

*By Fumio Demura*

**SHITO - RYU  
KARATE - DO  
GENBU - KAI**

*Series #4*



# **Kama**

**Karate weapon of self-defense**

沖縄古武道

鎌術

沖縄古武道連合会

**OKINAWA KOBUDO ALLIANCE**

# History Of The Kama

**A**lthough karate was practiced in Okinawa before the prohibition of weapons became an island policy, there was a tremendous growth and development in the art after the policy was instituted in the 17th century. By the time the Shimazu family from Japan invaded Okinawa in the early 17th century, the ban on weapons was already a national policy. The Japanese continued this policy by prohibiting the purchase or sale of any weapons. The need for some form of protection for one's family and crops against thieves and invaders stimulated the development of Okinawan martial arts.

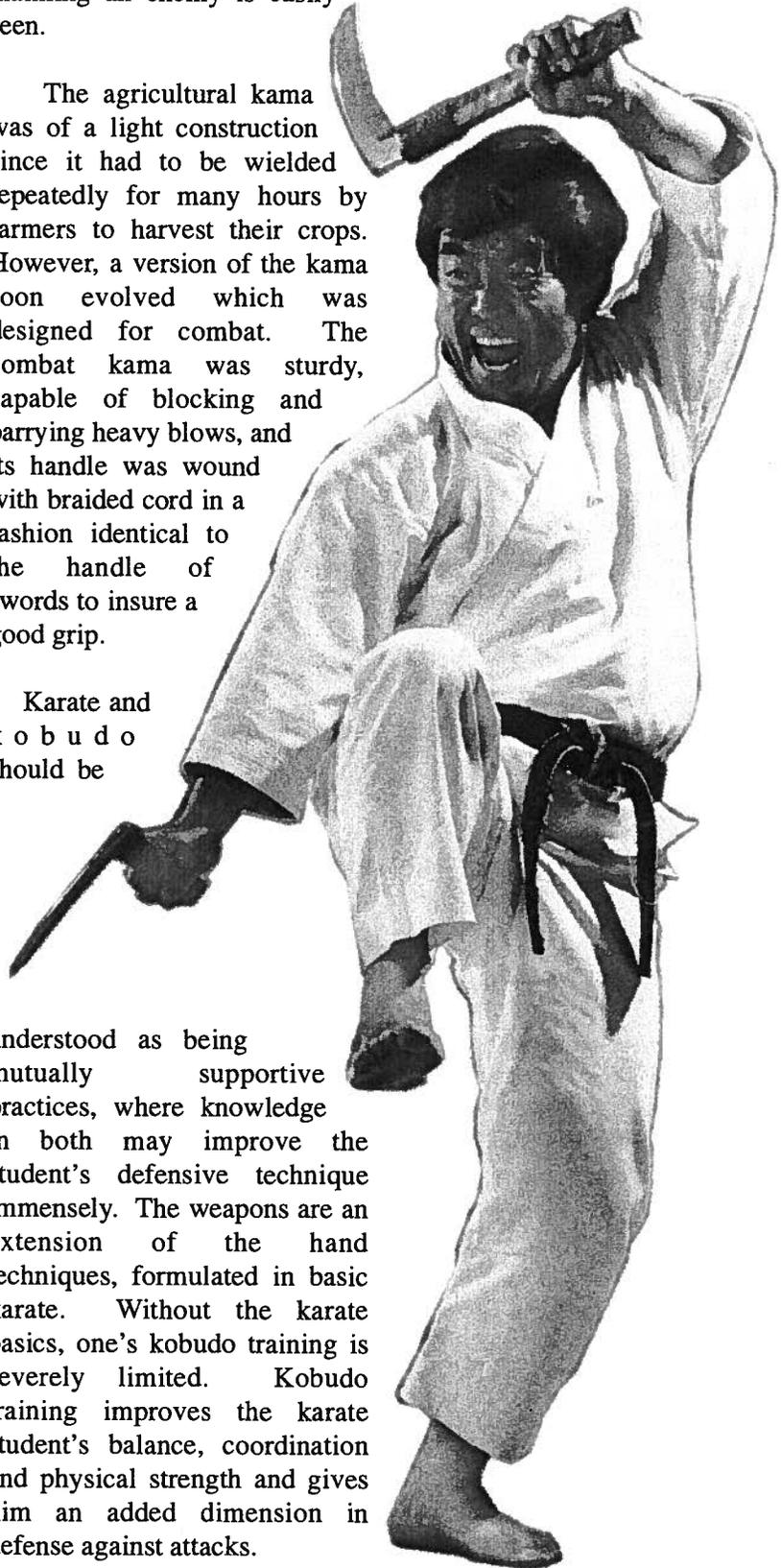
The Okinawan martial arts of that time were a careful blend of the Chinese martial arts developed in Zen Buddhist temples and native martial arts of Okinawa. Like the Chinese, the Okinawans practiced both unarmed (karate) and armed combat called kobudo. Most kobudo weapons were originally farm implements, converted into effective weapons of self-defense. The staff or bo is a good example of an Okinawan kobudo weapon used both for work and protection. The only bladed farm implement that was allowed under the prohibition policy was the scythe or kama. The kama has a long, curved, single-edged blade used for mowing or reaping a farmer's crops. This agricultural tool was naturally fashioned into a very effective weapon of self-defense. Its capacity for killing or

maiming an enemy is easily seen.

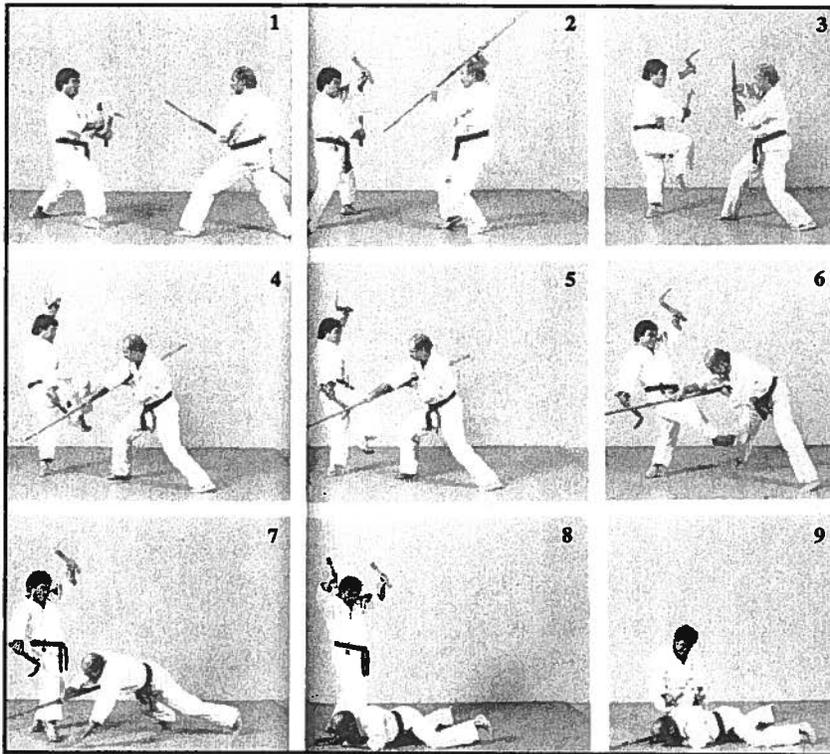
The agricultural kama was of a light construction since it had to be wielded repeatedly for many hours by farmers to harvest their crops. However, a version of the kama soon evolved which was designed for combat. The combat kama was sturdy, capable of blocking and parrying heavy blows, and its handle was wound with braided cord in a fashion identical to the handle of swords to insure a good grip.

Karate and  
k o b u d o  
should be

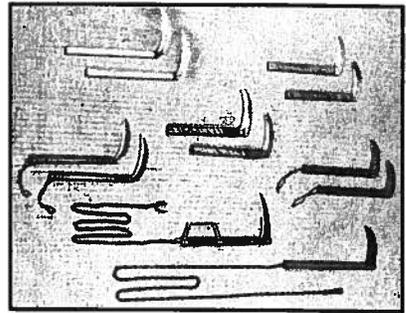
understood as being mutually supportive practices, where knowledge in both may improve the student's defensive technique immensely. The weapons are an extension of the hand techniques, formulated in basic karate. Without the karate basics, one's kobudo training is severely limited. Kobudo training improves the karate student's balance, coordination and physical strength and gives him an added dimension in defense against attacks.



# Anatomy Of The Kama



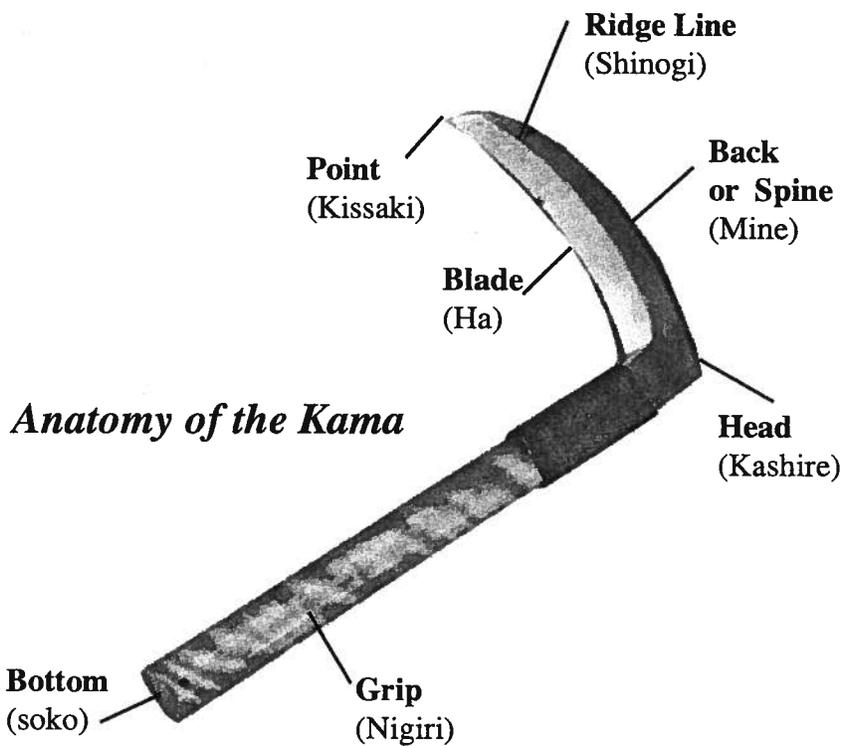
In this sequence, Demura demonstrates a kama attack against the bo. As the opponent attacks with a reverse strike to the knee use a reverse down block while lifting the right leg (1-4). Sweep the opponents right leg outward and pull the bo backward (5-7). As the opponent falls, raise both kama and counter with a double overhead strike into his back (8-9).



*Different Kinds of Kama*



In this position. The kama can protect the head from a downward strike and perhaps be used to snare the opponent's weapon away



# Care Of The Kama

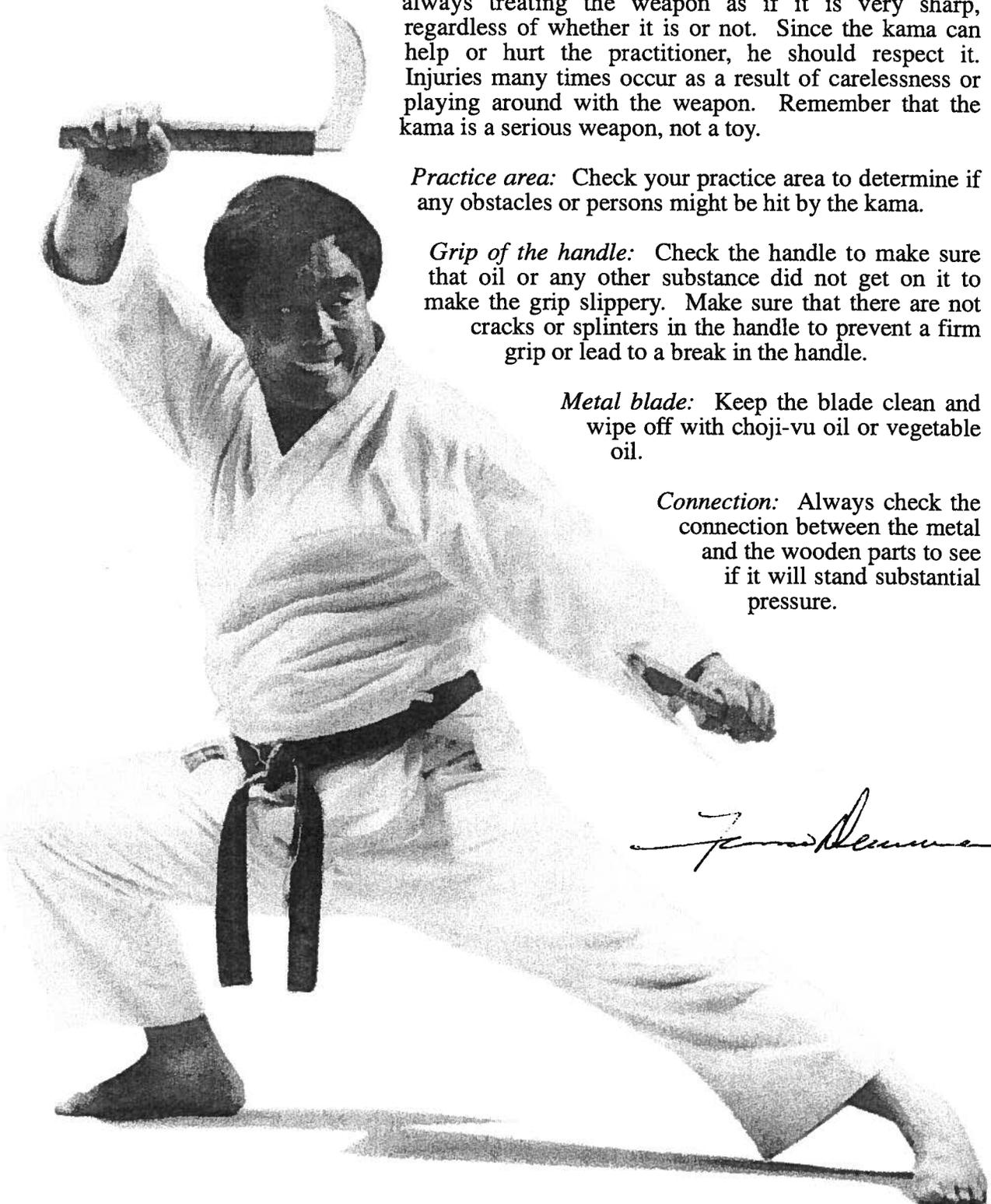
To be an effective tool or weapon, the kama should be very sharp. Most people use an unsharpened kama for practice, always treating the weapon as if it is very sharp, regardless of whether it is or not. Since the kama can help or hurt the practitioner, he should respect it. Injuries many times occur as a result of carelessness or playing around with the weapon. Remember that the kama is a serious weapon, not a toy.

*Practice area:* Check your practice area to determine if any obstacles or persons might be hit by the kama.

*Grip of the handle:* Check the handle to make sure that oil or any other substance did not get on it to make the grip slippery. Make sure that there are not cracks or splinters in the handle to prevent a firm grip or lead to a break in the handle.

*Metal blade:* Keep the blade clean and wipe off with choji-vu oil or vegetable oil.

*Connection:* Always check the connection between the metal and the wooden parts to see if it will stand substantial pressure.



*Tommy Kama*