

# SHOTOKAN

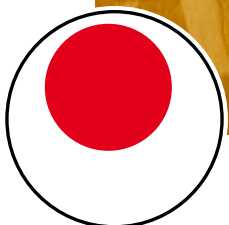
**KARATE MAGAZINE**

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**CLARE  
WORTH**

3rd DAN JKS



THE MAGAZINE FOR ALL SHOTOKAN KARATEKA



# SHOTOKAN KARATE MAGAZINE

## EDITORIAL

We have an interview in this edition with our very own SKM Secretary and Administrator Clare Worth. It's important to hear the perspective of Shotokan's many female students and instructors who train just as hard and seriously as their male counterparts and take all the same knocks, bruises and injuries in training. Shotokan ladies are a tough bunch in my experience.

Clare will be well known to many SKM readers and worldwide subscribers. She nearly always answers the phone in the SKM office, often on the line for an hour listening to personal training regimes, dojo experiences, injury problems, karate-related life-stories – all part of the job.

There's a fascinating article by Slavko Bubalo based in Croatia, dealing with the 'Black-Belt' Myth and the Dan/rank/grading subject, including many historical details and facts relating to this subject.

Many people pay a lot of lip service to one's grade or rank in Karate-do. I can't count the amount of times I've been asked, "What Dan grade are you now?" Usually I smile and try and explain that the actual number is really not that important but it generally falls on deaf ears! They seem to equate the number of Dans with the technical or fighting ability of the karateka!

The reality is, that these days in 2022 there are massive differences in what constitutes a Dan rank/grade. The levels of technical ability, knowledge and

experience required varies considerably from one Association or Organisation to another – and the requirements! A Dan-grading exam is 'subjective', the same as judging a Kata contest. Both are open to personal preference, bias, and partiality.

In a Kata event, one judge may focus on correct form and technique, whereas another judge could favour spirit, attitude



Editor John Cheetham 5th Dan.

and power. So, judging a Dan-grade exam is similar if it's conducted by a Grading Panel of several senior instructors. However, it's still *subjective* even if the decision is solely taken by 'one' examiner. Age and physical capability/condition are considerations which will always be taken into account by an experienced examiner. Many times a higher Dan grade will be awarded, rightly so, after many years of dedicated practice and service to Karate.

Continuous training, trying to progress and learning are important elements of our Art, not what number of Dan grades one possesses. It's about the total karate experience, the development – the journey.

Talking about a Karate journey, there's a real 'food for thought' article in this issue by a senior WTKO Sensei, Scott Middleton 7th Dan, focusing on his extensive study and research into Kata Jitte/Jutte. It's a fascinating, insightful personal story.

I said to Kamil Kroczewski (jokingly) that Nishiyama sensei would turn in his grave if he read your article! Kamil replied saying... "I know about Sensei Nishiyama's approach but this is really the same principle with a different understanding."

Both feet-flat, a grounded position can generate incredible hitting power: a lunging action (back heel up) also creates dynamic, explosive hitting power. Surely we can utilise both methods in our karate?

Good Health, Good Training, Editor.

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**FRONT COVER: CLARE WORTH 3rd Dan JKS, simultaneous block-strike on Grenville Harrop 5th Dan. (Photo By Graeme Armitage).**

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EDITORIAL ADDRESS: S.K.M. P.O. Box 53, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 0HH. U.K. (TELEPHONE & FAX No. + 44 (0)1925 755047).

email: john@shotokanmag.com (or) clare@shotokanmag.com website at: www.shotokanmag.com

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# JUTTE – THE ENDLESS JOURNEY!

By Scott Middleton.

## YOUTHFUL INSPIRATION:

There was a time that Bobby Fisher captivated the world by waging war at the 1972 World Chess Championships. His enemy was the imposing Boris Spassky of Russia, and this battle in the ongoing Cold War was fought with kings, queens, rooks, bishops, knights, and pawns. The world held its breath for an entire summer in 1972 as these two giants of chess collided in Reykjavik, Iceland. Nearly two decades before what was to become the “Match of the Century”, a young Bobby, upon awakening and often before his feet even touched the floor, would immediately open his chess books and eagerly begin studying. It’s been written that this daily ritual would last for long stretches of time, and that Bobby wouldn’t even take a break long enough to eat. Most professionals would identify Bobby’s feelings towards his books as an unhealthy attachment. In the years following the match of the century, a collector paid handsomely for the books that Bobby used to study chess with in his youth. In an attempt to protect his newly acquired treasures, the collector diligently began cleaning the food crumbs packed between the pages from all of the years that Bobby had spent eating while studying. When Bobby found out what the collector had done, he emotionally wailed, “He’s ruined them”!

While I certainly do not compare myself to one of the greatest prodigies of all time, I can appreciate his unquenchable thirst for study. In the mid 1980’s the first Karate book I ever owned was the seventh volume of Sensei Nakayama’s iconic Best Karate series. At the risk of sounding middle aged, this was a time far before the convenience of online shopping and books magically appearing with next day delivery. With only one small bookstore in the city of my birth, and Karate still in its infancy in Brandon, it was slim pickings. With the perspective only someone that is middle aged can have, perhaps it was destiny that this was the one and only Karate book on the shelf. While I may not have food crumbs packed into its pages, I can clearly recall countless hours of scrutinizing every detail of the black and white photos with the enthusiasm only a young teenager can have. The images of Norihiko Iida Sensei performing kata stimulated my young imagination, and left a residue on my mind that has never washed away.

As a teenager, I eagerly fell into my pursuit of the kata Jitte / Jutte, and naively measured my performance against the pictures of Norihiko Iida Sensei. My resolve only strengthened every time I



*Sensei Scott Middleton 7th Dan WTKO, based in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada.*

miserably failed to capture a fraction of his power, or the dignified performance that sprang from the pages. Still, to this very day, the pursuit of perfection is agonizingly slow, but I have long since accepted the process of being content with continually sanding down the rough edges of my performance and hoping for a smoother finish. Like any craftsman, I was, and still am, acutely aware of the flaws that remain, but I was, and continue to be, lured by the song of gaining intimate information from the kata.

## THE CATALYST:

Fast-forward nearly three decades later, I was sitting at the International Airport in

Winnipeg, Manitoba after hosting and co-teaching the weekend’s seminars. After successfully completing the long list of duties in the months leading up to the seminar and seeing my hard work come to fruition over the last few days, I had earned a moment of relaxation. I ordered a coffee that came with a price tag one would expect from an airport restaurant and after a few moments of anticipation I was served the bitter dark liquid. The success of the seminar made it easy to let go of any disappointment I may have had over the sub-standard coffee. My guest for the weekend was Sensei Richard Amos whom I could sense was also enjoying his

own level of satisfaction after the success of the weekend's seminar. Over the years, I had hosted the WTKO's Chief Instructor many times in Canada, and his brilliance always captivated the Canadian students.

The mental fog that I was blissfully soaking up evaporated immediately when Richard Sensei "suggested" I examine for Rokudan in just a few short months. He explained that the examination would take place in Thun, Switzerland, at our first International WTKO Summer Camp. In addition to the physical requirements for Rokudan, I was also required to present a research paper to himself and the WTKO Executive Chairman, Sensei John Mullin. The theme of my research was my choice, but Richard Sensei did recommend that it should be both interesting, and unexplored. Those two words, "interesting" and "unexplored", seemed to reverberate inside the walls of the airport before Richard Sensei suddenly whisked away to catch his return flight to New York City. I was left holding the now lukewarm bitter dark liquid, but his words had already caused a seismic shift. Albert Einstein was once quoted as saying "In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity", and I was going to relish in this opportunity.

**INTERESTING & UNEXPLORED:**

Compiling the research paper for my Rokudan examination back in 2013 forced me to articulate the journey that I had been on since my teenage infatuation with Norihiko Iida Sensei's kata. In the beginning of 2022, as the world cautiously awoke from its pandemic slumber, and nervously began walking the long road to normalcy, I felt that it was the right time to expand on those ideas, and offer my journey to a wider audience. This self-imposed sentence is another opportunity to put myself into "the middle of difficulty".

For centuries, the truncheon has been a tool used by police officers to uphold justice and as an undeniable symbol of their authority. Historically, the English "Bobby" walking the beat would carry handcuffs, a whistle, and a billy club to assist them in detecting and preventing crime. Attached to the batons was the Royal Crest, which served to identify the officer as a servant of the law. In New York, a police officer would carry two different lengths of batons depending on the time of day. During the daytime, the shorter "day-stick" was used, and at night, the lengthier "night-stick" was sure to bring an immediate compliance. In recent years, law enforcement now utilizes a more compact and less cumbersome truncheon with the advent of telescopically expanding batons made of lightweight metal.

In the feudal era of Japan, the Doshin, and their superiors, the Yoriki, were the medieval equivalent of a beat cop, and a duty sergeant. As officers of the

law they held the distinguished right to carry an iron baton that was considered a badge or symbol of their authority by the public. Between 12" and 24" in length, the Jitte/Jutte would have a protruding single hook or fork, and often had colorful tassels attached to the handle. The various colors served as a rank system that indicated seniority, and duties of that particular officer.

The name of the iron baton evolved over time with similar sounding words, but with entirely different Kanji and with vastly distinct interpretations. The weapon was initially referred to as a Jitte (Truth Hands) in honor of its symbolic significance. The public could trust the sincere fidelity of the barrier, and that they would fulfill their duties with truthfulness. Over time, the police officers themselves used the term Jutte (Ten Hands) in reference to its utilitarian significance, and how the iron baton would give the carrier the power of ten hands.

**THE POWER OF TEN HANDS:**

The intrinsic connection between Japan's feudal era police baton and the Shotokan kata Jitte / Jutte would certainly fall under the category of "interesting" and "unexplored", but remains arguably inconsequential if it does not relate to the kata. In the spirit of Hansel and Gretel, I needed to leave a trail of breadcrumbs to ensure I would find my way back to my quest of obtaining the power of ten hands. The Jitte / Jutte as a weapon was used for striking, thrusting, blocking, and entangling the limbs of an adversary. The connection between how Japan's historical police baton was used, and a more evolved kata is in the ideology of using our own body as the weapon.

Handicapped by having to rely on articulating the movements rather than enjoying the luxury of a physical demonstration, there are numerous examples in the kata that the body and weapon are used in a similar way, like random jigsaw pieces, spread out arbitrarily, waiting for the practitioner to piece them together revealing the bigger picture.

**STRIKING:**

The single hook ominously protruding above the handle of the Jitte / Jutte



*The Kanji for kata Jutte / Jitte (Ten Hands).*



*The Kanji for the Edo period weapon known as the Jitte, (Truth Hands).*

elevates the weapon from something used purely to bludgeon an adversary. Historically the practical application of the hook was to trap, and subsequently break a sharpened edge weapon, to ensnare the adversaries clothing, or for striking in close quarters.

With a little latitude and some imagination on behalf of the reader, we can see that the thumb of our hand has the semblance to the weapons *Kagi* (Hook). Movement #16 in the kata is often described as blocking a stick attack with



the hands shaped as "tiger mouths" (See photo above)....

The traditionalist, among us would dig in their heels and emphatically argue

that this sequence of movements was passed down from the ancestors of Karate, and should remain unaltered to forever preserve the applications for future generations.

However, in my opinion these are close range opportunities to strike with the thumb, or the web of the hand between the thumb and forefinger, to the eyes or throat. The skeletal structure of the thumb does not allow for heavy impact of any kind, but the eyes and throat are incredibly vulnerable areas, and a strike of any kind would be highly effective.

### THRUSTING:

Centuries ago, Miyamoto Musashi the renowned swordsman authored the Book of Five Rings. The combat strategies contained in his manual are often cryptic, but the insights gained are timeless. In one section, Musashi suggests that while preparing to engage in battle we should have the feeling of *“stabbing the opponent in the face with the tip of the sword”*.

Over a year ago, I received another “suggestion” from my seniors that perhaps I should consider attempting the examination for Nanadan. Incidentally, although not my point, I examined successfully in April 2022. A full description of how I physically prepared in the year leading up to the examination could make for another interesting article, but it is how I prepared intellectually that is relevant now. Leading up to the examination, I took on the daunting task of writing down the mindset, and sensations I encounter when performing each movement of Jutte. In stark contrast to how the kata is objectively performed, our mindset is subjective. I spent considerable time reflecting on the static position we assume prior to the start of the kata. Although I can offer a number of applications for this arm position, my focus was on how I felt preparing to engage in the kata or, as Musashi advocates, *“preparing to engage in battle”*.

For several days, I sifted through the wide range of sensations I encounter while in this position, and what remained was my clenched right fist. I mentally project this fist forward in a manner similar to how the feudal era weapon would have been used at the onset of an altercation, or a battle as Musashi suggested.

### BLOCKING:

To “press or to suppress” sounds dangerously close to a Shakespearean paraphrase, but in my opinion is the key to understanding *Osaе-uke* on a more applied level. We have to trust, as it would be deflating not to, that a higher level of Karate is obtainable. With sincere effort, perseverance, and enough time, the lessons of Karate will continually wash over us. Along the way, we will absorb these lessons and carry on to the point



*“My ideas, convictions, of pronouncing my kata as Jutte has been strained through a filter of training, research, and constant introspection.”* where we reach saturation. The ongoing struggle in our art is to define and redefine these principles.

The Japanese verb *Osaeru* is translated as “to hold something down, hold back, to stop, to restrain, or to curb”. The generally accepted and often unquestioned translation of *Osaе-uke* is “pressing block”. I acknowledge this translation, and the difficult process of accurately translating a word from one language to another, while considering the unique cultures involved, but still capturing the intended meaning. I acknowledge this difficulty, but in no way does that mean I am content. While executing kata the line that separates performance and application should always remain blurred and connected as the two halves enrich the other.

Judging from an aesthetic viewpoint the third movement of Jutte is far too subtle to be attractive. As such, it is perhaps forgivable to gloss over the *Osaе-uke* that is executed with the left hand. In close quarters, the attacker may use a wide range of attacks, from a grab, a strike, a tackle, or any combination of these. Using *Osaе-uke* to pragmatically “suppress” the attack, and any subsequent attacks, we create possible openings and the distance to defend ourselves.

### ENTANGLING:

The sincere enthusiast that slowly opens the door to begin their journey will not know or could not know the obstacles they will eventually face on the other side.

Bravely, they still cross the threshold. At first glance, it will be difficult for them to comprehend that one of the greatest challenges they will face is to express the same technique on different scales.

The *tekubi makiotoshi-uke* found near the end of the kata Nijushiho and Unsu are examples of these varying scales, and in my opinion closely related to the first movement of Jutte. Using the well worn pages of my copy of the Best Karate series as a reference point, the opening movement of Jutte is described as a *“middle level pressing block with the back of right wrist”*. Reverse engineering how this movement is executed in the three kata mentioned provides a glimpse at how the wrist is used to entangle, wrap, or twist the limb of the attacker.

### KARATE – THE ENDLESS JOURNEY!

In February 2020, I was indulging in a glass of red wine after teaching over the weekend in Norway alongside Sensei John Mullin, and Sensei Richard Amos in celebration of the Stavanger Karateklubb’s 50th anniversary. Drinking red wine is something I rarely do, but the celebratory weekend and the great company was a combination I could not resist. During supper, I was seated next to Ivar, an intelligent individual, and a dedicated practitioner who I consider a good friend. The conversation between us flowed from one topic to another as easily as the red wine, and at one point the conversation landed on the saying that I have used for a number of years. Ivar asked, *“is there a destination in the endless journey”*? He had offered it as a question, but perhaps Ivar intended it to be a question I should be asking myself.

I was already well into my journey by the time I viewed those pictures of Norihiko Iida Sensei as a wide eyed teenager. The spark that it created caused a roaring fire that still burns brightly today. As strange, as it may sound this fire provides the light that I need to continue moving forward, as I navigate into the unknown. In many ways, this article is tangible proof of how I have broken away from conventional thinking, and from the comfort that conformity brings. My ideas, convictions, and the hubris of pronouncing my kata as Jutte have all been strained through a filter of training, research, constant introspection and so much trial, and error. While it may not sit well with the traditionalists among us that is a weight I am willing to bear as I continue travelling my endless journey.

*Note: In the article I allude to my approach of using my body as the weapon, and the hand is shaped as the feudal era weapon (Jitte) with the thumb having the semblance of the Kagi (Hook). In the Kata there are several places that we use the hand how the weapon was used. This was my idea for including the ‘hand’ photo.*