

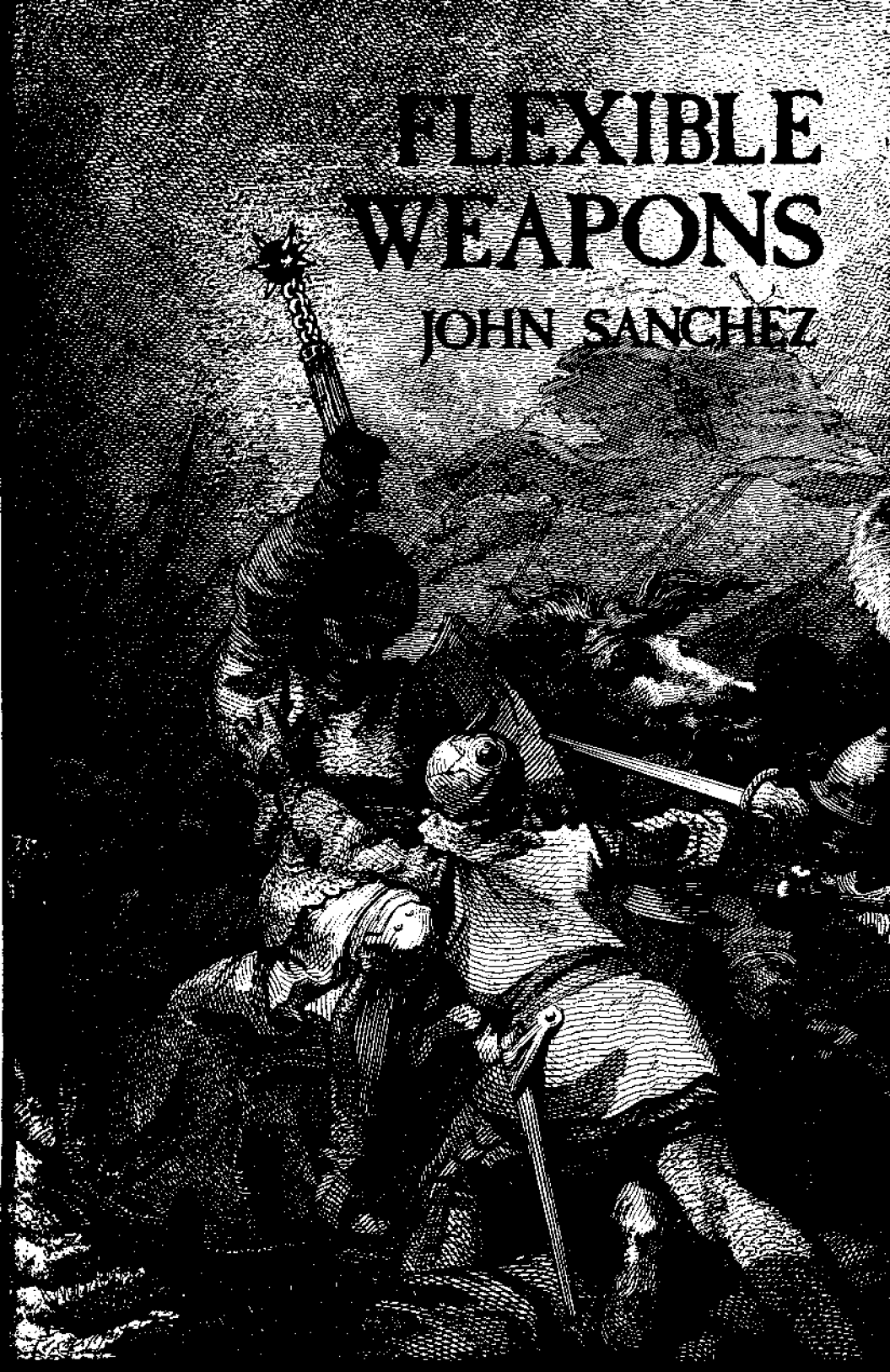
FLEXIBLE WEAPONS

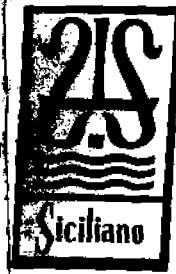
JOHN SANCHEZ



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Flexible Weapons

Flexible Weapons

by John Sanchez

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Flexible Weapons

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Introduction

Despite the different subject matter, *Flexible Weapons* is a continuation of my first Paladin Press book, *Slash And Thrust*. The systems presented in the two texts are in complete harmony.

Some phases of knife training and fighting discussed in *Slash And Thrust* are identical to corresponding aspects of flexible weapon use. Rather than go over the same ground twice, these points are not repeated here. If you have not already studied the system of knife fighting outlined in *Slash And Thrust*, I suggest that you do so before attempting to work with flexible weapons.

A practical familiarity with flexible weapons can be valuable indeed. They are formidable instruments, offering greater speed and power for the user's effort than simple impact weapons such as truncheons do. Flexible weapons are versatile as well, useful in a wide range of self-defense/offense situations, against both unarmed opponents and those armed with common nonprojectile weapons.

Flexible weapons are practical to carry and easy to conceal. When the large combat knife or short trun-

cheon cannot be carried concealed, due to warm weather clothing or for whatever reason, many people carry a lockblade folding knife in a pants pocket. A flexible weapon will, under these circumstances, prove a better weapons choice, but only if the reader trains with it. Most flexible weapon draws are smoother than the folding knife draw-and-open. They also have a far longer reach with an equal ease of concealment. The blades of most folding knives are too small to have dependable stopping power, since edged weapons must be large to have reliable stopping power. Flexible weapons are impact weapons, so they need only a relatively light weight and a design that allows the efficient use of that weight.

There is another reason for gaining some experience with flexible weapons. Many weapons of opportunity and improvised weapons belong to this genre. Everyone has heard of the old bar of soap/wet sand in a sock trick, but a belt and heavy buckle, a length of garden hose with the hand sprayer attached, a fishing sinker or rock on the end of a rope, shoelace, or necktie, and a telephone receiver with the cord are flexible weapons too. Whether an object is a weapon or not depends more on the individual holding it than on its original function.

However, flexible weapons have a few outstanding weaknesses which must be balanced against their strengths. It is difficult for a flexible weapon user to adapt well if the distance between him and his opponent suddenly narrows from the normal close interval to body-to-body contact. The longer flexible weapons are notorious for being useless at the closest quarters. It is true that if the flexible weapon user expects or desires to come very close to the opponent he can double his weapon, but the time it takes to do this

represents a serious moment of weakness if the opponent is within fifteen feet.

The flexible weapon wielder is sometimes at a disadvantage if he has no control over the distance he will fight at. For example, if a competent knife fighter was sitting next to an enemy in a car or train, he could put his hand on the concealed knife handle by gradual, imperceptible movements, and then draw and strike in a single motion; literally in the blink of an eye. A flexible weapon fighter cannot do this in a similarly restricted situation no matter what his level of skill.

One major flaw of all flexible weapons is that it is hard to judge the exact force of a strike. Even true experts have trouble doing this. The fighter may intend to merely strike the opponent unconscious, but unless care is taken in selecting the target area, brain damage, paralysis, or death may very well occur. Such accidents can be prevented, but their likelihood must not be forgotten.

I. Flexible Weapons

Flexible weapons differ from ordinary impact weapons in that they are jointed in one or more places. The basic principle of adding a joint to an impact weapon is thought to have originated with the primitive agricultural flail. These implements were used in Europe until the nineteenth century, and still are in some parts of the Orient. A few highly effective flexible weapons were in fact unmodified agricultural flails; for example the long-hafted flail used by medieval infantrymen in eastern Europe, and the nunchaku, a rice threshing flail of China and Japan. As flails proved themselves as weapons, new, more lethal versions of this farm implement were developed, suited especially for military use.

Agricultural terminology is used to designate the separate parts of flexible weapons. The striking weight is called the beater (swingle or swiple). This is linked to the handle (or handstaff) by chain, rope, or a heavy leather thong. In some cases there is no proper handle; the beater is linked to another beater, either of which may be held or used for striking. Or there may

be no handle at all, and the chain or rope itself serves as the handle.

Chain Mace

The first is the *chain mace* family. Chain maces were used in Europe, Russia, India, China, Japan, and ancient South America. Such wide use is evidence of the weapon's lethality. The mace's construction is always sturdy and simple. A short, heavy beater of metal, stone, or wood is connected to a hardwood or metal handle.

It should be realized that traditional chain maces were designed for use against armored opponents. Since the seventeenth century there has been little justification for the large beaters that were formerly used—solid iron balls three inches in diameter and the like. Yet there is no need to think of chain maces as this sort of thing. The very long handles seen on most traditional European chain maces can also be dispensed with. Yard-long handstaves must have been serviceable when these weapons were used against cavalry, but they have no purpose now. The mace instructions herein are for ones similar in size and weight to the practical chain mace in the illustration.

For the practical chain mace an eight-ounce beater is more than ample, and poses no problems to carry and conceal. An eight-ounce beater may seem light, but it can hit with frightening impact even when wielded by a person with no skill at all. Any weight over this is likely to hinder more than to help.

The length ratio between the practical chain mace's handle and chain makes it fairly easy to control. It is the least difficult of all the flexible weapons for an unskilled individual to use.

The mace's handle-to-chain length ratio must be such that it is physically impossible for the beater to

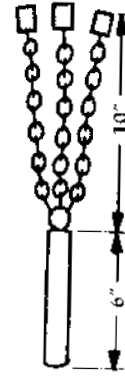
TRADITIONAL FLAILS



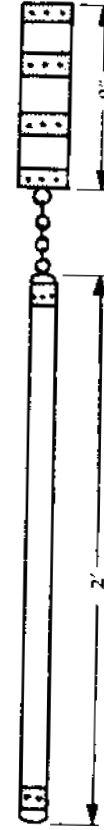
English Flail — Oak Handstaff, Leather Thong, and Hollywood Beater



European Type — Hardwood and Iron



German — Oak and Iron



Chinese and German — Oak and Iron Strapping

strike the user's hand when the chain is taut. This can happen if the beater rebounds from the target after impacting. If it does the user's hand will at best be temporarily crippled.

The term *chain mace* is unfortunate when used to describe this weapon. It makes one think of ponderous medieval artifacts. The practical chain mace is really more like a long leather strap. Except, of course, that the leather strap is designed to minimize injury. The practical chain mace is designed to maximize it.

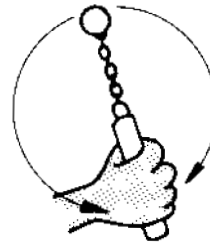
Manrikikusari

The *manrikikusari* is a Japanese flexible weapon of another family. It is said to have been invented in the 1700s, but is probably much older than that. Weight and chain weapons have been used in the Orient since ancient times.

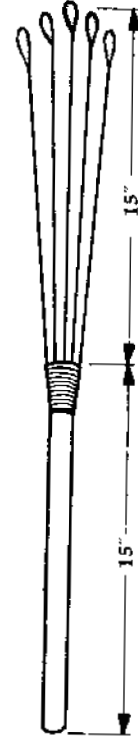
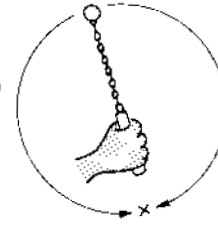
The *manrikikusari* is a medium length chain (about two feet) with a small beater of iron, steel, or brass at either end. The ones illustrated are of average size and weight. The beaters only weigh three or four ounces each, but are quite effective. The chain of the *manrikikusari* contributes little to the force of a strike, and does not need to be heavy. At the same time however, it should not be too light. If it is, the weapon will be unbalanced and hard to control. For the usual three- to four-ounce beaters, a chain with links three-quarters of an inch long, one-half inch wide, and one-eighth of an inch thick is most suitable. Straight-link chain is preferable.

If you find it hard getting used to the feel of a *manrikikusari*, tape a section of stiff half-inch hemp rope firmly to the chain along its entire length. This reduces the weapon's "whip" a little. After a few weeks change to three-eighths inch rope, and from there a few weeks later, to nothing but the chain.

Wrong Length Ratio
Between Handle and Chain

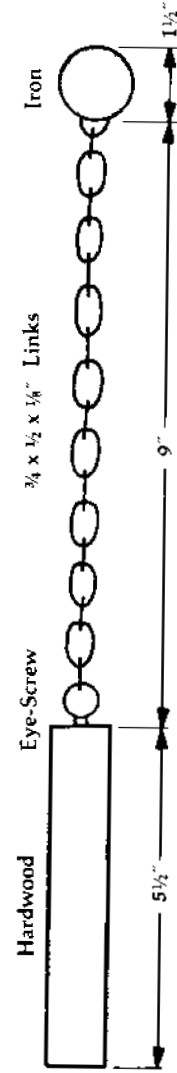


An Acceptable Length Ratio



Turkish and Russian Type — Wood, Rope, and Lead

Practical Chain Mace



Weight of Beater — 8 oz. Total Weight — 13 oz.

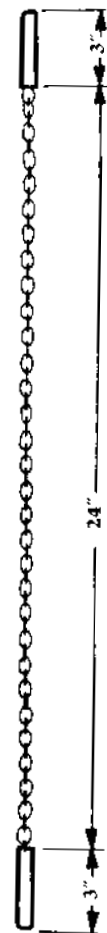
Manrikikusari are occasionally seen with chains as long as three or four feet. When the chain is much longer than the normal two feet, the extra length is generally kept bunched in the right hand along with the beater on that end. This extra foot or two is held back as a reserve for locking and roping tactics (which are discussed in a later section). The reserve chain can be let out for a simple strike, but this should be done with great caution if at all, and then only when it is certain that the strike will be a telling one. In the heat of a fight it is very hard to retract the extra length of chain once it is let out, as is necessary if the strike misses and the enemy decides to close in. The only quick and reliable way to shorten the unusually long manrikikusari is to double it using both hands, but this is a dangerously weak instant if the manrikikusari user has lost control of the situation. And indeed he would lose control if he had just missed with a strike. The enemy is closing fast, and all he has is an extremely long manrikikusari which is useless at closer intervals.

Yet there is nothing wrong with using a manrikikusari doubled from the start, if the fighter's strategy or a restricting environment necessitates it. The weapon hand holds the middle of the chain so that both beaters strike at once. An average length manrikikusari is used like a chain mace when doubled.

Again, the longer manrikikusari is most useful for locking and roping, but when used for striking—the commonest tactic—problems are likely to develop. For all but the very skilled, an unusually long manrikikusari tends to minimize the weapon's strengths and accentuate its weaknesses. If the idea of a long flexible weapon appeals to you, it would be better to specialize in the steel whip.

Steel Whip

The *steel whip* is a Chinese device, which represents the third flexible weapon family. According to

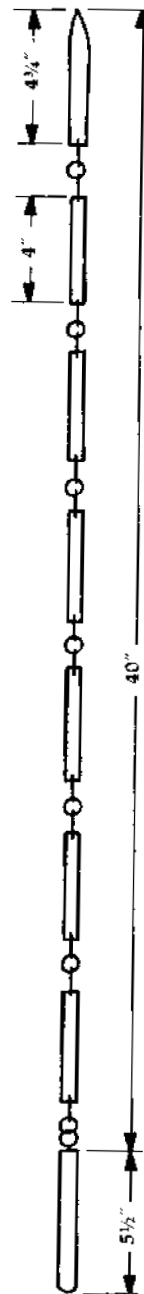


Manrikikusari, Kusari — Jutte

Each Beater Weighs 3 oz. Total Weight -- 10 oz. Links are $\frac{3}{4}$ x $\frac{1}{2}$ x $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

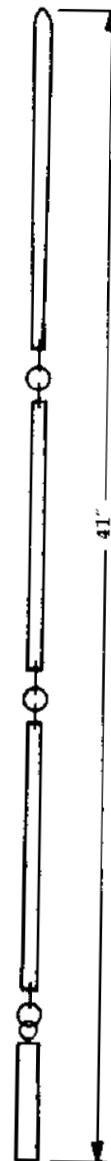


Bolo Variant — Rope and Stones in Pouches



Steel Whip, Chain Whip, Gorn-Bin

Total Weight -- 22 oz.

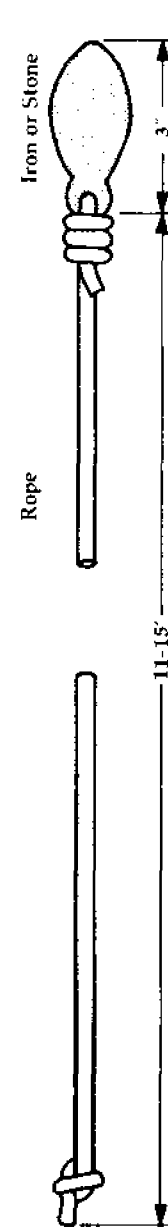


one colorful account, it was invented by an imprisoned bandit chief. After breaking out of jail, the bandit killed all of the pursuing guards with the long chains that were still locked to his wrists. The story relates that he designed the first steel whip shortly thereafter.

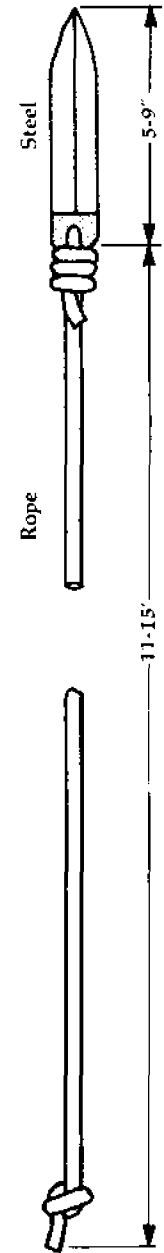
The steel whip is composed of three, five, seven, or nine steel or iron beaters. They are connected end to end, three links of chain forming each joint (see illustration). The Chinese prefer round-link chain, rightly claiming that it keeps the beaters from entangling and binding better than oval or rectangular links. On the other hand, oval or rectangular links are stronger than round ones. At any rate, the links should be large enough to allow the beaters free movement in all directions. On one end, the series of beaters is attached to a hardwood or iron handle by another three links of chain. On the opposite, striking end, the final beater usually comes to a dull point. This is never sharpened and has no edges. The final beater is also slightly longer and heavier than the others. The illustrated seven-section steel whip has beaters four inches long, one-half inch wide, and about three-sixteenths of an inch thick. Its final beater is four and three-quarter inches long, one-half inch wide, and one-half inch thick. At twenty-two ounces overall it is a little lighter than many.

The optimum length for a steel whip is related to the size of its user. When he is standing erect and holding the handle horizontally at the level of his navel, the tip of the weapon should just touch the ground. While steel whips a foot or more longer can be used, the above is a truly practical length.

When passing through a small room, hall, or any doorway, the steel whip should be carried doubled. The final beater is held in the weapon-hand along with



Meteor Hammer, Meteor Ball, Flying Meteor



Rope Knife, Pliable Spear

the handle. It is then used somewhat like a manrikikusari.

The three families outlined to this point represent differences in construction less than they do differences in length. Weapons of opportunity fall into one of the three families according to their length. Thus, a short, heavy chain is used as if it were a chain mace. A two and one-half foot section of fence chain is used as if it were a manrikikusari, and a longer piece of the same as a steel whip. The length of the weapon of opportunity generally determines how it should be used. This applies to countless other tool components, industrial items, and miscellaneous objects.

The last group of flexible weapons, the thrusting family is narrow, with only two members. These are the *meteor ball* and *rope knife*; both are semi-legendary Chinese weapons. The rope knife may also have been used in Africa, but this is uncertain. It is said that in the hands of an expert they were versatile, and that most of their technique of application has been lost with time. They are different from all other flexible weapons in that they do not strike in arcs if properly handled, but thrust at the opponent in nearly straight lines with little arc in trajectory.

The meteor ball is a compact weight of stone or iron (twelve to sixteen ounces) tied to one end of a rope eleven to fifteen feet long. Eleven feet is the most comfortable length for a person of average size. The rope is supple, and one-quarter to one-half inch thick. It should be cotton or hemp. Nylon parachute cord is too elastic, though otherwise ideal. In the rope knife, the weight is replaced by a heavy, handleless knife blade, about four to eight ounces in weight and sharp on both edges.

These thrusting weapons may seem bizarre and outlandish. Frankly, I think they are. Nevertheless, it is

well to understand the basic principles of their use, for in some circumstances similar improvised weapons can be utilized. Consider the following. If the rope knife is improvised, the knife will hit point first no matter what at ranges from six feet to the length of the rope. The knife will have a hard impact on the target. Any kind of fairly supple rope can be used, provided it is not very thin or very thick. The knife can be recovered whether it hits or not. If it misses, the weapon can be recovered and "refired" in one and one-quarter seconds; with long practice more quickly. If a meteor ball is improvised, the same applies to it, except that any compactly shaped stone or weight close to three-quarters of a pound can be used. The rope knife and meteor ball are not presented here as weapons of choice for personal combat, but as easily improvised tools that can be slapped together under bad circumstances and put to good use.

Beater Design

Whatever the flexible weapon, the beaters should be of a square, rectangular, or hexagonal design rather than round. The angled edges concentrate a strike's force on a smaller area. This facilitates damage to superficial nerves and muscular tissue, in addition to enhancing the effect of strikes made at the enemy's bones and joints. That is the reason why the impact weapons used by police are always round and smooth. The difference between bluntly edged and rounded beaters is not noticeable with heavy chain maces, but with the lighter-beatered manrikikusaris and steel whips it is dramatic.

Carry and Concealment

As previously stated, flexible weapons are practical to carry and conceal. There is no need for special holsters, rigs, and modified clothing. It is possible to

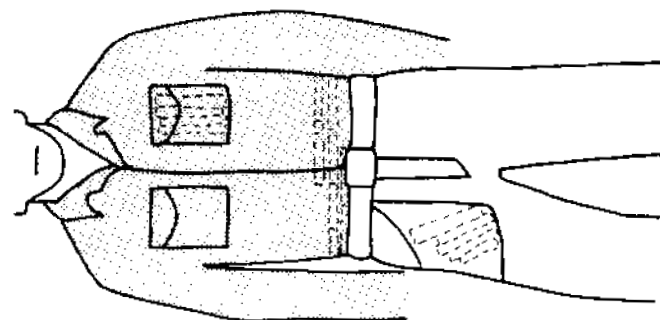
use such things, but they are nearly always unnecessary complications. See the accompanying illustrations.

Manrikikusari types may be carried in a variety of ways. One beater can be carried in the change pocket of the right front pants pocket, the chain and second beater hanging down into the main pocket and bunching on its bottom. In this carry one inch of chain is visible, though very inconspicuously. If there is no change pocket, one of the beaters is pushed behind the belt and waistband directly above the right front pants pocket, the chain and second beater hanging down into the pocket. Perhaps three inches of chain will be visible between the top of the belt and the pocket's mouth. In either carry the weapon is drawn by hooking the exposed portion of chain with the index finger.

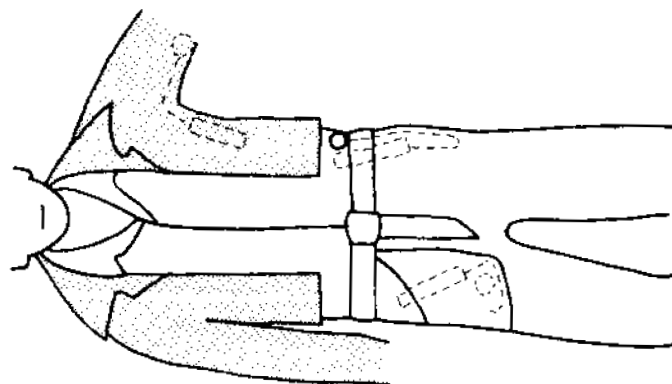
If a jacket or shirt is worn outside of the pants, the chain can be doubled and dropped down behind the belt and waistband on the right side. The two beaters hang out over the top of the belt, and the chain is concealed, being inside the pants.

When a buttoned shirt is worn tucked in, the manrikikusari can be carried around the waist, one beater to either side of the navel. The weapon rests in the fold of slack cloth the shirt makes where it is tucked into the pants. A belt must be worn in this carry.

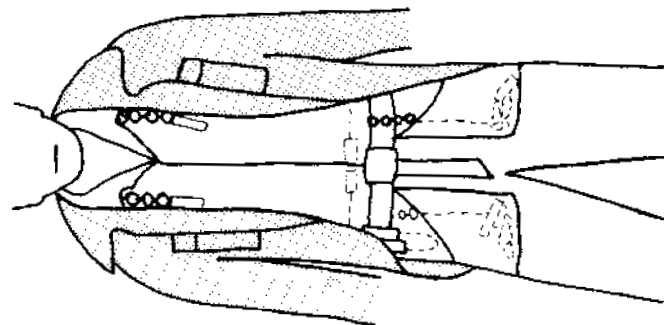
If quick access from a seated position is desired more than security, the manrikikusari is draped around the neck, the beaters hanging down on either side of the front of the chest under a low-buttoned jacket or sweater. Or half of the manrikikusari is put in one front pants pocket and the rest in the other, six or seven inches of the chain stretching between the pockets below the belt buckle. A pullover sweater or shirt should be worn to hide the exposed chain. This carry allows for a quick, very smooth draw. Each hand



Steel Whip



Practical Chain Mace



Manrikikusari

grabs one end of the exposed chain, and they slide to the beaters as the weapon is pulled free and straightened.

I recommend the change pocket carry mentioned first. It is comfortable; secure, always inconspicuous, and allows quick access from any position.

A practical chain mace can be carried in a pants pocket, with the final half-inch or so of handle sticking out. Or it can be thrust behind the belt and waistband at the right side, left side, or at the back. The last two inches of the handle and the beater are exposed, above the top of the belt. A jacket, sweater, or shirt must be worn to cover them. A simple and effective way to carry the mace when a jacket is worn is to let the chain and beater hang down inside of the left sleeve, and the handle hang free inside of the jacket's breast, below the armpit. It is a reasonably secure carry if the handle has any weight at all. This is one of the very few flexible weapon-concealed carries that allows its user to draw and strike in one motion.

The steel whip is the bulkiest of the lot, but even so folds flat and compactly. It can be carried in a pants pocket, a fatigue-sized shirt pocket, or it can be tripled and carried across the abdomen under a tucked-in shirt. A traditional alternative is to coil it unfolded about the waist under a sweater or shirt. When completely folded, the steel whip can be tucked behind the belt and waistband at the back, with the handle inclined to the right if the user is right-handed.

There is no way to conceal members of the thrusting family so that they can be put to their proper uses quickly. Here, a common sense approach is to coil the rope in the normal way (like a new electric cord), with a few inches of rope and the beater protruding from one end. If the weapon is carried like this, it is instantly available as a short chain mace, the tight coil serving as a handle.

II. Training

Flexible weapon design allows the use of a wide variety of techniques, some of which are rather sophisticated. Many valuable tactics and combinations are not instinctual, however, so there is no way that these can be performed with speed, power, and safety except through practice. With the possible exception of the practical chain mace, the weapons dealt with in this text cannot simply be picked up and used effectively by a person who has no practical familiarity with them. Flexible weapons are in their own way complex. All of this points to the fact that training is vital.

Flexible weapons have a tendency to "bite" the inexperienced user, generally on the hands, the leading knee, and the head at and above eye level. Work your way in training past the level of skill at which most of these accidents occur. In training mistakes can be corrected; in actual fighting they can not be.

Combat Training Forms

A useful method of solo training is the combat form, or *kata*. This may be a fixed series of movements handed down intact for hundreds of years, or it may be

shadow fighting that the trainee makes up as he goes along. In the form, the trainee engages one or more mentally visualized opponents. He strikes, evades, and counters, reacting to the movements and attacks made by the imaginary opponent or opponents. The number of tactics used in the individual form varies. Only one could be utilized, or more than thirty. The opponent may be visualized as stationary, or, more realistically, as moving at a desired speed. This speed ranges from slow motion when the trainee is working on an unfamiliar tactic, to nearly faster than can be handled. To do this the trainee must achieve a certain control over his imagination. The combat form should be approached as a mental as well as physical exercise. This is an important point, and deserves some elaboration.

Most trainees tend to daydream during their forms. This tendency must be rigidly suppressed. There is a difference between proper visualization and fantasizing. The former is a legitimate exercise, and the latter is pointless. The opponent in a daydream is not realistic. The correctly visualized opponent acts "real" so long as the trainee maintains his concentration upon the combat form. As an example, study the following scenario:

The student is working on counterattacking a straight knife thrust. He prepares himself, and then visualizes an opponent facing him in the proper stance just out of range. As the opponent steps in to thrust, the student strikes at the imaginary knife hand with his weapon. However, the strike misses. At this point, if he is loosely fantasizing, the opponent ceases to "exist." That is not the way things happen in real life. If the student is correctly visualizing the scene, his imagined opponent will continue the thrust just as a real one would. The student knows that he would

have been hit by that thrust in actual combat, because he is hit by it in his training form. The situation is emotionally if not physically real for the moment, and the student may experience involuntary muscle spasms in the area of his body that was "hit."

Once again, the disciplined use of imagination should play a strong role in the practice of combat forms, but the key word is *discipline*. This is admittedly difficult, and so some instructors tell their students to think of nothing but the manipulation of the weapon when doing forms. That prevents fantasizing, but is dangerous in that the trainee may forget about the practical applications of his form. Then the useful series of strikes and counters soon degenerates into a graceful, artistic, waving of the weapon through the air.

So much for mental and emotional realism in the combat form. The student must also strive to make it physically realistic. That is a problem, for the weapon makes no contact with a tangible target in the form, and there is nothing to stop its striking arcs. There is no choice but to blend many of the strikes together in repeated circular movements, some of which have no relation to how the weapon would behave if it had impacted against a solid target. As long as mere forms are practiced, there is no way to rectify this departure from reality. Yet this problem can be alleviated to some extent by keeping the forms short. Five strikes or fewer to the average form is a good general rule. Of course, this limitation of the strikes does not directly affect the amount of footwork that may be used in the individual form.

Fight and Form Duration

When trying to keep your forms authentic, another factor to consider is the duration of real fights

in which flexible weapons are used. It is hard to generalize, but a knife-against-knife fight between two competent combatants is typically over in twenty-five seconds. When one or both combatants use flexible weapons, the fight is very often finished within four to ten seconds. If one of them knows nothing about practical fighting techniques, then it probably will be over far more quickly, within one to three seconds. This type of fight is so short that there is rarely any time or need to utilize a great number of tactics in sequence.

A very long, intricate, and artistic form indicates one of two things. The form is not intended to have a practical relation to a specific combat situation, and is only a calisthenic exercise; or the form does indeed represent a combat situation, in which the flexible weapon user misses with roughly ninety percent of the strikes that he attempts.

Impact Training

Solo training where the weapon is struck against a solid target is called impact training. It enables the trainee to grow accustomed to how flexible weapons behave in actual use. When a flexible weapon strikes a hard and bony target it may rebound violently back at its user. When a soft and yielding target is struck the weapon may stop dead upon impacting. Impact training teaches the student how to handle his weapon when its striking arcs are distorted or interrupted. Furthermore, it gives the student a fine feel for combat intervals and his weapon's range.

There are many kinds of targets that may be used in impact training. One of the best and least expensive is a round wooden post driven into the ground. The post should be about six feet tall and six inches in diameter. Starting eleven inches down from the top, it

is wrapped six or seven inches thick with old carpeting, rags, or similar padding. The padded section is a little more than two feet long, and below it the post is bare.

Instead of cloth padding, a sack filled with sawdust or woodchips can be tied to the post. Sand should not be used as a filling, for with time it packs too hard in the bottom of the sack. Never use expensive gymnasium bags. The iron and steel weapons used in impact training destroy them in short order. If any sort of bag is used, its life can be prolonged by wrapping it in split inner tubes and taping them securely in place. On the whole, however, carpet padding is better than a bag. It is simpler, more durable, and gives the target a more human shape.

The main consideration is to give the target a hard skull and soft body. The short length of bare post above the padding is the target's head. The carpet padding represents chest, back, sides, abdomen, and groin. The post area below the padding is the target's leading leg, simulating the hardness of the knee area's unprotected bone, which is a prime target. In addition, a wooden arm with a sand-filled glove at the end can be lashed to the target's "shoulder." This allows the student to manipulate combat intervals very realistically in his impact training.

It is an excellent idea to wear heavy gloves when working on the target, especially if you do so with a mace. Sooner or later the beater will rebound off the target's head or leg after a strike and hit your weapon hand like a hammer. Impact training teaches the student to control his weapon when it boomerangs in this way, but while still learning to do so it is good to have some protection.

The trainee must be able to strike with great force, but he should also learn how to strike with

moderate force. Striking with speed but only a moderate impact is by no means easy. It is useful and worth learning.

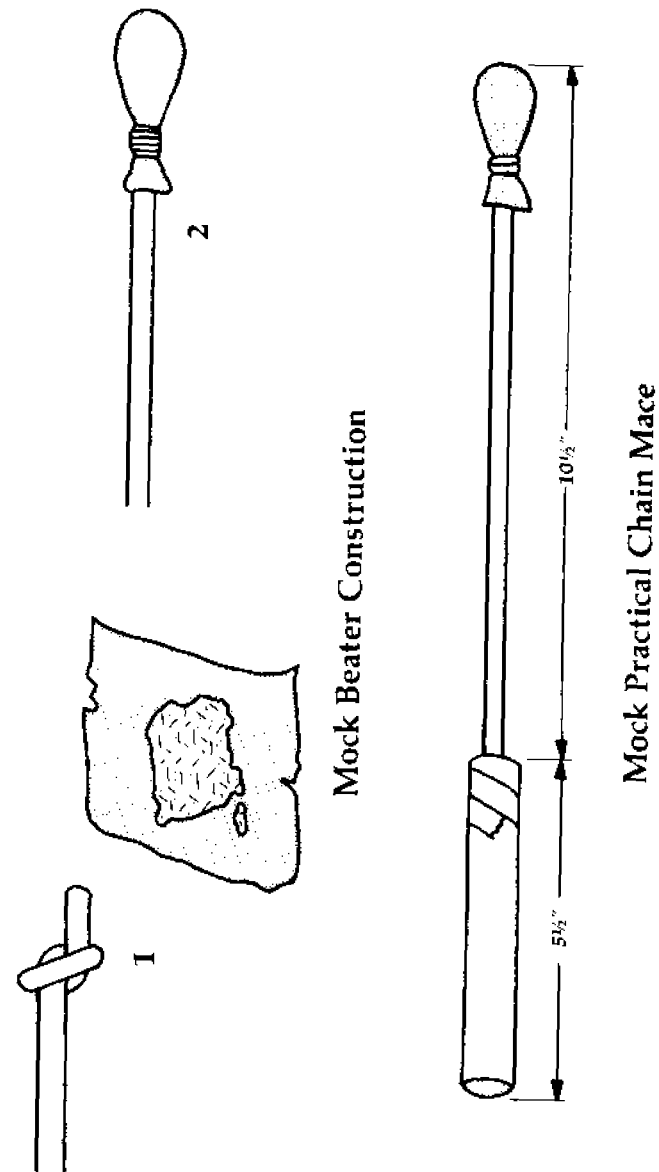
Live Sparring

Sparring tests the practical value of the student's solo training. This holds true for any combative art, but is markedly so for flexible weapon fighting. In the various phases of solo training many students become fascinated with flashy movements and complex strike combinations. When sparring against a live opponent most such moves, though not all, are found to be unnecessary and impractical. Sparring is also the best condition under which to develop new tactics, because they are simultaneously put to a realistic evaluation.

Mock Flexible Weapons

Weapons of iron and steel are never used in sparring. Instead, mock weapons are used that are as close to their real prototypes in balance and feel as safety permits. The mock weapon's overall length *must* be the same as the real weapon it represents. If it is given a handle, that too must be the precise length of the real one.

Mock weapons should have enough weight to let trainees know when they are hit, but at the same time they must be light. All flexible weapons are used with great speed and centrifugal force. Even an apparently harmless weight can be dangerous. The mock weapon's chain is made of supple rope, preferably cotton, three-eighths or one-half inch thick. A single overhand knot is tied at both ends. The beaters are constructed of cloth and sand. One teaspoonful of sand, a tablespoon or two of sawdust, and the knot on one end of the rope are placed in the center of a piece of cloth six inches square. The cloth is folded to form a bag



about the filling and knot, and then is tied in place with light cord. The end knot prevents the mock beater from slipping off the rope.

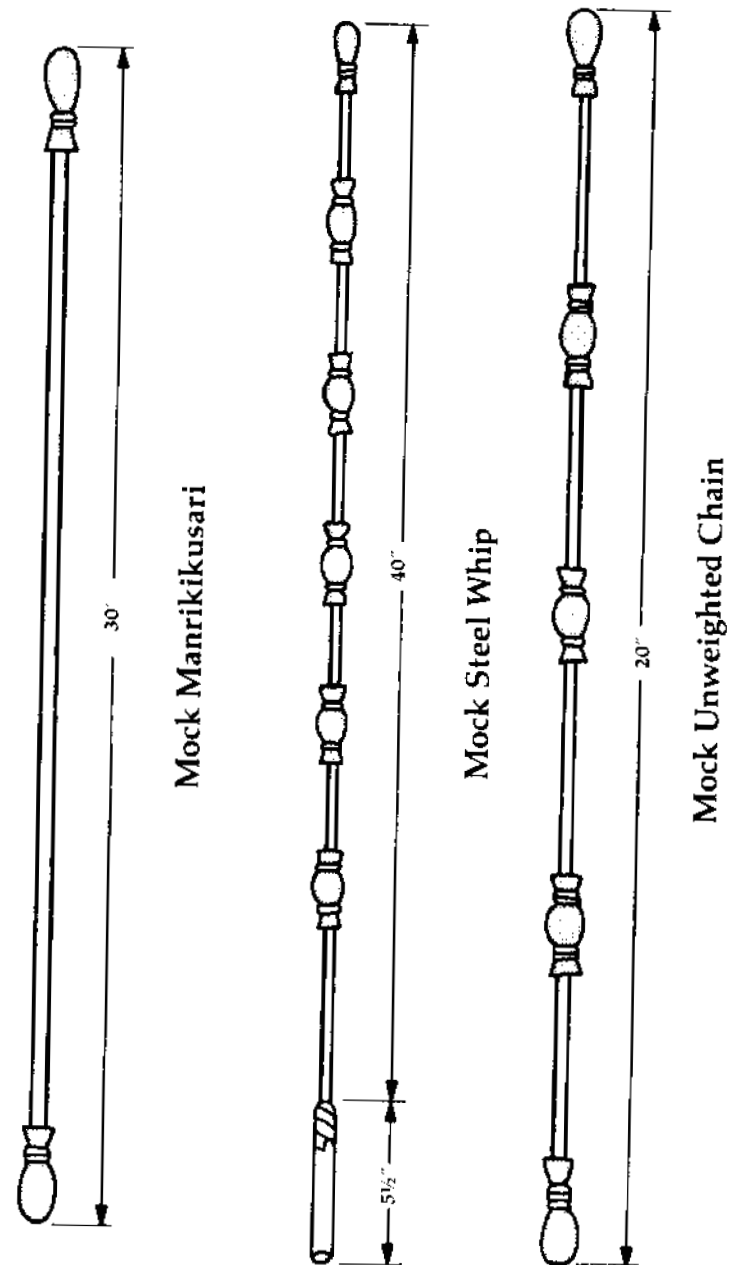
If a manrikikusari is simulated, the rope is weighted at both ends. If it is to be a mock steel whip or chain mace, the unweighted end is taped to a section of stiff three-quarter inch garden hose. The mock steel whip or unweighted chain of any length should have six beaters distributed evenly along its length in addition to the one at the tip, in order to reproduce the balance of the real weapon. The additional cloth-bag beaters are tied by both ends to the rope.

Many readers may think the amount of sand I advise using ridiculously small, and wish to improve the quality of their sparring by beefing up their mock weapons considerably. I hope that you will delay doing this until after you have been hit solidly on the temple by a mock weapon of the weight prescribed here.

The thrusting family is an exception. A mock rope knife or meteor ball cannot be manipulated realistically unless the sand and cloth beater weighs six ounces or more. This weight is perfectly safe so long as the mock weapon is used for thrusting strikes in the classic manner. But if the thrust misses and there is no time to prepare a second one, the technique is shortening the weapon and using it for ordinary arcing strikes is often brought into play. If this is done in sparring, the six ounces of sand might injure or conceivably kill the sparring partner. Because of that danger, the beater is constructed as usual except that it is oversized, and is also thickly padded with cloth. The extra padding is two or three inches thick on all sides of the sand weight.

Sparring Apparel

Industrial safety goggles must be worn when sparring. Without them a trainee risks injuring or



losing an eye. A pair of gloves is a good idea, though not really necessary.

Protective clothing should be kept to a minimum. It is good for sparring to entail some pain. A little pain makes trainees take it seriously when they are hit, and prevents the formation of a careless attitude. Too, not every touch made in sparring would be effective in a real fight. Weak, misplaced, and glancing strikes are not counted. To differentiate between these and well-made strikes the trainees must feel all of them.

Sparring Rules and Suggestions

When two rank beginners spar, every time a strike hits they immediately halt action and hold their relative positions. The one who was hit calls out exactly where he was hit, and whether the strike was hard or weak. If they disagree, the trainee who was hit has the final say. Then, still holding position, they determine what the effect of such a strike would be in real combat.

This being done, they resume action where they left off if the struck trainee is still theoretically able to fight. The struck trainee must bear in mind the nature of his injury, and modify his choice of tactics accordingly. For instance, if he were struck solidly on the point of his left shoulder he could not use that arm once action is recommenced.

If a trainee is hit by a blow that would have disabled his entire body or killed him, the trainees do not go immediately into a new bout. They halt action, break position, and the bout is formally ended and evaluated before the next one is begun. Rank beginners must be trained to judge the value of every strike that lands, understanding the effect such strikes would have on them if their weapons were of iron or steel. This is the basis of realistic sparring with mock weapons.

Stopping action at every hit is a necessary discipline, but it is also very awkward. This aspect of practice is dispensed with as quickly as possible, after the trainees know the force of their own blows and have memorized the body's target areas. Then the hit trainee just calls out the strike's location and estimated effect while continuing to fight, if he is still theoretically able to do so. However, a clear division between individual bouts must be kept. If not, they tend to run together, and that must be avoided.

When the trainees become competent they need not call the touches anymore. Both will know instantly the effect each touch would have if the weapons were real, and they will automatically act accordingly.

Sparring Variations

In sparring, the student should fight a variety of opponents. He can be set against an unarmed opponent, one with a truncheon, a knife fighter, or another flexible weapon user. It is bad to fall into a specialized rut. Ideally the student should face these different combat situations in sequential bouts. In the first bout of the sparring session one trainee uses a flexible weapon and the other is unarmed, in the next the second trainee switches to a truncheon, in the third a knife, and so on. After the initial four bouts the second trainee switches to a flexible weapon and the first trainee varies his. The alternation may be repeated as many times as desired. A sparring session of thirty bouts is an honest bit of work.

The flexible weapon user should know how to efficiently fight an unarmed opponent. It is a very common fighting situation, and is not nearly as easy for the flexible weapon man as it may seem. An unarmed man facing any weapon is quickly adrenalin-

ized and seldom overconfident. The unarmed student ought to restrain his fists or feet from making full contact, though the student with the weapon should definitely know it when he is hit.

Confrontations in which the flexible weapon wielder faces an opponent armed with a truncheon or knife are not unusual, so it is worth the student's time to become familiar with them. Wooden truncheons are not used in sparring. A good substitute is a toy plastic baseball bat. It is the only easily obtainable mock truncheon that can be used freely and with full contact.

Sparring with mock knives is fully detailed in *Slash And Thrust*. The combination of flexible weapon against knife is excellent training for the flexible weapon user, teaching him the value of accurate, hair-trigger strikes, and how to make the most of his weapon's reach. It is also a superb, though often frustrating, exercise for the knife fighter, teaching him decisiveness and how to seize initiative.

Conflicts in which flexible weapon versus flexible weapon are rare, yet they should be represented in sparring. Like knife against knife sparring, it gives the student a keen sense of relative distances and combat intervals.

Flexible Weapon Construction

Except for manrikikusari, which are available from martial art supply stores, no quality flexible weapons are currently sold on the commercial market at a reasonable price. Good quality practical chain maces are not made anywhere, to my knowledge. Steel whips are sold by a few Chinese import houses—at an exorbitant price.

I suggest that it is best to construct these weapons yourself. Construction is not difficult or

costly, and should take only a few hours of your time; even less if you have metalworking experience. No tempering or precision edge grinding is called for. All that is needed is a hammer, hacksaw, file, hand drill, commercial chain of the right size, and some good iron stock. Use the weapons illustrated in this text as models; the practical chain mace, the thirty-inch manrikikusari, and the seven-section steel whip. The measurements given are exact.

As a short cut, a serviceable manrikikusari can be made by taking twenty-six inches of the right sized chain and locking a three- or four-ounce padlock to the final link on both ends. Use all-steel, impact resistant padlocks. This short cut can be used to make a mace, too. Unfortunately it does not work with the steel whip. Even though only the final beater of a steel whip is used for striking, the other beaters are necessary for balance and control.

All iron parts of the flexible weapon should be darkened. This makes it difficult for the enemy to immediately identify the weapon, and makes it very hard for him to see strikes under bad light conditions. A quick acting chemical gun blue can be used. Leave the paste or fluid on three times as long as the manufacturer recommends, and repeat the application four or five times. This should give the weapon a dull, mottled, gray-black finish—not as pretty as a silver-blue, but better from a functional standpoint.

III. Flexible Weapon Fighting

As previously stated, this system of flexible weapon fighting is an extension of knife fighting as presented in *Slash And Thrust*. Where a particular aspect of both fighting systems is identical, I have omitted it from this book, since it is covered by the aforementioned text.

This system is based on the manrikikusari family. In its construction, size, and tactics of manipulation, the manrikikusari may be thought of as a middle ground between the chain mace and steel whip families. The manrikikusari family is the widest, most commonly used group, and it is the family into which most improvisations fall.

When the characteristics of chain mace and steel whip modify or negate a specific tactic of the manrikikusari-based system, clear mention of this will be made, referring to the variant family by name.

The tactics proper to the thrusting flexible weapons differ strongly from those of the other three families. In order to preserve a measure of clarity, the uses of rope knife and meteor ball are discussed separately in a short appendix.

Fighting Theory

The basic theory of flexible weapon fighting is the same as that of knife fighting. The greater part of the art consists of strong and timely attacks. The distinction between offensive and defensive tactics is often unclear, as it should be. The commonest and safest "defensive" tactics are the counterattack and the stop-hit. A stop-hit is an attack made on an opponent's attack and designed to hit before it. Only one genuinely defensive tactic is favored: evasive footwork combined with an accurate, unconscious awareness of combat intervals. All other purely defensive tactics are frequently risky and dangerous, and in most circumstances imply that their user has lost control of the situation.

Engagement Attitudes

Engagement attitudes are defined as positions in which the hands and weapons are held, generally when approaching the opponent but still out of range. A very rough synonym is *guard*, as used in sport fencing. Though more familiar, this term is not used here. Most people take it to indicate that the weapon in some way shields its user from possible attacks. This has nothing to do with the normal function of flexible weapon engagement attitudes. Few of them protect any part of the body. The only purpose of an engagement attitude is to act as an efficient, ready position from which swift and forceful strikes may be made.

Two-handed Attitudes

In two-handed engagement attitudes the chain of the weapon is usually stretched taut, the beater in the left hand and the handle or opposite beater in the right. Occasionally the entire length of chain is bunched, and held in the left hand along with the

TWO-HANDED ATTITUDES

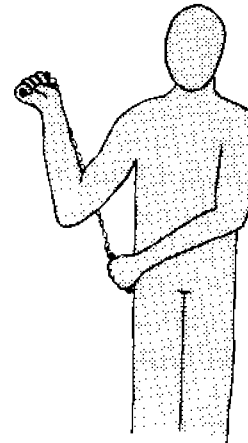


Fig. a. Right Side

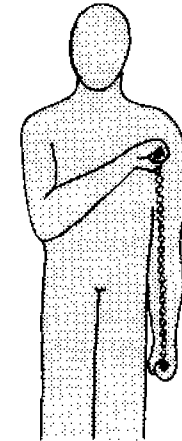


Fig. b. Left Side

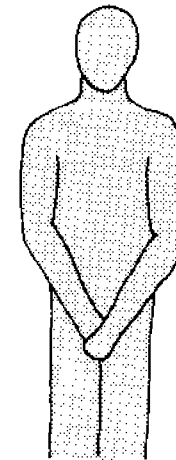


Fig. c. Concealed

beater. This is then a deceptive tactic, one that makes it impossible for the enemy to judge the length and range of the weapon before it strikes out towards him. The initial strike is marginally slower and less stable than if the chain is held taut, yet this variation of the two-handed engagement attitude is still quite useful and should be practiced.

Naturally there are many ways in which the hands may be held. The following are two of the best. In the first the weapon is held at the right side of the body, in the second at the left.

In the first attitude, the left hand holds the beater, and is crossed in front of and close to the abdomen. The back of the hand faces outward at the right side. The right hand holds the handle or other beater, and is in front of and close to the right shoulder, with the wrist bent back and the palm facing upward. The right arm is fully bent, with the right elbow close to the right side of the body. The chain stretches from the left hand to the right, and is taut, passing behind and touching the right triceps.

In the second two-handed attitude, the left hand holds the beater and hangs straight down at the side of the left thigh and a few inches to its rear, but not behind it. The right hand, holding the handle or other beater, is in front of and close to the left shoulder, palm down. The right forearm is crossed in front of the chest. The chain is taut, stretching from the left hand to the right, in front of and along the length of the left arm.

As they are described here, these attitudes are suited for a manrikikusari of average length. With small alterations of the left hand's place in the first, and of both hands in the second, they can be used with any flexible weapon whatsoever. They are highly

aggressive positions, as are most two-handed engagement attitudes.

One-handed Attitudes

Limp weapon engagement attitudes are one-handed. The flexible weapon is held in the right hand and the chain and beater are allowed to hang straight down, motionless. Generally the weapon hangs close to the side of the right leg. In one variation the right forearm is crossed in front of and close to the abdomen, the chain and beater hanging down at the left side. Limp weapon attitudes give the impression of unreadiness. When the flexible weapon hangs at the side of the right leg it is often hard for the enemy to see it clearly. He may fail to notice it altogether, until it is too late.

One-handed attitudes are particularly suited to the chain mace. The handle and shorter chain of a mace enable it to strike easily and quickly from a limp position. Limp weapon attitudes are also used with the manrikikusari, but very seldom with the steel whip. However, a similar engagement attitude especially for the steel whip exists. In it, the steel whip rests over the right or left shoulder. The weapon hand, holding the handle, is about a foot in front of the shoulder that the weapon rests on. The tip of the weapon and more than half its length dangle behind the shoulder and down the back. Or the steel whip can be held loosely about the waist, both hands in front, the right hand holding the handle and the left hand holding the final two or three beaters folded together. These attitudes are the static equivalents of steel whip coiling, a group of tactics that will be discussed shortly.

Circular and Figure Eight Attitudes

The last two types of engagement attitudes are the circular striking and figure eight attitudes. In both

of them the opponent is approached with the weapon in fast motion, making continuous propellor-like circular strikes or continuous figure eights. These tactics may be used with all flexible weapons. There is much to be said in their favor, and much to be said against them. They will be discussed at length in the section on strike blending technique.

Strike-to-Attitude Relationships

The engagement attitude adopted by a flexible weapon user should suit whatever strike he expects to make first. When the right hand is at the right side of the body in an attitude, the weapon is able to strike straight down or right to left at most angles with economy of motion. If the right hand is at the left side of the body, then straight down and left to right strikes are the optimum attacks. This is true for any of the attitudes that were mentioned, with the exception of the figure eight type. In that case the distinction is irrelevant, first because the weapon hand is nearly always held dead center when executing the figure eight; second, because diagonal right to left and left to right strikes are automatically consecutive.

If the fighter plans his first strike to be from right to left, he should step into striking range of the enemy with his right foot leading. The twist of his waist as he steps in gives additional power and speed to the strike. If the initial strike is to be from left to right, the left foot leads on the final step. This is very important with the steel whip, or any flexible weapon longer than thirty-two inches. Twisting of the hips, waist, and shoulders plays a large role in steel whip manipulation. The figure eight engagement attitude is again an exception. In a figure eight the strikes follow one another so quickly that it is generally useless to try to

estimate which will hit the enemy first, at least when it is used as an engagement tactic.

Vision Considerations

In some martial arts, particularly Japanese style, the student is taught to maintain unbroken eye contact with the enemy while fighting. They state that the enemy's decision to attack can be seen in his eyes a split-second before he telegraphs it with his body. Eye contact is also said to help the fighter establish psychological dominance over his enemy.

An opposite rationale holds that it is never good to gaze directly into an opponent's eyes. Doing so does not allow the peripheral vision to cover his hands and feet well. Too, avoiding eye contact can have a psychological effect on the enemy. It tends to create an emotional distance between combatants. This is desirable, for it makes it harder for the enemy to fully focus his emotions on the fight. This is especially true if the fight starts spontaneously, as opposed to those brawls preceded by a lengthy exchange of shouted insults. In order to work well, the technique of denying the enemy the emotional focus engendered by aggressive eye contact must be implemented *before* the point of actual physical conflict is reached. This denial takes place while the opponent is talking himself up, or if there is to be no talk, during the walk-up and approach phase.

The best place to direct the eyes is in the general direction of the enemy's solar plexus. If there is a chance that an object may be thrown, fix the eyes an inch or two higher.

Striking Techniques

There are two old Chinese maxims about flexible weapons: "Soft weapons are used as if they are hard,

hard weapons as if they are soft"; and "The steel whip must be straight, the spear must be bent." These are truisms indeed. Their meaning, as far as flexible weapons are concerned, is that the chain of the weapon must be straight as an iron bar when striking. When the portion of the weapon between hand and beater is loose or wavy during a strike, the strike is weak, slow, inaccurate, and leaves the striker open to all sorts of countertactics.

In the accompanying illustration, eight strikes at different angles are given numbers. Hereafter strikes are referred to by number. The illustration is only a diagram of strikes, and does not indicate targets. Do not visualize a human figure at its center. If this is done, a 5 strike might be seen as an attack to the opponent's right side. That could be, but a 5 strike may just as well be aimed at his head or knee. Likewise a 2 strike is not always at the opponent's left shoulder. It is often aimed at his leading hand.

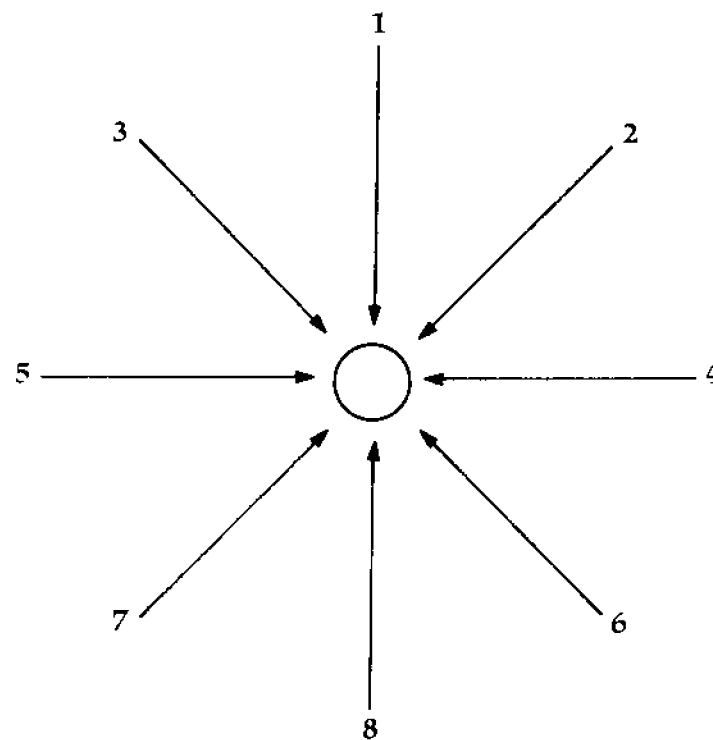
Flexible weapon strikes are performed mainly with the wrist. A little elbow and shoulder movement is also required. Still, the wrist always gives a strike most of its speed and centrifugal force, or power.

Strikes 2, 3, 4, and 5 are the most frequently used. They are relatively easy to control if they miss the target. Strikes of this group are easy to recover, and they blend well with one another into combinations.

Strikes 1, 6, and 7 are used slightly less often, being marginally harder to recover and blend into combinations.

Strike 8 is infrequently used. This movement is hard to put any real power into, weapon recovery is difficult, and it is not very versatile. When an upward attack is needed, a 6 or 7 strike is generally used instead of an 8.

DIAGRAM OF THE EIGHT BASIC STRIKES



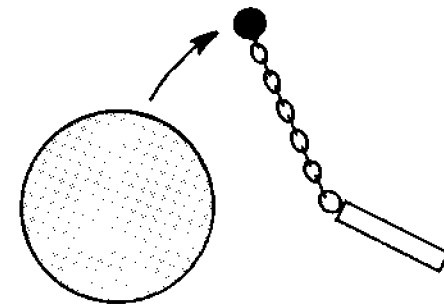
Rebounds and Dead Stops

If a flexible weapon hits a very hard and bony target such as the skull, the beater may rebound back at its user dangerously fast, somewhat like a boomerang. If it hits a soft, yielding target, such as the abdomen or groin, the weapon often stops dead on impact. The hands and most parts of the limbs are exceptions. When they are struck, the beater is likely to hit and then continue to the other side of the target, without an unmanageable distortion of its striking arc.

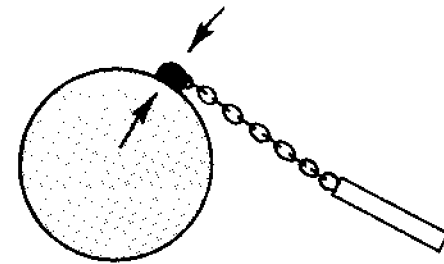
The boomerang or dead stop problem is severe with the chain mace, and to a lesser extent also affects the manrikikusari. It does not greatly affect the steel whip or unweighted chain of any length. In these weapons there is no great difference between the weight per inch of the striking tip and the weight per inch of the rest of the weapon. In other words, the distribution of the weapon's total weight is fairly constant throughout its length. Therefore, after the moment of impact the portion of the weapon that lies between the hand and the striking tip has enough weight and momentum (inertia) to tend to pull the striking tip through the target, continuing its arc on the other side. See the illustration. This is a complicated point, but it is well worth understanding. It enables a fighter to estimate how any flexible weapon will behave in actual use, without even touching it.

Recovery and Blending

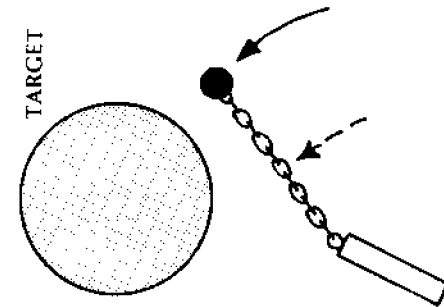
After a strike, one of two techniques must be used to control and redirect the flexible weapons. The first technique is based on decelerating the weapon and bringing it to a halt. It is called *recovery* (of the weapon). In the second technique, the weapon is allowed to continue its striking arc, and the centrif-



... or boomerang. The light chain does not have enough momentum to pull the heavy beater through, completing the arc.



... that the beater is likely to stop dead ...



The weight of the beater is so much greater than that of the chain per inch, ...

ugal force is used to begin the next strike. This is called *blending* (the strikes together).

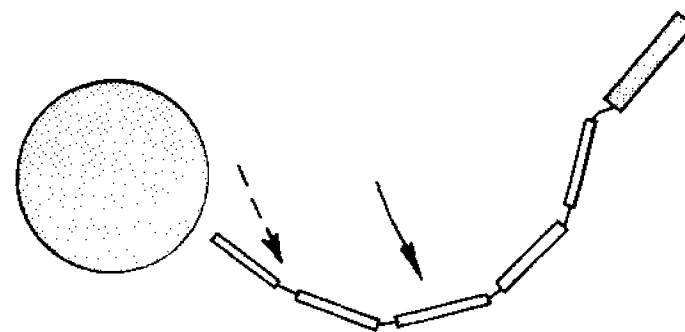
Recovery tactics are normally used only when they can be combined with a side or back-step out of the enemy's range. Blending tactics are generally utilized when it is impossible or undesirable to do this, because of any enemy who is constantly closing, terrain limitations, or the flexible weapon user's free choice. Blending tactics are possible if the weapon pulls through after impacting, or if the initial strike misses. If the weapon stops dead or boomerangs, blending tactics are difficult to use and control. But before going into the tactics of recovery and blending, a few points must be made.

Technically exact descriptions of flexible weapon maneuvers are necessarily complex. The best way to avoid confusion here is to read this text with a flexible weapon in your hand. Try each tactic as you read it, just to get a clear idea of what is being said. Things which look complicated on paper often prove simple and understandable in practice.

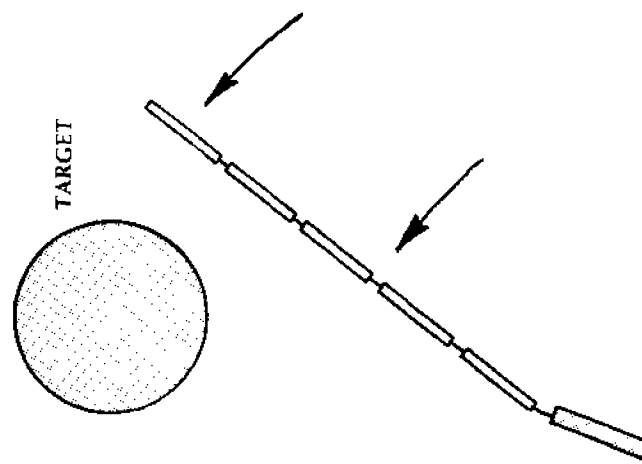
If you do not have a mace, manrikikusari, and steel whip, simulate them. Get three lengths of ordinary fence chain, sixteen, thirty, and forty-five inches long. They will be good enough for some rough practice, but obtain the real weapons as soon as possible.

In the following descriptions of recovery tactics, mention is made of decelerating the weapon. This is done as the weapon nears the end of its striking arc, by flexing or extending the wrist and keeping it that way for a quarter of a second, neutralizing the weapon's centrifugal force. The wrist bends in the same direction as the strike that is decelerated.

A mace can be decelerated by the wrist alone because of its shorter chain. The manrikikusari, a longer weapon, must be decelerated with a small



... pull the tip through, completing the arc.



Here the striking tip weighs the same per inch as the rest of the weapon. After impacting, the momentum of the latter is enough to . . .

amount of general arm movement in addition to that of the wrist. To decelerate a steel whip, which is longer still, a twist of the wrist and shoulders is added to the arm and wrist movement. However, a steel whip is seldom fully decelerated.

Two-handed Recoveries

The first recovery tactic is the two-handed recovery. The weapon is decelerated as it approaches the end of a striking arc, and the free end is grabbed with the left hand. The chain is then tautened between the right and left hands, which simultaneously adjust themselves into a suitable attitude for the next strike. One of the two-handed engagement attitudes is probably the best choice. If for some reason the weapon cannot be decelerated, the left hand grabs it by the middle of the chain, rather than by the beater or striking tip. Then the left hand slips down to the beater as the chain is tautened.

Striking from a two-handed position is not entirely a one-handed movement. As the right wrist flicks the weapon into a strike, the left hand should give the beater a very small push into the striking arc as it is released. The push is very slight, but it assists the right wrist, and gives the weapon an added initial burst of speed. It also prevents telegraphing the strike with the right, or weapon hand, the one that the enemy watches.

Two-handed recovery is easier if the original striking arc is one that travels in the direction of the left, or empty hand. If the flexible weapon user is right-handed, these include strikes 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8. A flexible weapon can be brought to a two-handed recovery after nearly any strike, but some lend themselves to the tactic more readily than others.

Two-handed recoveries work well with a manrikikusari. The average manrikikusari's length and chain/beater weight ratio are perfect for this tactic. The chain mace is slightly unsafe to recover in this way due to its proportionately heavy beater, but it is rarely necessary to try two-handed recoveries with a mace, because of the greater control afforded by its shorter chain and handle.

A steel whip can be brought to a two-handed recovery, yet it seldom is, and then more usually for blocking tactics than as a preparation for a strike. The left hand never grabs the steel whip at its striking tip, but rather a foot or so up from it. This is vital if the weapon is brought back to a two-handed engagement attitude, for otherwise the hands are too far apart. When using a steel whip from a two-handed engagement attitude, and if time permits it, the final two or three beaters should be folded side by side and held in the left hand. As the strike is made they unfold in midair, adding a foot or more to the weapon's apparent reach. If the opponent back steps he will be hit anyway. This works best with the illustrated seven-section type of steel whip.

Limp Weapon Recovery

The second recovery tactic is the limp weapon recovery. After a strike the weapon is decelerated and the chain and beater are allowed to drop down, hanging free. This is a one-handed tactic, but the fighter should always remain aware of his left hand's position. The left hand is frequently used to assist the right hand when the weapon is decelerated. It can reach out and lightly pat, not grab, the arcing weapon a few inches below the beater, at the same time that the right hand performs the standard decelerating tactic. The pat neutralizes part of the weapon's cen-

trifugal force, making the deceleration easier and smoother. A left-handed "pat assist" is particularly useful with the manrikikusari.

Limp weapon recoveries are well suited to the practical chain mace, which tends to break its centrifugal force after impacting. Conveniently, the mace is the easiest flexible weapon to bring into a strike directly from a limp position, because of its short chain and handle. Limp weapon recoveries are occasionally used with a manrikikusari, but rarely with a steel whip. Once an unsupported steel whip is allowed to go totally limp, it is hard to strike strongly with it at the drop of a hat.

This does not apply to the steel whip engagement attitudes that were mentioned earlier. In them the weapon is supported by the shoulder or both hands, and does not just hang free from the right hand. For other reasons, though, these steel whip attitudes are not reverted to after the initial moment of engagement has passed. Then they are usually replaced by steel whip coiling.

Fanning Combinations

The first blending tactic is fanning. In it, the weapon is slightly decelerated as it reaches the end of a striking arc, and before it falls a second strike is made, the opposite of the first.

The most manageable fanning combinations are a 4 strike followed by a 5, and a 5 by a 4. 2-7, 7-2, 3-6, and 6-3 combinations are also possible. Any fanning combination may be repeated endlessly, but there is little justification for this as a striking tactic. Repetition of a single fanning combination is normally done only as a warning tactic, to make the opponent keep his distance. Fanning is used with the mace and manrikikusari, but never with the steel whip because of its

length. The chain mace may be fanned by wrist action alone. With the manrikikusari a moderate amount of arm movement is also necessary.

The left hand is often used as an assist in manrikikusari fanning, by patting the weapon to decelerate the initial strike. This is done the same way as when bringing it to a limp weapon recovery. A left-handed pat assist is most applicable when the initial strike of the fanning combination is a 2, 4, or 6.

When the initial strike in manrikikusari fanning is a 3, 5, or 7, the strike should be made with the index finger of the weapon hand extended along the chain. The effect is to tactically shorten the manrikikusari without decreasing its reach, making it easier to fan with. The index finger acts as an extension of the fist, and lets the fighter choke up on the weapon without changing his grip. As the initial 3, 5, or 7 strike is decelerated the index finger gives way a bit, helping the wrist. When the wrist gives the manrikikusari its second striking arc the index finger pushes against the chain, decreasing the weapon's inertia and resistance to the new arc.

Steel Whip Coiling

The second blending tactic is coiling. It is nearly exclusively a steel whip maneuver, being suited to that weapon's design. It can be applied to any unweighted chain of a similar length. The chain mace is entirely unfit for coiling, but it is never really necessary to try coiling a mace. Its size makes a mace fine for fanning, which for it takes the place of coiling. Sometimes a manrikikusari is partially coiled, but on the whole this should not be done unless it is unavoidable. It is rightly considered to be bad technique.

As the tactic's name implies, the steel whip is allowed to coil itself about the user's body. Then the

weapon is uncoiled, with the uncoiling motion blending into a strike. There are three kinds of coiling: waist, forearm, and shoulder. In all three types twisting of the waist, torso, and shoulders play a great part. For that matter, body twisting and angling is the main component in any phase of steel whip manipulation.

Waist Coiling

Waist coiling is the most basic of the three. As an example, the weapon user waist-coils a 4 strike and uncoils with a 5 strike. No attempt is made to decelerate the initial 4 strike. The weapon hand is just brought a little closer to the body at waist level, and the weapon is allowed to fully complete its right to left arc. As a result, the part of the steel whip about eight inches down from the handle hits the coiler on the left side of his waist. The weapon carries little force so close to the handle, and the impact is not painful. The rest of the weapon wraps counterclockwise around the waist, the tip finally coming to rest at the left side. The coiler must twist his waist and torso forty-five degrees counterclockwise in synchrony with the weapon's coiling. This lessens the final impact of the tip.

Immediately upon being fully coiled, the steel whip starts to uncoil and loosen. The coiler gives the naturally uncoiling weapon force and direction by twisting his waist and torso forty-five degrees clockwise, back to its original orientation. The steel whip is not pulled free; it frees itself, aided by the body twist. When the steel whip is fully uncoiled it automatically goes into a 5 strike. Then, when the weapon is free from the waist, the strike is given power by the wrist and arm.

This is 4-5 waist coiling, because a 4 strike is followed by a 5 strike. The only difference between it

and 5-4 waist coiling is that in the latter the weapon coils clockwise, uncoils counterclockwise, and the body twists first clockwise, then counterclockwise. Shallowly angled 2 and 3 strikes can be waist coiled. The 2 uncoils into a 5 and the 3 into a 4. In all waist coiling the left forearm should be lifted to about four inches below shoulder level. This forestalls painfully hitting the left elbow with the weapon's tip. Also, be careful to coil the weapon high on the waist. If you let it drop down during the coil, the tip will impact against the exposed bones of the hip area.

Forearm Coiling

Forearm coiling is nearly the same as waist coiling, except that the left forearm, hanging down with a bent elbow, is placed between the left side and the weapon as it begins to wrap about the waist. The weapon coils in the normal way, but with the forearm as well as the waist inside of its circle. As the steel whip uncoils, the left forearm assists by pushing it away from the waist in the direction of the uncoiling strike. This is added to the usual body twisting, first in the direction of the coiling, then in the direction of the uncoiling and strike.

It is nearly impossible to forearm-coil a strike that travels left to right, because only the left forearm can be used for the tactic, the other being occupied with holding the weapon (assuming the user is right-handed). Therefore, the combinations yielded by forearm coiling are 4-5, 4-7, 4-3, 6-5, 6-3, 2-5, and 2-7. The forearm is more mobile than the waist, so forearm coiling allows initial strikes to be redirected in a greater variety of ways than waist coiling. 2-3 and 6-7 combinations may be tried, but they are very difficult, too much so to be useful in combat. These combinations are performed as figure eights, not by coiling.

Shoulder Coiling

Shoulder coiling is used when the initial strike is a 6 or 7. If a 6 strike, the whip is allowed to complete its upward diagonal arc, and the weapon hand is drawn in a little towards the chest. As a result, the portion of the steel whip about eight inches down from the handle hits the left shoulder. The rest of the weapon coils itself diagonally down and across the coiler's back, its tip slapping against the floating ribs on his right side. The body must be twisted in synchrony with the weapon, in the direction of its coiling. In this case the shoulders would twist counterclockwise, and the right shoulder would be raised two or three inches higher than the left.

As the steel whip loosens, its uncoiling is helped by twisting the body again, back to its original position and in the direction of the uncoiling strike. This is a powerful twist of the shoulders, torso, and waist. The weapon then automatically uncoils into a 3 strike. As it clears the shoulder the strike is given force by the wrist and arm.

If a 7 strike is coiled over the right shoulder, it uncoils into a 2 strike. It is also possible to coil a 6 into a 5, and a 7 into a 4. The resulting 5 or 4 is a high strike.

Second Strikes and Delays

In waist and shoulder coiling, the second strike does not immediately follow the first. There is always a small delay between strikes, perhaps two-thirds of a second. This must be taken into account, yet it should not be seen as a flaw or liability. There are many times when it is desirable to have a small delay between strikes, but bringing the weapon to a full recovery is impractical. As an example, the following:

Fighter A steps within range of fighter B, and aims a 4 strike at him. B evades this attack by ducking,

without sidestepping or backing away. Now A has the feeling that B is going to jump forward out of his ducking crouch and make his own attack. A knows that he has to get out of B's range. But A also has to do something with his own weapon, which is completing its right-to-left arc and is shortly going to hit him if unattended.

A limp weapon recovery does not work well with a long flexible weapon, and it might hinder his footwork. A two-handed recovery would make A focus his attention on his hands when he should be thinking of using his legs. Circular strikes and figure eights are no good at the moment. The timing and distances are all wrong for them, and a 4 strike cannot be blended into a figure eight anyway.

So A draws in his hand a little and coils his weapon as he jumps out of B's range. This keeps it from entangling his legs and temporarily recovers it. If B decides to follow A, he will step into the number 5 strike that A's weapon makes as it uncoils. If B is cautious and hangs back, A can definitely establish this safe distance by repeating 4-5 and 5-4 waist coiling three or four times in B's direction. This tactic would prevent B from closing the distance, giving A time to plan his next move.

This sequence of events is not hypothetical, and is certainly workable. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily superior to other possible strategies. The only reason for presenting it here is to illustrate a common type of situation in which waist and shoulder coiling are valuable, in spite of, or because of, the delay between strikes. The delay can be used as a temporary recovery.

In forearm coiling there is much less of a delay between strikes. Tactically, it can be treated as fanning with a forearm assist.

None of these methods can be used to coil 1 or 8 strikes. Some Chinese stylists can do this by coiling the steel whip around their feet and elbows. These tactics are not analyzed here because they work best if the weapon is held in a reverse grip, pointing from the little finger side of the fist. Too, I am not adept enough at this style to teach it.

Circular Blending

The third blending tactic is circular blending. When used to repeat a strike it is called circular repetition. When the initial strike is followed by a different one it is called circular combination.

Circular Repetition

Circular repetition is a simple tactic. A strike is allowed to continue its arc, and is given fresh centrifugal force by a rotation of the wrist. The weapon describes a full circle, repeating the original strike. Circular repetition can be used with 1 and 8 strikes, if the fighter makes them at the right or left side of his body rather than in front. 4 and 5 strikes can be repeated when they are high strikes. Circular repetition of 4 and 5 strikes is not done overhead. The hand makes a tight circle in front of the face at forehead level, and the larger circle described by the weapon's tip is slanted slightly downward in the direction of the enemy. "High" only signifies the position of the weapon hand, not the altitude of the strike itself. If the fighter takes a low stance as he executes the tactic, his "high" 4 or 5 strikes will be on a level with the opponent's abdomen and hands. If he drops into a crouch the strikes will be at knee level.

Repetition of the diagonal strikes is also possible. The weapon hand is held at shoulder level, about a foot to the side of the right shoulder with 3 and 6

strikes, or the left shoulder with 2 and 7 strikes. Any kind of circular repetition may be continued indefinitely if the weapon is given a sustained propellor-like motion.

With the manrikikusari and steel whip the wrist alone should be used. A chain mace needs a considerable amount of general arm movement, not so much to give it power as to give it a longer reach. Circular repetitions of 1 and 8 strikes are used with all flexible weapons. Circular repetitions of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 strikes are used often with the steel whip, somewhat seldom with the manrikikusari, and almost never with the chain mace.

Circular Combination

Circular combination starts out in much the same way as the circular repetition. The initial strike is allowed to continue its arc, and is given fresh power by a rotation of the wrist. The difference is that the wrist rotation is not on the same plane as the initial striking arc. This causes the second strike to hit the target from a new angle. Using circular combinations, a 4 strike can be followed by a 2, a 5 by a 3, a 6 by a 4, and a 7 by a 5. A 1 strike with the weapon hand to the right side can be followed by a 2 strike. If the hand is at the left side, a backhanded 1 strike, it is followed by a 3.

Circular combination is an excellent steel whip tactic, and is frequently used with the manrikikusari. With the steel whip and manrikikusari it is acceptable to make the first strike of the combination using some elbow and shoulder movement, but all subsequent strikes in the combination should be made by the wrist alone. Circular combinations are seldom used with a chain mace. A mace requires large arm motions as a compensation for its short chain, larger motions than are safe or practical in most situations.

Figure Eight

The fourth and final blending tactic is the figure eight, which is essentially a circular combination of two diagonal strikes. Figure eights blend together the downward diagonal strikes, 2 and 3, or the upward diagonals, 6 and 7. 2-3 figure eights are the more commonly used, being easier to control than the 6-7 variety. The less general arm movement used to form a figure eight the better. A manrikikusari or steel whip should be manipulated with the wrist alone. A chain mace must be given a longer reach with some elbow and shoulder movement. A figure eight may be used singly as a simple combination of two strikes, or it may be repeated indefinitely if the weapon is given a continuous eggbeater-like motion. In recent years, repeated or sustained figure eights have gained a kind of mystique among martial arts enthusiasts. Because of this they are worth a close evaluation.

There are some definite advantages to the use of sustained figure eights. In them, strikes follow one another in the blink of an eye. If an initial 2, 3, 6, or 7 strike misses the enemy, it can be blended into a sustained figure eight. There is a good chance that the second or third strike will hit him. If these strikes fail as well, the same sustained figure eight temporarily serves to keep the enemy at a safe distance. This is one of the sustained figure eight's strong points. It is very useful as a stand-off tactic, a defensive maneuver.

When using a sustained figure eight, the fighter lays down a pattern of strikes that covers a large area in front of him. It is a good tactic if the fighter cannot predict from what angle the enemy will attack next. So long as he knows the general direction from which the enemy will strike, there is a good chance that the sustained eight will cover him, or at least automatically counterstrike the attacking enemy.

An important characteristic of sustained figure eights is how they appear to the opponent. They look extremely threatening and difficult, and so they frighten and impress an inexperienced opponent as few other moves do. A fighter approaching his enemy in a two-handed engagement attitude is every bit as dangerous as one closing the distance with his weapon making figure eights in the air, but the figure eights look much more alarming. This is not a joke. It is a factor well worth keeping in mind.

I once saw two men square off, one with a yard of chain, the other with a camp ax. Both were prepared to use their weapons. Before the axman could come close to him, the chain user began to make sustained figure eights in the air, very rapidly and expert-looking. Seeing this demonstration of what seemed to be great skill, the axman grew dismayed immediately and quickly left.

This may have been the only tactic that the chain user knew, and there are a number of sound strategies by which the axman could have defeated it. But the bottom line is that by displaying what looked like proficiency, the chain user prevented a bloody fight. This is what was referred to earlier as a figure eight engagement attitude, because the fighter began his sustained figure eights before he came within striking range of the opponent.

The enemy's quality should be judged. Many are not so easily impressed.

Figure Eight Weak Points

The sustained figure eight is a fixed pattern of strikes, and from this arise most of the tactic's outstanding weaknesses. Any fixed and sustained strike pattern allows the enemy to see your reach very clearly. Therefore, the sustained figure eight is often

hard to use in a purely offensive manner, rather than as a stand-off or counterstriking tactic. If the opponent is at all fast on his feet and unrestricted by terrain, he is quite hard to hit with a figure eight strike.

If a figure eight is sustained for too long—as a rough rule more than four seconds—the enemy may be able to predict the rhythm of the individual strikes forming it. This is particularly dangerous if he is armed with a knife or short truncheon. The enemy may make a timed attack straight into the figure eight when the beater is arcing to one side harmlessly. When the next strike does come down, or up, he will be inside its arc, at most receiving a bad bruise on his back. The flexible weapon user will be finished.

If the opponent has any kind of long object, he can break the sustained figure eight merely by thrusting the object into its center, or striking the predictably moving chain. The flexible weapon snarls about the introduced object, and then goes limp. This method of attacking the strike pattern itself works very well with a long truncheon or baton. It is not necessary to strike with the center of the baton. This is less safe and no more effective than using the four inches closest to the tip. The flexible weapon's centrifugal force is what makes it snarl itself, not the strength of the truncheon's blow or thrust.

Quick side stepping is difficult when a steel whip is used in sustained figure eights. When this strike pattern is used with any long flexible weapon the feet must be kept reasonably close together at all times, about a shoulder width apart. If a fighter quickly spreads his feet widely to the right and left, the flying beater may inadvertently tear loose one of his kneecaps.

It is wise to keep a low stance when using a steel whip. A common response to a sustained strike pat-

tern is to duck in beneath it, coming to very close quarters where the long flexible weapon is relatively useless. As the opponent does that he is vulnerable to a kick in the face, but it is better to forestall the whole situation by maintaining a low stance. A low stance should be kept with any long flexible weapon whose main tactics are coiling, circular blending, and figure eights.

In short, the figure eight used singly is an excellent tactic. The sustained figure eight is a valuable tactic, yet it must be employed with discretion. It is not a cure-all maneuver, and it should not be applied as such.

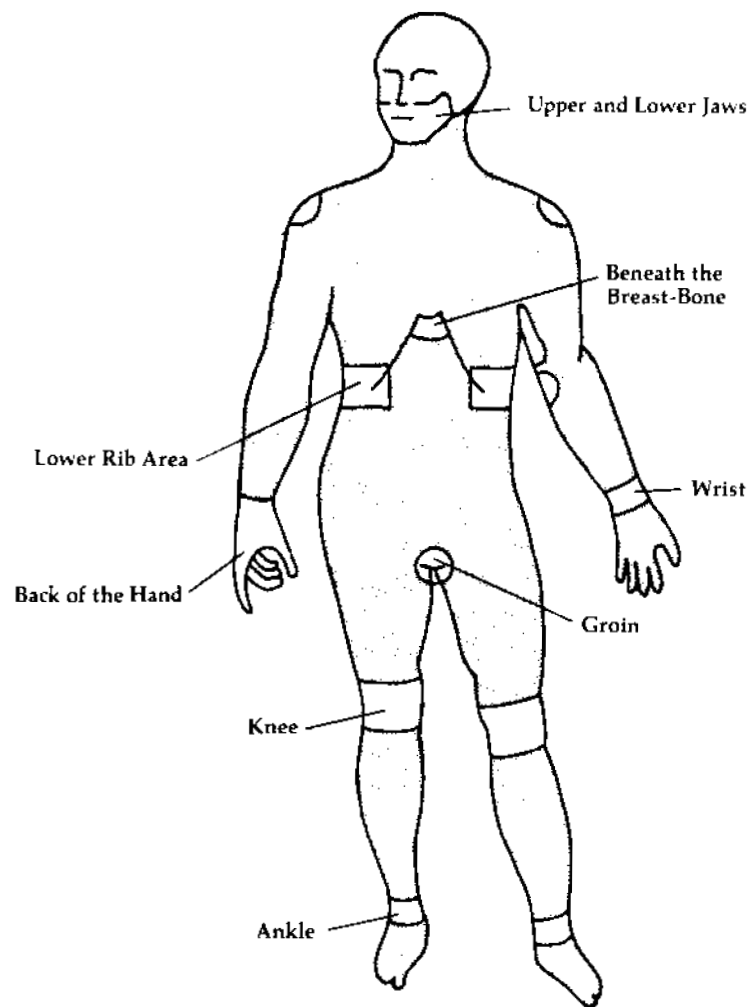
Anatomical Considerations

In order to use flexible weapons with efficiency, it is necessary to have a practical knowledge of basic anatomy. The targets presented here are divided into two groups according to their purpose: pain and joint controls, and quick kills.

Pain and Joint Control Targets

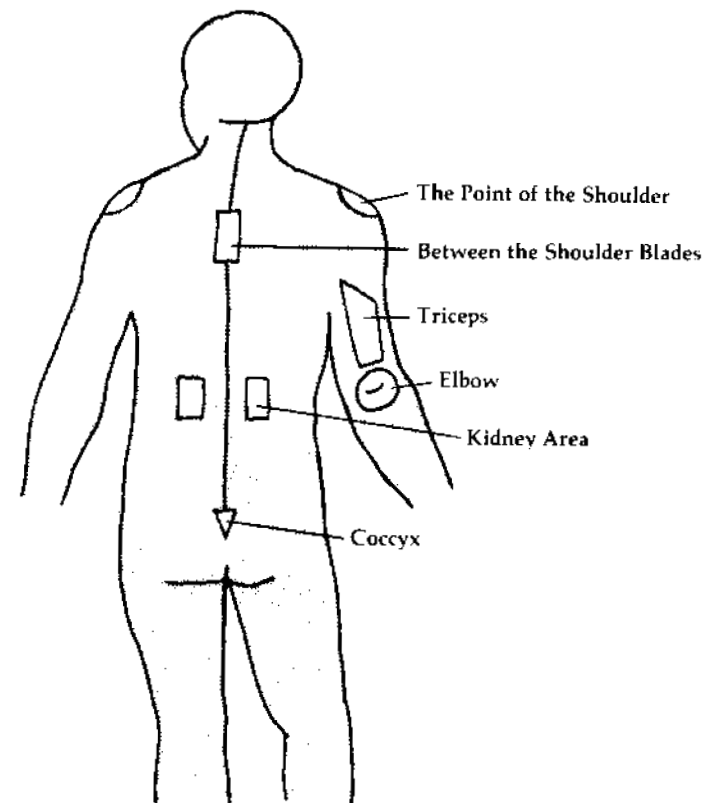
Attacks to pain and joint control targets do just what the name indicates: they bring the enemy under control by localized pain, general shock, or in some cases by destroying the mechanical functionality of a specific joint. These targets have been chosen with care. There is little or no chance of a strike to any of them proving fatal. A few possible controlling strikes were omitted, for the risk of accidentally killing the opponent with them is too great. For instance, any one of the head areas described as a quick kill could be struck with moderate force as a controlling measure. However, the upper skull is a delicate area, and it is all too easy to underestimate the power of a flexible weapon. It is better to make note of them under a

PAIN AND JOINT CONTROLS



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PAIN AND JOINT CONTROLS



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separate category. Controlling the opponent is different than killing him, and there should be a clear distinction between the two from the start.

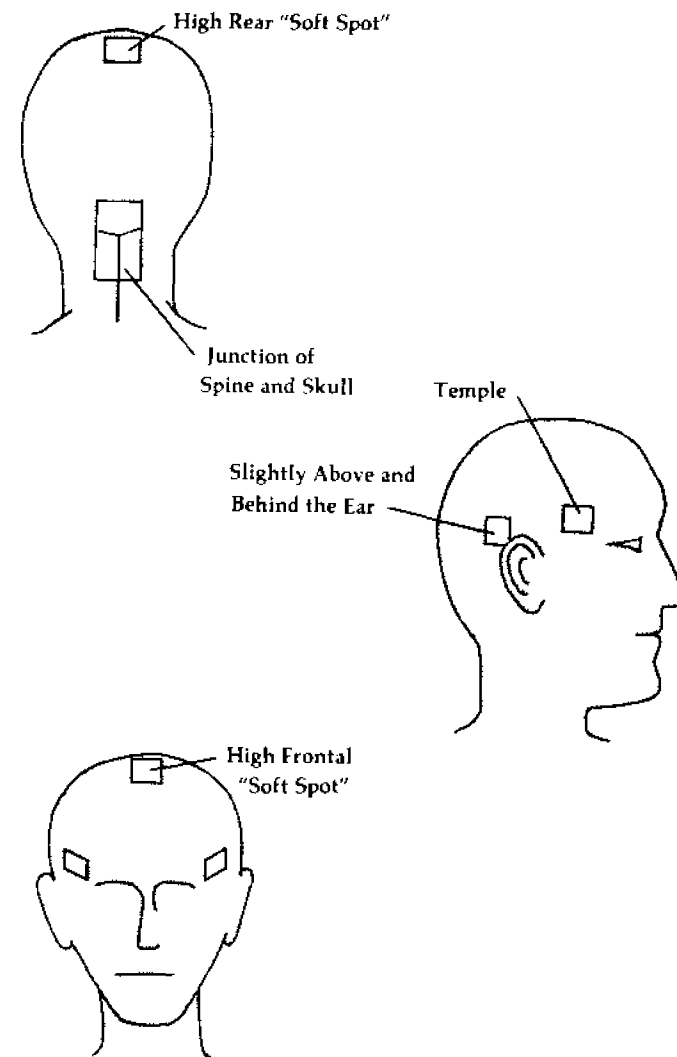
As a rule, the fighter should land at least one controlling strike before the final quick kill, if called for. Many of the controlling strikes are to the limbs, which are closer to the flexible weapon user than the enemy's torso or head. This means that the limbs can often be struck while out of range of the enemy's possible counterattacks. Also, once the enemy's limbs are cancelled out in the initial phase of the fight he cannot use them to attack, defend, or evade. This leaves the flexible weapon user comparatively free to proceed in whatever way he deems best. In a situation where it is inappropriate to kill the opponent, the initial application of pain and joint controls forestalls having to snap off an instinctive head strike and killing accidentally.

Quick Kills

The quick kills are self-explanatory. Even if slowed down or off target a bit, one of these strikes will still stun the enemy, allowing the delivery of a second strike with no serious opposition. Once you opt for lethality, always combine two or three quick kills, even if the first seems to have done its job. The idea of continuing to strike an inert body is repugnant, but if the enemy's certain death is not desired there is no justification for using a quick kill strike in the first place.

The target labeled "junction of spine and skull" is a little vague. Three optimum targets can be singled out from within the area. The first two are the occipital fossae. They are the weakest portions of the occipital bone, which roughly speaking composes the back of the skull. The fossae are slightly above and to either

QUICK KILLS



side of the central point where the occipital bone and spine join. The skull in this area has a strong convex curve, so in order to hit one or both of the fossae at the preferable ninety-degree angle, the strike must be made at an upward angle to the overall target area. The goal is to fracture the bone inward.

If the exact junction of spine and skull was struck, the goal would be to fracture or dislocate both. In reality the skull and spine are very rarely severed at the point of junction. It is just as effective and much easier to strike about three-quarters of an inch down from this point. The goal here is to sever the spinal cord by strongly dislocating the first two cervical vertebrae. In most cases of so-called death by hanging, this was the actual method by which death was produced. If a heavy chain mace is used, all of these fine distinctions are pointless, but they should be kept in mind with a lighter-beatered weapon.

Flexible weapons are capable of whipping around the enemy's body and striking him from the rear. The use of kidney, coccyx, and occipital strikes is not limited to situations in which the flexible weapon user is to the enemy's rear or side. There is little or no loss of power when a mace or manrikikusari is so used, and only a slight loss with the steel whip.

Blocking Techniques

When a flexible weapon is used to block thrusting attacks or blows, it is held in both hands, with the chain always stretched taut between them. The ready position for blocking is a type of two-handed engagement attitude. The left hand holds one end of the weapon near the left hip. The right hand holds the other end a few inches in front of the right shoulder. The weapon is taut, passing diagonally from the left hand to the right, and it is kept close to the body, no

more than an inch or two away from the chest. The full length of a manrikikusari's chain is fine for blocking, so it is held by the beaters. A steel whip or similar long weapon must be shortened; the right hand grips the handle, but the left hand holds its end a foot from the tip. Otherwise the hands are too far apart and the blocks are awkward. (See Figure A.)

To block a thrusting attack or downward vertical blow at the head, the weapon is brought overhead in a straight horizontal position. The taut chain sweeps upward in front of the face. (See Figure B.)

A thrusting attack at the head, neck, or upper chest, or a blow at the left side of the head or neck, is blocked by bringing the weapon to the outside of the left shoulder and the left side of the head. The right hand is uppermost, just above the level of the top of the head. The weapon is in a vertical position. (See Figure C.)

A thrusting attack to the head, neck, or upper chest, or a blow at the right side of the head or neck, is blocked by bringing the weapon to the outside of the right shoulder and the right side of the head. The weapon is in a vertical position. As the hands snap the weapon into the block, their positions are inverted, with the right hand dropping and the left hand rising. This inversion makes the weapon turn about 150 degrees clockwise. When the block is completed the left hand is uppermost, just above the level of the top of the head. Be careful not to let the weapon go slack during the hand inversion. (See Figure D.)

When a flexible weapon is in the blocking attitude recommended above, thrusting attacks and blows to the middle and lower torso are either on the left or right side of the weapon. Thrusting attacks include punches, many kicks, and weapon thrusts. Blows include most open hand strikes, certain circular kicks, and weapon blows.

BLOCKING

Fig. a.

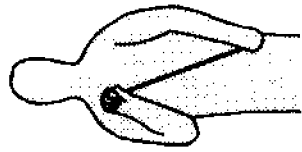


Fig. b.

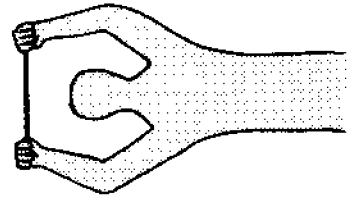
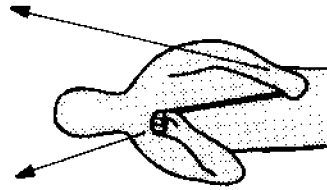


Fig. c.

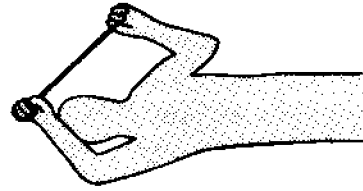
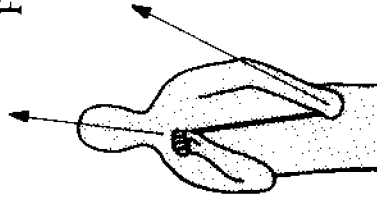


Fig. d.

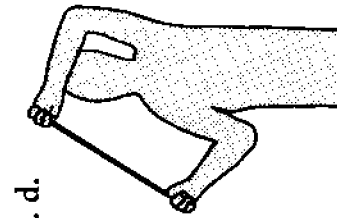
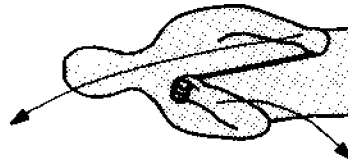


Fig. e.

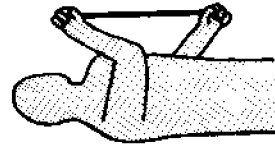
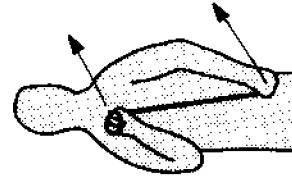


Fig. f.

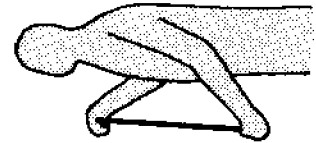
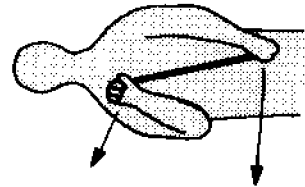
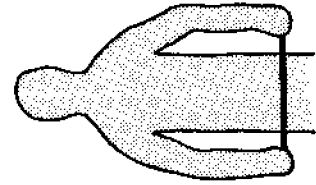
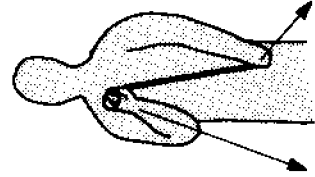


Fig. g.



If a thrusting attack or blow to the middle or lower torso is on the left side of the weapon, it is blocked by bringing the weapon to the outside of the torso, to the left. The weapon is vertical, and the right hand is uppermost. The left hand has only to move about six inches in this block, and the right hand crosses the body at shoulder level. (See Figure E.)

If a thrusting attack or blow to the middle or lower torso is on the right side of the weapon, it is blocked by bringing the weapon to the outside of the torso, to the right. The weapon is vertical, and the right hand is uppermost. The right hand moves only a few inches, and the left hand crosses the body at hip level. (See Figure F.)

A rising attack to the lower abdomen or groin is blocked by bringing the weapon downward and a foot out to the front, in a straight horizontal position. Keep the chain taut, and make the block well below groin level. (See Figure G.)

Blocking a blow demands a larger motion than blocking a thrusting attack. No matter how taut the flexible weapon is held, it always bends a little under the force of a blow. The longer the weapon, the harder it is to control this bending.

All blocks should be combined with head and body displacement, or slips, as these displacing moves are sometimes called. Generally this involves moving the head or body away from the place where the block meets the attack. For instance, if a fighter blocks a strike at the right side of his torso he slips his body a little to the left at the same time. If a fighter blocks a strike at the left side of his head he simultaneously slips his head a little to the right. The slip acts as a safety margin in case the block is not quick enough, or the weapon gives too much under a blow.

The thrust or blow of an average-size truncheon can be blocked with a flexible weapon. The attacks of an unarmed opponent can be blocked with the weapon or the empty hand. It is bad to block a flexible weapon strike with another flexible weapon. When the two meet, they entangle, making quick disengagement impossible. There is also a danger that the striking weapon will whip around the block and hit you anyway. If a flexible weapon is ever blocked, it should be with a stiff object over two feet long.

A knife attack should never be blocked, unless it is slow, direct, and crude—like a large downward stab at the top of the head with the knife held in an ice-pick grip. Excepting the special category of hysterical housewives with kitchen knives, this sort of attack occurs more often in self-defense classes than in real life. Even against the crudest attacks, a combination of evasive footwork and counterattacking with the flexible weapon is a better strategy than blocking. These tactics are safer than blocking, which implies a much closer distance between combatants. The knife is an exceedingly mobile weapon. It must be treated with respect even if the person holding it knows little about how to use it.

Follow-ups

After a block there are four types of follow-up movements. First, the fighter can jump away from the enemy, and widen the interval between them until he has enough room to make use of striking tactics. Or the fighter can hold his position and kick beneath the block for the enemy's knee or groin. If the fighter wishes, he can move in even closer to the enemy and use both ends of his weapon as yawara sticks. This works best with a manrikikusari, though it can be done with a steel whip. Fourth and finally, the fighter

has the option of following the block with a locking tactic. Locking tactics will be evaluated shortly.

Gripping

Even when a flexible weapon is moving rapidly, carrying bone-breaking power in its striking tip, the part closer to its handle moves more slowly, with relatively little force. This fact provides the basis for the technique of gripping. While the enemy's weapon is in a striking arc, it can be safely seized behind the beater with your empty hand. Gripping is employed when the enemy's next strike can be predicted and timed, i.e., when he is using sustained figure eights or sustained circular repetitions. Gripping is effective against steel whip and manrikikusari-type weapons, but is risky against the mace. The short chain and proportionately heavy beater of the mace tend to coil around the gripping hand and smash it.

The tactic is essentially simple. The open, empty hand reaches into the striking arc, intercepts the weapon at the desired point, closes on it, and then pulls. Nevertheless, all of this must be done with some subtlety or else the gripping hand may be broken and crippled.

When intercepting the weapon in its striking arc, never bat at it with the gripping hand. That is the way to break your own bones, for the inertia of the hand is added to the inertia of the weapon, doubling or tripling the impact when they meet. Of course the hand must move fast to intercept the weapon at the right point, but it should do so with a very loose, relaxed wrist and elbow. This enables the hand to give at the moment of impact, and is the factor upon which the safety of the tactic rests. Strength is of no importance until after the moment of interception and impact, when the weapon is actually gripped and pulled out of the opponent's grasp.

The grip and disarming pull should be coordinated with an attack; a strike with your own weapon or a kick is appropriate here. If the enemy concentrates on his gripped weapon, the strike or kick will hit him. If he tries to evade the strike or kick he will often unconsciously relax his grip on the weapon, and so may be disarmed by a strong pull. One of the two, grip or strike, will probably work, but if both fail release the enemy's weapon and jump out of his range quickly. Avoid getting into a tug-of-war with the opponent. All that does is give him time to formulate a new and more dangerous strategy.

Gripping takes a fine eye for the hostile weapon's speed and length. The hardest part is recognizing the right time to use the tactic. Gripping is not easy, but it can be quite valuable. It is one of the few maneuvers that give an unarmed man a chance against a long flexible weapon. Practice it.

Locking

Locking is a defensive tactic used only with the manrikikusari and steel whip (chain maces are too short). Locking sequences normally begin when an opponent's fist or foot attack is blocked. The weapon is kept in position against the blocked limb, and the right or left hand wraps the chain about it. Then the wrapping hand regains a firm grip on its end of the weapon and pulls it tight. The weapon is wrapped about the limb in such a way as to immobilize its main joint (the elbow, shoulder, and occasionally the knee). Or the limb can be immobilized by locking it to another part of the body. Locking the two wrists together, and locking the right wrist to the neck are the most common tactics. An alternative is to step in obliquely after the initial block and snake the flexible

weapon around the opponent's neck, using it as a garrote.

The distinguishing feature of all locking tactics is the deliberation with which the hands wrap the weapon about the enemy. This is done at a very close interval as well. There are some styles of using the manrikikusari that seem to place more emphasis on locking than on striking.

When compared to simple strikes, locking tactics appear very complicated. They require precise hand movements and body shifting in order to wrap the weapon safely and effectively. A fighter who relies on locking must have far more training than one who favors striking, and even then there is a greater chance of something going drastically wrong when he tries to use his locking tactics. If a strike misses its target, the striker has three to six feet between himself and the opponent. He usually has time to strike again, step back, and so on. If a locking tactic goes wrong, the locker is tied by his weapon to an uncontrolled enemy at very close quarters. Then the locker has two choices; he can release the weapon wrapped about the enemy and jump back, or he can forget the useless weapon and go in for some potentially sloppy infighting. This battle is likely to lose, having surrendered his timing and initiative to the enemy along with his only advantage—the weapon.

You may have seen series of photographs claiming to show practical locking technique with the manrikikusari. If you have, inspect them again. Is the man being locked while still body punching with his free hand, kicking, and kneeling for the locker's groin? Or is he standing there docilely, to make the locker's technique look good in the picture? Draw your own conclusions.

Yet it nonetheless remains that some fighters simply like locking. Aptitudes and preferences vary from individual to individual. One point to consider is that most locking tactics do not injure the opponent. If at all possible, locking should be used instead of striking when there are witnesses or the opponent knows the flexible weapon user. This is true even when, under these conditions, there is legal justification for the use of a weapon. Self-defense laws are confused, especially when weapons are involved. Locking cannot be construed as "armed assault with intent to kill" or "use of excessive force." If locking appeals to you, see "Suggestions for Further Study."

Roping

Roping tactics are directed at the opponent's wrists, forearms, knees, ankles, and in some circumstances his weapon. Despite a superficial resemblance, roping differs from locking in both method and purpose. Roping hardly ever immobilizes the target limb. Its usual function is to afford a grip on the opponent from a comparatively safe distance.

The motion of roping is that of a regular strike, but while a strike properly impacts with the beater, a roping strike makes contact with the part of the chain a foot or more down from the beater. When this area hits, the free portion of chain beyond it continues its arc, wrapping tightly about the target limb. Before the weapon has a chance to loosen, the roping strike is followed by a strong pull to break the opponent's balance. The pull should be combined with a side or backstep, for power and also because a typical response on the part of the roped enemy is to step forward with his own attack. The pull and step are simultaneous, and the weapon is always kept taut.

When the wrist or forearm is roped, the enemy is pulled directly into a kick to the knee, groin, or beneath the breastbone. When the knee or ankle is roped, the enemy is pulled onto his back or side. The roper circles to the enemy's weak or weaponless side, keeping the flexible weapon taut, and kicks to the head, spine, kidneys, or coccyx. In either case only kicking attacks should be used. The right hand is occupied with the weapon, and the left hand is kept free, ready to act against possible counterattacks.

The roping motion is instinctive and uncomplicated. The only thing likely to go wrong is that the roping strike will miss the target. Unlike an ineffectual lock, it can then be treated as if it were a normal strike that missed. Roping combines well with the larger techniques of recovery and blending.

The steel whip or long chain is excellent for limb roping. A manrikikusari is better used against the wrists and ankles than the forearms and knees. The practical chain mace is unfit for the roping tactics discussed so far, because of its short chain.

Sometimes when a steel whip is used to rope the opponent's wrist, it will slip free as the pull is made. A steel whip's alternate bar and link sections do not allow it to wrap as tightly about a thin target as a regular chain does. Still, this does not present any problems. On the contrary, when a steel whip pulls free, its bar and link sections always give a brutal twisting wrench to the roped wrist joint.

In flexible weapon versus flexible weapon situations, roping is often employed against the hostile weapon itself. Ideally this is done as a disarming technique. Weapon roping is brought into play when the enemy uses sustained figure eights or sustained circular repetitions, either as a stand-off tactic or offensively. There are two good reasons to wait for such a

sustained strike pattern. First, this makes it possible to predict the enemy's next strike. Second, the constant centrifugal force generated by a sustained strike pattern puts strain on the weapon hand, tending to weaken the opponent's grip on the handle.

The roper swings his weapon into the strike pattern. When the two weapons meet they entangle, and the roper gives a hard tug. If the enemy loses his weapon at this point, do not step right in with a strike; it's too awkward with the weapons tangled together. Rather, move away from him quickly, get a good grip on both of the weapons (one per hand), and then step back in with a strong double-weapon attack. It is very easy to disengage the weapons once both of them are in your hands. They often untwine automatically when the tension of the disarming pull is removed.

This type of roping is fairly safe, because the combatants are separated by the combined lengths of their weapons and forearms. The roper narrows the interval only to the point where the hostile weapon may be struck, not the enemy. The roped enemy then cannot counterattack without stepping forward, which at least gives a split second's warning. Yet the danger of counterattack is less than you might think. Weapon roping happens so fast that it usually confuses the enemy for a moment.

If the opponent does not release his weapon at the first pull, do not get into a tug-of-war, but try not to let the weapons go slack. The best thing to do is to step forward with a kick to the opponent's leading knee. This is a fine attack in its own right, but here there is another reason for its use. A common response of the opponent in a situation of this sort is to step forward with a snap kick for the roper's groin. If the roper is kicking to his knee at the same time, the roper's foot usually blocks the groin-kicking leg as it is lifted. From

there the roper may repeat his kick. Or better yet, sidestep to the enemy's right and fist strike with the free left hand to his head or throat. The whole right side of the enemy is unprotected, because his right hand is still occupied with holding the weapon that he refused to give up to the roper's initial pull.

When two flexible weapon users face off, entanglements like this can happen by accident and very unexpectedly. The fighter who is mentally prepared for that eventuality and takes what advantage he can without hesitation will win. All flexible weapons, including the chain mace, may be used to rope the opponent's flexible weapon.

Roping should never be used against the knife or truncheon. The former is too short and mobile, the latter is too smooth. When the rope is followed by a pull the flexible weapon just slips off. If roping is used at all against these weapons, it should be reserved for the opponent's knees and ankles. However, it is better to rely on ordinary counterattacks, stop-hits, and evasive footwork if the opponent is armed with a knife or truncheon.

Rope Knife and Meteor Ball

A basic method of thrusting with the rope knife and meteor ball is shown in the accompanying illustrations. The weapon is held in both hands, with the right three to three and one-half feet back from the knife or beater, and the left holding the other end. About four and one-half feet of rope hang slack between the two hands. Any excess rope—generally three to four feet—is coiled loosely in the left hand, being held in place only by the left index finger (Figure 1A).

The weapon is given a striking arc in the conventional way, to build up centrifugal force. In the illustration this is a number 8 strike at the right side

1 — THRUSTING STRIKE

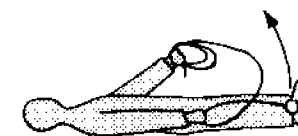


Fig. 1a

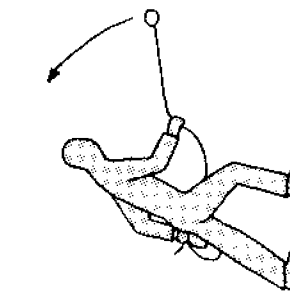


Fig. 1b

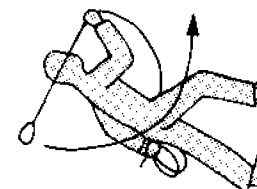


Fig. 1c

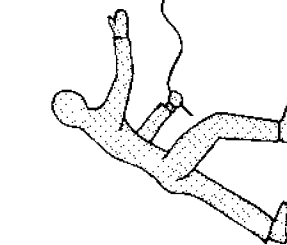


Fig. 1d

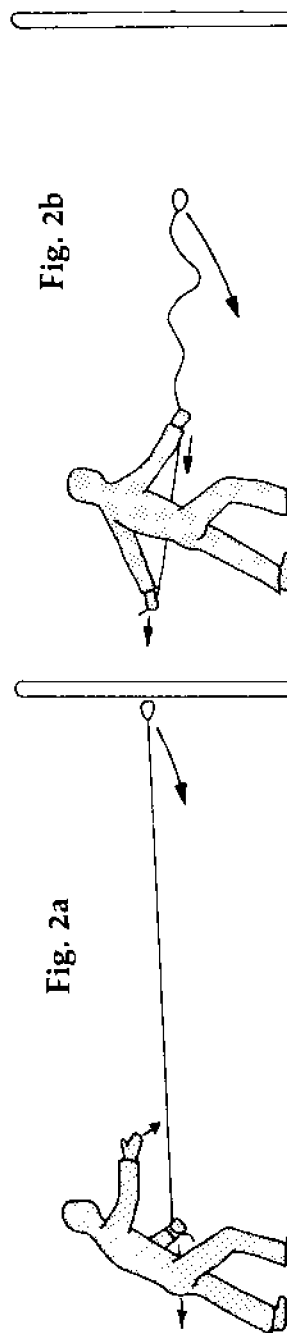
(Figures 1B and 1C). The strike is allowed to turn full circle once or twice.

At the proper moment the right hand releases the beater or knife end of the weapon, and the now unrestrained centrifugal force changes into a linear thrust. If necessary the left index finger is relaxed at the same time, releasing the extra length of coiled rope and adding that much more reach to the thrust. The remaining four fingers of the left hand keep a tight grip on the end of the rope (Figure 1D).

The weapon is recovered by simultaneously catching the rope loosely with the half-open right hand before it can fall, and jerking on the end with the left hand. This causes the rope to snake back through the right hand, which grips it when three to three and one-half feet of it remain. The left hand with index finger extended reaches down and hooks up some of the slack rope that is now hanging down between it and the right hand (Figures 2A, 2B, and 2C). While the left hand is doing this, the right hand puts a new upward spin on its end of the weapon, as in Figures 1B through 1C. From here the linear thrust can be repeated.

If the initial thrust misses and there is no time for a second one, the right hand gives a spin to its end of the weapon as above, but does not release it. This three to three and one-half foot section of rope with the knife or beater at its end is used like a steel whip. The spin serves as a starting point for circular repetitions, circular combinations, figure eights, and roping. Two-handed recoveries and coiling should not be tried, particularly with a rope knife. The rope may be let out through the right hand until the free portion is roughly five feet long. This is very good for roping, but it limits the use of figure eights and some types of circular repetitions.

2 — RECOVERY



When it is used in the classic thrusting manner, the target for the meteor ball is a three-inch-wide imaginary strip running from the top of the head to the groin, straight down the center of the body. The rope knife is aimed at the same area, except for the face and the upper chest between collarbone and breastbone.

IV. Suggestions for Further Study

Printed material on flexible weapons is scarce, but a few sources do exist. The best by far is *Spike and Chain*, by Charles Gruzanski. It is published by the Charles E. Tuttle Company of Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo, Japan. *Spike and Chain* details the manrikikusari technique of the Masaki ryu. A number of locking tactics are analyzed. It is a clearly written book in which a wide variety of tactics are presented, and it is well worth reading and evaluating. A word of caution though; some formal tactics of the Masaki ryu seem to me to be of doubtful utility. At no point in *Spike and Chain* are the possible drawbacks and weaknesses of specific tactics mentioned.

Short articles on the manrikikusari are occasionally printed in martial arts magazines. On the whole these should be ignored. Most of them appear to be a couple of pages paraphrased from Mr. Gruzanski's book.

In the September 1976 issue of *Karate Illustrated* there is an article entitled "Willy Lin's Flying Meteor." After a much too short introduction, the bulk of the article consists of photographs in which Mr. Lin

demonstrates five thrusting tactics with the flying meteor (meteor ball). The first is similar to the basic thrusting method given in this text, but there are some fundamental differences between them that should be noticed. These include the length of the rope beyond the right hand, the initial arc, the side of the body worked from, and the type of grip the right hand takes on the weapon. For sheer power, Mr. Lin's method is the better of the two, but I think that mine is the best for working in a semiconfined area. The remaining four tactics are all very hard, yet they should indicate the weapon's possibilities to those who are interested.

An excellent source of general information is George Cameron Stone's *A Glossary of the Construction, Decoration and Use of Arms and Armor in All Countries and in All Times together with Some Closely Related Subjects*. This is the finest reference work on traditional weapons that has ever been published. It is available from the Fairfield Book Company.

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