

# [The 9 Lost Throws of Funakoshi Gichin: Karate's Forgotten Takedown Techniques](#)

Posted July 26, 2012 at 9:04 pm

[Share on facebook](#)[Share on twitter](#)[Share on digg](#)[Share on delicious](#)[Share on email](#)[More Sharing Services](#)

There's a lot of cool and quirky techniques to be seen in Karate.

**At least if you know where to look.**

Having personally had the unique opportunity to travel around the world in pursuit of such techniques for many years now, I'm always as amazed when I bump into random Karate people who seem to have no clue that there's all kinds of thrilling joint locks, throws, [ground fighting](#), strangulations, [pressure points](#), takedowns and other unconventional tricks and methods of subduing an aggressive opponent found in old-school Karate.

*However, as I think about it, perhaps I shouldn't be so amazed at all?*

The modern **3K** (Kata/Kihon/Kumite) systematization and subsequent sportification of Karate has inevitably led to the unfortunate decline of many authentic Karate techniques, as their original intent was/is simply too dangerous for the more civilized setting in which Karate is commonly practised and taught today.

**I mean, hey, what responsible parent would send her kids to Karate class if they were taught to cripple each other?**

*I wouldn't.*



Mabuni Kenwa and Taira Shinken (*Karate-do Nyumon*, 1938)

*Neither would you.*

**And so, we ended up here.**

Still, we're not kids. We're goddamn adults – with fully functioning brains and a highly practical sense of (hopefully) good judgement – meaning we can, and in my opinion *should*, always strive to dig deeper into the treasure chests of old-style Karate techniques now and then to uncover those precious, lost, gems with the potential of making us bona fide [Karate Nerds™](#).

*Agree?*

**Well, allow me to help then.**

Today, I thought I would take you along for a brief journey through Karate history, by exploring the writings of [Funakoshi Gichin](#) sensei (legendary founder of [Shotokan Karate](#)), as we take a plunge into his historical outline of **nine lost throwing techniques of traditional Karate** (*'nage-waza'*).

Obviously, these techniques weren't really “lost” during Funakoshi's time; in fact, many of his peers (including pioneers like Chojun Miyagi, Mabuni Kenwa, Taira Shinken, Motobu Choki, Konishi Yasuhiro etc.) repeatedly demonstrated similar ‘exotic’ techniques in their writings – it is only quite recently they have begun to disappear from dojos around the world as punch-kick Karate is steadily taking the center stage of worldwide Karate attention.

*Nevertheless, in ye olde days Karate was far more than that.*

**As you'll see in a minute.**

But before we get to the juicy stuff, I want to take a minute to let you know that you shouldn't be discouraged by this post if you happen to be totally uninterested in Funakoshi sensei, or even his brainchild of Shotokan Karate. You see, this post has nothing to do with styles, dojos, teachers, associations or organizations. Old-school (Okinawan) Karate was historically far too eclectic to be bound by such dogmatic minutiae; as it was unofficially only governed by one very simple creed:

If something works, use it.

This highly *organic* (not to mention *practical*) mindset was what made original Karate such a diverse and interesting mix (known in the Okinawan language as “*champuruu*”) of techniques and methods – whether quirky or not – and is what personally interests me as I gradually keep uncovering more and more of the ‘lost’ sides of Karate in my own journey towards the summit of Mt. Karate.

**A journey I happily keep sharing with you guys.**

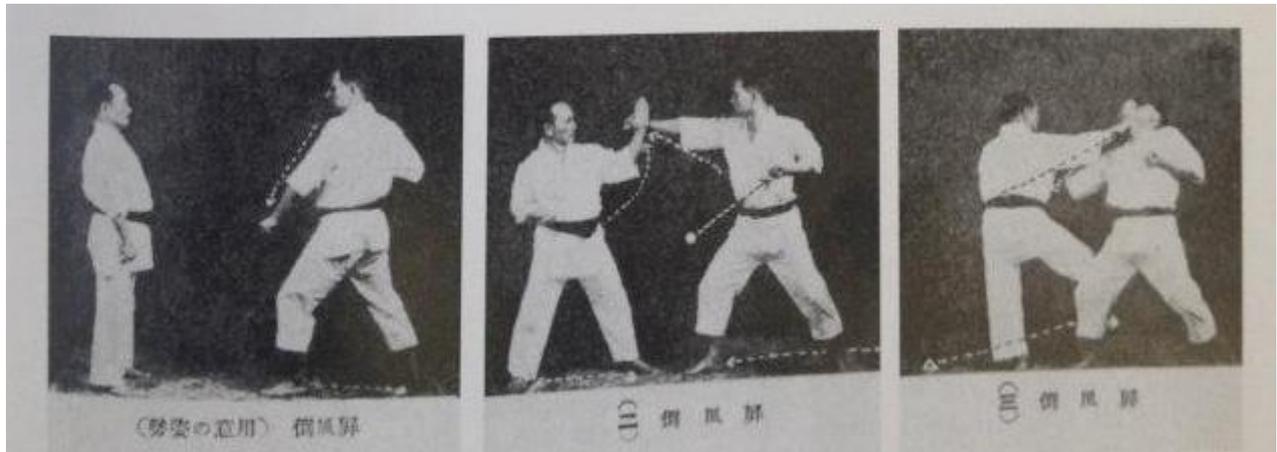
*But, as always, I digress.*

Still, the good thing is, today there's no need for the average Karate-ka to travel around half the globe just to get a taste of such forgotten practices, because – *tadaa* – we have books (and awesome blogs). More specifically; books, documents and articles written by various old-school Karate experts. *Such as Funakoshi Gichin.*

And now, with those words, allow me to finally present to you ‘*The 9 Lost Throws of Funakoshi Gichin: Karate’s Forgotten Takedown Techniques*’.

Here we go:

## #1. Byobu Daoshi: ‘Topple a Folding Screen’



As personally demonstrated above in his groundbreaking work *Karatedo Kyohan*, the first of these nine throws by Funakoshi sensei is called *byobu daoshi*.

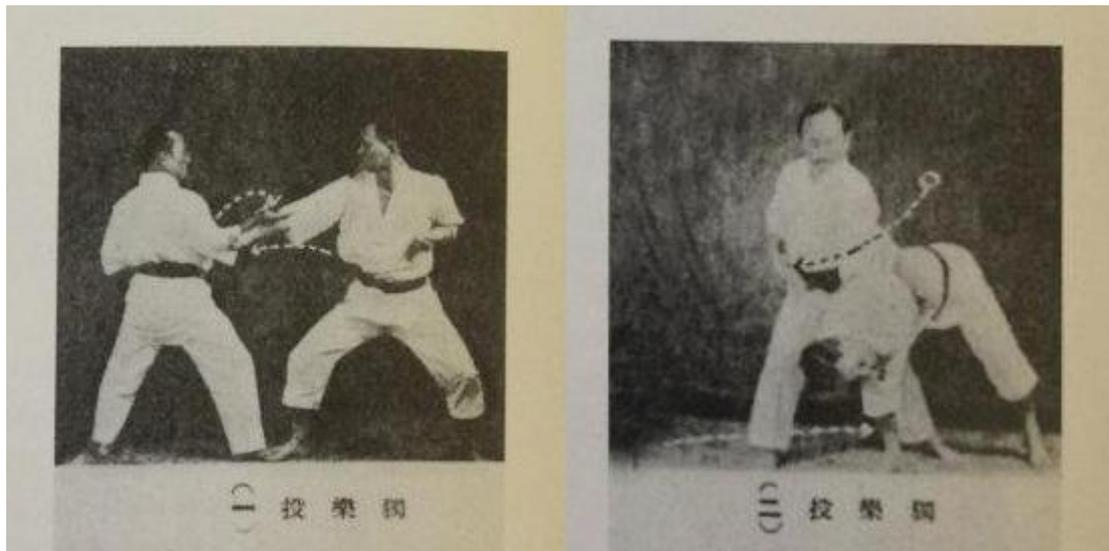
[Byobu](#) literally means a traditional *folding screen*, super common in Japanese society for dividing rooms and private spaces, while *daoshi* (*taoshi*) simply means to knock over, or topple, something.

Hence, as shown by Funakoshi sensei above, when the high punch (*jodan-zuki*) flies towards your face, slide back and block it with your open front hand, and proceed by quickly grabbing the attacking wrist with your blocking hand while forcefully grabbing the chin/throat of your opponent with your free hand.

Then, swiftly step forward and trip the opponent backwards over your leg (similar to Judo’s *osotogari* throw) and the throw is finished.

*Sweet, simple and slightly brutal – just like it should be.*

## #2. Koma Nage: ‘Spinning Top Throw’



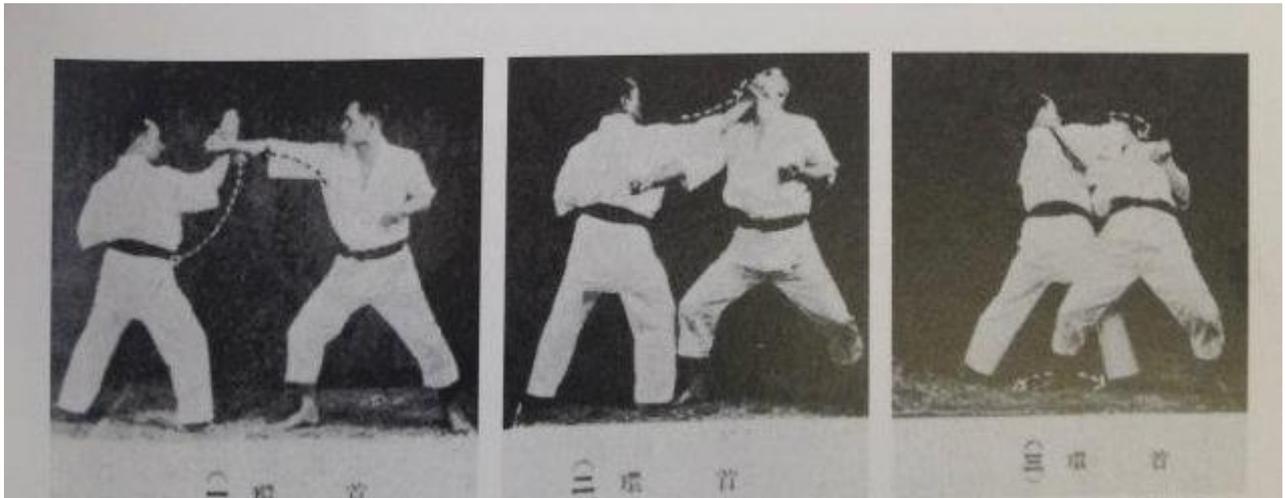
In this next throw, Funakoshi sensei beautifully marries a popular bunkai move from Tekki/Naihanchin kata with the *ju-no-ri* principle so common in Aikido, Ju-jutsu and Judo (and high-level Karate, of course).

As your opponent steps in with a middle punch (*chudan-zuki*), slide back and block the strike with a dropping block (*otoshi-uke*) from the *outside* this time. Immediately grab your opponent's wrist with your blocking hand, pulling it strongly down to your hip, as you step forward with your leg slightly behind your opponent, placing your free hand on his elbow joint as leverage, effortlessly spinning him around and down to the ground.

The key to really making *koma nage* work is to utilize the opponent's incoming force, executing the whole takedown in one smooth motion.

Think "*Aikido*".

### #3. Kubi Wa: ‘Neck Ring’



This throw starts out in a fashion similar to both of the previous throws.

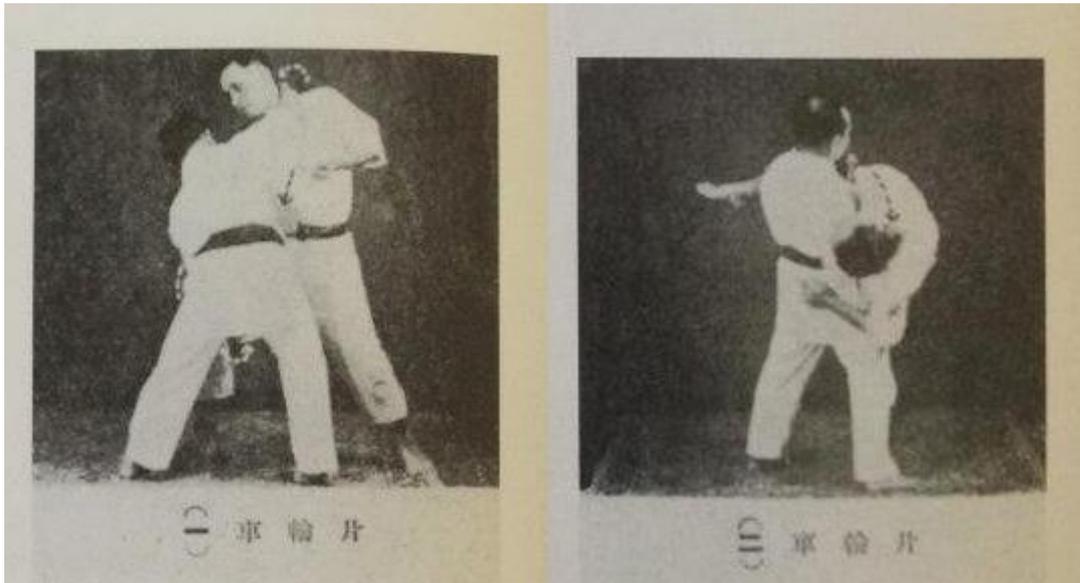
As your opponent steps forward with a high punch towards your face (*jodan-zuki*), slide to the outside again as in the second throw, but block high with your front hand as in the first throw.

Quickly slide forward (*yori-ashi*) past the outside of your opponent's attacking arm, striking him on the chin with your open hand (*shotei-uchi*). Then, as your opponent flinches, promptly step in behind his front leg (*fumi-komi*) and circle your outstretched arm behind your opponent's neck, hugging it tight as you bring him down, simultaneously pushing with your free hand at the small of his back to increase the effectiveness.

Interestingly enough, some of the MMA fighters from my academy use a similar technique quite often – with much success.

*Works like a charm.*

## #4. Katawa Guruma: ‘Cripple Wheel’



The *katawa guruma*, or cripple wheel (similar versions are also known as *Fireman's Carry*) is a quite popular move in many fighting traditions that involve throws (like Judo, Greco-Roman Wrestling, Shuao Jiao etc.).

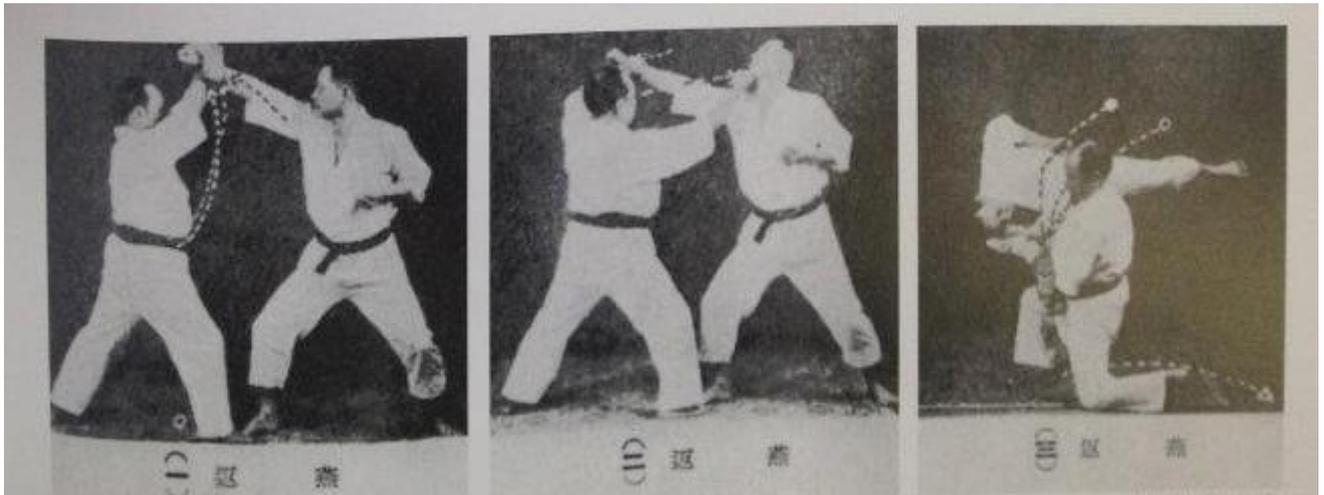
In this case, begin exactly like in thrown #2 (*Koma Nage: 'Spinning Top Throw'*), by sliding back to the outside and blocking (*ura-te*) your opponent's feeble attempt at crushing your solar-plexus (with a *chudan-zuki*). Next, move forcefully straight towards your opponent and wedge the attacking arm between the two of you, as you smoothly slide your blocking arm up and grab behind the neck of your opponent (here's where the above images start to make sense).

Now, with your free hand, reach down between your opponent's legs and seize his dumplings (or just grab a hold of his thigh), lifting up as high as possible while you pull his neck down to your right backside.

Naturally, you'll recognize this exact move from several kata (like Kusanku/Kanku Dai, Passai/Bassai Dai, Unsu/Unshu etc.)

*Just as with all of these techniques.*

## #5. Tsubame Gaeshi: ‘Swallow Reversal’



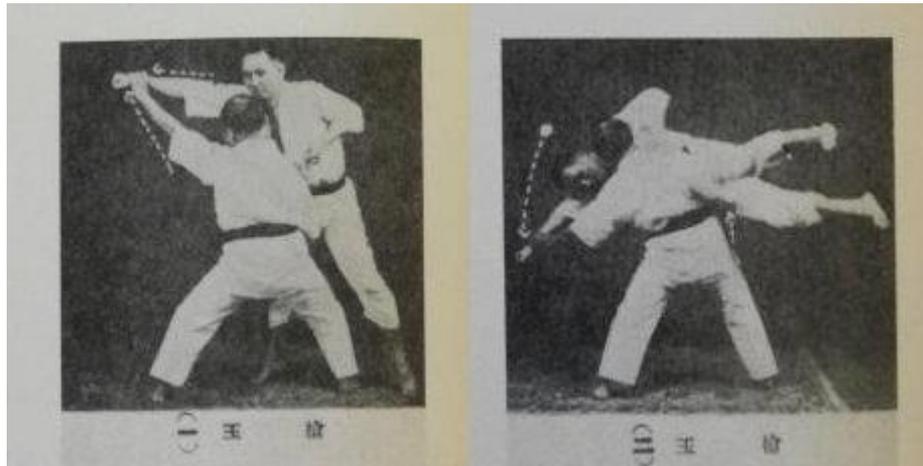
Funakoshi sensei was known for letting his poetic side shine through when naming techniques and kata on more than one occasion – this move is no exception.

To perform the *tsubame* (lit. *swallow*, yes, the bird) *gaeshi*, step back and perform a rising cross block (*juji-uke/hasami-uke*) with open hands to deflect your opponent's high punch (*jodan-zuki*), and immediately grab the attacking arm from the inside, striking to your opponent's jaw with a vicious backfist (*ura-ken*) strike.

Then (here's the tricky part); move towards your punch-drunk opponent in a circular fashion, spinning around while at the same time dropping down to one knee, as you drag your opponent to the ground by twisting his arm around, pulling your hands to your hip.

*Just like a swallow landing in its nest...*

## #6. Yari Dama: ‘Spearing Through’



In yet another throw that puts your opponent's testicular fortitude to the test, your opponent tries to punch you in the mouth again as you slide back and block the punch with your open front hand from the inside (*shuto-uke*) – just like in the first throw (*byobu daoshi*).

As always, immediately proceed by grabbing your opponent's attacking wrist with your blocking hand, and then take a big step forward into a deep sumo stance (*"but Jesse-san, that looks impossible, we don't have shiko-dachi in Shotokan!"*) and slam your free hand into your opponent's crown jewels. Laugh at your opponent's newfound vocal range (*note: if he didn't turn into an opera singer after that last move, he's probably not a "he"*), as you then slide forward even deeper and finally finish the throw by pulling down to your left (on the arm), while lifting up strongly from below.

The main principle is very similar to the *kata guruma* (#4).

## #7. Tani Otoshi: ‘Valley Drop’

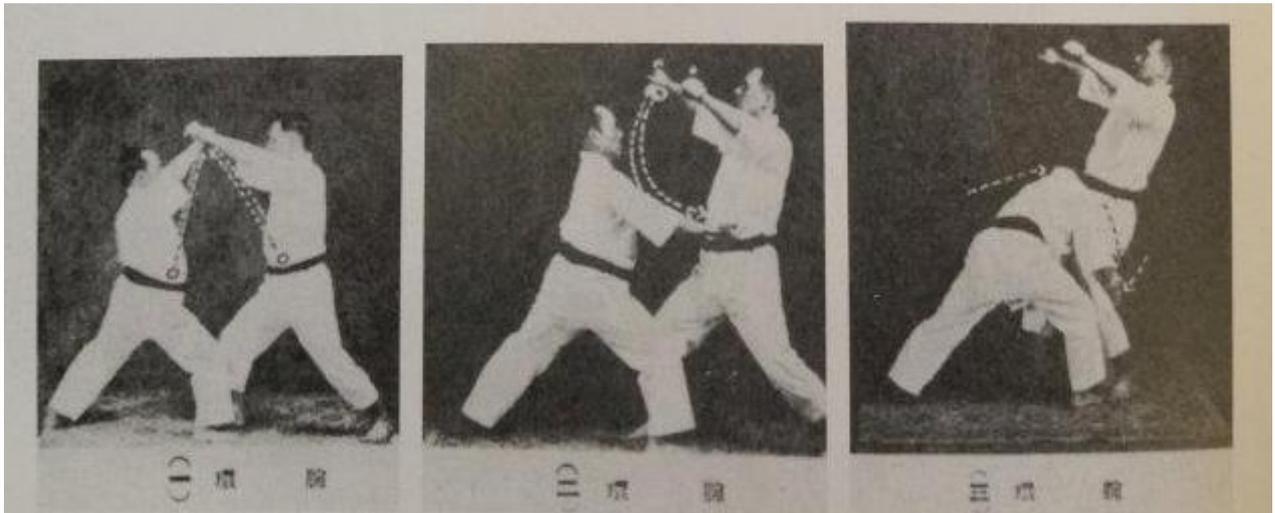


Although *tani otoshi* is one of the most common moves in competitive Judo nowadays, this throw by Funakoshi sensei more resembles the modern-day version of *seoi-nage* (albeit with a slightly broader stance) than anything else.

As your opponent lunges forward with a punch to your midsection, step back with your right leg and parry the blow with your front hand, immediately grabbing the attacking arm and pulling it to your side (the [real meaning](#) of *hikite*) while you execute a swift counter strike to your opponent's soft spot. As your opponent flinches (if you haven't figured it out by now; the purpose of these numerous disruptive strikes (*atemi-waza*) is to take advantage of your opponent's a natural flinch response, or elicit a pain withdrawal reflex, thereby setting up the subsequent takedown), step forward and swing your attacking arm under your opponent's outstretched arm, spin around and throw him over your shoulder to the ground.

Finish off by threatening to end his misery, as suggested by the last picture.

## #8. Ude Wa: 'Arm Ring'



To demonstrate that these throws work when defending from attacks *other* than straight lunging punches, in this *ude wa* technique Funakoshi sensei defends against a double handed lapel grab/choke/push/punch instead.

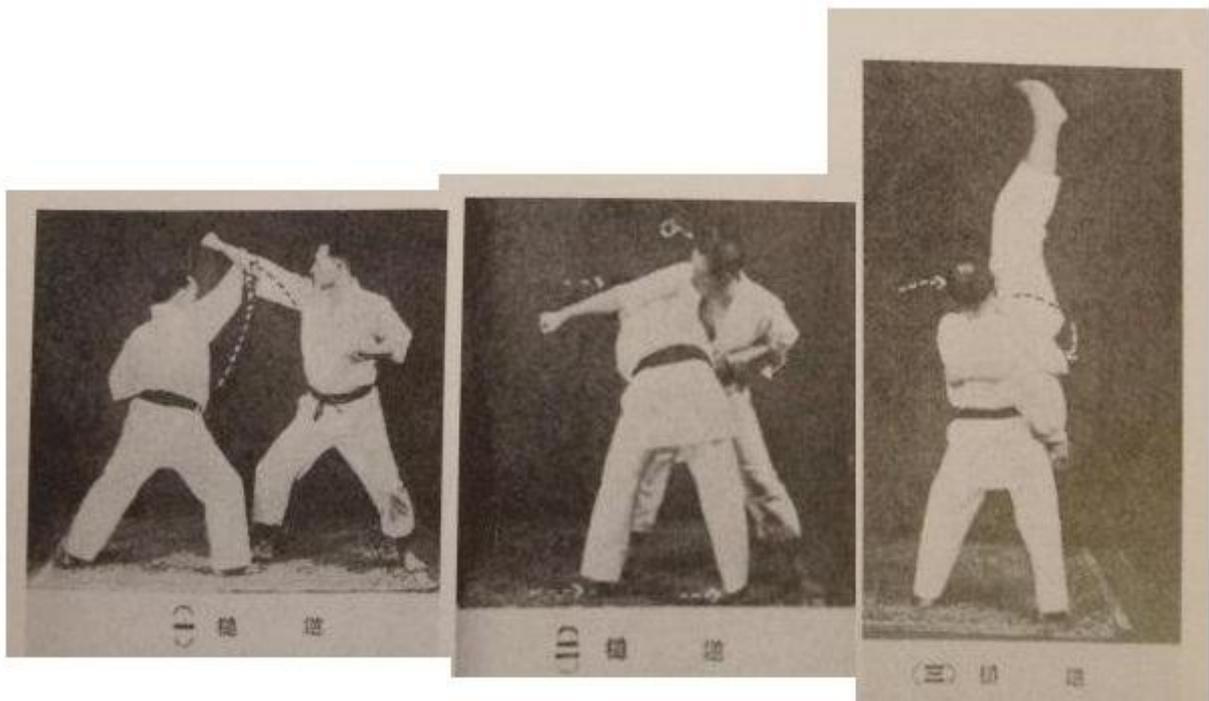
As your opponent approaches you with both arms outstretched, quickly deflect them upwards and immediately sink into your opponent with double horizontal hammerfist strikes against the midsection (I recommend aiming for the cartilaginous medial portions of the ribs, since they break the easiest). As your opponent gasps for air, lean down and hug his legs tightly while pushing strongly against his hip bone with your shoulder, swinging his legs past yourself and dumping him on the ground.

A perfect example of the [four principles of Quan-fa](#), by the way.

When you try this in the dojo, make sure your partner really knows his breakfalls (*ukemi*), or else there might be a nasty neck injury on the schedule.

*Also, do I even have to mention what [kata](#) this bunkai is from?*

## #9. Gyaku Tsuchi: ‘Reverse Sledgehammer’



And lastly, my all-time personal favorite old-school Karate throw: *the reverse sledgehammer*.

Or, as pro wrestlers call it nowadays; the [piledriver](#).

As your opponent desperately tries to attack you again (for the ninth time in a row now!) deflect his high punch (*jodan-zuki*) by stepping back with a rising block (*age-uke*). Quickly slide forward on the outside of your opponent's attack, reaching around his upper back with your blocking hand as your free hand slides in front of his belly. Now flip him over, laugh manically for a couple of seconds and finish off by dumping him on his head (either by simply releasing the grip or sitting down yourself).

---

**And that's it.**

Nine classic (yet unorthodox by today's standards) Karate throws that you've probably never had the chance of practising/seeing (until today!) – straight from the horse's mouth.

*Feel free to try them out during your next Karate class!*

**In the meantime, I want to know what you think of Karate throws in general?**

Are they really that useful? Do we even need them? Can they actually be performed by a weaker person (which, after all, is a prerequisite for any effective Karate technique)?

Let me know what you think in the comment section.

*Then go throw somebody!*