major concern, whereas having the maximum amount of safe blocking area is (use the cutting edge of the knife to receive a blow... if you catch edge to edge it is just a block. If you meet your cutting edge against their body... well then, they just learned that it isn't a game, didn't they?

OTHER COMMENTS

One major misconception that is promulgated by movies, is that to be serious, a knife wound has to be to the body core or, even better, the throat. This is absolute nonsense. Any major artery, when cut, will bleed significantly, possibly fatally. While it is true that under many situations small arteries will retract on their own and stop such bleeding (a natural self protection mechanism), this assumes that the person is not all wound up with adrenalin flowing. And blood loss matters!

When you get that excited, the adrenalin accelerates your heart rate and increases your blood pressure making it harder for the body to shut off such bleeding.

And what does the word “significant” mean? Well, it means different things, depending mostly on your physical condition. A 65-year-old smoker with high blood pressure and heart problems is going to be in trouble much sooner than a 24-year-old well-conditioned non-drug user.

Another point is that located very close to most arteries are the nerves that control at least a portion of the extremity, which the artery feeds.

NOTE: If you cut the controlling nerve, then the extremity does not work... probably forever. Despite the dramatic improvements in modern day neurosurgery much of this damage can NEVER be repaired!

Also located in close proximity are the tendons and ligaments, which propel the extremity (make the hand open or close, etc.). If these are cut, they frequently can be repaired surgically but what happens when your hand can no longer hold the knife. You may not live long enough to have that operation.

Therefore, most experienced fighters will target the arms and try to cut an artery and the associated structures rather than going for the body core. Then all they really have to do is to wait for the effects of the bleeding to take place. In the worst case scenario, the bleeding will make you so upset and rattle your concentration so bad that you may make a major mistake allowing them to inflict other major damage or if they get lucky, you will simply bleed to death from the artery they opened and they won't have to expose themselves for reprisal.

TYPES OF KNIVES

I am not going to get into a long-winded debate about which kind or brand of knife is best here, but I would like to bring up a few points for discussion. The first point is that when using a knife, the concept you should look for is something with enough edge on it that you have a reasonable chance of doing what you want it to do (i.e., cut). This means these one to two inch toys are nothing but that.

A two-inch knife has major problems reaching out and touching anyone and since you do have to reach out and thus expose yourself to make a cut, I recommend that you use something with adequate reach. On the other hand these mini swords which some people carry are just as worthless.

Despite their having a long reach, the mass and the loss of leverage makes them too hard to control well.

Note: There is a big difference between swinging a blade and controlling it. By control, I mean that you are able to EASILY make the tight, extremely fast, small circles, which makes a knife so deadly.

Therefore, the big, flashy high mass knives that Hollywood and those with ego problems like to carry are not practical and generally are NOT the type, which an experienced fighter carries.

My recommendation on the type of knife to use is to pick out a well-balanced knife that has the maximum BLADE length of 4 to 6 inches that does not feel at all heavy to you. Get a knife that has good balance. Proper balance (neutral balance at the hilt is what I recommend) makes the point much easier to work and thus much quicker. Whether you chose single or double edge depends on personal preference, but most experienced fighters like double-edged knives because it is easier to rotate the knife and expose a cutting surface.

For myself, I use a short 4-inch, double-edged blade in my front hand and an 8-inch, in my back hand held point back. (Remember, my back hand is for blocking, not attacking anything except what they hold out to me... like their hand when they try to reach out to get me.)

Lastly, on the brand, of knife. I don't personally care which brand you get, that is your problem. And there are more opinions on which brand is best than there letters in this book. BUT brands change. So what may have been a great brand last year may have changed for profit [or other] reason and no longer is as good. So sorry but I am not even going to go there... if you really want to know, read, talk to experts and realize that they all have different opinions. But you really can't make an informed decision until you have been educated.

But if you are into knives, then I recommend that you invest in getting a **great** knife. Don't bet your life on one of those twenty-dollar specials that won't carry an edge past the first cut. You need something which will stand up to being hit with the blade of another knife without shattering, will cut through whatever you touch and hold that edge. It will be expensive to buy, take longer to work up a good edge, and will demand care, but then, it is no different than any fine piece of equipment.

Light travels faster than sound.
This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

Alan Dundes

AN EXERCISE IN STUPIDITY

The last point I will make is about “throwing knives.” OK Flat out this is purely my opinion and you are welcome to yours, but I think, "Throwing knives are a sad, stupid joke. Only the movies could imply that throwing knives are practical for anything but very special and RARE occasions. (You can read that as “probably never.”) The obvious question is why would you want to throw away a perfectly good weapon? [And if they really were so good, why do you have to have more than one?]

A knife is designed to do its damage by being used repeatedly, not in a one shot deal. Even IF you hit your victim, you are not going to completely take them out of the action unless you can hit them directly in the eye or the throat. You will still have to deal with them. The only time I would throw a knife is if it was a way that I could assure myself that it would distract my attacker long enough for me to get away, and for that I really don't have to practice long hours at hitting a specific target. Merely launching it in his general direction is enough to give me a head start!



The truth of the matter is that there are people out there who can give you all these wonderful reasons why a thrown knife is going to be able to save your life but all their reasons come down to some nonsense about attacking some unsuspecting victim at about 20 or more yards away from you. Why? This is not guerrilla warfare we are training for, and even if we were, then why not do what the experts do. (Military professionals use guns not knives for this type of work!) And I can give you plenty of other short-range weapons that are completely silent to take out an opponent [some which we already talked about, many we didn't], that don't require you to throw them away. Sheesh

Therefore, IF you really want a projectile weapon, buy a gun. It is far more effective! The time is much better spent! If you want to spend useful time on knife training, learn to get out of and away from a knife attacker and/or close in, and suddenly, brutally take them out of the picture.

CONCLUSION [of this chapter]

If this chapter gives you the feeling that you really can't win in a knife fight, then you understand my opinion completely!

I believe that you should learn knife training so that you can do what you must do to survive if it ever comes to that.

However, realistically, knife defense training should be thought of much like the concept of gun defense.

The only real defense is not to be there!

“Take the money, my boy, take their money.

People want to believe,
so who am I to destroy their temporary happiness
by bursting the illustrious bubble of their illusions.
It makes them happy to believe, so take their money.”

Confessions of a well know con artist.

Sai

By now you have realized that I am not a fan of weapons katas. In most cases I think that they are a silly example of people trying to force something into a mold that doesn't really fit. The Sai is definitely one of those cases. Every Sai kata I have ever seen has been guilty of spending it's time teaching moves which are impractical for street usage, and worse, implies to the student that the weapon is best held point backwards.

Or even that many movers of the kata use the weapon in ways to strike as if the weapons was nothing more than a very poorly weighted stick or club ... come on, if it has a sharp edge or a point then that is the real focus of the weapon. Swinging it around in fancy Ninja turtle ways does not represent how you would need to use it on the street ... but then maybe that is my limitation.

I think things need to make sense, be practical and that under stress you do what you have practiced ... if all you have practiced is some silly Ninja turtle or Hollywood movie move ... then there will be hell to pay when you get a reality check on the street!



Let's review a little history here and you will quickly see what is so wrong with present day Sai katas. First off, the Sai is historically as old as the sword. Supposedly it originated from the trident spear. Its history is so old that it is hard to know for certain, but I really don't think there is too much debate. However, the actual working design of the Sai came about when the trident was shortened and this new design began to be used for combat. (Let's face it, the Sai does not make a very good fishing tool. Trident yes, Sai no.)

However, if you look at that ancient weapon you will find that it is completely different from the mass produced chromed (or painted) stamped out toys of today! First off, the ancient Sai did not have a round piece of metal in the middle. The ancient Sai was actually a bladed weapon in the middle with a hook on each side of the blade.

Think about it for a minute. If the Sai did not have a sharpened blade in the middle, it would be a very poor version of the fork. I said "poor" because with the long handled fork you would be able to keep your opponent at a farther distance. Since the handle was shortened, it must be that the wielder wanted the person in closer. Not just to stab them. A long handle could do that better than a short one could. Also, a moderately long handle could still capture another weapon in the prongs with the same twisting motion.

So, why have a very short weapon? Obviously there was a desire for a short-range precision weapon. The most common reason in my experience is greater need for control of the point of the weapon. Another challenge to the current design is that it takes no real effort to flatten the center blade of the Sai. Since all ancient metal weapons were made on some versions of a blacksmith forge anyway, they had the ability to flatten the blades. SO that is exactly what they did. The outer two blades may have been left rounded for greater strength but whether or not they were rounded really doesn't change the tactics of the weapon like the center shaft being a true blade does. This difference in blade configuration may seem like a minor difference but it definitely is not!

The importance of this is two-fold. With a blade in the center you can be certain that the purpose of this weapon was to cut your opponent. Yes, you may well have the opportunity to poke him with the point of the Sai, but the blade could do damage to arms legs and whatever opening appeared through armor which a straight point would never be able to do. Since it was a short blade (at least in relation to the sword), it was a slashing cut; not the strong handed controlled cut of the sword. So Sai techniques should be somewhat closer to that of a knife than they were to the sword.

Secondly, it is the blade of the weapon that was the primary defense. The Sai forks were defense against any weapon (not just the sword), which came into its reach by first stopping the weapons strike and then twisting. Thereby trapping that weapon so that the person could attack their opponent without the weapon coming into play. Obviously that meant that two Sais were very useful but such was definitely not the only combination that would successfully work. Unlike today, when Sais are sold relatively inexpensively in pairs, weapons in older days were expensive. (Refined metal itself was hard to get.) Thus you could see many different weapons being used as the complementary weapon to the Sai. The theory was that the Sai was the main defensive weapon against someone who had a longer weapon and the other weapon being used to close in and finish off the opponent once the long weapon was disabled.

Once you understand this, you can understand why I reject the idea seen on weapons tournaments where the Sai is held backward along the side of the forearm. Secondly, I also reject the nonsense concept where the person crosses their wrist or the tips of the Sai. This completely destroys the efficiency of your arm strength. (See *Secrets of Power: Technology Versus Magic* or the video, *Advanced Fighting Techniques* if you do not understand why this is true.)

Now that we have the concept of what a Sai really is, the concept of learning how to handle a Sai is quite easy. Think of it and train as if you were handling two knives with special capture apparatus attached, throw out the grand, glorious, sweeping moves and concentrate on guarding your center line and you will have a very efficient weapon good for both offense and defense.

Might does not make right.

Unless applied correctly it doesn't win either!

The Spear

The spear is a weapon that has typically been misunderstood by Westerners. The concept most Westerners have of the spear is a sharp point on a staff. That is not a very good description because, besides, the sharp point, there is another major difference between the spear and the staff. Those differences are flexibility and length.

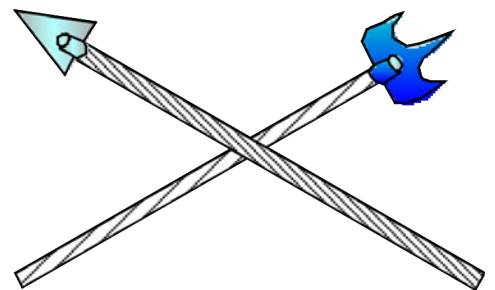
Obviously, because its greater length, the spear is designed to keep the opponent, at a distance. Where the spear wielder can reach their opponent, but the opponent cannot reach them. A good idea in any confrontation!

Unlike the staff, which is designed to resist bending, the spear is designed to bend.

NOTE: I am not talking about the typical commercial martial arts mail order spear here, where all they do is slap a removable chrome point on a tapered staff, but a real spear!

The reason for this flexibility is for sensitivity. Unlike the staff that is designed to bash your opponent into submission, the spear is designed to be a soft weapon. By that, I mean upon contact with your opponent's weapon, it will transmit their movements so that you can determine what they are doing, bend around their forceful movements and penetrate their defenses and them.

A common and nasty trick of the spear wielder is to slam their spear down on the upraised weapon of their opponent. If the spear was a non-bending weapon, the opponent's weapon would stop it right there. However, because the spear bends, the forward end of the spear and the point will keep on bending downward from momentum until it is pointing at the opponent. A quick jab at that instant and you have a very surprised and skewered opponent. This also works from the side.



In fact, all of the major techniques of the spear are designed to bend around your opponent's weapon. Instead of using massive force, the spear wielder tries to use minimum force and let his opponent's excessive force open up targets for him.

Now do not misunderstand me. The spear can also be used like a staff because if a good spear practitioner has the point of the spear driven away, he will rotate the near end of the spear and use it to play a tune on his opponent's head. However, you should realize that because of its greater flexibility, that one has to hold the spear closer to the striking end (compared to the staff) or the bend will absorb most of the force.

Do I need to mention that the fancy back twirls and pole vaults are complete nonsense? Nah. Please tell me that you already know that.

I really do think that spear training is EXCELLENT for learning to work with weapons because it forces the student to develop a sensitive touch. Spear training is close to the equivalent of push hands training in Tai Chi. [i.e. complicated]

If you want to learn to use a spear, I suggest that you do the work to find yourself an eight foot pole which can bend in at least a 30 degree arc from top to bottom. Odds are you are not going to be able to buy this from a mail order catalog, but you can find one in the local woods fairly easily (depending on the part of the world you are located in). You need to look for types of willow, poplar, some types of young birch, etc. Good luck, the effort will be worth it!

In the end, luck favors those who are prepared.

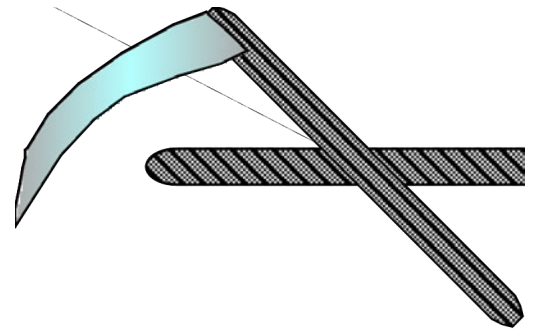
Miscellaneous Weapons

This section will be a (hopefully) short compendium of some of the weapons that I haven't talked about so far. And yes, I know that I am leaving out some (many?) weapons. Secondly, while I truly admit that this book is full of my personal opinions, I have to state that this section is by far the most opinionated. Therefore, if you are not interested in listening to my opinions without detailed explanations of why I came to those conclusions, you might do us both a favor and pass this section.

Kama

The Kama is in my personal opinion, definitely a candidate for worst weapon of the century award!

To understand how bad the Kama is, you have to use one. I said use one, not swing one. Long before I ever heard of martial arts I had the task of cutting thistles in my father's pastures [with a Kama] ... yes you can still buy them as farm tools... same item, but without the fancy prices or chrome!



I spent hours and hours, for days on end, EVERY summer using this farm implement [known in martial arts as a Kama], battling Canadian thistles. Such is a never-ending war. I learned to hate both the thistles and the Kama! But this many hours taught the reality of swinging it! Things you will not learn in a Dojo!

The main problem with the Kama is that the angle of the blade is such that you have to reach out and pull against your worst angle half the time (pulling inward **across** your body). True, you have the strong stroke which brings it from the opposite side of your body to the same side as your arm is on, but then you have to bring it back again and that angle is pulling against the worst efficiency angles your arm has. I tell you from personal experience that my arm AND BACK, hurt so bad I believed I would never be able to use them again.

The other problem with the Kama is that in order for it to cut correctly you have to have the blade meet the object to cut at a 90-degree (i.e., perpendicular) angle. Again, this works well coming across your body but the stroke to get to the opposite side is VERY bad! (Read that as weak, poorly effective and very tiring to the arm!) Thistles, especially when they get large, are HARD to cut! So are people!

Thus, it was with great glee that my father finally broke down and bought me one of the circular hand held sickles. With its curved blade, I didn't have to hold my wrist at an unnatural angle to get the blade to meet the thistle correctly. Meaning I could reach out and change the angle of both swings, improving the efficiency and saving my arm.

Today it is harder to find the traditional Kama in hardware stores because everyone who uses hand held cutting tools of this type has come to the same conclusion as I did.

So what does that mean to the traditionalist? It simply means you are only studying history, Bub, because if you try to use the Kama on the street, you are going to have every one of the problems I did. In order to attack your opponent, you have to try to stick them with the point of the weapon, not the intent of this weapon or reach out with your wrist at a very bad angle and try to hook your opponent.

This may work if your opponent is dumb enough to just stand there and doesn't have (or doesn't know how to use) a weapon, of their own. Unfortunately, if they do, they are going to break or cut off your fingers before you ever make contact.

While I admit that there may be experts out there who, after decades of training are very fast and deadly with the Kama, I still would put my bet against them if they went up anyone who was even fairly good with ANY other edged weapon!

Exotic weapons

Every Chinese B-grade movie seems to come up with a new exotic weapon which the villain uses to threaten the hero. After killing countless scores of martial artists, the hero just manages to escape death and overcome the villain based on their superior attitude and a slight ability edge. Give me a break.

First off, these weapons were obviously newly created. They never existed in a time when metal was expensive and frankly they don't work on the street. It comes down to this. I notice that the more exotic a weapon is, the more mass it seems to have. Mass follows the mass rules of momentum that we have discussed before. Thus, the more mass it has, the more muscle it takes to move the weapon and the easier it is to deflect the weapon's flight path. I will simply refer to earlier explanations rather than repeating myself here.

Yes, yes, a person can get extremely good with any weapon, if they practice a lot. They can also be very good against the average person on the street. But then the average person is not the expert in weapons who is going to come up against them. It's back to the concept of whom you are training to fight... amateurs or pro's. I am not going up against a pro with something that looks like it stepped out of a grade 'D' Kung Fu movie. Frankly, I haven't got the years of practice needed to get good with a weapon like that, nor the training time it would take to STAY good enough to be able to use it on the street. In short, I want to live long enough to impress my grandchildren with my stories.

Throwing Stars

Have you ever seen a martial arts movie where the victim is killed by catching a star in his forehead? Of course you have. It is one of the favorite ploys of writer's that haven't the faintest idea what a star (called a shuriken) can do. In fact, I doubt these writers have ever touched a shuriken in their life or they would realize immediately that the concept of producing death by a shuriken strike to the forehead is impossible. There simply is not enough mass to ever penetrate significantly into the skull, even at point blank, let alone the distance shown in the movies.

In fact, if these so-called brilliant writers knew anything about medicine, they would know full well that simply penetrating the skull does not kill a person. True, it may set up the person for infection that may kill the person several days later, but what are you going to do? Wait around for that to happen? I mean really!



The real truth is that, the throwing star does not have enough mass impact to produce significant brain trauma. Therefore, unless you strike the eyes or the throat you are not going to do anything more than cause bleeding and really irritate your opponent. Yes, the star can be useful, as an irritant.

It can be used to target the legs and slow your opponent down. But since you need time and distance to be able to take aim and fire off a star I have to ask why don't you spend that time to do something really useful, like leave? And there is the little matter of what happens if you miss? Need I say anything more than leave this fantasy for the movie writers. They can write the reaction they want into the script. Reality doesn't restrict them!

Guns

One thing I want to make clear with this section is to debunk the idea that you, or anyone else for that matter, is going to be able to stop a gun from firing once the trigger has been pulled. In the movies the hero grabs the gun out of the villains hands in the nick of time.

Well, the truth is that even if you are that fast (no one is) you would still be very dead because most guns will still fire even if you grab them. There is no way you can keep the slide from moving in a pistol and you are not going to be able to keep the revolver from turning and firing either. The leverage is just too great!

Secondly, about the myths, of somehow jamming your hand, under the hammer, so that the hammer doesn't fall and set off the round. Well, even if we assume you are that fast enough (I don't believe it), to do that. Unless you put your entire finger in there- you are NOT going to stop the round from going off! The hammer of a gun, is going to punch a hole right through the web space between your thumb and finger and still fire. But don't worry, you won't feel it, the bullet will hurt much more! Then, of course, there are the pistols with internal hammers!

The truth of guns is that the best defense is NOT to be there! If you must try something fancy (i.e. your life depends on it) then deflect the muzzle and assume that it is going to go off, because in all likelihood it will. Even if the holder didn't intend to fire, your action will probably cause the trigger to be pulled.

I realize that this is not a popular stance because of the increasing number of gun wielding punks on the street today, but truthfully, I do not have a good answer despite all the years I have spent in both the military and in martial arts training. I only wish I did.

However, knowing that we really are vulnerable may give us the reality check needed to avoid those areas where trouble is likely to occur, and thus live to tell of our great grandchildren all about our personal glories.

The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits.

Closing note

This book felt to me, as if I had put a lot of negative comments in as I wrote it. It felt the same way when I reread it. I didn't mean it to be that way and I tried to minimize that, but I truly believe that weapon training in the martial arts has a LONG way to go to reach the reality of the rest of our training. I am definitely for realistic training of both open-hand and weapon types, but the operative word has to be "realistic" or it only adds to the misconceptions that are going to get people hurt.

If I have added any glimmer of realism in your approach to weapons, then this book has served the purpose I intended.

As you have surely noted, MUCH of this subject is from MY personal Opinions and PERSONAL experience.

Does that make it "right" or absolute? NO! I know you don't believe that [I truly hope you don't]. My entire point of this book was to present both ideas and factual scientific principle, so that you can make your OWN decisions.

Hopefully ones based on reality - at least a reality that works for you! Not something you have seen in the movies! Or heard a friend talk about or read in a magazine.

please note that I will be glad to answer letters or comments (and learn more information! from your knowledge and experience if you would be kind enough to share) , but I openly state - I am not about to change my approach of favoring realism over any claims of prowess.

Thank you and take care!

Sincerely,

Bruce Everett Miller - bemiller@cloudnet.com