

‘Anyone can become strong’

Become an expert with this theory

(Shōrinji Kempō no susume Chapter 2)

Translated from Japanese by Joshua G. Hale

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1 Break an opponent’s balance using six directions

Normally, when we try to throw (*nage*) or bring down (*taoshi*) an opponent we try to forcefully apply the techniques we have learned, but the opponent often refuses to be brought down. Anthropomorphic differences mean that when we perform the same motions there are subtle differences in the angles involved and the technique doesn’t work. The teachings of *Shōrinji Kempō* were intended for everyone, and began with this question of how an opponent can be brought down.

There are many techniques in *Shōrinji Kempō* and there many ways of bringing down an opponent. It seems that people may begin to think that it is difficult to remember them all. However, if one analyses the dynamics of how an opponent may be brought down, one can understand that there are simple principles at work. Firstly, before the phase when one brings down or throws an opponent there is a phase called *kuzushi*. The opponent must be brought down or thrown using *kuzushi*. There are only six fundamental directions for *kuzushi*. According to the teachings of *Shōrinji Kempō* it is clear that if one acquires these six directions one can perform *kuzushi* on any opponent. The six directions are (see Figure 1):

1. **Forwards**, in the line at right angles to the line between the toes
2. **Backwards**, in the line at right angles to the line between the heels
3. **Forwards and left diagonally**, from the side of the little toe
4. **Forwards and right diagonally**, from the side of the little toe
5. **Backwards and left diagonally**, from the outer edge of the heel
6. **Backwards and right diagonally**, from the outer edge of the heel

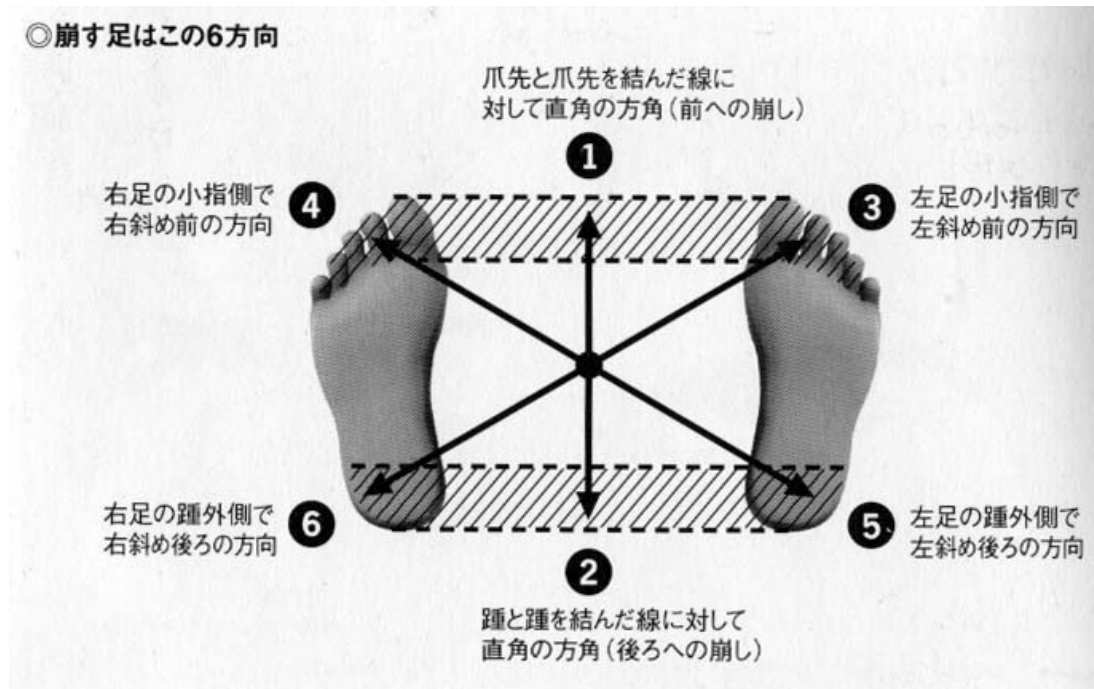


Figure 1: These are the six directions of *kuzushi*

People stand on two feet. The toes and heels of both feet form four points upon which the centre of gravity is supported. As an example, try floating the balance off the heels and standing on the two points that are the toes of both feet. If you do this, and someone adds a force forwards one's balance gets worse and one should experience *kuzushi* in the forwards direction (1). Alternatively, try floating the weight off the toes and contacting the ground with only the heels. If someone adds a force backwards one's balance is immediately broken and one experiences backwards *kuzushi* (2). If one's partner maintains a posture from which it is easy to perform *kuzushi* one can break their balance with only a small force. As an aside, *Jūdō* has a sideways *kuzushi* but since we don't use leg sweeps or hip throws in *Shōrinji Kempō* there is no sideways *kuzushi*.

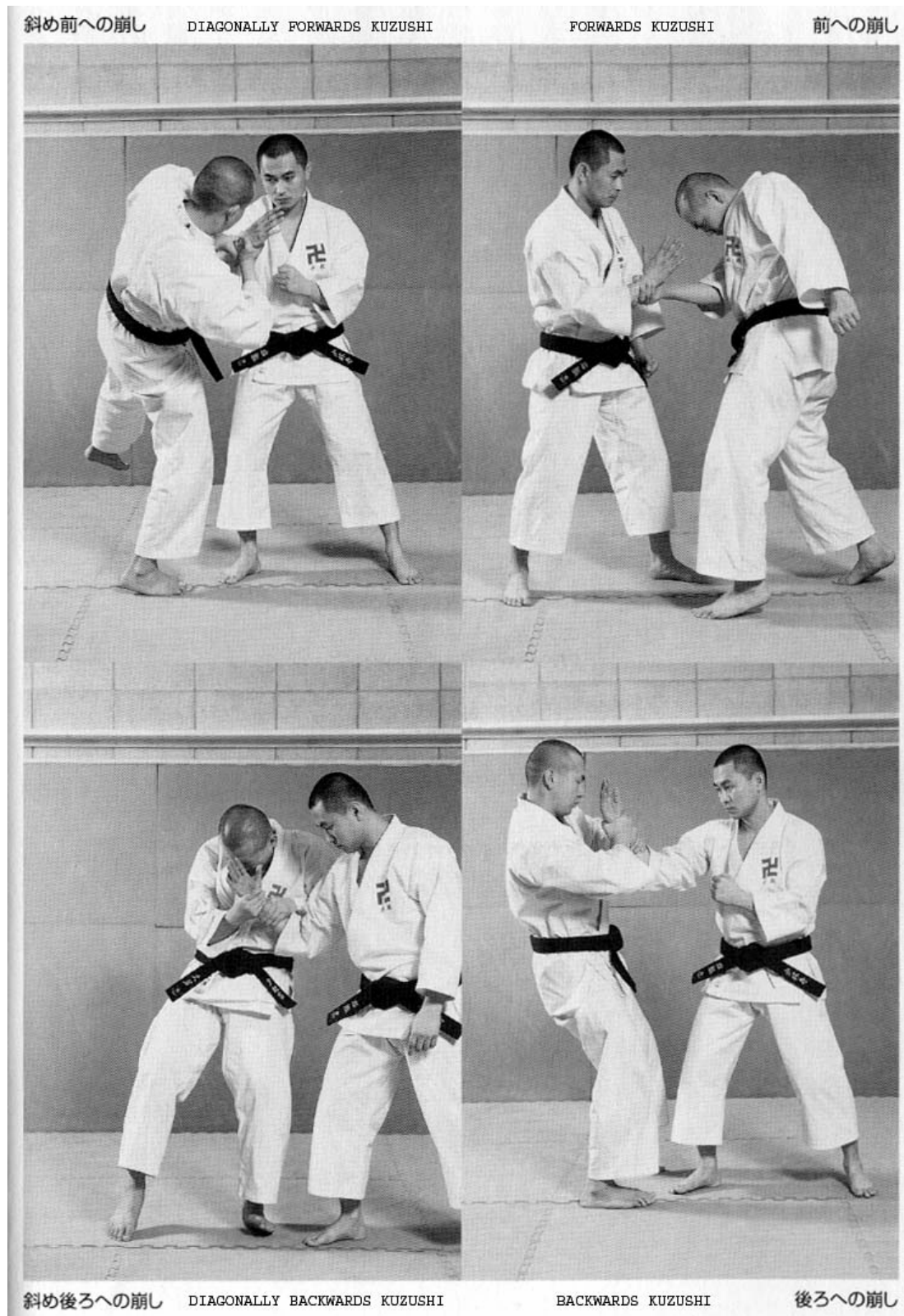
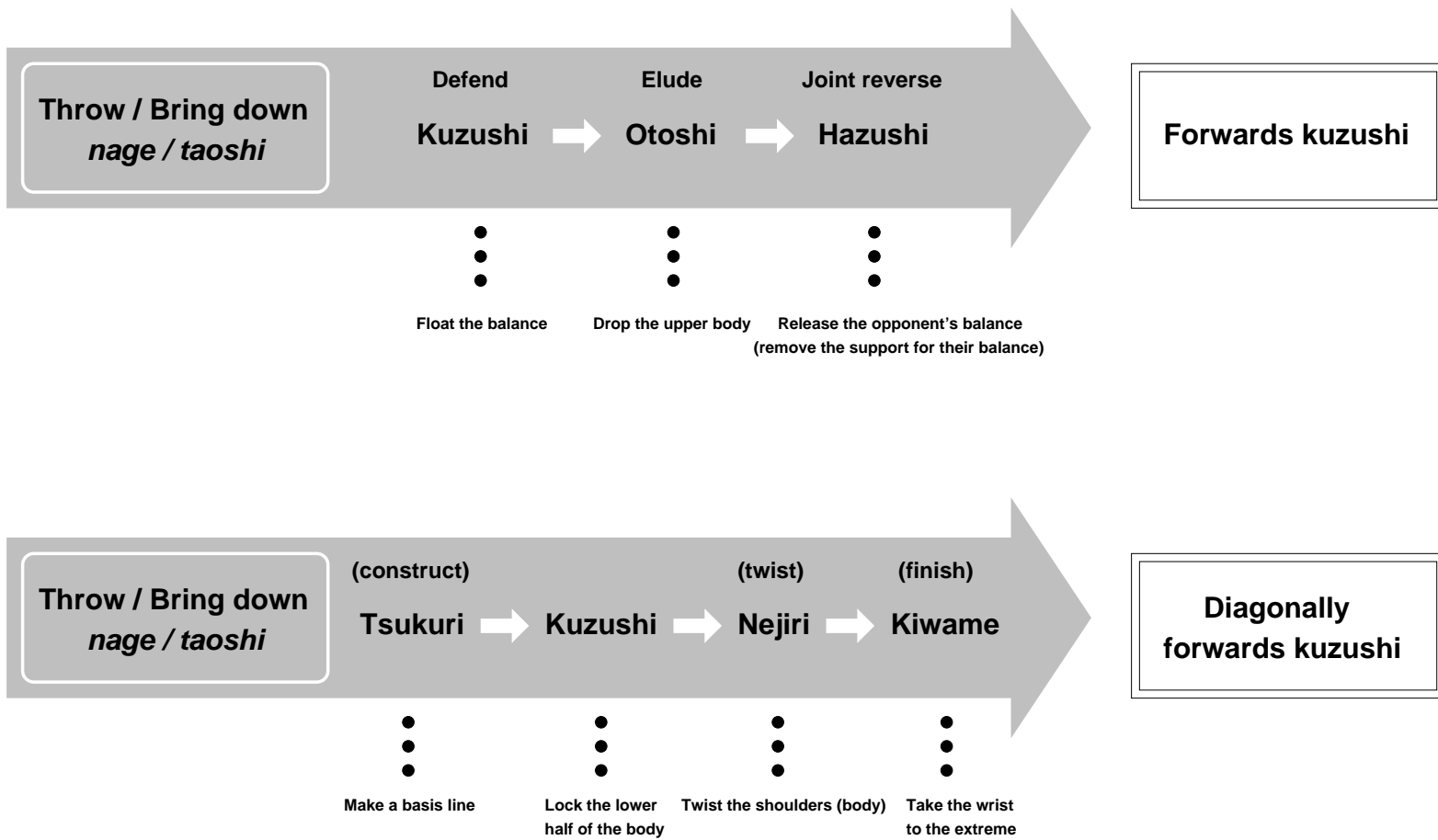


Figure 2: Photographs showing examples of the six *kuzushi* directions

Figure 3: The process of throwing or bringing down



2 How an opponent falls

We have seen that when bringing down an opponent it is useful to add a forwards or backwards *kuzushi* force. Consider an opponent who unconsciously resists falling, making it more difficult to bring them down. If in preparation one performs *kuzushi* the opponent will simply fall. In order to understand this '*kuzushi*' one must acquire the idea of isolated and relative balance.

1. Isolated balance is when there is absolutely no external force acting, and the balance is stable, *i.e.*, normal standing
2. Relative balance is when some external force is acting so that an equal opposing force must be generated but the balance is stable.

An example of relative balance is the *sumo* clinch. When an opponent makes some attack and one tries to break their balance the opponent may take a step, or thrust out their buttocks or belly to maintain stability. This condition is a case of relative balance. It is a condition from which it is harder to perform *kuzushi*. So how *can* one perform *kuzushi*? When this has occurred, if one moves the opponent's centre of gravity away from the point right between their feet a little in the direction of the toes the opponent's heels will become a little light (Figure 2 stage 2). If the toes or heels are just a little bit light the opponent will not sense this feeling, *i.e.*, they don't feel a sensation of *kuzushi*. The point of *kuzushi* is that the *support* for standing is no longer in place. The opponent must be brought down during the time when they don't know the support is gone. This means the opponent will not understand how they were brought down (Figure 2 stage 3).

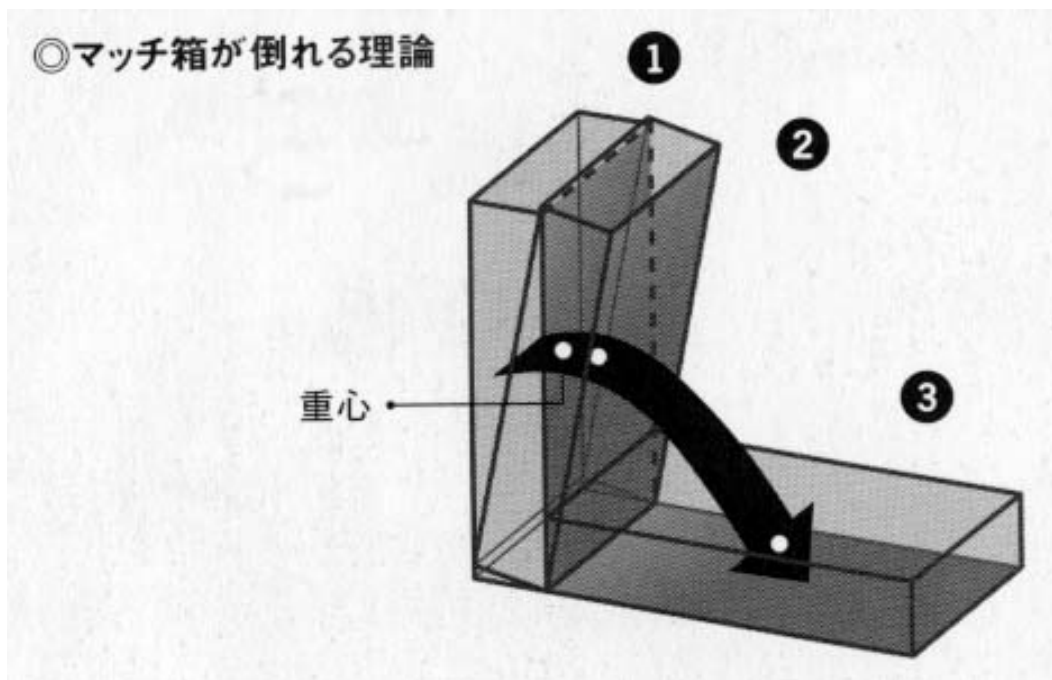


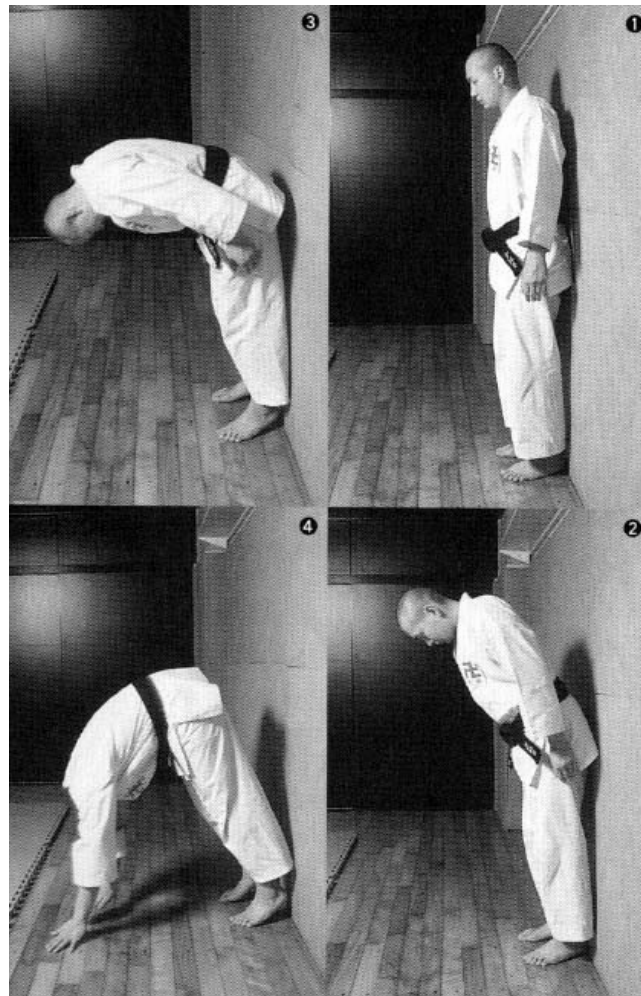
Figure 4: Principle of the falling matchbox

What is kuzushi!?

You should pretty much have grasped *kuzushi* in your head by now. However, what you have grasped in your head and whether or not you have physically experienced *kuzushi* may be difficult to understand. Let's try to understand it with an everyday example. Since the examples used to explain the teachings of *Shōrinji Kempō* often involve the pool side I want to use it here too. You're standing at the edge of the pool and someone gave your back a push. What did you do? You probably stood on your tiptoes, bent your back and tried not to fall in. But in the end you fall into the pool. That is *kuzushi*.

Alternatively, I'd like you to recall trying to lift something heavy. In order to raise a heavy cardboard box you used both hands, and with an 'ooph' tried to lift the box. But the box was light and you threw yourself backwards. This is also *kuzushi*.

Try this experiment: stand pressing your buttocks and back against a wall, and try bending your upper body. What happens? You fall down as if dropping from the head.



3 *Kuzushi* should come first!

Shōrinji Kempō techniques are for self-defence so they are performed when an opponent makes an attack. For example, let's look at the sequence until the opponent falls in *kiri gote* and *maki gote* in Figure 3. The throwing (*nage waza*) and bringing down (*taoshi waza*) techniques of *Shōrinji Kempō* involve manipulating the attacker's centre of balance. Firstly an opponent who has put forward an attack (*seme* (1)) is handled with *kuzushi* (2), and from that condition dropped down (*otoshi* (3)), and lastly released (*hazushi* (4)) from the base supporting their centre of balance, and thus brought down.

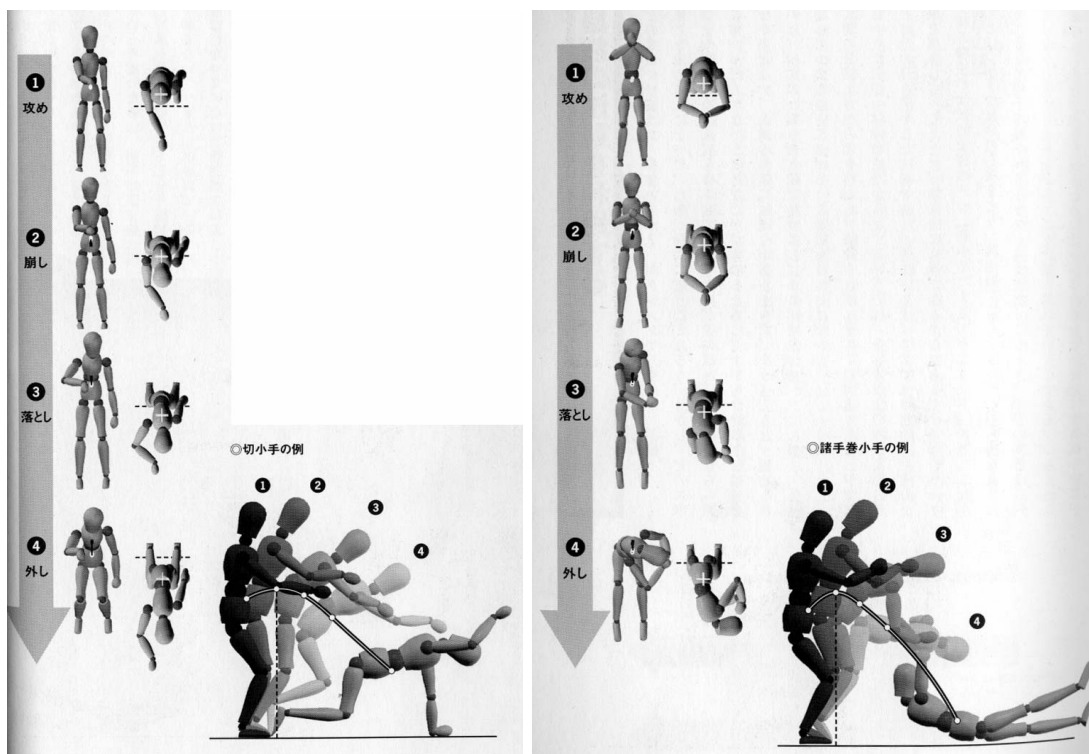


Figure 5: The case of *kiri gote* and *maki gote*

4 Using natural principles

Which *budō* or fighting technique is the strongest? Boxing? *Karate*? *Jūjutsu*? For a person seeking power, of course, this is a question to think about. However, no matter what sport one takes up the thing that one soon realises is that if a person has flourished on that path they are unusually powerful! However, it gets tougher to spend the tens of years necessary to flourish. It's because a human's flesh and blood is limited. According to such thinking, only a handful of people can flourish.

It's not terribly boring and disappointing. The reason is that knowing the human skeleton, natural principles, and with training, *Shōrinji Kempō* is the *budō* at which one can attain the level of 'expert'. That is to say, the techniques of *Shōrinji Kempō*

are based on methods that make use of the human skeleton and natural principles. To put it the other way, in study, through understanding physical and physiological principles one will be able to apply these methods effectively.

Let's consider a representative technique of *Shōrinji Kempō*, *maki gote*. *Maki gote* is a technique used when an opponent grabs one's right arm in an attempt to perform *ude gyaku dori*. One performs *kagite shuhō*, and then while twisting the opponent's arm, brings them down. During the technique the opponent rises onto their tiptoes and having *kuzushi* performed on their balance they fall very naturally. To put it simply, it means that in order to bring down the opponent one must make their balance unstable. What should one do in order to make their balance unstable? This is exactly where the physiological principles of the nerves, muscles and joints and the dynamic principles involving the separation of the balance from its supporting surface are applied.

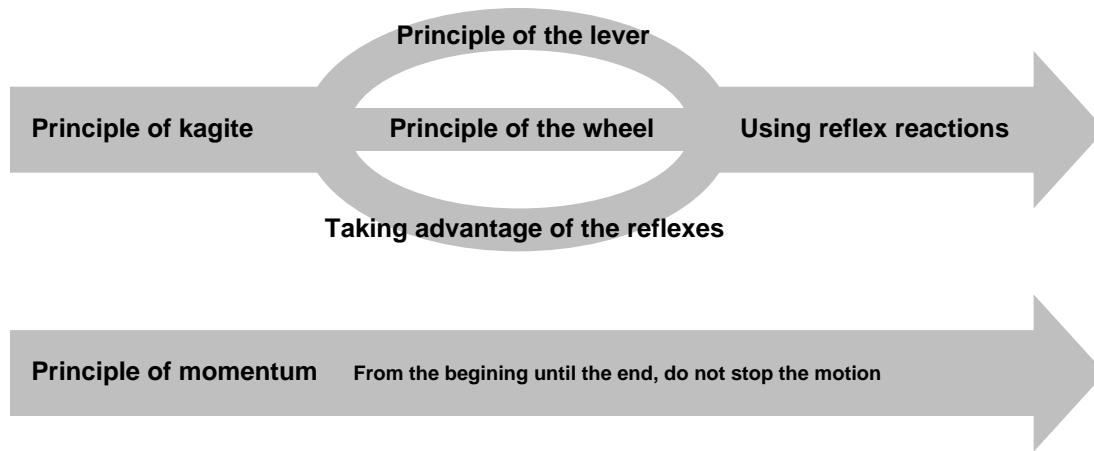


Figure 6: The theory of *kuzushi* used in *jūhō*

4.1 The principle of *kagite*

Kagite shuhō is used, as in *gyaku gote*, when an opponent has begun to take hold of one's wrist. In order to render the opponents attacking force powerless one brings the elbow close to the body while bending it. The principle is extremely simple. For example, imagine you have a heavy stone. What would you do in order to lift it? You would probably bend down to pick it up. What happens to your elbow when you do that? They ought to be bent. One knows from experience that trying to lift it with the elbows extended is pretty difficult so one naturally bends the elbows and tries to get as close to the stone as possible. In the same way, when one tries to oppose a large force with a small force one should use the principle of *kagite*, *e.g.*, in techniques like *kote nuki*, *maki gote*, *gyakute nage*, *yori nuki* and *maki nuki*.

4.2 The principle of the lever (*teko*)

You should have learned at school that one can move (lift) a big object by making a fulcrum and using a small force to move it. This is an application of the principle



Figure 7: The principle of *kagite*

of the lever. When it comes to joint techniques in opposition this principle can be applied to achieve success against an arm *etc.* *Shōrinji Kempō* also makes use of this principle of the lever. It is well used in techniques such as *ude juji*, eluding techniques (*nuki waza*) and joint reverses *gyaku waza*.

4.3 The principle of the wheel (*kuruma*)

When does a structure rotate and maintain its momentum? It's when the edge of the frame touching the ground is thin. That is to say, because the point in contact with the ground is small it can easily rotate. In *Shōrinji Kempō* one of the processes of bringing down an opponent is the sequence of (1) *kuzushi*, (2) *otoshi* and (3) *hazushi*. The point of *kuzushi* is to take advantage of the opponent's effort to resist and stand firm. If one uses *kuzushi* the opponent will stand on their tiptoes. Thus, because the point of contact with the ground becomes small it is easy to move their body. This means it's also easy to rotate their body. The principle of the wheel is used in many situations.

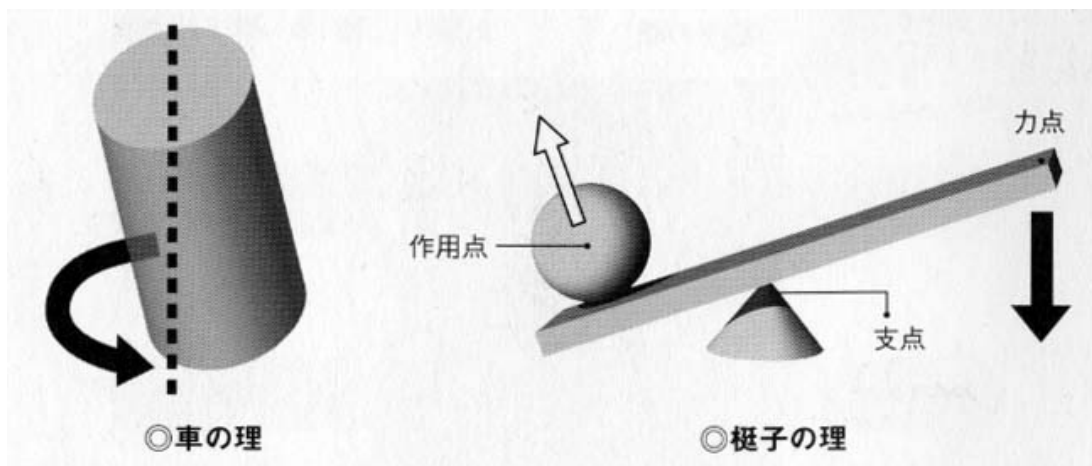


Figure 8: The principles of the wheel (*kuruma*) and the lever (*teko*)

4.4 The principle of momentum (*hazumi*)

A good example of momentum can be found if you recall cutting something hard with a knife. If you just try pressing it requires considerable force. So how about not just pressing, but swinging downwards from above? You can cut with a simple chop. Also, as soon as you have made a cut the knife immediately returns to its original position. The motion of swinging downwards and cutting does not stop. In the same way, when performing joint reverses (*gyaku waza*), one manipulates the opponents centre of balance, and once you have started moving them their motion does not once stop until they have been brought down. Likewise, it is vital that the defender's motion does not stop.

4.5 The principle of the meridians (*keimyaku*)

The meridians (*keimyaku*) of the human body taught in Eastern medicine (special flows around the body similar to electric currents) have fourteen main routes. There are various (708) points among which there are switches that cause the flow to flicker. These are concealed 'openings' to junction points of the flow and are the *kyūsho* (vital points). The 708 points are the *tsubo*¹ used for treating illnesses. Among the 708 points, *Shōrinji Kempō* makes use of 138 'openings' in deflections (*uke*) and counter attacks.

¹'*tsubo*' is the Japanese name for an acupressure point.