

Okinawan Kobudō: The 6 Traditional Weapons We Teach

What is Kobudō?

Okinawan Kobudō is the traditional weapons art of Okinawa, often practiced alongside karate. Many tools used in daily life were adapted into disciplined methods of self-defense, character development, and cultural preservation.

1) Bō (Rokushakubō) — The Staff

History: The bō is a long staff associated with travel, farming, and security work. In Okinawa, staff methods developed into a complete system emphasizing distance control, stable stances, and decisive strikes.

Parts (English / Japanese):

- Tip/End — Saki (先)
- Shaft/Main body — Bō (棒)
- Center/Balance point — Chūshin (中身) ● Grip zones/Hand positions — Nigiri-bu (握り手)

2) Sai — The Truncheon

History: The sai is commonly linked to Okinawan law enforcement and security roles. It is known for strong blocks and control, including methods to trap and redirect an opponent's weapon.

Parts (English / Japanese):

- Tip — Saki (先)
- Side prongs — Yoku (翼)
- Main shaft — Monouchi (首)
- Handle — Tsuka (柄) ● Pommel/Butt — Tsukagashira (首元)
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3) Tonfa — The Side-Handle Baton

History: The tonfa is often connected to the handle of a millstone or grinding tool. In Kobudō it became a close-range weapon for striking, blocking, and controlled rotations that build coordination and forearm strength.

Parts (English / Japanese):

- Main shaft — Monouchi (首)

- Side handle — Tsuka ()
- Tip/End — Saki () ● Grip/Rotation zone — Nigiri-bu ()

4) Kama — The Sickle

History: The kama began as an agricultural cutting tool. In Kobudō training, kama practice develops precision and control, with a strong emphasis on safe handling and disciplined technique.

Parts (English / Japanese):

- Blade — Ha ()
- Spine/Back of blade — Mune ()
- Blade base/Tang — Nakago ()
- Handle — Tsuka ()
- Butt/End cap — Kashira ()

5) Nunchaku — The Flail

History: The nunchaku is often associated with farming tools used for threshing grain. In Kobudō it trains rhythm, timing, and control through striking, trapping, and smooth transitions.

Parts (English / Japanese):

- ● ● ● Sticks/Handles (2) — Connector (cord/chain) — Grip area — Tip/End — SakiNigiri-bu () () Kon () Himo () / Kusari ()

6) Eku (Oar) — The Boat Oar

History: The eku is a traditional Okinawan boat oar adapted into a powerful weapon. Its unique shape supports strong swinging strikes, thrusts, and sweeping movements, taught with emphasis on body mechanics and conditioning.

Parts (English / Japanese):

- ● ● ● Blade (wide end) — Neck/Shoulder — Shaft — Grip/Handle end — E () KubiNigiri-buHa () () ()

Why We Teach These Weapons

● ● ● ● Builds coordination, balance, and focus Strengthens traditional stances and body mechanics Deepens understanding of karate movement principles Preserves Okinawan martial heritage

Want to Train?

Ask us about our Kobudō classes and the best starting point for your age and experience level.

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