

Okinawan *goju-ryu*, as with many karate systems, offers its exponents hand and foot techniques designed to devastate an opponent before moving into grappling range. Being a close-range fighting system, *goju* places equal emphasis, usually at the more advanced levels, on grappling techniques such as locks and throws. These techniques are executed from both a standing and a supine position, covering the gamut of combat situations. *Goju-ryu*, by its very nature, adapts to each situation.

Seikichi Toguchi, senior student of *goju-ryu* founder Chojun Miyagi, points out that within the *koryu kata* (classical forms) are movements which are the key to devastating locks and throws. Most of these *kaisai* (applications) are not apparent and require many years of constant kata practice to make them second nature. Toguchi, head of the *shoreikan* system of *goju-ryu*, says that "Each kata usually requires ten years of practice to make it one with the student. Each kata has a code, and this code unlocks the principles set forth in a particular kata."

This article will address three major types of throws/locks, including their origins and applications. Basically, these are upper-body locks, upper-body throws, and ground techniques.

Upper-body locks most often employ the lock or bar of an arm or wrist. Since the *goju-ryu* practitioner is an infighter, these locks will present themselves quite readily. The main purpose of a lock is to apply pressure via hyperextension, flexion, or torque, to a joint. It should be noted that many locks also utilize a pressure point to aid in the immobilization of a specific muscle group.

Toshio Tamano, senior student of Toguchi, points out that the principles of *goju-ryu* (i.e., the use of both hard and soft) are most important to the application of locks or throws. The *ju* or soft aspect is the key ingredient in setting up an effective lock. Once drawn in, the opponent is locked, and the *goju* practitioner utilizes the *go* or hard aspect of rooting his stance.

One important point to be illuminated here is that the basic strategy of *goju-ryu* is the elimination, by whatever means required, of the attacker. Miyagi believed *goju* techniques should be utilized only as a last resort, only when ab-

LOCKS AND THROWS OF GOJU-RYU KARATE

The Secret to
Close-Range Fighting Success

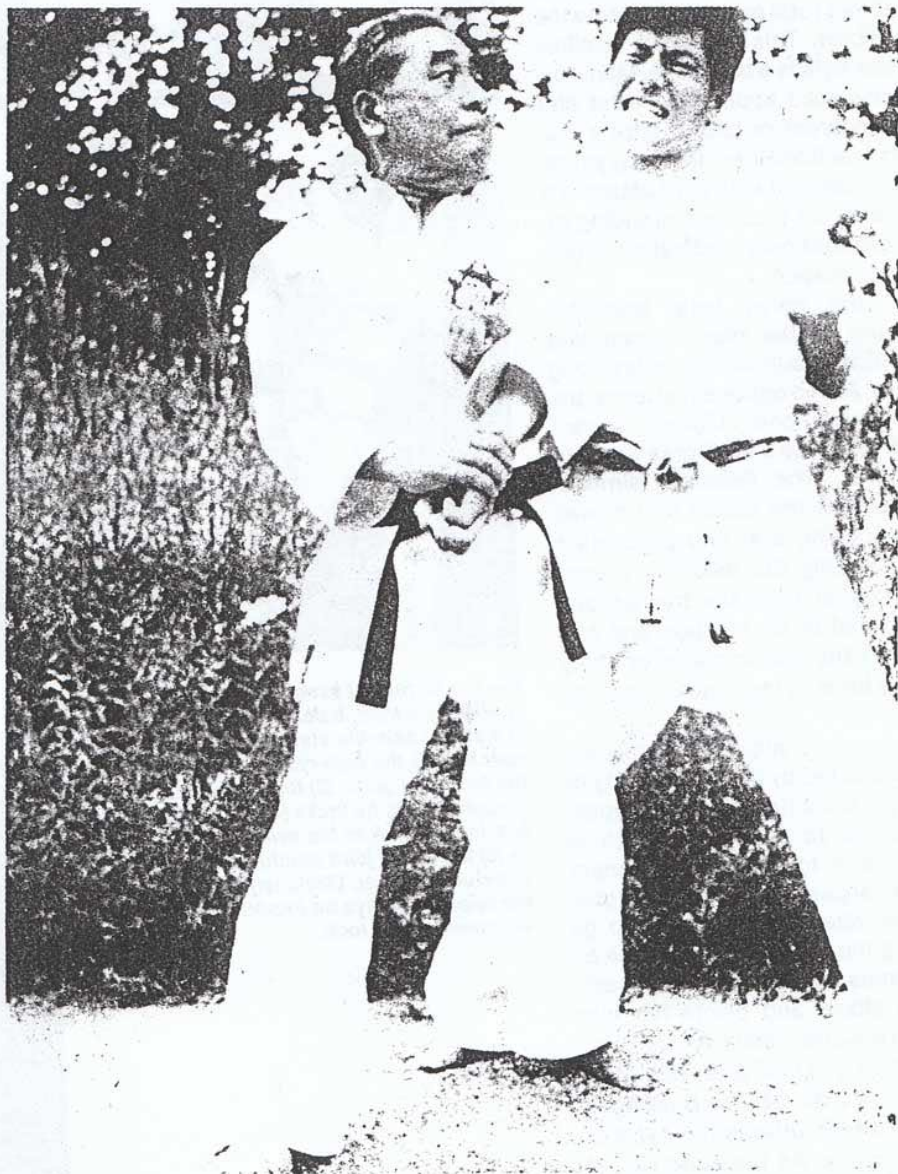
by Scott Lenzi

Photos by Jeff Thompson

solutely necessary. Toguchi points out that his teacher believed the ultimate goal of *goju-ryu*, and any martial art for that matter, was peace and self-development.

To further clarify this strategy, in many martial arts the goal is to punch or kick; in others it is to throw. *Goju-ryu* flows and adapts to both long- and short-range situations. Adaptation, as can be seen in nature, is the key to survival.

One of *goju-ryu*'s basic locking/breaking techniques can be seen throughout many of the kata, such as *gekisai dai ni* and *saiifa*, etc. This movement is most often a block called *ura uke*, which utilizes the back of the hand and wrist. The simultaneous motion of both hands in opposite directions will initially break the attacking arm at the elbow and maintain a lock after the break. This particular technique is executed in the *sanchin* stance, which is firmly rooted.



Seikichi Toguchi (on left at right), senior student of *goju-ryu* founder Chojun Miyagi, demonstrates one of *goju*'s many locking/trapping techniques on one of his students.

As with most locks/throws, and following the principle of adaptability, the relative height and distance of an opponent are important factors in determining the correct technique for a given situation.

One of the most effective goju arm locks comes from the classical kata *Sepai*. This particular lock makes use of the hyperextension of the elbow to incapacitate the opponent. Utilizing correct footwork and the soft *kake hiki uke* block, the attacker's arm is grasped and his wrist upturned. The left arm simultaneously circles around and completes the lock below the elbow joint. An equally effective variation of this lock finds the left (locking) arm further up against the triceps. When correct pressure is applied to the vital point here, the opponent is rendered helpless.

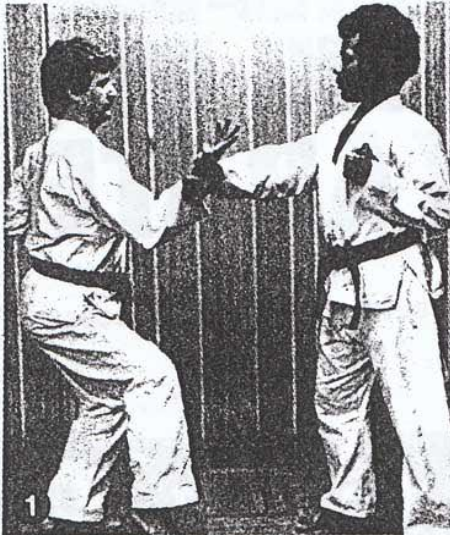
This lock, as with most in goju-ryu, is executed in the art's principle stance of *Sanchin dachi* and requires the shoulders to be down (as in *sanchin kata*), which allows total energy transfer to the locked elbow. This particular application of this kata is a basic one. Many levels of advanced application exist and are not apparent or taught until a student has practiced them for many years. Comprehension of kata application is a simple task, but true understanding requires extraordinary dedication, practice and education.

From the *koryu kata shisochin* comes one of the most devastating locks, which is additionally a breaking technique. As the opponent attacks, the Goju-ryu practitioner utilizes correct footwork to create a 45-degree angle to the attacker. The defender simultaneously blocks the punch and moves the non-blocking arm into precontact position. Seizing the assailant's arm, the goju stylist uses the tremendous power created in hip rotation and can further break the arm in place, or apply downward force to lock and control the opponent.

A follow-up technique to this maneuver, again created by the adaptability of Goju-ryu, presents itself when the opponent attempts to use his strength to break the arm lock. If the opponent possesses superior strength, the goju practitioner allows the attacker to go attack along the original path. As the attacker comes up, the defender backlocks the elbow and pivots his hips strongly in the other direction, thus ending in a throw and final arm lock.

In the *kururunfa* kata, we once again find a lock which utilizes the hyperextension principle. As the opponent attacks, the defender employs a *kake hiki*

uke (twisting hooking block) and grasps the wrist. The goju exponent simultaneously steps to the center of the attacker's stance and pivots 180 degrees in place. The attacker's arm is now situated atop the defender's shoulder in an extremely compromising position. Any number of subduing strikes, be they to the groin or solar plexus, etc., are available.



The key to correct execution of this lock is in utilizing a fluid, balanced motion, ending in a strong sanchin stance. As the attacker punches (1), the goju-ryu defender deflects the blow and grabs (2) the assailant's hand. Stepping in (3), he locks (4) the attacker's arm in the crook of his own arm, then pushes (5) the elbow joint painfully upward in an unnatural manner. Obviously, the height of the opponent plays an important role in the alignment of the lock.

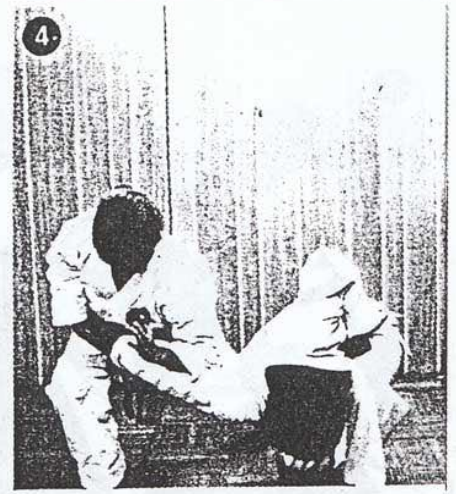


SEI PAI

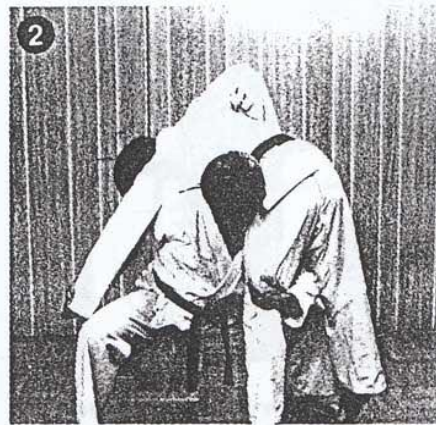
SEI PAI

SHISOCHIN

Rotation of the hips is the key factor in achieving maximum power in this lock. The goju-ryu defender blocks (1) a left punch away from his body, and as his assailant attempts a right punch, the defender grabs (2) the attacker's hand. Rotating the hips, the defender pivots (3) and delivers (4) a crushing blow to the back of the assailant's elbow joint.



SEIUNCHIN

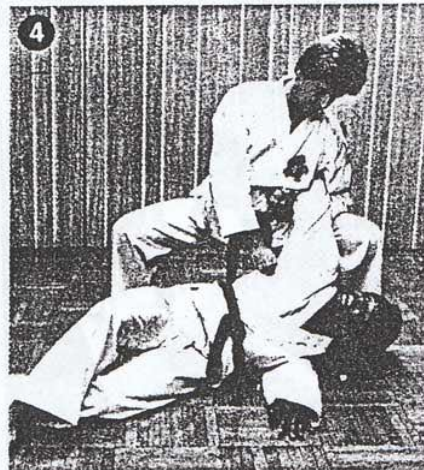
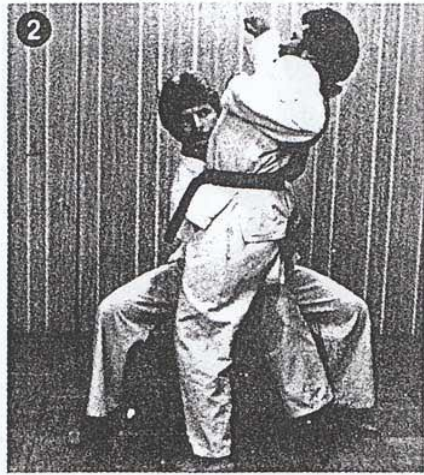
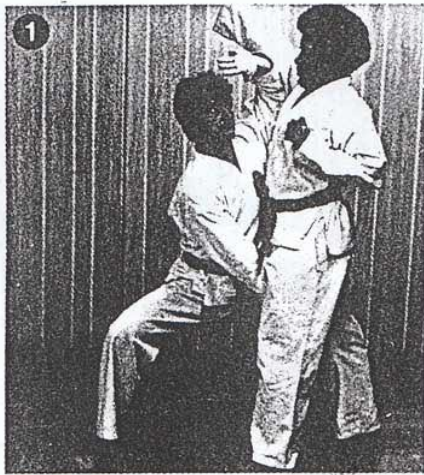


This throw is similar to the "fireman's carry" of wrestling fame and can be quite devastating. As the opponent punches (1), the goju-ryu practitioner assumes a horse stance, grabbing the punching arm and countering with a groin strike. He then reaches between (2) the stunned attacker's legs, lifting him onto his back, where he can now throw him (3).

most disabling consequences occurs when a close-range opponent launches a mid-level attack. The defender blocks across his body while simultaneously aligning the other arm perpendicular to the opponent's motion at neck level. The throw is executed with the arm locked around the throat and the attacker's leg(s) simultaneously swept out from under him. Another variation has the defender snap the opponent's neck in conjunction with the throw.

From the *seiunchin* kata comes a dynamic throw similar to a "fireman's carry," as it is known in American wrestling. As the opponent launches a strong, charging attack, the defender assumes the *shikodachi* (horse stance) and blocks, then strikes. These counterstrikes also have a variety of choices, each based on the level of the student. After striking, the hand is brought under the groin and the opponent is thrown with the aid of a rising *shikodachi*. Within the *shorei-kan* system are a series of applications which illuminate these throws.

The *sanseiru* kata includes a throw executed against a close-range opponent. Once again relying on *shikodachi*,



The throw at right is taken from the sanseiru kata and requires correct timing between the legs and arms to achieve the desired result. As the attacker punches (1), the goju-ryu practitioner blocks the blow upward while reaching between the assailant's legs. Grabbing (2) the attacker's uniform at

both the shoulder and the seat of the pants, the defender lifts (3) the opponent off his feet. Once inverted, the assailant may be dropped in any number of positions. A finishing strike (4) is seldom required.

position of protection, mobility and readiness. As the opponent attacks, the defender may launch a kicking counter-attack. One of the unique throws/traps of goju-ryu is done from the ground and is executed from this ready position: As the attacker steps in range, one foot is hooked behind the assailant's foot, the other at the knee. The goju stylist simultaneously draws in and kicks out, usually dislocating the opponent's knee and enabling the defender to assume control of the situation. Once the attacker is on the ground, the defender quickly closes in and counters decisively to the groin.

Practice for ground techniques is usually conducted with the attacker in seiza (kneeling) position and the defender seated with crossed legs. Toguchi developed this format for the practice of a variety of situations in addition to leg techniques from the ground.

The ability to utilize locks and throws, as well as ground techniques, is important in coping with real-life situations which, for the most part, occur in close quarters.



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the goju exponent drops his body below the oncoming attacker while simultaneously blocking his arm. With the body in this low position, the lower arm is directed under the groin and the other arm over the opponent's shoulders, both arms seeking each other. From this position, the opponent is lifted and slammed onto his back or directly down, causing the neck to bend and exposing the seventh vertebra to potentially severe damage.

All throws described herein are investigated on their most basic levels. As mentioned, a myriad of variations, each more devastating in nature, are revealed as the students' experience and study continues.

The last area, and most obscure, is that of ground techniques. These techniques are the most difficult to ascertain and require deep study of kata. Since goju-ryu follows the principle of adaptability, the possibility of fighting from the ground must be investigated. The practices of rolling and falling are important in the shorei-kan system.

Assuming the goju practitioner is on the ground and the opponent is standing, the grounded person assumes a



By twisting the body 180 degrees, dynamic power is created, as this technique illustrates. As the opponent punches (1), the goju-ryu defender deflects the blow and grabs the striking hand. Twisting (2) his body so that his back now faces the attacker, the defender yanks on the extended arm while delivering an elbow smash to the mid-section. Maintaining control over his now unbalanced opponent, the defender delivers (3) a palm smash to the groin. The circular principle pervades the stances, footwork, blocks and counters of goju-ryu.