3-Tigers Martial Arts Weapons

Weapons For Beginning Level:

**Ssahng Jeol Bong - (Nunchucks)**

The Ssahng Jeol Bong is comprised of two short sticks connected by rope or chain. It can be practiced as a single or double weapon and is admired for its speed and complex twirls. Consistent practice with the Ssahng Jeol Bong develops coordination & dexterity as well as conditions upper body muscles, especially the muscles of the arms and shoulders.

The *Ssahng Jeol Bong (Korean)*, also known as the *Nunchaku (Japanese)* is a traditional Okinawan weapon. Often called a *Chul Te or Dur Ree Ge*, it worked very similarly to a mace. The length of the longer shaft allowed the warrior to stay at a safer distance from his opponent and would also aid in the generation of power in a strike. As peace time prevailed, the warriors, with little to do but train, fashioned the *Cuhl Te* into smaller versions creating the design we are familiar with today.

**Foam Weapon** - A foam weapon, (also known as a boffer or latex weapon), is a padded weapon used for simulated combat. Such weapons are used in simulated battles called "boffer wars" and in some live action role-playing games (LARPs).

In the United States the term *boffer* is used for all foam weapons, and combat with foam weapons is usually referred to as *boffing* or *boffering*. In Europe and the UK, the terms *latex weapon* and *LARP-safe weapon* are more common, and combat is usually referred to as *LARP combat*.

The primary concern in designing a foam weapon is safety; a pulled blow with a foam weapon should not hurt the target, and in systems that allow it, even a full-strength blow should not cause injury. Combatants who consistently fail to pull their blows are liable to be ejected from an event, or at least pulled out of the fighting for safety reasons. The weapon should be durable, to withstand the stresses of combat.

A secondary issue is aesthetics; often, a foam weapon is designed to look something like a real weapon such as a sword or an axe, sometimes with detailed adornment. The weighting and balance of a foam weapon can also affect how easy it is to use in combat.

Normally there are several main features of a foam weapon: A core, padding, thrusting tips, various forms of functional and artistic flourishes, and an outer coating or shell.

**Bo Staff**, The *Jahng Bong (Korean)* was used in daily domestic chores and doubled as an effective weapon against larger or multiple opponents at increased range. The Jahng Bong uses leverage to generate powerful
strikes the proper execution of which increases upper body and core strength. (The Jahng Bong, is essentially a leaver, a slight motion by the user results in a faster, more forceful motion at the tip; thus enabling long-range crushing and sweeping strikes.) The Jahng Bong, may also be used for thrusting strikes and for joint-locks.

The Eighth degree black belt Master G. K. Lee says of the Jahng Bong, “Personally, I think this is one of the most beautiful weapons to watch or use. The combination of strength and skill needed to make it a truly effective weapon makes it one of the most respected of all weapons”.

One of the five systemized weapons developed by Okinawan pioneers of Karate, the bo is the Japanese name for a wooden staff approximately five foot in length (six foot in Okinawa). The bo was used by bushi (military warriors), priests and peasants alike. The beauty of this weapon was in enabling one to disarm a swordsman while remaining at a safe distance. The bo's practical origins stem from poles balanced across the shoulders to carry buckets of water. In fighting application it allows blocking and striking against a range of weapons. Still one of the most popular weapons of budo, the bo is commonly used in kata and demonstrations. It is also beneficial for improving balance and upper-body strength.

**Escrima, Arnis & Kali** refer to a class of Filipino martial arts that emphasize weapon-based fighting with sticks, blades and improvised weapons. Although training starts with weapons, empty hand techniques, trapping and limb destruction are also core parts of these arts as the weapon is considered merely an extension of the body. *Eskrima* and *Arnis* are the most common among the many names often used in the Philippines today to refer to these arts.

The teaching of the basic skills in Eskrima are traditionally simplified. With limited time to teach intricate moves, only techniques that were proven effective in battle and could easily be taught en masse were used. This allowed villagers, generally not professional soldiers, a measure of protection against other villages, as well as foreign invaders. This philosophy of simplicity is still used today and is the underlying base of escrima. Because of this approach, escrima and the Filipino martial arts in general are often mistakenly considered to be "simple". However, this refers only to its systematization, not effectiveness. To the contrary, beyond the basic skills lies a very complex structure and a refined skill set that takes years to master.

Practitioners of the arts are called eskimador for those who call their art Escrima, arnisador for those who call theirs Arnis and kalista or mangangali for those who practice Kali.
**Weapons For Intermediate Level:**

**Sai** - *Kama Bo Nunte Sai*. The *sai* is a traditional Okinawan martial arts weapon. The basic form of the weapon is that of a pointed, dagger-shaped metal truncheon, with two curved prongs called *yoku* projecting from the handle. It is generally used in pairs.

A popular and highly recognizable weapon, the *sai* is a short, forklike metal weapon approximately 15 to 20 inches in length. The weapon consists of a shaft, pointed in front and tapered to a blunt lipped end, and two tines projecting forward from about a quarter of the distance from the end of the shaft. The *sai* is believed to have originated from the pitchfork. Its traditional weapon applications include usage in various Karate stances and as a form of defense against sword attacks. It was also used to stab, trap block and punch, with practitioners carrying a *sai* in either hand and a spare attached to their belt. The weapon could also be thrown. The weapon immigrated to Okinawa and became one of the five systemized weapons of the early Karate developers. In its current application the *sai* is used as a training weapon (with dulled points) to test accuracy in striking and quick block-and-counter techniques.

According to Okinawan folklore, the *sai* began as an agricultural tool used to measure stalks, plow fields, plant rice, or to hold cart wheels in place. It may have also been an evolution from a pitchfork but evidence for this theory is limited. Before its arrival on Okinawa, the *sai* was already being used in several other Asian countries including India, Thailand, China, Vietnam and Malaysia.

Outside Okinawa, the *sai* is generally believed to have been designed as a weapon. Early evidence suggests Indonesia as the weapon’s point of origin where it is said to have been developed from the *trisula*. The word *trisula* itself can refer to both a long or short-handled trident. Because the *trisula* was created in South Asia,
another theory is that the sai originated in India and spread along with Hinduism and Buddhism. This is supported by the fact that the trisula is important as a Hindu-Buddhist symbol.

The sai eventually reached Japan in the form of the *jitte* or *jutte*, which has only a single prong. Both are truncheon-like weapons, used for striking and bludgeoning.

The sai is typically used in pairs, with one in each hand. Five kata are commonly taught, including two kihon kata. The style includes a variety of blocks, parries, strikes, and captures against attackers from all directions and height levels. Use of the point, knuckle and central bar is emphasized, as well as rapid grip changes for multiple strikes and blocks.

The sai's utility as a weapon is reflected in its distinctive shape. It is primarily used as a striking weapon for short jabs into the solar plexus but it also has many defensive techniques. With skill, the prongs could be used to trap or even fracture a katana's blade.

There are several different ways of wielding the sai, which give it the versatility to be used both lethally and non-lethally. One way to hold it is by gripping the handle with all of the fingers and pinching the thumb against the joint between the handle bar and the shaft. This allows one to manipulate the sai so that it can be pressed against the forearm and also help avoid getting the thumb caught in the handle when blocking an attack. The change is made by putting pressure on the thumbs and rotating the sai around until it is facing backwards and the index finger is aligned with the handle.

The knuckle end is good for concentrating the force of a punch, while the long shaft can be wielded to thrust at enemies, to serve as a protection for a blow to the forearm, or to stab as one would use a common dagger. In practice, some prefer to keep the index finger extended in alignment with the center shaft regardless of whether the knuckle end or the middle prong is exposed. The finger may be straight or slightly curled. Used in this way, the other fingers are kept on the main shaft, with the thumb supporting the handle.

The grips described above leverage the versatility of this implement as both an offensive and a defensive weapon. Both grips facilitate flipping between the point and the knuckle being exposed while the sai is held in strong grip positions.

**Bokken** - (or commonly as bokutō in Japan), is a Japanese wooden sword used for training. It is usually the size and shape of a *katana*, but sometimes shaped like other swords, such as the wakizashi and tantō.
The bokken is used as an inexpensive and safe substitute for a real sword in several martial arts such as kendo, aikido and kenjutsu.

Historically, bokken are as old as Japanese swords, and were used for the training of warriors. The bokken is a wooden training tool for those martial artists interested in learning the use of a sword. In Japan, the sword and the art of its use goes back before the times of written history. There are legends that tell of the mythical period of the gods concerning their use of swords.

Miyamoto Musashi, a kenjutsu master, was renowned for fighting fully armed foes with only one or two bokken. In a famous legend, he defeated Sasaki Kojiro with a bokken he had carved from an oar while traveling on a boat to the predetermined island for the duel.

- Tachi: Total length, approx. 102 cm; tsuka (handle) approx. 24 cm.
- Kodachi: Total length, approx. 55 cm; tsuka (handle) approx. 14 cm.

Additionally, various koryu (traditional Japanese martial arts) have their own distinct styles of bokken which can vary slightly in length, tip shape, or in whether or not a tsuba (hilt guard) is used.

Kama - The Sahn Knat or Kama are traditional farming implements similar to a sickle or small scythe used for reaping crops and also employed as a weapon. Before being used in martial arts, the Sahn Knat was widely used to cut crops. The Sahn Knat is a formidable weapon. As a weapon, both the point and sharpened edge of the metal blade are called in to use, while the Sahn Knat could also be used to block, trap and disarm weapons used against the wielder. The hard edge of the Sahn Knat blade would traditionally be kept razor-sharp to enable efficient cutting of crops, which made it a lethal weapon in the right hands, though this is sometimes a cause of training accidents by unskilled wielders, for whom blunt training versions of the weapon are created. It is also a popular modern forms competition weapon.

Okinawan peasants used the kama as a fighting blade. For great reach they attached a chain to the base of the sickle to develop a form of the weapon known as kusarigama. The kama is used either singly or in pairs, one in each hand, for close-range combat. It is employed to slash, hook, rake, chop, deflect or block. The kama has a short blade set perpendicular to a hardwood handle. Modern day kama use is primarily restricted to kata and demonstrations. The kata include several circular movements that improve blocking and countering techniques.

There are only two registered forms in Japan in modern day. They are called Kanigawa and Tozan. The forms today in martial arts classrooms have little or nothing to do with the techniques used in past battle forms.
**Weapons For Advanced Level:**

**3-Section Staff** - The three-section staff is one of the most difficult and versatile weapons within Taekwondo. More prevalent in Northern Systems such as Kung Fu, the three-section staff can be used as both a close-quarters weapon, a trapping weapon and as a long-range flexible whip-like weapon.

![3-section staff](image)

This weapon is constructed from three pieces of wood connected by metal rings at their ends. Lengths of the sections are equal, each about the length of an arm. It can be used as a long range weapon when held at one end and swung freely, or a short-range weapon when two of the sections are held and used to strike or parry.

**Broadsword** - The broadsword is one of the most famous of Chinese weapons. It is used in many forms of Kung Fu. This sword was designed to cut, swing, blow, thrust and parry & is all manipulated through an intricate set of footwork patterns.

![Broadsword](image)

A **broadsword** is a sword with a blade that is heavy, straight, and usually double-edged. A single-edged weapon sharing the other characteristics of a broadsword is called a backsword.

It was a preferred armament in England for four centuries, beginning in the 17th century and continuing until the advent of firearms, although many different designs were used over that time, falling into various schemes of categorization by type of hilt. In its early days it had only a plain cross hilt, sometimes accompanied by an outer ring, and a double-edged blade; it was then used for attack only, the wielder employing a buckler for defense. As use of the buckler declined due to the inconvenience of carrying it, techniques were developed for defensive use of the broadsword.

**Straight Sword, Jian** - The **jian** is a double-edged straight sword used during the last 2,500 years in China. In Chinese folklore, it is known as "The Gentleman of Weapons" and is considered one of the four major weapons, along with the Gun (staff), Qiang (spear), and the Dao (sabre).
A guard or hilt protects the hand from an opposing blade. The shape of the guard can be described as short wings pointing either forward or backward. The longer two-handed handle could be used as a lever to lock the opponent's arm if necessary. Grips are usually of fluted wood or covered in rayskin, with a minority being wrapped with cord.

The end of the handle was finished with a pommel for balance, to prevent the handle from sliding through the hand if the hand's grip should be loosened, and for striking or trapping the opponent as opportunity required - such as in "withdrawing" techniques. The pommel was historically peened onto the tang of the blade; thereby holding together as one solid unit the blade, guard, handle, and pommel. Most jian of the last century or so are assembled with a threaded tang onto which the pommel or pommel-nut is screwed.

Sometimes a tassel is attached to the hilt. During the Ming Dynasty these were usually passed through an openwork pommel, and in the Qing through a hole in the grip itself; modern swords usually attach the tassel to the end of the pommel. Historically these were likely used as lanyards, allowing the wielder to retain the sword in combat. There are some sword forms which utilize the tassel as an integral part of their swordsmanship style (sometimes offensively), while other schools dispense with sword tassels entirely. The movement of the tassel may have served to distract opponents, and some schools further claim that metal wires or thin silk cords were once worked into the tassels for impairing vision and causing bleeding when swept across the face. The tassel's use now is primarily decorative.

The blade itself is customarily divided into three sections for leverage in different offensive and defensive techniques. The tip of the blade is the jiànfeng, meant for stabbing, slashing, and quick percussive cuts. The jiànfeng typically curves smoothly to a point, though in the Ming period sharply angled points were common. Some antiques have rounded points, though these are likely the result of wear. The middle section is the zhongren or middle edge, and is used for a variety of offensive and defensive actions: cleaving cuts, draw cuts, and deflections. The section of blade closest to the guard is called the jiàngen or root, and is mainly used for defensive actions; on some late period jian, the base of the blade was made into an unsharpened ricasso. These sections are not necessarily of the same length, with the jiànfeng being only three or four inches long.

In martial art schools wooden swords are used for training. In some religious Taoist sects, those wooden practice swords have come to have an esoteric ritual purpose, claimed by some to metaphorically represent the discipline of an accomplished student.

Though there is significant variation in length, balance, and weight of the jian from different periods, within any given period the general purpose of the jian is to be a multipurpose cut and thrust weapon capable of stabbing, as well as making both precise cuts and slashes, as opposed to specializing in one form of use. Although the many forms and schools of swordsmanship with the jian vary as well, the general purpose and use is still not lost.
Historical *jian* wielders would engage in test cutting called *shizhan*, practicing their skills on targets known as *caoren*, or "grass men". Such targets were made from bamboo, rice straw, or saplings. This practice was similar to the Japanese art of tameshigiri, but was never formalized to the extent that the latter art was.

Today many Chinese martial arts such as *taijiquan* and their martial artists still train extensively with *jian* and expertise in its techniques is said by many of them to be the highest physical expression of their kung fu. However, most *jian* today are flexible tai-chi or wushu *jian* used mainly for ceremonial purposes and not for actual combat. Famous *jian* forms include San Cai *Jian* and Kun Wu *Jian*.

**Spear** - The spear was arguably the first military weapon. Known as the *jyang*, spears fall into several categories pertaining to their use defensively or offensively. The spear is traditionally referred to as the “king of weapons” and thus there are many forms of it. We will be working with the regular spear.

**Rope Dart** - The rope dart or rope javelin, also known as Jōhyō in Japanese, is one of the flexible weapons in Chinese martial arts. Other weapons in this family include the meteor hammer, flying claws, and chain whip. Although the flexible weapons share similar movements, each weapon has its own specific techniques.

The rope dart is a long rope (usually 10'-16') with a metal dart attached to one end. This was a weapon from ancient times, which allows the user to throw the dart out at a long range target and use the rope to pull it back. The rope dart can be used for twining, binding, circling, hitting, piercing, tightening, and other techniques.

Rope dart play consists of twining, shooting, and retrieval. Twining and shooting can be done from any joint such as foot, knee, elbow, and neck. The rope is anchored on the left hand and played primarily with the right hand.

Skillful use of the rope dart can easily trick an opponent because the dart can shoot out very suddenly.
**Chain Whip** - The chain whip is a weapon used in some Asian martial arts, including Chinese martial arts, in addition to modern and traditional wushu. It consists of several metal rods, which are joined end-to-end by rings to form a flexible chain. Generally, the whip has a handle at one end and a metal dart, used for slashing or piercing an opponent, at the other. A cloth flag is often attached at or near the dart end of the whip, and a second flag may cover the whip's handle. The flag or flags enhance a wushu performance by adding visual appeal, and by producing a rushing sound as the whip swings through the air. They also help stabilize the whip, enhancing the performer's control. This reduces the performer's risk of inadvertently striking himself/herself.

The chain whip is heavy but flexible, allowing it to be literally used as a whip to hit, hook and bind an opponent, restrict his/her movement, and to deflect blows from other weapons. The dart is used for slashing or piercing an opponent. In some cases, the dart might be coated with a poison. Because the whip is flexible, it can be used to strike around obstacles, including an opponent's block. The whip chain can be folded and hidden from view, making it an easy weapon to carry and conceal.

Chain whip forms are often extremely elaborate. In some, the chain whip is thrown in the air and caught, flicked around the neck, or flung around underneath a recumbent performer. One classic technique, used to accelerate a spinning chain whip, involves rapidly wrapping and unwrapping the length of the chain around various parts of the body, including the legs, neck and elbows. Various twisting or flicking motions cause the chain whip to gain momentum as it unwraps. Chain whip techniques may be combined with jumping kicks and other acrobatics. Double chain whip forms have been developed, as have forms in which a chain whip is coupled with a broadsword.

As with all weapons that are either chained or tied together, the whip chain is hard to control without practice. In fact, it is harder to control than a traditional rawhide or bull whip because the linked sections provide looser joints while a bull whip is a continuous piece. The chain whip is sometimes considered one of the hardest weapons in martial arts to apply in combat, simply because the wielder's sole focus of control of the overall weapon is through the handle.

**Bullwhip** - A bullwhip is a single-tailed whip, usually made of braided leather, which was originally used as a tool for working with livestock.

Very versatile, frightening, and effective if used properly. Can disarm, wound, strangle, or be used for other purposes. Can go all over the place or be grabbed by the end and taken away if user is inexperienced.

A whip is at its most dangerous at the moment it cracks, and it is usually fully extended when this happens. For a short whip the danger zone is between four and six feet (1.2m. to 1.8m.) from the whip handler. If you are facing an opponent with a short whip in a fight, you have two options. You can run away, or you can move closer and attempt to punch, kick or grapple with the whip handler. If you are closer than four feet (1.2m), you are too close to be easily hit by the cracking end of a whip, but watch out for a quick flip or a switch to the other hand to turn that whip into a blackjack.
Short whip fighters will usually retreat from someone who tries to grapple with them, while dealing quick stinging blows aimed at both sides of the head and torso. When a blow connects and the pain distracts the opponent, the whip handler can then reverse the whip and use the handle for a disabling blow.

The best cracks to use for short whip fighting are variations of the sidearm and overhand flick. A whip handler should avoid moves like the forward crack, which have a long setup and thus telegraph her intentions to an opponent. Strokes may alternate from the left and right hand sides or stay on the same side of the body. In either case, the follow through from one stroke must be the setup for the next. The whip should be continually moving in ever changing unpredictable vertical and diagonal planes. Moves in a pure horizontal plane should be avoided unless the whip is very stiff, as the follow through may wrap around and hit the whip handler on the back. Even if the whip is not travelling fast enough to be painful at this point it takes too long to reverse the motion and bring the whip back to fighting mode, and it is quite undignified.

The basic exercises you should practice if you want to defend yourself with a short whip are the continuous overhand flick on both sides of your body, and the X pattern. Then, by switching from one pattern to another and varying angles and timing you can create an intimidating defensive screen of fast moving leather.

One way that a whip fighter can prevent someone moving inside the danger zone is to use a knife in the other hand. Whip and knife techniques are taught in Filipino martial arts such as Kali. One form of whip traditionally used was the buntot pagi or tail of a stingray! The poison was left in the sting making this a particularly vicious weapon.

Glossary of whip terms:

**Belly** - Is the insides of the whip. This is the most important part of the whip. It is what gives the whip its density. If this part of the whip is not made correctly the whip will not be good. A whip is only as good as its belly. No matter what it looks like on the outside.

**Double Plaited Belly** - A "Double Plaited Belly" starts with a rolled or plaited core. Then plaited layer #1 and a "bolster" is added. Over top of that another plaited layer with a higher number of laces and another bolster. This whip within a whip design forms the "double plaited belly" of the bullwhip.

**Bolster** - A "bolster" is a precisely fitted and tapered strip of leather that wraps around the belly of a whip.

**Overlay** - The "overlay" or outer layer of laces that is plaited over the belly. *It's the layer you see.*

**Fall** - This is the removable piece of un-braided leather that is attached to the end of the fall on bullwhips, snake whips, and stock whips. It is where the cracker/popper is tied on.

**Handle** - On a bullwhip or stock whip this is the solid part of the whip you hold on to. On a snake whip or signal whip it is still the place you hold on to but it is flexible and usually is plaited with a single diamond plait.
**Popper/Cracker** - The part of the whip that makes the sound on the whip. On bullwhips, stock whips and snake whips it is attached to the fall and can be easily replaced. On a signal whip it is braided in and has to be replaced by a whip maker.

**Wrist Loop** - A braided loop usually attached to the heel knot typically on signal whips and snake whips.

**Heel Knot** - The knot at the end of the handle.

**Junction Knot** - The knot that separates the thong and the handle on a bullwhip.

**Keeper** - The loop of leather on a stock whip that the thong is attached to. This is also on the same as the keeper on the stock whip thong.

**Fall Keeper Knot** - The knot that holds the fall onto the thong of the whip usually it consists of several overhand knots however some whip makers use a very intricate knot called snake head knot.

**Wrap** - This is when the fall of the whip and in some cases the thong wraps around an object like a tree or someone's arm or body.

**Cutting** - Usually having to do with cutting targets like sheets of newspaper or other targets.

**Plait** - Pronounced "plat" not "plate". The term whip makers use for braiding. It means the same thing. It is also the term used to describe the number of lace i.e.; 4 plait, 8 plait, 12 plait, 16 plait etc.

**Four Seam Plait** - Also called a whip makers braid/plait. It is a braid consisting of four seams as opposed to a herring bone plait which consists of eight seams. It is the most common type of plait used on the thong of the whip.

**Red Hide** - An Alum tanned hide used for falls. In the US it is called Latigo.

**White Hide** - Partially tanned rawhide used for falls. Usually those found in Australia.

**Tonfa** - The tonfa's circular motion allows rotating strikes as a weapon, with the side of the tonfa used for blocks and the ends for thrusts. Traditionally two tonfa were often used simultaneously and were very efficient against armed assailants. In modern Karate training the tonfa aids development of block-and-strike strategies and upper-body strength.

The tonfa also known as tong fa or tuifa, is an Okinawan weapon. It was traditionally made from red oak and wielded in pairs. A similar weapon called the *mae sun sawk* is used in krabi krabong.
The origin of the tonfa is debated, but experts believe it originated in either China or Indonesia. It is used in both Southeast Asian and Chinese martial arts and was probably brought to Okinawa through their influence. The Chinese believe it was developed from a crutch, but Okinawan folklore holds that during the reign of the ruler Shō Shin, restrictions were placed on the use of weaponry in order to stabilize the country after a period of civil war. This restriction is said to have favored the development of unconventional agricultural tools as weapons of self-defense. In this context, it is said that the tonfa was developed from a wooden handle of a millstone, a common agricultural implement. In modern times, the tonfa was the basis for the police baton but their combat application is different. It was first used for rice grinding.

The tonfa can be gripped by the short perpendicular handle or by the longer main shaft. In defense, if the handle is grasped then the shaft protects the forearm and hand while the knob protects the thumb. If both ends of the shaft are held, the shaft can be used to ward off blows and the handle can be used as a hook to catch the opponent's weapons.

In offense, one can swing the shaft to strike the target. Large amounts of momentum can be imparted to the shaft by twirling the tonfa by the handle. The tonfa can also be wielded in such a way as to use the knob as a striking implement, held either by the handle or by the shaft. One can also stab opponents with the shaft of the tonfa. By holding the shaft and the handle of the tonfa together, one can use it for holding or breaking techniques.

Tonfa are traditionally wielded in pairs, one in each hand. This is unlike police nightsticks, which are generally used alone. As the tonfa can be held in many different ways, education in the use of the tonfa often involves learning how to switch between different grips at high speed. Such techniques require great manual dexterity. As with all Okinawan weapons, many of the forms are reflective of karate techniques.

**Fan, Korean fighting fan** (Korean: mu puche, from buchae, "fan") is a martial arts weapon spawned during the early Joseon Dynasty as a weapon of opportunity. Swords and similar edged weapons were banned during this time which created a need for weapons that could be held in plain sight without arousing suspicion. Most popular among the middle class and upper class, the fan became an option.

Craftsmen discovered a method of taking the "pak dahl" wood, an extremely resilient birch tree that thrived in the ice storms and harsh seasons of Korea's mountain peninsula, and tempering to a hardness that could resist edged weapons typical of the era.

Following traditions of traditional weaponry, Korean Fans were often unique to their wielder and bore many possible combinations. Some wove flexible metal ribbons along the outer most edge for cutting power. Some preferred feathers that hid finger-sized razor blades which would rake upon striking. Others held variations of poisons or were used to conceal other weapons such as throwing blades which could be released in a spread upon snapping the fan open, a technique a few Kook Sul Won artists are said to practice. Poison fans often hid deadly to stunning concoctions in bladders or channels which would open upon spreading the fan, allowing the user to gently direct a gust of irritants and toxins at their opponent over short distances. Folklore and hearsay also suggests occasional traveling merchants trading with China possessed fans with small compartments in the vanes of the fan which held small explosive pellets that upon striking a surface would create a bright and dazzling flash of light, similar in concept to modern Chinese novelty fireworks.
A war fan is a fan designed for use in warfare. A number of war fans were used by the Samurai of feudal Japan, they varied in size, materials, shape and use.

One of the most significant, and perhaps most interesting, uses was as a signaling device. Signaling fans came in two varieties: #1 a real fan that has wood or metal ribs with lacquered paper attached to the ribs and a metal outer cover, #2 a solid open fan made from metal and or wood, very similar to the gunbai used today by sumo referees. The commander would raise or lower his fan and point in different ways to issue commands to the soldiers, which would then be passed on by other forms of visible and audible signaling. The art of fighting with war fans is tessenjutsu.

Types of war fans:

- **Gunsen** were folding fans used by the average warriors to cool themselves off. They were made of wood, bronze, brass or a similar metal for the inner spokes, and often used thin iron or other metals for the outer spokes or cover, making them lightweight but strong. Warriors would hang their fans from a variety of places, most typically from the belt or the breastplate, though the latter often impeded the use of a sword or a bow.

- **Tessen** were folding fans with outer spokes made of heavy plates of iron which were designed to look like normal, harmless folding fans or solid clubs shaped to look like a closed fan. Samurai could take these to places where swords or other overt weapons were not allowed, and some swordsmanship schools included training in the use of the tessen as a weapon. The tessen was also used for fend off arrows and darts, as a throwing weapon, and as an aid in swimming.

- **Gunbai (Gumbai) or Gunpai (Gumpai)** were large solid open fans that could be solid iron, metal with wooden core, or solid wood, which were carried by high-ranking officers. They were used to ward off arrows, as a sunshade, and to signal to troops.

**Wing Chun/Mook Jong** - Wing Chun was developed when several grandmasters of the Shaolin temple systemized the best parts of the Chinese martial arts, to form a martial art that was practical and faster to learn than the other styles. Wing Chun aims to deflect force in combat rather than meet force.

Wing Chun uses a center line theory that is based around attacking vital targets along a central line of the body. Wing Chun uses the wooden dummy to practice striking and blocking techniques. Wing Chun also uses a partner exercise called Chi Sao, where two partners practice various arm exercises together, to gain better reflexes and response to attacks.
**Cane** - The modern cane, made with self-defense in mind, is a powerful weapon that has practical application on a daily basis. It is not threatening, but is effective against attackers armed with bladed weapons or using their bare hands. Study of the cane provides excellent mental and physical discipline and develops balance, strength, smooth coordinated movement, and the ability to memorize physical combinations. For Asian martial arts practitioners, the cane is an excellent weapon to add as part of your study and provides an opening into developing a broader base of knowledge and skill as a martial artist.

**Katana** - The katana was the favored weapon of the samurai warrior and Japan's most widely used sword. It is a long, curved, single-edged sword with a blade a little over two feet long. The katana's hilt usually made of wood and covered with skin and silk cords, was removable. Drawn in a sky-to-ground manner, the katana was worn in the belt on the left side, edge upward. Employed as a thrusting weapon on horseback and foot, the katana was also used in competition and ritual deaths. Many katana's were crafted by master swordsmen whom kept their art a secret.

The authentic Japanese sword is made from a specialized Japanese steel called "Tamahagane" which consist of combinations of hard, high carbon steel and tough, low carbon steel. There are advantages and setbacks to both types of steel. High-carbon steel is harder and able to hold a sharper edge than low-carbon steel but it is more
brittle and may break in combat. Having a small amount of carbon will allow the steel to be more malleable, making it able to absorb impacts without breaking but becoming blunt in the process. The makers of a katana take advantage of the best attributes of both kinds of steel. This is done by a number of methods, most commonly by making a U-shaped piece of high-carbon steel (the outer edge) and placing a billet of low-carbon steel (the core) inside the U, then heating and hammering them into a single piece. Some sword-makers use four different pieces (a core, an edge, and two side pieces), and some even use as many as five.

The block of combined steel is heated and hammered over a period of several days, and then it is folded and hammered to squeeze the impurities out. Generally a katana is folded no more than sixteen times, then it is hammered into a basic sword shape. At this stage it is only slightly curved or may have no curve at all. The gentle curvature of a katana is attained by a process of quenching; the sword maker coats the blade with several layers of a wet clay slurry which is a special concoction unique to each sword maker, but generally it is composed of clay, water, and sometimes ash, grinding stone powder and/or rust. The edge of the blade is coated with a thinner layer than the sides and spine of the sword, then it is heated and then quenched in water (some sword makers use oil to quench the blade). The clay slurry provides heat insulation so that only the blade's edge will be hardened with quenching and it also causes the blade to curve due to reduced lattice strain along the spine. This process also creates the distinct swerving line down the center of the blade called the hamon which can only be seen after it is polished; each hamon is distinct and serves as a katana forger's signature.

The hardening of steel involves altering the microstructure or crystalline structure of that material through quenching it from a heat above 800 °C (1,472 °F) (bright red glow), ideally no higher than yellow hot. If cooled slowly, the material will break back down into iron and carbon and the molecular structure will return to its previous state. However, if cooled quickly, the steel's molecular structure is permanently altered. The reason for the formation of the curve in a properly hardened Japanese blade is that iron carbide, formed during heating and retained through quenching, has a lesser density than its root materials have separately.

After the blade is forged it is then sent to be polished. The polishing takes between one and three weeks. The polisher uses finer and finer grains of polishing stones until the blade has a mirror finish in a process called glazing. This makes the blade extremely sharp and reduces drag making it easier to cut with. The blade curvature also adds to the cutting power.

**Tanto (knife)** – The samurai wore the tanto either alone, or with the tachi (long sword). The tanto was used as a thrusting weapon in close combat, although it could also be thrown.

**Shuriken** – One of the most popular of weapons is also known as the ninja throwing star. Initially developed to provide a distraction and not a weapon of attack. Regardless of Hollywood magic, shurikens can injure but not penetrate deeply enough to kill. The most popular of shuriken styles come in four to twelve points per star.