

# 3 'Essential' Applications For 'Pressing Block' Every TKD Student Should Know!

## Old School Perspectives on Taekwon-do

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## Old School Perspectives on Taekwon-do (OSP)

**Bringing to the Taekwon-do world the lost practices and the hidden applications of the Taekwon-do patterns**

It is my mission to help TKD lovers rediscover the 'Old School Methods' and in doing so keep TKD relevant for the self defence needs of the 21st century - Ciaran McDonald

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*This eBook is an excerpt from the New book [‘Old School Perspectives on Taekwon-do’](#) (out NOW!) & DVD and online course [‘Understanding Joong Gun Tul’](#) (out NOW!) which uses the applications and lost practices of Old School Okinawan Karate to reveal the plethora of self-defence techniques contained in this beautiful pattern.*

This series of articles, eBooks, books, DVDS and downloads represents an attempt to breathe new life into the Chang-Hon Tuls by use of the lost practices and fighting strategies of Old School Okinawan karate, the progenitor of both Taekwon-do and the modern styles of Karate such as Shotokan from which Taekwon-do was derived. By doing so we attempt to move our understanding of the applications of the Chang-Hon tuls beyond seeing everything merely as a block, a kick or a punch.

First we must understand that most of the techniques and templates (two or more linked moves used to deal with a common act of violence) contained within the Chang-Hon tuls are derived from the kata of Old School Karate. For the non-believers to reach a ‘road to Damascus’ moment all they need do is take a cursory glance at the Pinan/Heian series of short kata created by the Grandfather of Modern Karate Ankoh Itosu.

The Pinan kata (Chinese for peaceful mind) are not themselves ancient. They were created by Itosu in approximately 1895. They represented an attempt to simplify the

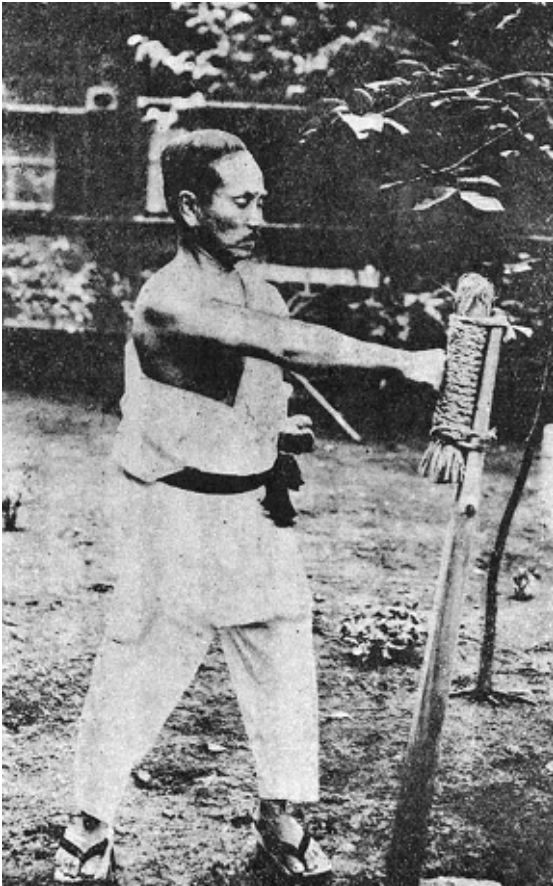
**Figure.1 Ankoh Itosu, Grandfather of modern Karate**



study of Karate so that it could be introduced into the Okinawan prefecture school system. This introduction coincided with a change of teaching methods from two person application drills to a much more child friendly version of training, where the solo form of the kata was drilled in large groups (much like how TKD trains patterns to this day). The kata were later adopted and taught as the syllabus of many of the modern karate styles on their introduction to main land Japan in the 1920s. Here the kata would be renamed the Heian (peaceful mind) series in an attempt to remove traces of ‘foreign’ influence and thus fit in with the nationalistic agenda of the rapidly militarising Japanese State. It is said that Itosu created these kata because the older classical ones such as Kushanku were longer and thus more complex. Furthermore there were many authors

of the older kata and thus many of the kata contained a huge amount of overlap and repetition of key templates. By distilling longer kata into 5 shorter kata Itosu was not only able to remove repetition but also to structure a syllabus that grew more difficult incrementally. A quick glance at the Pinan kata will leave the TKD student in no doubt as to the origins of much of our own Chang-Hon Tuls. Indeed TKD Tul Won-Hyo, is almost an exact copy of Pinan Nidan, originally the second kata in the series of five. Pinan Nidan contains not only the same techniques in roughly the same order but also the same pattern diagram of a capital letter I.

**Figure.2 Funakoshi Gichin, the Father of modern Karate**



But it is not only the Pinan kata that donated templates to the TKD tuls. In fact in a series of articles in totaly Taekwon-do in 2012 I was able to show how over 63% of templates from the first 9 TKD Tuls mapped directly on to the first 9 Shotokan Kata. Shotokan, the art in which General Choi gained a second dan black belt contains many kata including the Pinan/Heian series. However, the vast majority of the kata of Shotokan were never meant to be grouped into a syllabus and thus do not work brilliantly as such. In ancient times it would be common for a master to only know up to 3 kata. However, with the expansion of Karate beyond the school system in the 1920's and the shift in focus from applications to kata drilling, father of modern karate Funakoshi Gichin had to provide new material for his students. He did so by collecting numerous kata with which to teach. The problem is that these kata were designed by numerous authors throughout time and were kept top secret. Therefore, there is a huge amount of redundancy and repetition in these kata. This was a problem

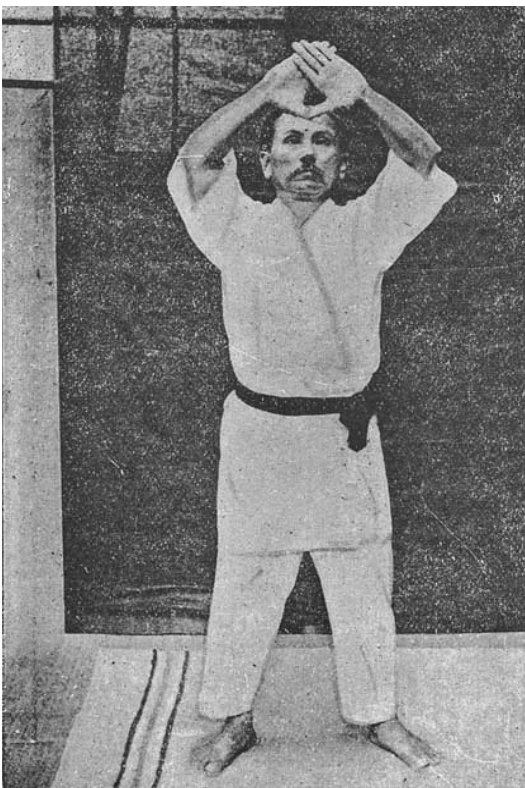
that General Choi was able to address when designing his new Tuls in the late 1950's.

It should not come as a surprise to students of TKD that the general looked to Karate when seeking inspiration for his new Tuls. After all the General and many of his technical advisors achieved black belts in either Japanese karate or the Korean version called Tang-Soo-Do. Furthermore, relying on karate as a source for self-defence templates with which to compile Tuls is not to be seen as a negative. After all, as previously stated Itosu did so himself in 1895. By doing so the General was able to further remove much of the repetition of the higher Shotokan Karate kata with their multiple authors and condense their material into a more efficient form. In addition the General was able to add techniques that had begun to appear on the tournament circuit such as high/spinning kicks.

So there is nothing to be feared from admitting our links to Karate. If we are accepting of the fact that many of the short sequences of moves contained within the Tuls were derived from the work of ancient forms then we can begin to ask ourselves: “for what purpose did the originators design these templates?” What kinds of violent attacks did they envisage encountering in pre-war feudal China and Okinawa?”. By studying the TKD tuls in this way we can begin to reclaim that which we are overlooking. Namely a rich and fascinating side to our art that deals efficiently with the kind of close quarter violence that distance arts such as TKD and Modern Karate do not effectively address.

## Why is Old School Karate relevant to Taekwon-do?

Old School karate is very different to Modern Karate. The kata and their templates are from Old School Karate but the applications are from modern Karate. Taekwon-do is derived mainly from Modern Karate. Though much of the flamboyant kicking did indeed come from Taekyon, the vast majority of the art, including the patterns applications was derived from Modern Karate. A quick look at the two arts will tell you how comparatively similar they are. Modern Karate was very prominent in pre-world war two Korea and was used by the occupying Japanese as a method of disseminating their culture to the occupied Koreans. Most of the originators and contributors to TKD had studied Modern Karate too. Indeed General Choi himself was a second degree in the most popular form of Modern Karate, Shotokan.



**Figure.3 Funakoshi performing Kushanku**

However, modern karate is not the same as Old School Karate. Modern karate is a dynamic art which focuses on long rang fighting through blocks, kicks and punches. It has an exciting sport aspect to it with the ultimate goal of scoring one decisive blow (Ipon). However, much of the modern understanding of the applications of the kata is based on the flawed understanding that violent attacks happen at such distances. In contrast Old School Karate is based predominantly on the strategies of the type of Chinese Kung Fu taught in Okinawa: predominantly Southern Chinese styles such as Monk Fist and White Crane. These styles emphasised the need to deal with violence at all ranges. Thus escapes from grabs, rudimentary grappling, controlling techniques, throwing, strangulation and pressure points were emphasised.

However, as Modern karate had for historical reasons become a distance art that focused primarily on blocks, kicks and punches it not only lost most of the richness of the system but further retrofitted applications to the many Chinese influenced kata. These interpretations were invariably: blocks kicks or punches. It is these modern interpretations that TKD has inherited and which prevent us from really benefiting from the richness of our tuls and their self defence lessons contained therein.

By accepting that the templates are older than both Modern Karate and Taekwon-do and that the fighting strategies of their originators differed from ours, we can begin to explore the multitude of close quarter applications that they offer. It is for this reason that these articles will take applications from Old School Karate and show where they appear in the Chang-hon Tuls. If we look beyond the surface level and with an open mind we will be able to see the true value lying beneath the dogma.

### Low Pressing Block- Applications and Eplanations



**Figure.4 showing the lob pressing block**

Perhaps the block with the least plausible and most incomplete explanation in TKD orthodoxy is the 'Low Pressing Block'. This block is executed by:

1. Raising the hands
2. Shifting the weight of the body on to one foot
3. Moving the hands in opposite directions and in slow motion whilst lowering the body into a low stance (slightly longer than a walking stance)

Current ITF thought is that one hand is blocking a kick whilst the other is simultaneously blocking a punch. If we leave aside the highly

improbable scenario of an attacker both kicking and punching at the same time (very difficult pull off and to do so prevents body mechanics from generating power) this explanation fails on many other fronts:

- 1) It fails to 'press' anything. The name of the block (pressing block) would imply a pressing action
- 2) It fails to explain why we are in slow motion
- 3) It fails to explain why we are in a low stance and not just a walking stance
- 4) It fails to explain why we are exerting power in a downwards motion and why our low hand is in a knife hand position (the position now favoured by certain ITF groups over the old flat palm position with a bent wrist)
- 5) It fails to effectively deal with either a punch or a kick as the low kick would break our fingers and the punch would still travel forward unimpeded.

A far more satisfactory explanation is that:

- A) We are actually 'pressing' something
- B) We are creating a lever to exert pressure over something in a downward motion by pressing it
- C) The hand that rises is securing something and by rising, it increases the leverage over the object
- D) It is executed in a low stance as dropping our weight through the technique increases the downward pressure.
- E) The block is done in slow motion, as it is a form of joint lock and NOT a break. The same technique could be performed much faster if the intention was to destroy the limb or joint. This is a controlling technique not an impact technique

In the first application (see figure.4) we will see that all of the above principles are addressed.

### **Application.1 against a lapel grab – arm bar takedown**

- a) The defender is grabbed by the lapel
- b) The defender reaches over and holds of the attackers grabbing hand securing it to his clothing, all the while conscious of the attackers free hand
- c) The defender distracts the attacker (low kick, spit, knee, punch, poke in eye etc) and turns 90 degrees hereby twisting the arm of the attacker to point the elbow up.
- d) The defender places his free hand on the back of the attackers elbow and exerts downward pressure whilst maintaining a secure hold of the attackers grabbing hand in its original position
- e) The defender maximises the downward pressure through the attackers elbow by dropping body weight low as a low stance is adopted



- f) The attacker must go to the ground to avoid damage to the elbow
- g) The defender maintains control on the ground or strikes and disengages.

As can be seen from this application, all the constituent parts of the block are fully explained and utilised. This makes it a far more satisfactory application than the simultaneous blocking of a kick and a punch.

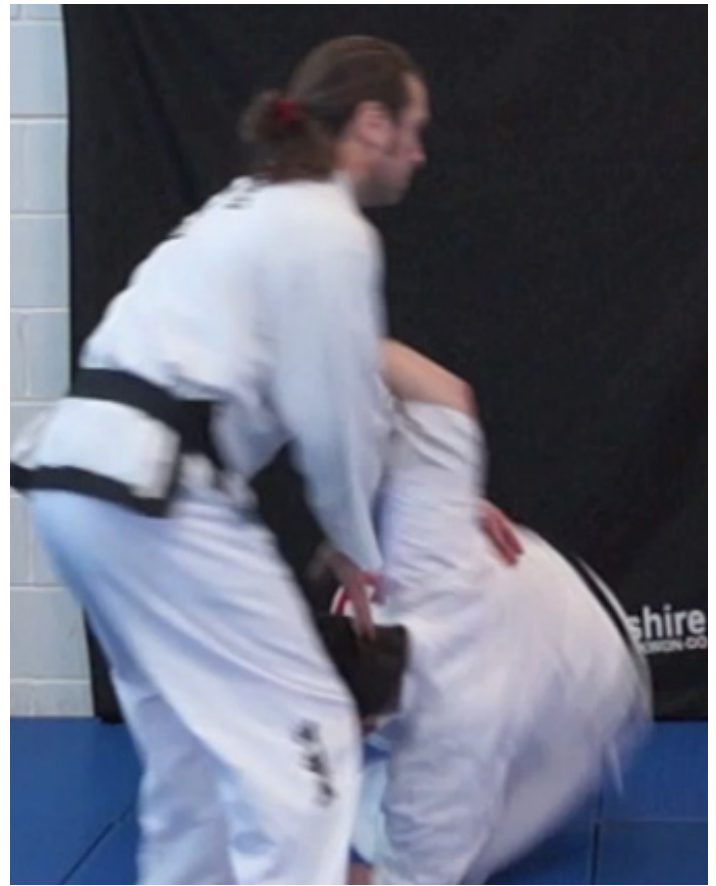


## Application .2 pressing the head takedown

As has been previously stated the context is the biggest deciding factor in how a technique is applied. If the context changes then so does the application i.e. have you been attacked with a grab, a kick or a punch. The same technique can also be used to take-down an opponent from a caught kick by pressing the knee. However, we will now look at pressing the head as a response to a hook punch. But it is important to realise that in both examples the principles of leverage are consistent with previous move. One arm elevates whilst the other applies constant pressure.

- 1) The attacker throws a hook punch
- 2) The defender blocks the punch with a KHGB.
- 3) The defender then wraps the arm and immediately slams the other forearm into the neck of the attacker
- 4) The defender knees the attacker in the groin and then circles one hand up and under the attackers punching arm whilst placing the other palm on the back of the attackers neck/head
- 5) The defender then raises one hand whilst lowering the other (like a seesaw). This will lower the attackers head and disrupt their posture
- 6) The defender makes a small circle with his feet whilst further raising and lowering the hands to turn over the attacker and throw them to the ground. This stepping and turning action is very like the circular punch of Joong-Gun





**In the above picture note that one hand is facing up and the other pressing down, just like a low pressing block. The turn to complete the throw can be seen to be the same 90 degree movement as the angle punch that follows in the pattern.**

### **Application 3. Leg press take down (see over)**

This last application again show the seesaw hands of the pressing block but also encompasses the circular stepping and arm action of the circular punch which follows it in the pattern Joong-Gun Tul. The same technique can be executed by grabbing a standing leg from a clinch too.

- 1) the defender is attacked with a circular kick which is caught on the ribs and then hooked to capture.
- 2) One hand circles up underneath the attackers calf and is pulled into the body whilst the other hand comes to rest on the knee
- 3) The defender steps forward to off balance the attacker whilst simultaneously pressing on the knee. Note: the standing leg of the attacker could also be hooked or



swept at the same time.

4) As the attacker hits the floor the defender immediately steps on his leg to prevent an upward kick and to avoid escape

5) The defender then applied an ankle lock and attacks the Achilles tendon of the fallen attacker.

Below is a picture of Miyagi Chogun, father of Goju Ryu Karate executing the same technique from a shoot position i.e. kneeling.



## Conclusion

So to conclude, once we are liberated from the dogma of modern interpretations of kata/tuls we are also free to find the applications that the Old Masters taught. These applications not only provide us with tools to deal with all manner of common acts of violent aggression but also give new a understanding of the great tuls we all practice. Though this knowledge has been lost in Taekwon-do and Modern Karate it is still present in versions of Old School Karate such as Koryu Uchinadi. It is also present in many forms of Classical Jiu Jutsu or Kung-Fu, which share common roots with Old School Karate.

For many students of Taekwon-do such applications are irrelevant. Many are are happy to enjoy our beautiful art in its limited form. However, for those who would like to add another level to their study and explore the secrets of Taekwon-do please check out my **critically acclaimed book** 'Old School Perspectives on Taekwon-do' found at:

[Check out my critically acclaimed book \(CLICK HERE\)](#)

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