

On the Origins of Okazaki Seishirō’s Mind-Body Training (Part 2)

By George Arrington

In my previous article, I detailed one of the possible sources of the mind-body training that Prof. Henry Seishirō Okazaki went through in his early days of Jūjutsu practice. In that article, I posited that he was trained in at least part of the Ema Shiki Shin-Shin Tanren Hō 江間式心身鍛錬法, or the Ema-System of Mind-Body Forging. The Ema system utilized deep abdominal breathing, Hara Kokyū 腹呼吸 and the Kiai 氣合 to develop, as Okazaki wrote, “an iron-like body” within himself. In Ema’s 1922 book, there are several distinct examples that correspond to some of the Danzan-Ryū’s training methods. In one particularly interesting exercise that Ema shows is where he lies on his back, digs his heels into the floor and arches his back upwards. He even shows a young child doing this exercise while Ema stands on the child’s stomach, thus demonstrating “Herculean” strength.

In his Kodenkan Dōjō, Prof. Okazaki had his students do a set of warm-ups that were comprised of a set of fundamental calisthenics and exercises. In fact, one of these exercises, known as the **Goldfish Movement** resembled the position shown in the Ema book. In this particular exercise, the student digs their heels into the mat, puts their hands behind their head, arches their body up and sways their hips back and forth. The purpose of this exercise was to help correct the alignment of the spine.

The complete list of the exercises taught at the Kodenkan is shown below:

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--|
| 1. Sumo Stomp | 7. Breathing | 14. Pushing (for two persons) |
| 2. Pounding Chest | 8. Stretching | 15. Raising (for two persons) |
| 2A. Pounding Shoulders | 9. Windmill | 16. Backward Bend A&B |
| 3. Pounding Groin | 10. Forward Leg Bend | 17. Neck Strengtheners |
| 4. Swaying Loins | 11. Forward Bend | 18. Nishi Exercise (blood circulatory) |
| 5. Lowering Loins | 12. Duck Walk | 19. Goldfish Movement (spine corrector) |
| 6. Loin Sway To Mat | 13. Raising Body A-E | 20. Grip Strengtheners |

(Important Note: Prof. Okazaki did not use the term “*Kowami*” for his exercises.)

Some modern Danzan-Ryū dojo’s continue to practice these exercises and those instructors who attended Prof. Tony Janovich’s Kodenkan Jujitsu Okugi® class saw these in detail.

In reading through the names of these exercises one can see the Goldfish Movement (#19). This was one of the clues that initially suggested that Ema’s method may have been related to Prof. Okazaki’s training.

As we look further at the names of these exercises, we see many that are obvious and a few that are not so clear. While bending and stretching may be obvious, lowering and swaying may not be as familiar. The complete beginner may speculate on how a goldfish might move, but they would

have absolutely no idea as to how to do the **Nishi Exercise** (#20) without personal instruction. One may be tempted to look up the term “Nishi” in a Japanese dictionary to see if it had some descriptive meaning. (As someone who has gone down that particular road, I can tell you that it does not yield any satisfactory results.) Those who have actually learned this movement know that it is done in the following manner: The person lies on their back, raises their arms and legs straight up, shakes their wrists and ankles for about a minute, and then drops their legs and arms back onto the mat. This process is then repeated several times. The effect of this exercise is to promote blood circulation throughout the arms, legs and the rest of the body. Again, the curious student might wonder why this is called “Nishi Exercise”. The following discussion will clarify the origin of the Nishi Exercise, the Goldfish Movement and several other exercises not found in Prof. Okazaki’s list.

In doing research for my previous article, I came across some interesting information. In that article, I found that the term “Ema” 江間 (seen on a banner in a photograph of Prof. Okazaki) was actually the name of a person, Ema Shun’ichi 江間俊一, rather than some descriptive term. In a similar way I found the same thing for “Nishi”. The person in question was a Japanese man named Nishi Katsuzō 西勝造 who lived from 1884 to 1959. In business, he worked as the chief engineer for the original Tōkyō subway system. Outside of business, he was an Aikidō instructor at the Aikikai Hombu Dōjō, and was closely associated with founder Ueshiba Morihei, his son Kisshomaru, and chief instructor Tohei Koichi. In addition to Aikidō, and in a manner similar to Ema, Nishi had his own system of physical improvement, “Nishi-Shiki” 西式, or the Nishi-method. Since he had an engineering background, Nishi approached health from a technical perspective and this is evident in his 1936 book, Nishi System of Health Engineering.

The overall philosophy of Nishi’s method is summed up in the following three statements:



In Japanese, this reads: 『良くなる、能くなる、善くなる。』— 西勝造 “Yoku Naru, Yoku Naru, Yoku Naru.” - Nishi Katsuzō. This may be translated as “Getting good, able and virtuous.” Nishi

stressed the point by writing this with three different characters which are voiced the same way. Interestingly, he included the Kaki 柿 leaf (persimmon) on this paper. The reason was that he believed in the curative powers of this leaf (with its high vitamin C content), and espoused the use of it in Kaki Cha 柿茶, or persimmon leaf tea.

The idea behind his system was that humans are essentially vertical versions of four-legged animals and thereby the internal organ and skeletal structures are acted upon by gravity in a different way. Nishi believed that great strides in a person's health could be made by improving circulation, especially in the capillaries. In fact he believed that the "true pump" of the circulatory system was the body's network of capillaries, rather than the heart. (The medical validity of this will not be discussed in this article.) The core of his system is centered upon the following six laws and exercises:

1. Flat Bed, Heishō Shindai 平床寝台 – When you sleep, use a bed that is flat and as hard as possible.
2. Solid Pillow, Kōchin Riyō 硬枕利用 – When you sleep, lie flat on your back and have a solid, semi-cylindrical pillow underneath your neck at the third and fourth cervical vertebrae. See illustration below:



3. Goldfish Exercise, Kin'gyo Undō 金魚運動 – Lie flat on your back, lace your fingers behind your neck, arch your body upward, and sway your hips back and forth. Your heel should be dug into the mat with your toes pulled toward your head as much as possible. In doing this exercise, your body should imitate the motion of a fish. Continue this exercise for about one minute. An alternate method of doing this is to have a partner hold your heels about 12-18 inches off of the mat. See photo below:



4. Capillary Exercise, Mōkan Undō 毛管運動 – This is the exercise that is widely known in the Danzan-Ryū community as “the Nishi exercise”. Lie flat on your back, raise your hands and feet straight up in the air, and vibrate both wrists and ankles for about a minute. At the end of one minute, let your arms and legs drop onto the mat in a relaxed fashion. Repeat this process several times. A hard, semi-cylindrical pillow may be used under the neck, if desired. An alternate way of doing this is to have a partner help to hold your legs up. See photo below:



5. Palm and Sole Joining, Gasshō Gasseki Undō 合掌合蹠運動 – Lie flat on your back, place your palms together and place the soles of your feet together. Move your hands up above your head and move your feet down away from your head. Draw your hands and feet back to the original position. Repeat this 10 times and when finished move your hands and feet back to the original position and hold for about two minutes. See photos below:



6. Dorso Ventral Exercise, Hifuku Undō 背腹運動 – Sit upright, either in a chair or in the Japanese kneeling posture (Seiza). Sway your upper body from side to side centering on your hip. Pause each time that you come back to the center position. When you are leaning to either side, extend your abdomen out. When you are centered, withdraw your abdomen in. See photos below:



The exercises shown above (especially the last three) were designed to help “pump” the blood through the capillary network. In addition to these exercises, the Nishi system was organized into four primary elements, five methods for self-diagnosis, and a set of ten “Special Cures”.

The four primary elements of the Nishi system are:

1. Skin – This is the interface between the body and the universe. It regulates the temperature regulation of the body.
2. Limbs – These are the parts of the body that allow work and motion. The lower limbs are especially responsible for supporting the body.
3. Nutrition – This is a form of concentrated potential energy and considered the prerequisite for life. Food should be fresh and “proper”.
4. Mind – The mind and body are intimately related. Keeping a healthy mind is necessary for bodily health.

The five methods of self-diagnosis in the Nishi system are:

(Important Note: The following methods are NOT meant to be a substitute for proper care by a physician.)

1. Can you bend your body touching the floor with your fists without bending your knees?
If so, your spine and stomach are sound.
2. Can you lean against a wall in front of you, making an angle of 30 degrees with the floor, and straighten your body without raising your heels from the floor?

If so, you have no troubles in the sexual organs or the sciatic nerve.

3. Can you lean back, face up, with a table behind you by putting your forearms on it, making an angle of 30 degrees with the floor, and keep your whole body straight without raising the toes?

If so, your kidneys are sound.

4. While lying flat on your back, and leaving your arms on the floor, can you raise your legs up over your head until our toes touch the floor?

If so, nothing is wrong with your liver.

5. Can you lie down onto your back from the Japanese style sitting position (Seiza) without raising your knees?

If so, your intestines and urinary organs function well.

The “Special Cures” in the Nishi system are:

Mastication (Chewing) Cure
Posture (Spine Alignment) Cure
Nudity (Skin Exposure) Cure
Mind (Parasympathetic) Cure
Air-Change Cure

Medicinal (Mustard) Cure
Fast (Agar-Agar Diet) Cure
Dietary (Raw Food) Cure
Leg-Bath Cure
Hot-Cold Bath Cure

The details of these cures will not be expanded here with the exception of the “Hot-Cold Bath Cure”. Nishi described this cure as a method to “nip in the bud” contrasting diseases as acidosis vs. alkaloidosis, chill vs. fever, and convulsions vs. lethargy. He also wrote that the form of hot-cold baths should be appropriate for the person’s condition. Some may be familiar with the hot-cold baths with immersion up to the neck. Nishi described this as well as hot-cold baths for hands-only, feet-only, and the use of hot-cold “stupes” (moistened strips of cloth).

In his article titled, “Da Kine Untold Story”, Prof. Sig Kufferath wrote about the hot and cold tubs that Prof. Okazaki had at his Honolulu home on Kewalo Street. (Prof. Kufferath lived around the corner from this home.) Prof. Okazaki told him to spend two minutes in the hot (105° F) tub and switch to the cold (35 ° F) tub for another two minutes and do this six times. Kufferath repeated this three times a week for six months. The result was that he developed “nerves of steel” such that, “if a lightning bolt struck next to you, you would not flinch.”

Unlike the Ema-method discussed in my previous article, the Nishi system continues to have a thriving organization throughout the world. One can find references to the Nishi system on the Internet in both Japanese and English. (Several website links are provided at the end of this article for your own research.)

While I have found no direct connection between Nishi and Okazaki, there are several distinctive parts from the Nishi system that are found in the arts taught and practiced by Prof. Okazaki. The

timing of the publication of Nishi's book (1936) would certainly have made it available to Okazaki. Further, it is believed that Nishi Shiki practitioners were organized in Hawaii at the same time that Prof. Okazaki was teaching in Honolulu. Coincidentally, it is known that the Nishi organization was helpful in bringing Kōichi Tōhei to Hawaii in 1953 to help spread Aikidō in the islands. It is therefore my belief that Prof. Okazaki was influenced by the Nishi and his system of health engineering.

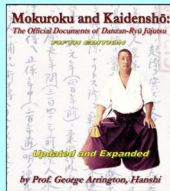
Special thanks to Sensei Karl Mueller of the Kodenkan Jujitsu School, and graduate of the 2013 Kodenkan Jujitsu Okugi® class with a Kaidenshō of Renshi.

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Selected Sources:

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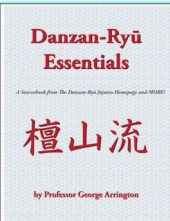


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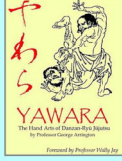


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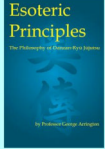
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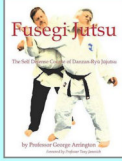
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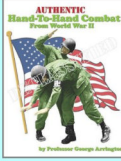
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