

# Makiwara.

## By Jean-Maurice HUARD

Karate is taught alone, through trial and error; training at Dôjô is only a small part of the work; it is often limited to two-person work because it is the only opportunity to compete in combat; you will only get it out of the fruit if you have prepared it by a patient solitary study.

This is why practitioners of yesteryear have developed methods such as Katas or Makiwara.

You have noticed how solid and massive the blows of the elders and especially the masters are; it is often impossible to parry or even deflect them.

The secret of these blows is among other things in the work at Makiwara that breathes life into your fists.

This article is intended to explain how to manufacture and install your Makiwara.

## Manufacturing

Take a softwood board without a knot trap, which is at once resistant without being hard, flexible and elastic. In Japan, wood is used from a variety of cypresses called Hi no Ki, which is not found in Europe.

The dimensions that are available give an idea of the size of a Makiwara.

Its length is about twice the height of your Gyaku-Zuki; its width is that of your fist.

Its thickness depends on your experience, your punch habit, your level of training, your physical condition; it ranges from about 10-15 cm at the foot (the part of The Makiwara that will be sunk into the ground) to 2 or 3 cm for the head (the part of Makiwara on which you will hit).

The ideal is to plant several Makiwara of different thicknesses.

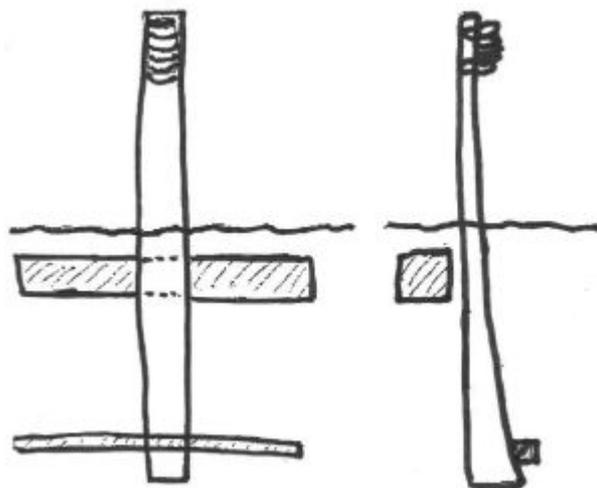
Ask the carpenter to whom you buy the piece of wood to cut it to the dimensions that suit you, but plan that you will have to trim your Makiwara yourself to the dimensions that suit you from experience; the best instrument to do this is a plane.

Finally, don't forget to treat the wood to make it waterproof and imputrescible (Carbonyl or tar or an eco-friendly product); the best is to let it soak several days in a bath of water repellent.

## Fixing

The Makiwara must be planted in the ground, in a place where you can move freely; a surface of 2 x 2m will do the trick. Dig a very wide hole (with your hands 50 cm) and half the length of the Makiwara. Slide your Makiwara into the ground. Add the following two pieces:

- in front of the Makiwara, in depth, a piece of wood that will fix it ;
- behind the Makiwara, near the surface of the ground, a large piece of wood that will be stopped.



## Protection

Protect your Makiwara from the elements:

Bring a plastic bag or large can (ask your baker for one) to protect him from the rain.

## Padding

The ideal padding is the one that best mimics the density of the human body. Attach a piece of doormat or straw rope (Wara) of rolled rice (Maku) several times to the top of the Makiwara where you hit.

## Training

Start very carefully: ten strokes a day, with each hand are enough for the first week. Strike without force, to get to know the Makiwara and tame your body's reactions.

If you get injured, which is inevitable at first, stop until the wounds are healed.

Start with Gyaku-Zuki and only slowly increase the number of repetitions and the strength of the blows. Think first of all about turning your hips.

The purpose of this training is to learn to resist the return of Makiwara; it is not to push it as far as possible, but to prevent it from coming back or throwing you back. The body learns on its own how to resist. So it is not in the least a matter of theory.

At first Gyaku-Zuki was studied; the ideal is to patiently manage to hit a hundred strokes of each hand every day, without injury.

One can also study other moves (Shuto, Haito, Enpi) but it is often necessary then to choose a Makiwara thick hands. For kicks, we use a completely different type of Makiwara, but this is a different story.

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