

# THE KATAS OF GOJU-RYU KARATE

## Foreword and word of thanks

In this reader the techniques of the kata of the karate style Goju-Ryu are described. You cannot learn the katas from this reader and it is assumed that you more or less know the movements of the kata. For that you will have to be taught by a teacher who knows this kata. In this reader you can look up the movements and the movement qualities, so that it is possible to improve your kata. That is why not only the individual techniques are described, but the underlying movement qualities and the way in which strength is developed in the kata are introduced as well. You may be wondering, "Do I need to know all these details and follow pedantic precepts?" The answer is no, you should have fun training karate. But you may find pleasure in learning these details over time. But it doesn't have to be, many movements go well - thanks to the instructions of your teacher.

When I started karate I didn't even know katas existed, so everything in this reader has been obtained thanks to people who have taught me or trained me. Thank you for that. Much of this knowledge is structured, for example in Sensei Higaonna's "Traditional karate 1-4" (Higaonna, 1988), the videos Sensei Higaonna has made and the transcriptions of these that Sydney Leijenhorst has put on paper (Leijenhorst, 2000b). In addition, Leijenhorst has written a curriculum in which the movement qualities and Okinawan concepts are explained (Leijenhorst, 2000a). Much has also been copied from this. The images of the execution of the techniques of the kata are - after some editing - taken from Habersetzer<sup>1</sup>, 1991. Sanne Bos helped with the three figures in the introduction. Janneke Verbeek has helped me with the English translation. Finally, I have to thank two people in particular. That is the head teacher of my dojo, Sydney Leijenhorst and my training partner Gert van Dorland. "Coincidentally", these two also reviewed and commented on the original manuscript. Thank you for that.

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## Reading Guide

This reader consists of three parts. First, an introduction, in which the history and purpose of the katas are briefly explained. This is followed by a section in which the most important aspects of the movements of the katas are explained. This consists of four parts: the three basic qualities, the sources of power, six Okinawan concepts and the transmission and processing of power. The third part consists of a description of the individual techniques of the katas. The order in which the katas appear in this reader is the order in which you are required to learn them for your exams. Sanchin is treated after Seiyunchin. Kururunfa, Sesan, Superimpei and Tensho are (still) missing.



Bodhidharma (5th-6th centuries AD) is seen as the founder of Zen Buddhism and temple boxing (Kung Fu). According to tradition, he found the monks of Shaolin in physically poor condition. They did little but meditate. Bodhidharma put an end to this by introducing a martial art as a means to better meet the physical demands of meditation.

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<sup>1</sup> We do not have any contact information from Habersetzer to request permission to use its images. However, his drawings are so valuable that it was decided to include them.

## Introduction

### What are katas?

Katas are an individual exercise consisting of a number of different techniques that follow each other in a fixed and logical way. The implementation is prescribed in detail. They may not contain all the techniques of a particular style, but they do cover most and all of the basics regarding combat scenarios, stance, power delivery, and so on.

Katas are a central part of the practice of karate and are characteristic of a particular style. The katas of Goju Ryu are divided into heishugata (closed hand) and kaishugata (open hand). In the “closed hand” kata, the tanden is constantly closed. This means that your lower abdomen is constantly tensed and your pelvis is tilted backwards, as if the breath has curled up in the lower abdomen. In the “open hand” kata, the tanden is only closed at the moment of focus. They are characterized by the alternation of tension and relaxation.

Goju-Ryu has 12 katas, two of which are heishugata: Sanchin and Tensho. Sanchin is trained in two forms: the form taught by Sensei Kanryo Higaonna and the Sanchin developed by Chojun Miyagi, the founder of our style. The other 10 katas are kaishugata. These are Gekisai dai ichi, Gekisai dai ni, Saifa, Seiyunchin, Shisochin, Sanseru, Sepai, Kururunfa, Sesan and Suparinpei. The katas were developed by masters in the fighting arts and it is often unknown who made the kata, and when and why it was made. Because the original intention of the maker is often unknown, it is undesirable that a kata is changed.

### Katas and karate

Katas are seen as the central training form of karate training. They serve as a vehicle for the transfer of combat skills and knowledge, both with regard to breathing, the individual techniques and the movement and posture qualities.

Katas are in between basic exercises (kihon) and combat training (kumite). Sometimes katas are presented as a fight against (many) imaginary opponents with a characteristic choreography, but this is not quite correct (it can be fruitful, if you imagine being attacked with certain techniques). In addition to techniques that can be applied in a self-defense situation, katas also contain techniques that are unrealistic to be used in an actual fight. They are added to develop certain qualities. For example, a shiko-dachi ('straddle stance') occurs rarely during the kumite, but frequently in the kata. With this position you develop strength to quickly push off and move. In addition, many techniques draw the hiki-te fist (“other” fist) back into the side to encourage the development of leg and pelvic strength. In a self-defense situation, this hand is better used for covering or controlling your opponent. Many katas, Saifa for example, contain techniques that are deliberately performed in a narrower position or with a small pelvic movement, so that you learn to generate power well under these more difficult circumstances. This requires more refined coordination. Katas are thus a mixture of combat applications and basic training and contain elements of the kihon and the kumite.

In addition to the kihon, the techniques in the kata are performed alternately and during movements. This is more difficult (but also more natural) than what is trained in kihon. In addition to kumite, katas are primarily a solo form and can therefore be trained anytime and anywhere. You don't need a partner and you can practice the techniques over and over again. This allows you to improve the techniques, for example your posture, your relaxation or aiming. Secondly, the movements of the kata are prescribed precisely and in detail. This means you always have a reference to assess, improve and perfect your techniques. Thanks to the heishugata you develop the integration of body, breath and mind. Thanks to the kaishugata you develop the implementation of the techniques. In short: you can train kata more often (and are less prone to injury) and there is more attention to the execution of your techniques, your posture, your basic qualities and the movement qualities than during kumite. Third, katas are a resource for techniques for your personal arsenal. Of course you learn a large number of combat techniques from the kata. All these techniques have been worked out in a standard bunkai (which you are requested to learn for your exams, for example), which can be further developed and applied and thus serves as the basis for your personal arsenal (see box).

### **Bunkais and the development of techniques**

The bunkai of the first technique in Gekisai dai ichi (high rising block and punch) is performed in the standard Bunkai with a side displacement, foot change and punch to the eye. But this seemingly simple technique can be performed in many other ways besides the standard form. These are called oyo-bunkai. Examples of oyo-bunkai of this jodan age uke (high rising block) are, for example, an attack to the chin, continuing the block as a downward elbow strike (hiji ate), taking the opponent's arm after the block and then stepping back and pull (hiki waza) or grab the other arm over the arm and continue it as an arm joint lock (ude kansetsu waza). The punch can also be performed to the throat or as an open hand technique. The foot change can also be performed with a kick (geri), mountain punch (yama zuki), or circle punch (mawashi zuki) instead of the forward punch. Other movement qualities can also be applied during the bunkai-kumite, such as the block without focus but as a continuous circular movement. By experimenting with the techniques from kata in this way, you develop a large arsenal of techniques.

However, these techniques still need to be added to your personal curriculum. In the standard bunkai, the arms are initially held at the sides, but it is also good to practice the techniques from kaki-e or from a fighting stance. In short: such a seemingly simple technique as the first movement of the first kata can already be an enormous source of possible techniques and combinations. Used in this way, the kata are the main source of your personal curriculum of techniques, provided they are additionally and creatively applied during the kumite training.

### **Origin of the kata of Goju-ryu**

The origin of our katas can only be understood in connection with the development of karate. Karate originated on the island of Okinawa, with Chinese (temple) boxing or Kung Fu (quanfa) as the main source. All styles of Kung Fu have katas, called quans or taolu in Chinese. The exchange of martial arts between China and Okinawa has a long history and has taken place many times, both by Chinese who came to live on Okinawa and Okinawans who went to train in China. The first documented application of karate - then still called 'te' (= hand) or 'tode' (= Chinese hand) - is around the end of the 18th century, but the tode will also be enriched by various people after that. All these people in Okinawa taught different styles of karate – the tode schools of that period are broadly classified into Naha-te, Tomari-te, and Shuri-te – and also had different katas. There are currently about 75 different kata in circulation on Okinawa alone, often in different versions (Bishop, 1989).

At that time, the Okinawans didn't really care what a particular style was called and they never systematically ordered all these forms. It was all about training. From 1879 Okinawa was occupied by Japan. The Japanese were interested in karate, but felt that the organization was poor, the training methods were clumsy, the curriculum was incomplete, a training uniform was necessary, competitions should be organized and more cooperation between the different karate schools should be established. Around the turn of the century, some Okinawans also realized that a further centralization of 'tode' was desirable, among other things in order to be able to teach it in schools. The Chinese origin of the 'tode' should be hidden for this and the unique Okinawan character emphasized. Tode became karate and the Japanese degree system was adopted. Before the Chinese 'quan' came the Japanese word 'kata'.

Important for the history of the katas of Goju-ryu is Kanryo Higaonna (1853-1916). Kanryo was born in Naha and trained from the age of 14 to 16 in Okinawa with a teacher who had learned Kung Fu in China. At the age of 16 (1869) he left for Fuzhou in China where he lived and trained for 15 years. He lived there in the house of the Kung Fu master Ryu Ryu Ko. Little is known of Ryu Ryu Ko, but he was a southern-style temple boxer and Kanryo learned the katas from him (and probably got a book, the Bubishi). About 1894 Kanryo returned to Okinawa. On Okinawa he will pass on his knowledge to Chojun Miyagi (1888-1953), the founder of our style. Chojun Miyagi has learned no fewer than nine katas from Kanryo. In addition, Chojun Miyagi would add three more katas to our system and modify one. Chojun Miyagi taught gym at a (secondary) school and for this he developed Gekisai dai ichi and Ni in 1940. Initially, these katas were just a sequence of movements performed by the students. But in 1948, Chojun Miyagi added these two katas to the Goju-ryu curriculum and also taught them in his own dojo. From that moment on, Gekisai dai ichi and Ni were the first two kata to be taught to beginning karateka and - if one continued the training - the other kata would follow. In the period before that, people first learned Sanchin. If one mastered Sanchin - after a fairly intensive period - the

student learned only one or two other katas, so that a high degree of perfection could be achieved in these individual kata.

In addition, Kanryo had learned from Ryu Ryu Ko Sanchin. This was initially performed with open hand techniques, which was judged to be too dangerous for students. Therefore, Kanryo taught Sanchin with closed fists. Chojun Miyagi would further modify the kata and, among other things, change the breathing method and also add the movement backwards (see the introduction to Sanchin). He also made the kata Tensho, based on the quan Rukkishu and would add it to our system.

## Power and movement in the kata

### Introduction

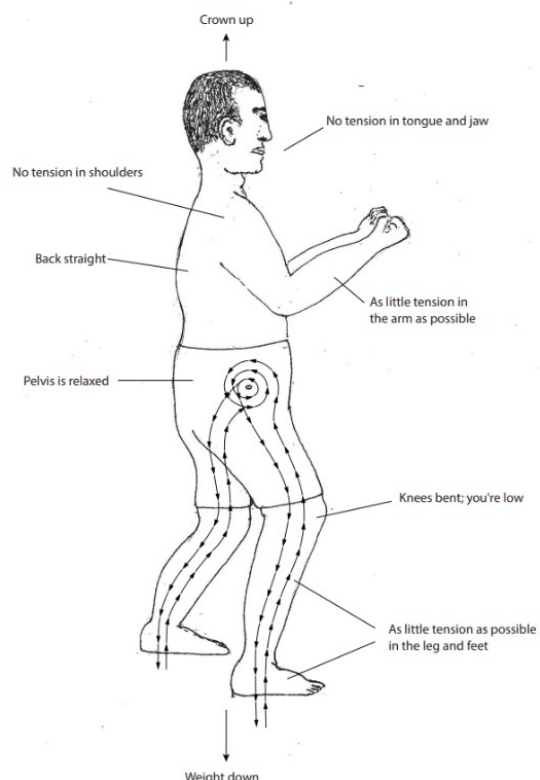
For the execution of a technique, underlying movement principles are always used, which support the techniques in different ways. These are explained here on the basis of 1. three basic qualities (grounding, centering and presence), 2. sources of strength, 3. six Okinawan concepts and 4. transferring and processing strength.

### Three basic qualities

Three basic qualities are essential for a correct execution of the movements of the kata: grounding, centering and presence (“concentration”). This division partly corresponds to the traditional Okinawan division of gedan (the feet press into the ground), chudan (good posture, the back is straight and the arms are free from tension) and jodan (the eyes look straight ahead and presence is everywhere). For the execution of these three basic qualities, the tanden or hara is crucial. The tanden is the center of your body and it is located in the middle of your lower abdomen, about 4 finger widths below your navel. Deep abdominal breathing is necessary for the development and use of tanden. To train this breathing, imagine that the airflow does not stop in the lungs during inhalation, but that the breathing movement continues to the lower abdomen. To make this possible, it is necessary that you push the lower abdomen out (more yang) or receive in all directions (more ying). If you do not yet have deep abdominal breathing, you should actively push the underside of the abdomen outwards (if you have done this more often, you can also apply the much more relaxed ying version). Due to the increase in volume in the lower abdomen, the lungs fill with air without the chest expanding. The extended version of this breathing movement runs along your tailbone over your pelvic floor and circles in your lower abdomen around the tanden (see centering figure). When the belly is full, you also start the exhalation from your lower abdomen and tanden. You can perform the breathing movement in different ways and it is good to develop and train it in different ways. This is reflected in all movements of the kata.

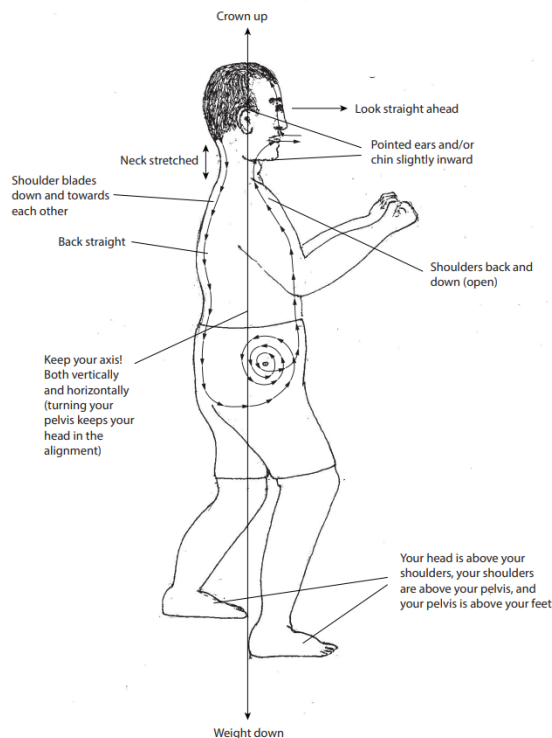
### Ground

When grounding, the body is maximally relaxed downwards. As a result, the pressure on the ground is highest. The contact between the feet and the ground is maximum and you press the feet firmly on the ground. A grounding aid can be to imagine as you inhale an imaginary line from the earth running through your feet and legs to the tanden. When exhaling, follow the same line from the tanden in the opposite direction to the floor (see figure). Make sure that when inhaling and exhaling you continue to relax the body downwards, and not go up with the imaginary breathing flow.



### Center

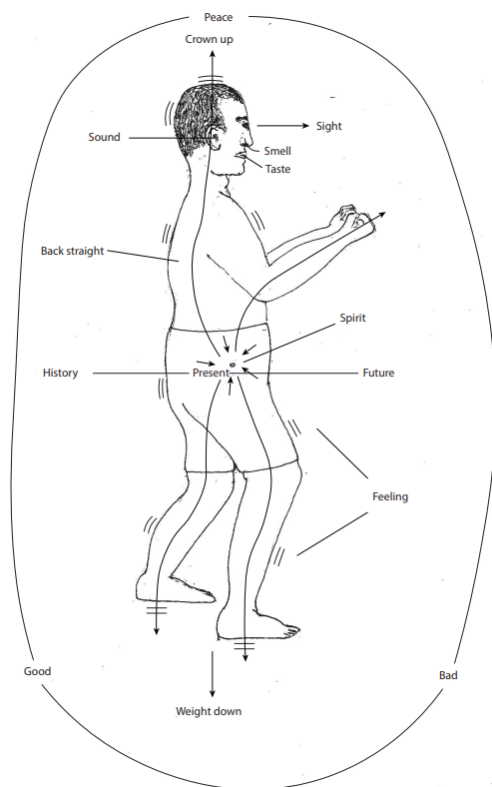
By centering you ensure that there is no unnecessary tension to remain upright. Because the muscles and joints are relaxed thanks to the grounding and centering, they can immediately take action. By centering you stand upright (see figure). Second, your head, shoulders, and pelvis rotate around an imaginary vertical axis through your crown and the center between your feet. Centering does not only include physical aspects. Being aware of your (straight) posture and the way you receive the ki in your tanden and how it flows from them are also important aspects of centering.



### Presence ("concentration")

The performance of a kata goes better if you are fully and undisturbed "at it". A distinction is made here between 'presence' (awareness of everything that is around us) and 'concentration' (more focused on one point/location/action). During the kata it is desirable that you pay attention to the posture, movement, breathing, relaxation,

performance and that you are not disturbed by thoughts about, for example, daily worries or a less successful action. The concentration this requires is called Zanshin (= 'permanent heart'), and refers to the undisturbed, concentrated mind. This is one of the moments when karate and Zen meet and karate is therefore also called moving Zen. Two terms closely related to this are Seishin and Isshin. Isshin means one heart. Sei means "essence" and shin "spirit". Seishin is the undisturbed real (spiritual) self. The tanden is the starting point for applying Zanshin, Isshin and achieving Seishin.



### Haragei

This brief summary of the three basic qualities shows that the body, the breath and the mind have the tanden as the most important support. It is therefore here where body, breath and mind come together. The art of integrating these three into our physical and mental actions is called haragei and literally means "the art of belly". The main kata of the Goju ryu is Sanchin and the name refers to these three fights - jodan, chudan and gedan or body, breath, mind - which must be fought for the development of a "full" movement. Sanchin is therefore a kind of pressure cooker for developing haragei, but for the proper execution of all techniques in all kata, "support from the abdomen" is indispensable.

### Sources of Power

The way force is converted into movement and impact is different in each technique. Three ways can be distinguished in which strength is developed in Goju-ryu karate. The three sources of force are:

generating from the ground (pushing force), unloading force (discharge or spring force), and falling (gravity). In addition, muscle power can also be used, but in our system there is no movement in which the strength is exclusively derived from muscle strength.

*Generating force from the ground (pushing force).* You get this power by pushing yourself against the ground. It occurs in varying degrees. It is always based on a push-off that is converted into a pelvic movement. For example, when pushing off for a push (oshi), or a step (ashi), possibly combined with a punch. Power is also taken from the ground when pushing off for a strike where the pelvis turns in, such as the reverse punch (gyaku zuki) in Gekisai dai ichi or as a smaller and more subtle movement with tanden zuki, for example. A grounded and centered karateka can generate more or less force from the ground in almost all techniques and uses this for a power impulse from the legs and pelvis. Also the reaction of (the mass of) the opponent at the moment of impact (action = - reaction) is often absorbed by guiding it to the ground (see also chinkuchi kakin in the next section).

*Force discharged (discharge or spring force).* This force is obtained by releasing a pretension of the muscles, similar to an arrow that flies away after the string of the tense bow is released. It is evident in the rising elbow lift/freeing technique (hiji age) in Seiyunchin, where the body is first curled up and released as the deliverance technique is performed. It is more subtle, for example, in the knife hand strike (shuto uchi) in Gekisai dai ichi, where the shoulder blades are first pulled apart and snap back during the performance of the shuto uchi. Also, the body part that performs the action can be held back, after which it shoots out or back when released. This happens, for example, in the backward elbow strike (ushiro hiji ate) in Seiyunchin, where the fist of the executive arm is initially held back by the other hand.

*Deriving power (gravity).* You get this power by dropping your body or a body part. The cross block (kosa uke) in Sanseru and the double punch with the middle finger fist (morote nakadaka ippon zuki) in Sepai are examples, where the power is derived from falling into a deep shiko dachi. Examples of dropping a body part are the dropping block (otoshi uke) in Seiyunchin and the low swing strike (gedan furi uchi) in Saifa.

## **Six Okinawan terms**

Before discussing the transfer and processing of power, six Okinawan concepts that are commonly used and related to the execution of techniques are explained. There are (many) more concepts, but these six are the most important. They appear frequently in all katas. It is not necessary to know them to enjoy training karate (a lot of things go well on their own), but understanding these terms may give a better insight into the movement and possibilities for improvement. The terms are chinkuchi kakin, muchimi, chiru no chan chan, chikara nu nujisashi, te no omomi, and shimeijurasan.

### ***Chinkuchi kakin (kime)***

Chinkuchi kakin is a (short) contraction of the muscles at the moment of hitting; it is also referred to as 'kime' or 'focus'. The term refers to the brief contraction of the muscles that locks the joints at the point of impact and focuses concentration on the point of impact. The stance is strengthened by (briefly) tightening the muscles and joints of the ankles, knees and pelvis and gripping the ground with the feet. After the moment of impact, the body is immediately relaxed and the joints are released again, ready for the next action.

Chinkuchi kakin consists of two parts, which (eventually) go together. On the one hand, the short-term contraction of the muscles provides stability and prevents the opponent's weight from striking back. For this, the position is grounded and the muscles, especially in the lower body, are tensed. In addition, the focus is on the connection between the point of impact and the tanden. The force is directed outward, you 'extend' the technique (imaginary) in the direction in which the force is thrust. Chinkuchi kakin gives a stable stance on punches, blocks and kicks (and allows faster movements). It is more or less present in all techniques, especially with punches and kicks, because they end with a focus (and least with continuous, unfocused movements).

You develop chinkuchi kakin by good focus and correct contraction and relaxation of the muscles during the kihon and kata. It is present in all movements of the kata and can be trained continuously. Provide relaxed movements with good kime at the time of hitting, aim for connection between tanden and the point of hitting, for example the knuckles. Keep moving well grounded from your pelvis. Especially the Gekisai dai-katas with their simple alternation between on and relaxation are very

suitable for practicing kime. The less focus in a technique, the less chinkuchi kakin. Punches and kekomi kicks therefore have more chinkuchi kakin than strikes and slamming, keage kicks.

### ***Muchimi***

Movements with muchimi are heavy and sticky, but fluid movements. Execution is slow, controlled, continuous and concentrated, based on overview, peace and alertness. The movement builds palpable tension and starts from the ground and the tanden. It is used in techniques that deliver force over a longer distance, such as control blocks (osae uke), joint locks (kansetsu waza), strangulations (jime waza), freeing techniques (hazushi waza), pushing and pulling techniques (oshi and hiki waza); especially techniques in medium and short-range combat. Because these movements require a lot of force for a long time, these movements are always supported by the large muscles of the lower body and trunk. Movements with muchimi occur in all katas. You train muchimi not only in the kata, but also by moving weights, such as the chi ishi and the nigiri game (grip vases). Application of muchimi with a partner can be trained with kaki-e. Continue to pay attention to the execution from the basis and the pelvis.

### ***Chiru no chan chan***

Chiru no chan chan is sometimes described as explosion-force, spring force, starting force, initial force, push off force or initial impulse. It refers to the force applied at the beginning of the movement. Execution is from legs and pelvis. The term also includes a quick response to an action, for example a starting gun or a click; in combat a response to a shoulder movement, a pelvic strike or - in close-range combat - a change in balance. Incidentally, the term is somewhat broader and also includes the state of the muscles, which for chiru no chan chan must be steely but also flexible and resilient. Chiru no chan chan is present in every movement, more emphatically it is present in techniques with a powerful initial impulse such as throws, release techniques and strikes. You get a powerful, fast push-off by moving a lot in/to/from shiko dachi. But knee bends (squats) and jumps are also suitable for this. Seiyunchin is an important kata for the development of chiru no chan chan with her many shiko dachis and big, strong body displacements.

### ***Chikara nu nujisashi***

Chikara nu nujisashi is going in and out of force. It refers to the interplay of force in following techniques. The basis for a good performance is the relaxation of the muscles after tensing the moment of hitting a technique (also part of chinkuchi kakin). In this way it becomes possible to 'strike' the force from the tanden and 'retract' it back to the tanden, so that it can be used for the next technique/action. The force then goes 'in' (during relaxation and inhalation: rest) - out (tightening, performing technique, exhalation: action) - in (relaxation: rest) - out (action) - in (rest) ... and so on. Chikara no nujisashi should be present in every sequence of movements. You can train chikara no nujisashi in all series of techniques by consciously paying attention to tension and relaxation, inhalation and exhalation and retrieving and expelling power from the tanden. All katas are therefore suitable for developing this technique, especially the Gekisai dai-katas with their clear rhythm. Incidentally, many people count in their heads with the movements of the kata, as is also the case in class. This is fine at first, but as one gets more practiced, it can be replaced by the rhythm of the breath. Closely related to the term chikara nu nujisashi is chikara no kyojaku (literal translation: power of hard and soft). This term refers to the correct application of tension and relaxation (and thus correct execution of force) in techniques and actions.

### ***Te no omomi***

The term te no omomi (literally: heavy hands) refers to the use of relaxed arms or legs while performing a technique. The impact of the technique comes mostly from the weight and speed given to a body part. You only use the weight of the relevant body part (and the impulse you have given it). Because the body part is kept relaxed, it has more impact to be effective. Examples are a dropping block (otoshi uke) with a relaxed arm, a circular kick (mawashi geri) or swing kick (furi geri) with a relaxed leg and all strikes, which after all only use the weight and speed of the arm. Te no omomi can be trained well in kihon, on the makiwara or with pads and a partner. Most kata contain te no omomi

techniques. Examples are the low sweeping block (gedan barai) in the Gekisai dai-katas and the swing strike (furi uchi) and thumb hand strike (haito uchi) in Saifa.

### ***Shimeijurasan***

Shimeijurasan refers to the perfect execution of the kata. It is the unattainable goal that everyone should strive for (regularly).

### **Transferring and processing power**

Power transmission mainly involves punches, strikes and kicks; processing force on blocks and evading. For the transfer of force, it is of course important whether it concerns an arm technique or a leg technique, but also whether the technique is a strike (circular) or a punch (straight).

### ***Strikes and punches***

A punch is usually rectilinear. The moment of hitting is always focused. A strike usually has a circular trajectory. In a 'heavy strike' the impact is determined by the speed and mass of the arm or leg (te no omomi). A 'tough strike' is focused and the joints are momentarily tightened at the moment of impact. An example is the circle strike (mawashi furi zuki) in Sepai and the hammer strike (tettsui uchi) in Saifa. With a 'continuous strike' the circular path of the technique is, as it were, taken 'through the body of the opponent'. Depending on the degree of muscle tension at the time of hitting, this looks like a heavy or a tough strike. The last one is the 'whip-strike'. In this case, the arm or foot folds back after hitting. There is no focus and these techniques are performed without tension in the muscles and joints of the upper body. Such techniques have less impact and are performed at the beginning of combinations or when attacking vital points. For example, the knuckle strike (uraken uchi) in the Gekisai dais and the uraken uchi in Saifa and Seiyunchin is made to the vital point just above the upper lip (jinchu).

Not all movements are focused in one moment. This usually concerns continuous movements, for example certain blocks that are executed in a more or less circular movement. The karateka must ensure that during the performance in the kata attention is paid to the imaginary (sometimes sliding) point of contact of this movement. This is the case with many blocks, such as the tora uchi ("tiger mouth"), the pulling block (hiki uke) in Saifa and many subtle blocks in the higher kata.

Also pushing and pulling movements are not focused at the moment of hitting. There is no hard contact and the movement is performed over a longer trajectory. The force for the push is always generated from the ground.

### ***Kicks***

The terms 'keage' and 'kekomi' are used in the classification of the kicks. Keage concerns slamming or snapping kicks. These are less focused at the moment of hitting and are usually performed without pelvic tilt/rotation, but possibly with a (small) pelvic extension. Often they are directed to vital points such as the crotch (with the ball of the foot in the Gekisai's, Saifa, Shisochin, Sanseru and Kururunfa) or the testicles (with the instep or ball of the foot) in kin geri. Kekomi concerns strike or incoming kicks. This is always focused and the pelvis is used expressly. Almost all kicks in the kata are keage, only the side kick (kansetsu geri) in Sanseru is kekomi. Kekomi kicks should indeed be trained frequently (it is stated that for a good development of the muscles for kicks, about half should be performed on a pad or makiwara).

### ***Blocks and evasions***

As a self-defense art, karate obviously involves blocks and evasions. The most confrontational is the hard, crashing defense (very "go"), where there is no dodge and the attack is completely warded off. You not only train the preservation of your own space, but also a correct attitude during this hard confrontation; you learn "not to step aside". Similar to this, but more difficult, is driving back the attack. Here you, as a defender, penetrate the space of the attacker. So you come forward while you block. The execution of the open hand block (shotei uchi uke) simultaneously with moving the whole body forward in Seiyunchin is an example of this. A third option for "repelling" is to take the attack. Naturally, the muscles are tense at the moment of contact; not every body part is equally suitable for this. An example of a technique with a body "that can take a beating" is with the so-called "noon

breathing". Here you hold your breath, so that the body remains tense. The low sweep (gedan harai uke) with the open hand push (shotei oshi) in Sepai is performed with this breathing. When diverting power you can take the opponent's power and use it in your next technique. With kaki-e you practice this and it is also called 'swallow-and-spit'. When distracted, the force of the opponent's action is blocked and changes direction in a circular motion and passes to you. This is the most common defense in kata. It can also happen that when we divert power, the strength of the opponent is extended, as is the case with a pulling block (hiki uke).

The last block is dodging. The strength of the opponent is no longer absorbed. Ideally, not only does one dodge so that the attack is missed, but also results in a strategically favorable position for a counter-attack. Then you can try to get the opponent off balance and make sure that after the dodge you end up in a fighting stance, which is also suitable for attacking. Of course, you train such an avoidance with all the larger lateral and backward movements from the katas.

## **The Techniques of the Katas**

### **Accountability terms used**

In the martial arts, the Japanese names are usually used for the various techniques and karateka are expected to master the most important ones in the long run. That's not so easy. That is why in this introduction and in Gekisai dai ichi and Ni the English term has been used and the Japanese term has been added in brackets. From Saifa onwards, the Japanese term has been used and the English term has been added in brackets (sometimes not if it concerns a new term). The five main positions are assumed to be known. These are: sanchin dachi (two feet long stance), zenkutsu dachi (forward stance), shiko dachi ('straddle' stance), nekoashi dachi (cat stance) and musubi dachi (attention stance). Also the term for withdrawing the other arm to the side has not been translated and has always been referred to as 'hikite'. Occasionally reference is made to vital points. An overview of the locations of the vital points can be found in the aforementioned Traditional Karate Vol 1 and in 'Terminology' (which also contains the other Japanese terms used), the latter can also be downloaded from the website of Kenkon or the IOGKF-NL .

### **Height of Techniques**

Finally, something about the level of implementation of the techniques. The techniques in the kata are always performed to vital points of a person who is exactly the same size as yourself. So a punch at mid-level is always to ganka (just below the nipple) or suigetsu (solar plexus) at your own height. If you yourself are in a low position and the technique is therefore performed lower, the virtual opponent in question is also in a lower position.

### **Beginning and end of the kata**

Karate begins and ends with a bow and the katas also begin and end with this. You stand in musubi dachi and you relax the body; the arms are relaxed next to the body. You ground, center and are present; the breath goes to the tanden. Keep the attention in the hands (press the thumb against the heel of the index finger), the feet and the tanden and check the deep breathing. You are instructed to bend ("rei"). In musubi dachi, you bend from the tanden and look a few meters in front of you at the ground (if you are bending to a partner, as in kumite training, you bend to your partner and keep looking at them). You say "onegai shimasu" which means something like "please help me"; an expression of gratitude to other people, including those who have made it possible for you to be here now and to be able to perform the kata. You will be instructed to get ready with "yoi". You move the hands in and place the left hand on the back of the right, arms still relaxed down. You say the name of the kata you want to perform. With "hajime" the teacher indicates that you can start with the kata. There is also some difference between countries and dojos in how the beginning of the kata is performed. Also, there is sometimes a difference between the beginning of heishugata and kaishugata, but the essence is the same everywhere.

Close the kata by placing - depending on the kata - the fist or the open hand of the right arm, palm up, in the palm of the left hand. Open the fist while rotating the hands and simultaneously step into musubi dachi; exhale only when the hands are down and the feet are contiguous in musubi dachi. Obviously staying grounded, centered and present, you bring the arms to the side of the body and make a bow similar to the one at the beginning of the kata and say "arigato gozaimashita" which means "thank you very much".

## Gekisai dai ichi

Gekisai dai ichi was created in 1940 by Chojun Miyagi (see introduction). Gekisai dai ichi means “to attack and destroy 1”. The kata contains different punches, blocks, strikes and kicks, performed at different heights.

It is important in the implementation that attention is paid to the correct implementation of each technique separately. Most techniques should be performed with speed and strength, only the mid-level block (chudan uke) with muchimi. Gekisai dai ichi teaches you to aim for vital points, gives you a good and powerful kime and trains the alternation between tension and relaxation.

### Rising block (jodan uke)

From musubi dachi, step straight ahead with the right foot and rotate on the balls of both feet and simultaneously perform the block. The length of your stance is two feet. The blocking arm goes close to the body and initially horizontally in front of the diaphragm and then straight up and turns only at the last moment. Minimize tension in your shoulders. The arm is focused on a fist-width from the forehead. The hikite arm rises initially, remains high throughout the body's turn, and from there is actively and forcefully pulled to the side. Focus vigorously. When you block, your weight is distributed over both feet. Advanced karateka can turn the elbow slightly downwards during the kime and perform the technique with a somewhat rounder movement.

### High punch (jodan zuki)

Push off by pressing the front foot into the ground and step straight into han zenkutsu dachi (three feet long). The pelvis does not turn inwards with the strike. During the kime of the punch, about 70% of your weight is on the front leg. The punch is at eye level. Also use the powerful hikite and close your tanden during the kime. Use the power of the push-off and the movement, keep your shoulders relaxed as long as possible.



### Low sweeping block (gedan barai)

Step your right leg back into shiko dachi and simultaneously open your pelvis and let it fall. You keep looking to the side. The hikite is pulled back forcefully (pull your elbow back and down). Until the kime, there is no tension in the arm and the fist ends a fist-width from the knee (in the bunkai, the low block is performed as an attack to the elbow and ends further from the knee). During the kime, the pelvis remains open, but the tanden closes.

Note: in shiko dachi the crown is up and the chin is slightly in (ears pointed) and the eyes look straight forward. The back makes an "S", the shoulder blades are against each other and pointing downwards. The pelvis is open and thus tilted forward, the shin is perpendicular to the floor and the knees are directly above the feet (initially many karatekas have to actively push the knees and thigh backwards). The hip is slightly higher than the knees (water would flow slowly down the thigh). The feet (especially the big toe and the inside of the foot) are pressed firmly into the ground and grip the floor during the kime.

### Mid-level block (chudan uke)

Pull the left foot to the other foot and then forward in a circle (the ankles pass each other) into sanchin dachi. The fist of the blocking hand begins well below the elbow of the other arm. The technique is performed with muchimi. This movement is performed with a fairly large circular motion and the foot and arm move simultaneously.

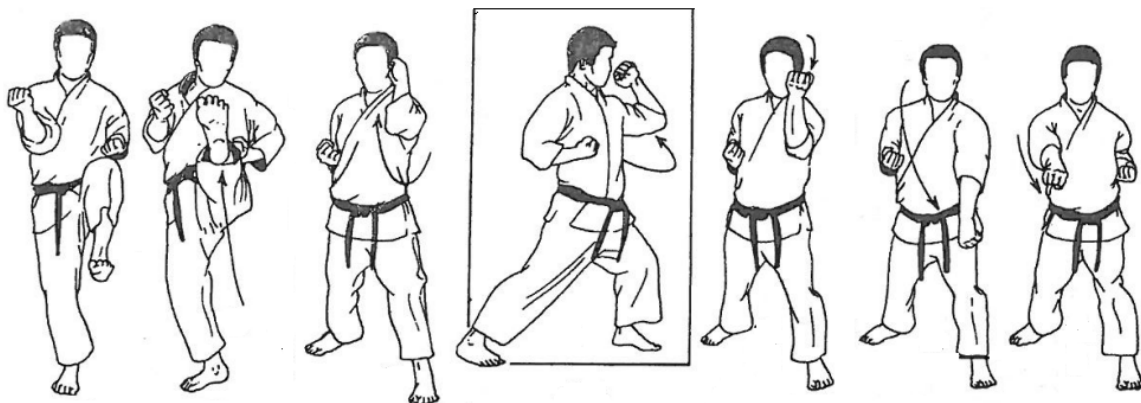
### Front kick (mae geri), elbow strike and stamp (hiji ate and fumikomi geri), uraken uchi (knuckle strike), gedan barai and mid-level reverse punch (chudan gyaku zuki)

The techniques in this series (except the elbow strike and the stamp) should be performed separately and vigorously. It is important to relax (in between) after each technique. The classical version of

Gekisai dai ichi has a counting stop for the knuckle strike, which allows the body to relax better. The rhythm is 1-2 and 1-2-3. Hold the block and hikite during the front kick. The kick – raising the knee high until the thigh is parallel to the floor – is keage (i.e. without pelvic tilt and hip twist). The kick is straight forward with the ball of the foot to the crotch. Before the kick, you sink in slightly on your standing leg and during the kick, the body is fully supported on the standing leg. You may extend the pelvis slightly (not necessary) and do not tighten it. After the kick, relax, actively pull the lower leg back until it is below the knee. From there he is stamped into zenkutsu dachi. The elbow strike is mainly forward, the fist ends at the jaw. Pull the hikite back vigorously. The elbow strike and the punch are performed together and depending on the level of the karateka, this can be done in three ways:

1. The foot is stamped down and the rebound from the ground is used in the elbow strike. The rhythm is 1 ..... 2.
2. The foot is stamped down and immediately afterwards the elbow strike is performed. The rhythm in pam-bam.
3. The punch and elbow strike are performed simultaneously. From hara, the force goes to the foot and the elbow simultaneously. This is called “splitting power”.

The knuckle strike is initiated from the pelvis and during the impulse the shoulders, elbow and wrist remain relaxed. The technique is a whip-strike (so there is no kime) to jinchu (vital point at the center of the upper lip). After the technique, the fist folds back and the elbow makes a 90-degree angle. The low sweeping strike makes a relatively small swing and turns around the elbow. During the performance there is no tension in the shoulders and elbow. During the focus, the arm rotates slightly. The hikite is powerful. The reversed punch is executed with a lot of force and speed. The movement begins by extending the back leg. As a result, the pelvis turns in; this is used for the powerful impulse of the punch, focused and executed to suigetsu. Also use the powerful and fast hikite. Kiai!



Note. In zenkutsu dachi, the crown is up, the eyes look straight forward, the chin is slightly in, the back is straight and the feet are pressed into the ground. The knee of the front foot is above the foot, if you look over your knee you just don't see the toes. The stand is about four feet tall. The feet are more or less level with the sides of the pelvis; your feet are in two lines.

### **Foot sweep (ashi barai) and knife hand strike (shuto uchi)**

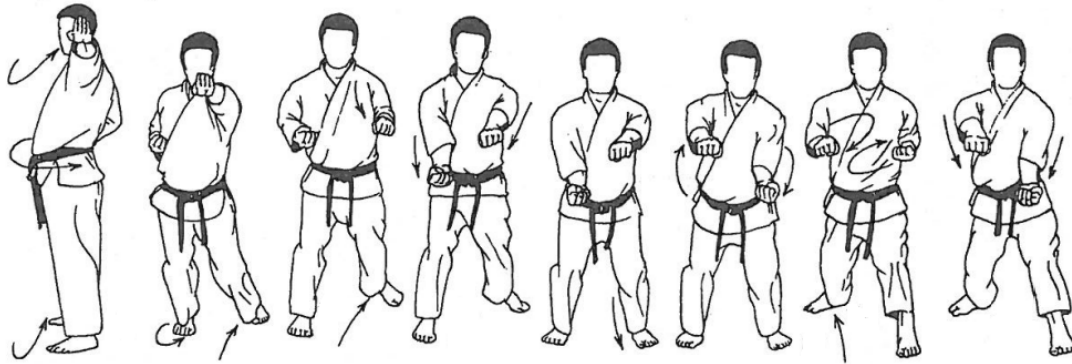
Pull the back foot towards the other and make a small sweep; the sweeping foot keeps contact with the ground for a long time and does not pass the other. Focus on the inside of the foot, making sure to sweep low. Stamp the foot in hachiji dachi (= 'natural position') and use the reflection from the ground for the impulse to the knife hand strike; also use the powerful hikite (remains a fist). During the sweep, also pull your shoulder blades apart and a little forward (the back remains straight, you keep looking forward) and also use the spring back of the shoulder blades in the knife hand strike. With the knife hand strike, the shoulders and elbows are free of tension. The technique is fast and focuses briefly at eye level ("heavy strike"). With the knife hand strike, the fingers are straight and the bent thumb rests against the side of the base of the index finger. Also focus on the point of contact with the pinky mouse.

### **Double punch (awase zuki): mid-level and reverse punch (chudan and ura zuki)**

The double strike is a small and closed form of the tora guchi. From hachiji dachi, step back in a straight line (slightly oblique) into zenkutsu dachi and actively pull your hand (as if you were dragging someone) into your side (knuckles stay up). Straighten your leg and put your whole body behind the double punch; Mainly use the power from the ground and your back muscles (the fist of the reverse punch is above the knee).

Step forward with your left leg and do not come up while switching feet (feet stand side by side for a moment; there is a moment similar to sitting on the toilet). While switching feet, perform a mid-level inward block (chudan uchi uke) with the right hand and a mid-level outward block (chudan soto uke) with the left hand, so you face the backs of both fists. Step back and at the same time pull the fists back vigorously into the sides. Use the bouncing off the ground, straightening the leg/pelvis and back muscles for another powerful double punch (awase zuki: ura zuki (reverse punch) and chudan zuki (mid-level punch)). From the fist going the mid-level punch during substitution is the hikite in the side with the knuckles up, the ura zuki (knuckles down during the substitution) is to the seventh rib (denko), the chudan zuki to the 5th intercostal space, just below the nipple (ganka).

Note: beginners may also perform the chudan soto uke as a 'normal' chudan uke, so that you look at the finger side of the fist.



Open the left hand and place the right fist in the left with a small circular motion. Turn the left foot out, join the right foot in musubi dachi and simultaneously rotate the hands. Close the kata.

## **Gekisai dai ni**

Gekisai dai ni means 'attack and destroy 2' and the kata was also developed by Chojun Miyagi, in the same period and for the same reason as Gekisai dai ichi. Gekisai dai ni is very similar to Gekisai dai ichi, only in the second part of the kata more open hand techniques are used. The differences from Gekisai dai ichi are: (1) when the kata is counted as a class, the forward kick, the elbow strike, the knuckle strike, the low sweeping swipe and the reversed punch are on one beat (the rhythm is 1 – 2 (elbow and stamp) – 3 – 4 – 5); (2) the second mid-level block is an open hand pulling block (hiki uke); (3) a right and a left pulling block (hiki uke) has been added and (4) the last technique is not a powerful double punch in a rectilinear zenkutsu dachi, but a tora guchi with muchimi, in nekoashi dachi, emerging from the line of attack. In addition to the points of attention you learn from Gekisai dai ichi, this kata teaches you the execution of blocks with an open hand and the shifting focus on different blocks. Only the techniques that differ from Gekisai dai ichi are covered.

### **Mid-level open hand pulling block (chudan shotei hiki uke)**

The movement is performed with muchimi, the foot moves in a circular motion (ankle along ankle), even with the hand. The blocking hand begins angled under the elbow of the other arm, fingers up. The force is focused on the little finger side of the hand during the block. This is a circular movement; only at the end of the block is the hand drawn straight to the body from the elbow about 5 centimeters; the elbow then touches the rib cage. When pulling, focus on the thumb and forefinger. The hikite is an open hand with the fingers up.

### **Right – left pulling block (migi hidari hiki uke)**

These two pulling blocks are executed quickly, but still separately and with muchimi. They are similar to the first pulling block, only faster but by no means rushed. Again, the ankle moves along the ankle, simultaneously with the hand movements, both of which begin angled below the elbow. The right foot is placed on the floor, briefly bears about 50% of the body weight and, after the block has been completed, pushes back for the same circular movement.

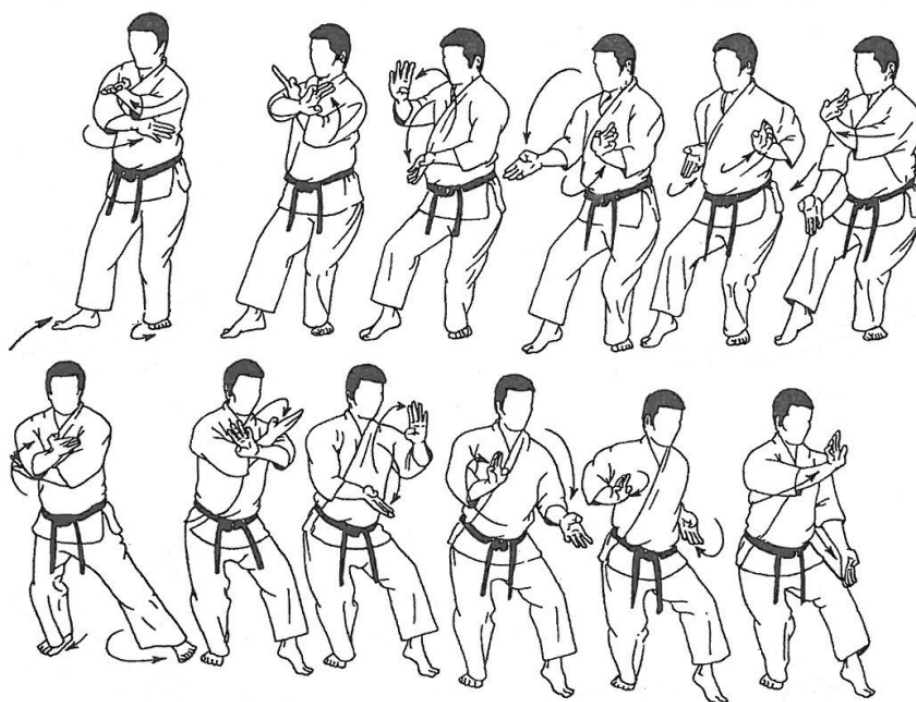
In the kick, the block is kept and the hand – unlike Gekisai dai ichi and the first in Ni – is therefore open. It is pulled back just as hard before the elbow strike, turns and becomes a fist.

### **Tora guchi “tiger mouth”; high controlling block with the back of the hand (jodan haishu osae uke), inward hook block (uchi kake uke) and high and low push (jodan and gedan oshi)**

From hachiji dachi (natural stance) you step diagonally backwards in a straight line and draw the other foot straight into nekoashi dachi. The movement is performed with muchimi. Inhale on the blocks, exhale on the push. Focus on the tanden, the large back muscles and the sides of the hands on the blocks; at the push on the tanden, the large back muscles, the palms and the thumb. The focus shifts with the blocks: with the block from the little finger side of the arm to the top of the wrist; in the low technique from the side of your wrist to the palm. When pushing, the palm is open and the thumb is contiguous. The tanden remains closed during the push, but the pelvis remains in its natural position. The upper hand ends at collarbone/throat height, the lower hand at the height of your thigh.

When moving, the entire sole of both feet remains on the ground. Therefore, put your front foot completely on the ground before moving. Note that the hand that is going to make the high controlling block starts angling under the elbow of the other arm.

To close, turn as a whole from the tanden to the front; the feet do not come off the floor.



Note: In neko ashi dachi, the crown is up, the chin is slightly in, the eyes look straight forward and the back is straight. Your weight rests mainly on the back foot (90%); of your front foot, the toes and ball of the foot lightly touch the floor, as if floating. The heel of the back foot and the ball of the front foot are along a straight imaginary line (or from musubi dachi, the front foot goes straight forward). The knee of the front foot falls slightly inward.

Bring the left hand up and then move both hands down in a circular motion and place the right hand in the left, palms up. Push off strongly with the ball of the front foot as you step back into musubi dachi from neko ashi dachi. You turn your hands and close the kata.

## Saifa

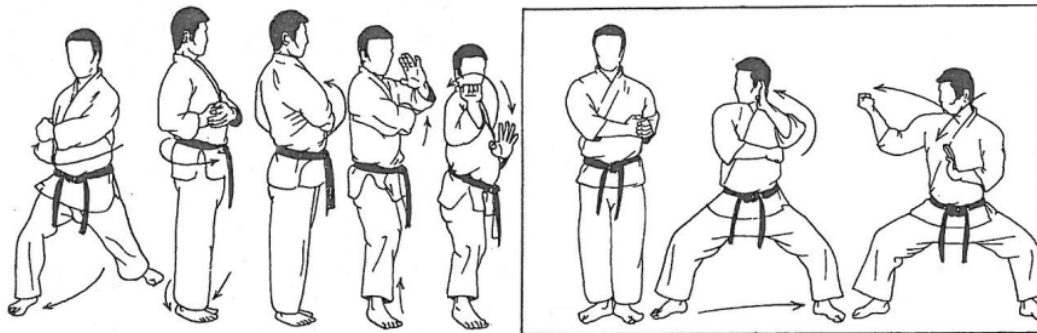
Saifa was introduced to Okinawa by Kanryo Higaonna. He learned the kata from Ryu Ryu Ko. The original maker of the kata is unknown, but he undoubtedly had connections with crane boxing. Goju ryu is the only karate style that has Saifa in its curriculum. Saifa means something like "destructive attacks" but the name is used more often, for example for completely different quans in Shaolin Kung Fu.

The kata is characterized, among other things, by the high number of striking techniques, which are of course circular and are performed without tension in the wrist, elbow and shoulder. Also, there is only minimal use of the muscles of the upper body, so that one learns to optimally use the impulse from the legs and pelvis during the strike. This allows you to train a lot of variation between tension and relaxation with this kata.

## Hazushi waza (freeing technique)

From musubi dachi you sink first, after which you push off powerfully from the back leg, you move the front leg 45 degrees obliquely forward. The movement is smooth and has been compared to a swimming octopus. You only come up when you have your feet connected, during the move you keep your back straight and crown up. At the beginning of the movement, the left hand grasps the right fist, the thumb and the little finger of the left hand sticking into the fist at the top and bottom respectively, so that more grip is obtained. During the hazushi waza, the arm stays close to the body (if it goes further away from it, you lose strength). At the start of the hazushi waza, the wrist is tilted outwards. Initially, the grip is loose, but firm during the technique. The actual freeing technique is powerful and also comes from turning the body; you tilt your fist and pull and punch vigorously.

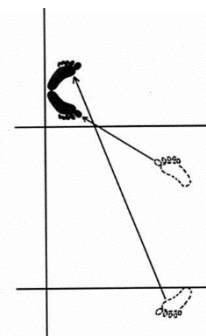
Note. The hazushi waza is performed from musubi dachi ("attention position", is the same as at the beginning of the kata). That is more difficult than, for example, from sanchin dachi (two feet long). By performing it from musubi dachi, the karateka learns to keep better balance. Incidentally, this freeing technique is also performed in the bunkai from musubi dachi. It is good to also practice this from stances where you stand firmer, as you would in a combat situation.



## Jodan uraken uchi (high knuckle strike) and osae uke (controlling block)

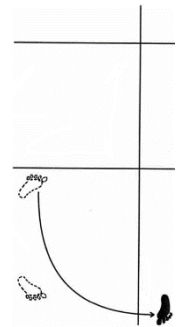
The rhythm of the movement from the starting position to the hazushi waza, the hazushi waza itself and the uraken uchi/osae uke is smooth/flowing – powerful – fast. For the uraken uchi, the arm (shoulder, elbow and wrist) is free from tension. The impulse of the movement comes from the tanden (and the falling of the pelvis), the muscles of the upper body are also almost relaxed. The uraken uchi starts near the armpit, follows a fairly large circle (past the forehead) and comes diagonally from above to jinchu (vital point at the upper lip). The uraken uchi is performed like a whip and the hand springs back, after which the elbow forms a 90 degree angle. The block is circling osae uke (controlling block) (and not a dropping block (otoshi uke). This means that muchimi must be added to this fast block. At the end of the block, this hand is raised in front of the solar plexus.

In the freeing technique in musubi dachi the pelvis is closed, in shiko dachi the pelvis is open. Pelvic drop and tilt is used in the knuckle strike and the controlling block. When moving from the shiko dachi to the next hazushi waza, the back leg moves obliquely forward in a straight line.

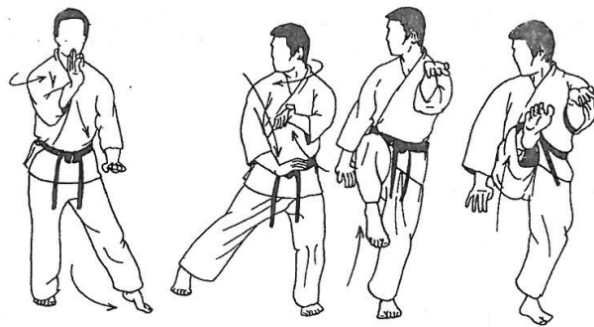


### **Sukui uke (scoping block), shotei gedan harai uke (open hand low sweeping block), hiza ate (knee kick) and mae geri (forward kick)**

Unlike the previous displacements in shiko dachi (straight line), this displacement is circular; the foot goes first to the other foot and the ankles go right past each other. Then the foot moves parallel to shomen (front of the dojo). The sukui uke and the gedan shotei barai are performed with muchimi; the arm that makes the gedan barai slides through the elbow of the other. After the block, all fingers point forward, the fingers of the gedan hand slightly inward. The head turns during the movement and looks to the side as the ankles pass each other. The addition of the leg is also done with muchimi. Only when the foot is directly under the body does it quickly release for the hiza ate. The mae geri is keage with the ball of the foot to the crotch (often the kick in Saifa is executed a bit too low, which is caused by the hiza ate being too low and therefore not lifting the knee high enough; make sure the thigh is horizontal after the knee kick). After the kick, the foot is actively withdrawn and then hangs down in a relaxed manner. For the move to the second sagi dachi (heron position), the foot goes straight down and then slides on the ground, with muchimi of course; the gedan hand starts spinning early in front of the block. The head turns at the start of the movement and also looks to the (other) side during the hiza and mae geri.



Note: the head does not look in the direction of the action. This makes the action a bit more difficult and you train your balance. Because you don't see the action, it would also stimulate the use of other senses, such as the ears and the feeling of the skin. You can also train this at times when you are not standing on one leg. A karateka who has not yet developed good balance (press your foot into the floor, the eyes look straight and pull your shoulder blades down) can look ahead.

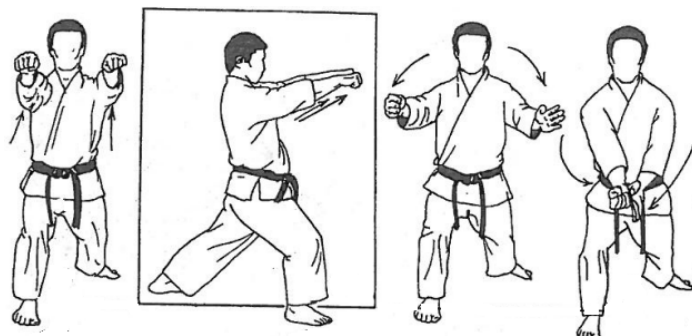


### **Morote zuki (double punch) and morote gedan furi uchi (double low swing strike)**

After the (second) kick, turn your head forward, forcefully move the leg backward into a zenkutsu dachi and simultaneously perform the morote zuki. The hands are first strongly pulled back to the sides, the knuckles remain up; the fists do not rotate during the punch. The double punch is slightly above the shoulders, shoulder width. As with the hiji ate (elbow strike) in Gekisai dai ichi, this can be performed in three ways depending on the level of the karateka (the difference is that in Gekisai dai ichi the reflection from the ground comes from the front leg, at Saifa the back leg):

1. The foot is put down and the force of reflection from the ground is used in the morote zuki. The rhythm is 1 ..... 2.
2. The foot is put down and immediately afterwards the morote zuki is performed. The rhythm is pam-bam.
3. The foot is put down simultaneously with the execution of the morote zuki. From the tanden, the force goes to both the foot and the knuckles simultaneously. So "splitting power".

In the morote gedan furi uchi there is no tension in the shoulders, elbows and wrists; you only use gravity. Don't do anything with muscles, just drop the arms. For this, the fists initially swing slightly sideways, and then fall down in a fairly large circle. Only at the moment of hitting do you focus, with the focus both in the fist and in the open hand (the hand above the knee makes the fist, note that with the open hand the tip of the thumb against the root of the



side of the index finger is pressed). The entire action is fluid with a powerful kime that closes the tanden.

### **Chudan hiki uke (mid-level pulling block) and morote zuki (double punch)**

The hand of the hiki uke starts angulated under the upper arm. You don't step sideways, but you swing the foot sideways. The side swing and the twist is one movement; there is no pause moment. The block has no kime. Use the bounce of the twist off the back leg and pelvis for the double punch. Focus vigorously.

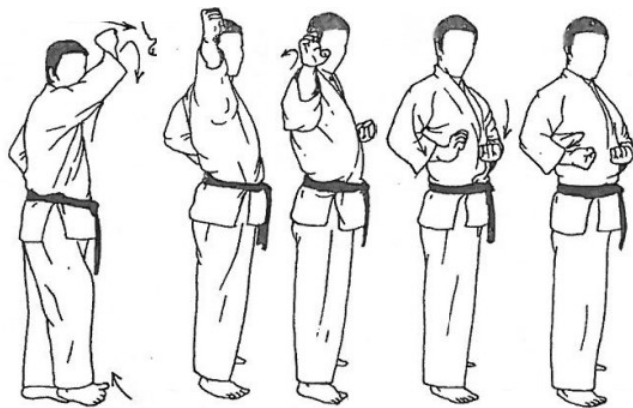
### **Ashi barai (foot sweep), tettsumi uchi (hammer strike), tsukami hiki ("grab and pull") and ura zuki (short or turned punch)**

The ashi barai is small, the foot goes along the other foot and you stamp it into hachiji dachi. Use the momentum of the sweep's movement through the tanden and the powerful hikite to support the tettsumi uchi. For the hammer strike, the upper body and the joints of the arm and shoulder are relaxed. The arm remains relaxed as it makes a large circle, along the crotch, the side of the body and over (!) the head in a smooth circular motion. Imagine that your arm is a solid rubber hose and your fist is a stone, your tanden the handle. The tettsumi uchi is powerful and on the forehead and is focused (= heavy strike) at the moment of hitting the underside of the hand, the tanden is then tightened and the feet grip the floor. Kiai!

Rotate and open the fist-hand, there remains tension in the fingers. Imagine that you grab someone by the hair and pull it down forcefully. This hand stays more or less "flat" and moves to your side. At the same time you make a powerful ura zuki.

The pelvis does not turn inwards with the strike.

Note: With the ura zuki, the pelvis in the kata does not turn inwards. This is to encourage the use of the lower body for power delivery. It is therefore not the intention that the non-rotation of the pelvis is compensated by providing more force with the arm. Incidentally, the pelvis in the bunkai does retract, in self-defense situations this is also more sensible.



### **Gyaku zuki (reverse punch)**

Turn from hachiji dachi to han zenkutsu dachi; three feet long. The power for the punch comes partly from the twist, the bounce off the ground from the back leg straightening and the powerful hikite. The punch is at throat level, above the collarbone. Focus vigorously.

### **Haito uchi (thumb hand strike)**

Take a long sliding step towards the back, open the hands and twist into a neko ashi dachi; the "gyaku zuki arm" remains relaxed and slightly extended. Keep the body upright but relaxed; there is no tension in the joints of the arm during haito uchi; the arm is thus more or less stretched during the performance. Use the pelvic impulse, the hikite retraction and the twist for the chudan (height: floating ribs) haito uchi. Focus the haito uchi on the side of the hand under the thumb! (And not on the ball of the thumb; if you focus on the side of the hand under the thumb, the (base of the) thumb does not protrude and will lie further in with the haito uchi than is the case with, for example, a nukite (spear hand thrust) or open hand block). Firmly pull the other hand back to the side, this hand is open and the palm is facing up. The fingers of the haito uchi end above this hand.



### **Tora guchi (tiger mouth)**

Perform the tora guchi in a similar way to Gekisai dai ni and close the kata.

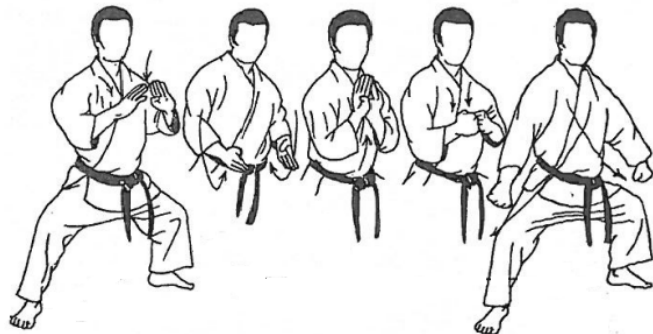
## Seiyunchin

Seiyunchin was introduced to Okinawa by Kanryo Higaonna. He learned the kata from Ryu Ryu Ko. The original maker of the kata is unknown. Seiyunchin means "control and push". This is equivalent to throwing someone off balance (or pulling), controlling and attacking with a close range technique (attack to a vital point, throw, choke).

Seiyunchin is the kata in which you develop a lot of "chiru no chan chan" - push off power or explosion power. The kata has a large number of movements over a considerable distance, both forwards and backwards. In addition, the kata contains a large number of techniques that are performed in shiko dachi (see the gedan barai at Gekisai dai ichi for the points of attention). During a shift from shiko dachi to shiko dachi, the body remains low and the feet slide across the floor. Although the shiko dachi appears several times in the kata, the way in which the movement takes place and how the power is supplied is different each time.

### Morote sukui uke (double scoping block) and morote gedan barai (low double sweeping block)

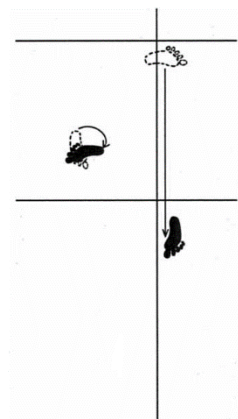
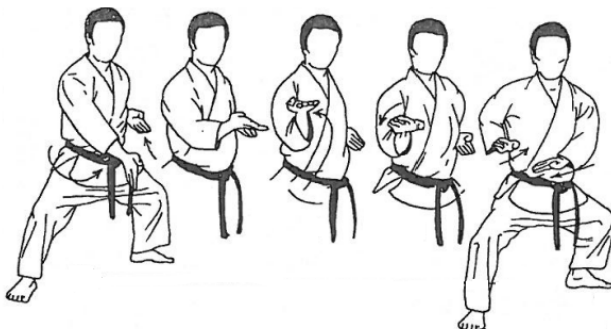
The entire movement is performed with muchimi. From musubi dachi you step in a straight line obliquely forward into shiko dachi. The hands simultaneously rise slightly, rotate and then move sideways; they circle around the abdomen like the belly of a heavily pregnant woman. Keep the shoulderblades low and fingers together, thumb pressed against the side of the index finger. When the hands meet in front of the lower abdomen, they rotate upwards, the fingers go straight up, the backs of the hands meet and the fingertips end just below the chin. The elbows are pressed against the rib cage. The breath goes to the tanden as the hands go up. Under the chin, the hands become fists (index finger first, with muchimi). The fists go down and the knuckles then twist together like a cogwheel. Hold your breath and keep your tanden tight while moving the fists down. When the fists are down, they go out and perform a slow morote gedan barai, still with muchimi. During the morote gedan barai you exhale and the tanden/pelvis opens (for advanced users: it is a kind of noon breathing). Shortly focused at the end with a powerful kime, the fists then turn in slightly.



### Sukui uke (scoping block), hiki uke (pulling block) and nukite zuki (spear hand strike)

Also this movement is slow and with muchimi. Open both hands. The hikite goes to the side of the body, hand open and palm up. Simultaneously, you perform a sukui uke with the other hand. While grabbing, the direction of focus changes from towards the inside, to obliquely upwards and upwards. The hiki uke is small and performed from the wrist. In the bunkai the sukui uke (and therefore also the hiki uke) goes to the elbow and you can also imagine this when you do the kata: grab your opponent by the elbow (and not the forearm or the wrist) and the nukite

goes short along the body with the focus in the fingers and the thumb pressed firmly against the side of the base of the index finger. Pull the pulling arm vigorously (but with muchimi) to the side of the body; the nukite is slanted downwards.

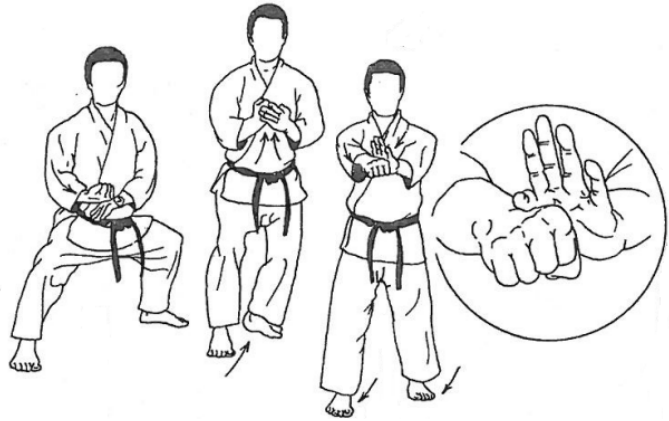


From shiko dachi, move straight ahead (see drawing), the feet slide on the floor without losing contact with the floor.

### Hojo oshi (supported push) and suri ashi (sliding move)

For the hojo oshi, place the fist in your open hand and they twist together until the ball of the thumb of the supporting hand is behind the ball of the thumb of the fist hand. From shiko dachi you pull the front leg back in a "high neko ashi dachi" (but it is not a stance, but one continuous movement). The suri ashi ("sliding step") is fast and powerful, the feet glide across the floor. The forward movement is from the tanden with the whole body and straight forward (you should have the feeling that you are pushing off very forcefully and falling forward); the technique itself is not a strike but a push to the solar plexus.

Note: In the standard bunkai, you punch with nakadaka-zuki (middle-finger fist punch) first, then open your hand and give a supporting push with this open hand. In the kata, you push and use the fist (no nakadaka).



### Ushiho (backward) and chudan hiji ate (midlevel elbow strike)

After the push you turn the fist tateken (vertical), the open hand turns with it and stays behind the thumb mouse on the fist. This open hand will "stick" causing the fist to "pull loose" for a powerful uraken hiji ate (backward elbow strike), simultaneously stepping back into han zenkutsu dachi. The open hand remains stretched out. This is followed by a powerful chudan hiji ate (mid-level elbow strike, the fist remains tateken (vertical) forward; the forearm in the palm of the (then turned) open hand. The two elbow strikes are in quick succession, but not "bouncing". So it is not: one (uraken hiji ate) – two (chudan hiji ate), but a fast and powerful one (uraken hiji ate) – fast loading – two (chudan hiji ate).



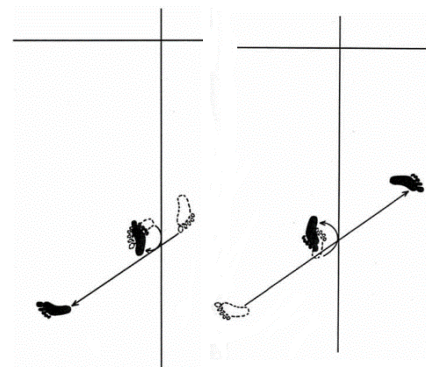
### Hojo uke (supported block)

The technique is performed with muchimi. The fist hand passes in front of seigetsu and starts on the left side next to your body where it rests in the palm of the other hand and together they follow the trajectory of a chudan uke (midlevel block). Firmly press and stretch the thumb of the open hand. The pelvis is closing during the blocking technique. With this slow movement, too, extra attention is paid to the support provided by the breath: you inhale during the block and exhale during the kime. Note the stand: it is renoji dachi, the "L-stance".

### Ippon gedan barai (low sweeping block)

From renoji dachi you step straight forward with the back leg, the ankles go right past each other. The gedan barai is performed with great power and speed. During the technique, the pelvis opens and falls in the shiko dachi and this is used in the first gedan barai. Keep the arm more or less straight.

After this the pelvis remains open, you push off powerfully with the front foot that goes straight back, the ankles go right past each other. Obviously you stay low; the feet slide across the floor. This gedan barai is also performed with a lot of speed and power. Therefore, pull the hikite back vigorously and grab the ground with your feet. Both of these gedan barais are the most



powerful moments in the kata. The first uses the drop of the body and the opening of the pelvis, the second uses the push-off with the front foot.

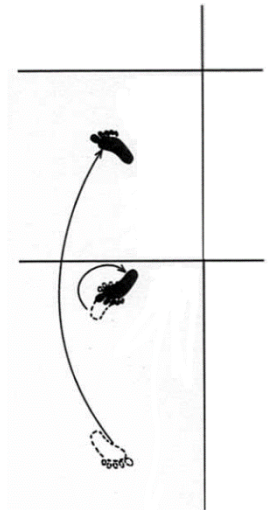
### **Shotei chudan uke (mid-level open hand block) and hari uke (bow and arrow block)**

From shiko dachi, withdraw the front foot and move to a shiko dachi perpendicular to the front of the room. The foot arches and passes the other foot, the pelvis remains open, the back straight, the feet slide across the floor and you do not rise. The chudan uke (mid-block) goes along with the rotation of the body. The hari uke is performed with muchimi. The arm that makes the jodan technique (the left) goes - palm up - through the arm that makes the gedan uke. The jodan block is a controlling and slightly pulling at the moment of focus. The gedan movement is sweeping, the arm is stretched. Make sure that the thumb rests firmly against the top of the base of the index finger. As a result, the hands are automatically open and the fingers are stretched. In this technique, focus on both the fingers and the palms of the open hands; also develop feeling for each finger individually.



When moving to the second hari uke (left gedan arm goes inside), turn on your left foot. The ankles don't go past each other but around each other, and you move your body similar to a door. Of course the pelvis remains open, you do not rise and the feet slide over the floor. When performing the hari uke, you lower your body a little further.

Note: the left arm goes inside twice. Until around 2010, this was implemented differently at various European dojos and the (right) jodan arm went inside in the second technique.

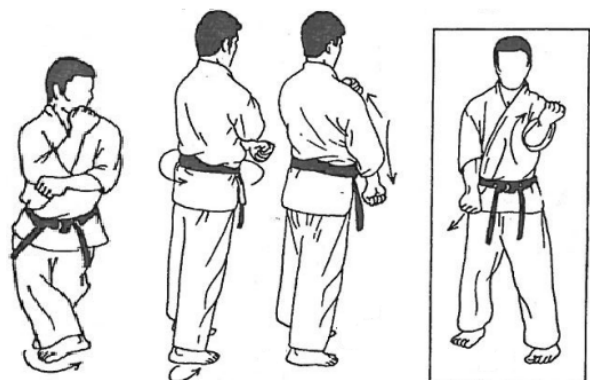


### **Jodan uchi uke (high inward block) and uraken uchi (knuckle strike)**

From shiko dachi, pivot on the left leg and take a swinging step from the outside in (similar to a large foot sweep, imagine sweeping someone below the ankle). Move from hara and come forward with the whole body. Both arms also make a large movement and come from the outside in. In the jodan uchi uke, the fist in front of the face ends at nose level. Apply the same amount of force in both arms. Place the elbow in the palm of the other hand. Then, from the tanden, slide the whole body forward with suri ashi, the feet slide on the floor, the left hand remains around the elbow and perform a uraken uchi to the nose. There is no tension in the shoulder, wrist and elbow; there is no kime, the hand jumps back. Note: In the bunkai, the left hand blocks with shotei uchi uke (inward open hand block). In the kata this hand is held differently and the elbow lies in it. Do not bring the bunkai into the kata.

### **Chudan yoko uke (midlevel outward block) and gedan barai (low sweeping block)**

Step with the front foot sideways in a kind of bensoku dachi (scissor stance). Sink (approx. 10 cm) with your entire weight deep into the front foot (imagine that you screw this foot into the ground). Then forcefully push off with this foot (imagine the screw springs back strongly from the ground) and use this force for the 135-degree turn. Cross both

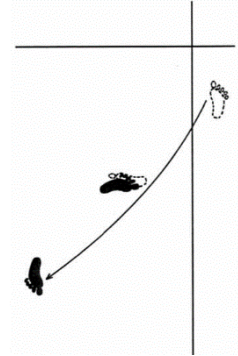


arms in front of your solar plexus and simultaneously perform a quick chudan yoko uke and the gedan barai.

### **Age zuki (rising punch), jodan uraken uchi (high knuckle strike) and gedan barai (low sweeping block)**

Push off from your back leg and keep your right hand in 'ura zuki'. Your left hand is open and above your forehead. As your foot lands, forcefully and actively pull your left hand toward your solar plexus and perform a powerful age zuki. Kiai! The elbow makes a 90 degree angle after the punch.

Then follows a uraken uchi (arm completely relaxed), fist is not focused (whip) and a small gedan barai from the elbow. Push off powerfully with the front leg, pivot on the left foot and step straight back, ankle along the ankle to shiko dachi and perform a powerful gedan barai. Pull the hikite back vigorously and grab the floor with your feet.



### **Hazushi waza/Hiji ate (freeing technique/elbow lift)**

For a good performance of the hazushi waza, imagine being attacked from behind (as in the bunkai). Also focus on the back of your body.

The arm of the front leg rests against the body and will perform the freeing technique; it lies under the arm that shoots back for the uraken hiji age (backward elbow strike). Curl up by: (1) closing your pelvis and tilting back, (2) pushing your shoulders forward and bringing your shoulder blades forward (but the back remains straight, crown up, you continue to look straight ahead) and (3) twist the arms and wrists together as far as possible, against the body. Release the built-up tension suddenly, like an arrow (actually three arrows: pelvis, shoulders and arms) flying off a tense tendon. In addition, the pelvis also drops slightly lower. The nukite arm flies back forcefully, like a uraken hiji age (backward elbow strike). The hazushi waza/hiji ate shoots upwards vigorously, as if popping a beer bottle cap (the fist remains against the body).



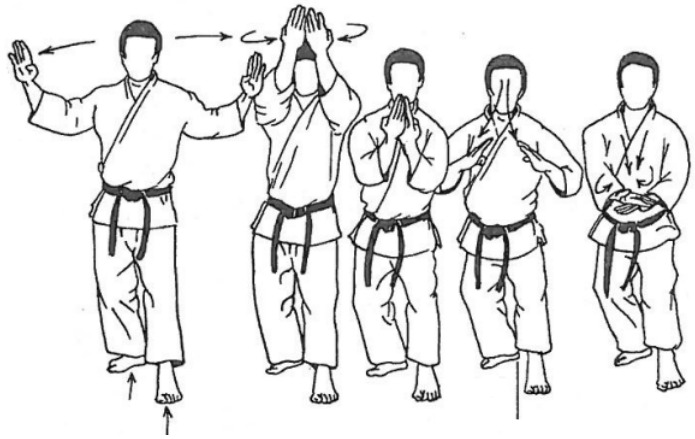
For the shift, transfer your weight to the front leg and push off very strongly with the ball of the foot for the back shift. The displacement is smooth but powerful, over a considerable distance (about 1.5 meters) and is performed at great speed. Imagine that you also push someone behind you over this distance. Stay low as the front foot slides from neko ashi dachi to bensoku dachi.

### **Shotei otoshi uke (open hand dropping block) and jodan uraken uchi (high knuckle strike)**

From neko ashi dachi, move a large step with shuri ashi forward into sanchin dachi (from the tanden with the whole body) and simultaneously (as two circles) perform a shotei otoshi uke and jodan uraken uchi. Block hand ends in front of solar plexus, fingers up. The knuckle strike is a whip strike to jinchiu.

### **Morote kuri uke (double elbow block)**

Step back in nekoashi dachi. For the kuri uke, the hands make a fairly large circle up and come together above the forehead, the backs of the pinky mice against each other, after which the elbows also touch each other. Bring them down slowly, with muchimi. Focus in the elbows as they go down. Then the elbows go out and make morote kuri uke. At the start of the block, the focus is on the elbows, but this shifts to the underside of the forearm, the palm, and finally the fingers (the thumb presses vigorously against the side of the base of the index finger, the fingers rest together ).



Rotate the hands downwards in a fairly small circle, place the back of the right hand in the palm of the left and rotate the hands as you step into musubi dachi.

Close the kata.

## Sanchin

Sanchin means three fights and the kata teaches (the integration of) 'jodan' (you look straight ahead, the chin is slightly retracted and you are aware of your body and the environment), 'chudan' (the back is straight, keep the shoulders and elbows low, elbows keep contact with the body during the punch and the direction of force turns outwards and is finally focused in the fists) and 'gedan' (pelvis is tilted back and closed, balls/vagina are retracted, the tanden is closed and curled up, the knees are bent towards the toes, the feet are turned in and pressed to the floor, the toes are spread and the leg and abdominal muscles are tensed). This should be performed in a correct manner and combined with deep abdominal breathing. This three-way division corresponds somewhat - but not completely - to the three basic qualities discussed in the introductory part.

There are, among others, two videos in which Sensei Higaonna deals with the kata. These are from Panther productions (translation Paul Enfield) and Tsunami Martial Arts Videos (translation David Chambers). In addition, the kata is extensively discussed in the aforementioned 'Traditional Karate Vol. 2'. A copy of the portion of the book on Sanchin and the transcribed narration of these two videos are available as one reader under the title "Heishu Kata (heishugata) – The core katas of Goju-Ryu" and can be downloaded from the website of Kenkon or IOGKL-NL. This reader is made by Sydney Leijenhorst (Leijenhorst, 2003). The section on Sanchin from Traditional Karate is attached here.

I have little to add to these texts and they cover all aspects of the kata, which are not repeated here.

I do want to give an overview here of how you can learn the kata step by step. About my exam for my first dan I hoped to be able to show "a reasonable Sanchin kata". As a criterion for this I had thought that my feet had to be in the right position. Coincidentally, it snowed during this period and so I could easily test my footwork. The print wasn't perfect, but certainly not bad. The footprints of the foot were in the right place, angled the right way, and they were neatly pressed into the ground. The snow had swept away more or less circularly along the other foot; the pass to the rear had scarcely taken another course. But I was not satisfied at all, I was sure I was doing "something" wrong. About my third dan the kata was a bit better, but I was still not satisfied. I decided to rebuild my Sanchin kata from scratch. Step-by-step. This turned out to be a good path for me. It turned out that I wasn't doing "anything" wrong, but in all parts of the rebuild I found aspects that the kata teaches and that were an important improvement for me. Now I train the kata more meaningfully and with more pleasure – although it is still a "difficult" kata and the execution is quite heavy, especially if you do it several times in a row.

I therefore do not want to withhold from you the (re)building of my "Sanchin": 1. make sure you take deep abdominal breaths, 2. ground (the feet press into the floor and the toes grab the ground), 3. learn the movements of the kata, 4. find the tanden and let the breath revolve around it, 5a. root (the feet rotate in the ground, muscles in the legs are tightened, knees are pushed in), 5b. tilt the pelvis and close the tanden, 6. pull the shoulder blades and elbows to the floor, 7. straighten your head, 8. pay attention to your body and the environment and 9. have your kata checked and help others with the kata (shime).

### 1. Get deep abdominal breathing

Deep abdominal breathing is crucial for the performance of Sanchin. The kata cannot be performed without deep abdominal breathing. For this, the muscles around the pelvis and lower abdomen are pushed out (and not retracted or contracted, a common mistake), so that maximum space is obtained there. If you don't yet have deep abdominal breathing, you do this actively at first, but over time the extension of these muscles and the space in the lower abdomen become more natural and self-evident. When you start the kata, these muscles should be pushed out so forcefully that you can take a forward kick to the lower abdomen.

### 2. Ground - feet press into the floor and toes grab the ground

The feet are actively pressed into the ground. The toes are spread and grab the ground. You should not come up here. That is why you must first press the foot into the ground, then 'roll the foot flat over the ground' from the inside, spread the toes and only then grab. Grounding is therefore a kind of wave: the foot presses into the ground from the inside of the foot/heel, the rest of the foot is pushed onto the ground, the toes spread and grab the floor. If this still doesn't work, it's good to practice this statically

and without movement. Sensei Higaonna about this: "It is essential to first achieve correct focus and technique in the feet".

If you do not perform the kata with deep abdominal breathing and grounded feet, it is not kata Sanchin, but something else.

### **3. Learn the movements of the kata**

The form and movements of the kata have been extensively explained in the aforementioned readers and are not repeated here. Volume 2 of Traditional Karate in particular gives all the directions and is included as an appendix.

### **4. Find hara or tanden and let the breath revolve around it**

You find the tanden by letting the breath flow through your back over your pelvic floor and let it curl up naturally. For a virtual point, it's surprisingly easy to find: it's about four finger widths below your navel, more or less in the middle of your body. During the inhalation, the current circles around the tanden a few more times and then during the exhalation it goes along the front of your body towards the mouth. See also the text and the figures in the introduction to three basic qualities and the text by Sensei Higaonna about breathing in the appendix. In the beginning you can also breathe directly through the lower back and the pelvic floor to the tanden (and out through the front); you can add the more extensive route through your nose, over your head and eventually to your mouth. In the original version of Kanryo Higaonna, breathing goes directly from the nose to the tanden and from there back to the mouth. You can experiment with many other ways of breathing, as long as they are through the tanden.

### **5a. Root (feet rotates in the ground, muscles in the legs are tensed, knees are pushed in)**

Rooting is a bit like grounding, but they differ in intent and they start differently. To root you must first ground, then push the feet from the tanden spirally into the ground - the direction of the spiral is that the knees (would) go out and the heels in. Indeed, imagine the roots of a tree. You will now (also) feel a number of muscles in your legs (including the calf muscle and the large muscle of your thigh) tighten. Hold it. In addition, you keep the knee in place/push slightly inwards: the muscle on the inside of the thigh tightens. You hold this one too.

### **5b. Tilt the pelvis and close the tanden**

At the same time, tilt the pelvis backwards. You actively tighten the glutes and you pull in your balls/vagina; keep the big abs pushed out (you can still take a mae geri). This is called closing the tanden, but inside you are relaxed and the ki flows freely through the body. Your body is tense and hard on the outside, but the breath is soft and fluid on the inside.

### **6. Pull the shoulder blades and elbows towards the floor**

Now you actively pull the shoulder blades down. The large back muscles - especially the large back muscle or latissimus dorsi - tense. You also actively push your elbows down: the large muscles on the sides of your back body tense (you keep pushing your elbows down during the punch, the block, the strike and the tora guchi). Now you can feel if your shoulders are above your pelvis and your pelvis above your feet. If this is not the case, you of course correct this (people who lean slightly backwards should therefore correct this by moving the pelvis slightly backwards). Incidentally, you regularly 'get' corrections while learning and performing the kata and the techniques. Of course you have to accept it; they are almost always improvements.

### **7. Straighten your head**

Now you have to put your head directly above your shoulders. Push your crown up and tuck the chin in slightly or prick up the ears. You look straight ahead.

### **8. Pay attention to your whole body and environment**

Obviously this part is very difficult to obtain. Also train them separately and with less tense muscles and pay attention to the ki in your body. It is also good to train the kata while paying attention to what you see, hear, smell, taste and feel (also in the back, feet, etc.). By the way, the idea is that you eventually stop thinking at all (muishiki)!

### **9. Have your kata checked and help others with the kata (shime)**

If you read the aforementioned texts by Sensei Higaonna, you will notice the great emphasis he places on 'Shime'. So do that too. Determine the level of the partner. For beginners, check the abdominal breathing and make sure they ground properly, spread the toes and grab the floor. For more advanced users you can of course perform the full shime, as explained in the literature above. Always start at the feet. Incidentally, "shime" actually means closing your body, but it is also used as a term for the Sanchin training with a partner, which controls your closing of your body, your posture and your movement/technique.



Kongo Rikishi, the diamond guardian of the earth. Classic example for the martial artist

## Shisochin

Shisochin was introduced to Okinawa by Kanryo Higaonna. He learned the kata from Ryu Ryu Ko. The original maker of the kata is unknown. Shisochin means "four openings" or "four directions" and this, of course, refers to the performance of the shotei zuki (palm strike) in four directions, but the kata has more twists and turns.

Goju-ryu is the only karate style with this kata. The kata is characterized by many and powerful, fast open hand techniques. An arm with an open hand can be relaxed more easily than with a fist, allowing techniques to be performed more quickly.

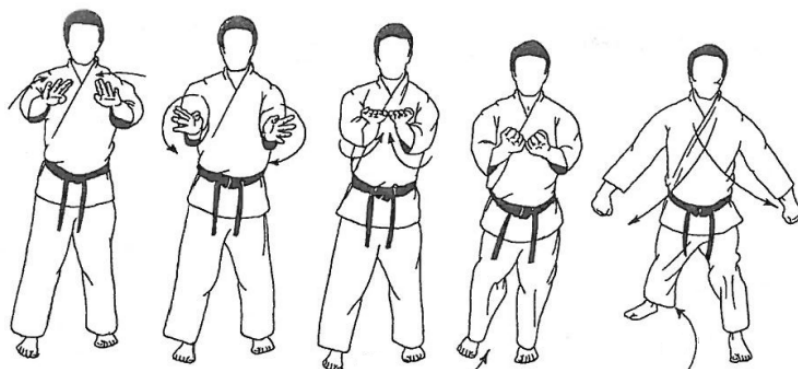
### **Nukite zuki (spear hand strike) and morote chudan shotei uke (double open hand block)**

From musubi dachi you lower and step with the right leg in a circular motion into sanchin dachi (feet standing, as in all kaishugata, straight). Simultaneously the hands go up, slide over each other to the side at the level of the solar plexus and make past the elbows - one right below, the left above - make a circular movement forward in morote chudan shotei uke (double open hand mid-level block). The hands are more vertical than horizontal. The elbows are close to the body (about a fist away from here) and at a 90-degree angle.

During the movement, the block and the strike, imagine a tiger stalking prey and then suddenly striking. So you move slowly, circularly (ankle along ankle) and with muchimi. When grounded, you suddenly strike with a nukite zuki with a lot of power, speed and precision. You first pull the hand that is going to stab firmly into your side, after which it jumps out. In the nukite zuki, the hand is a spear: the thumb presses against the mouse from the side of the index finger, the palm and fingers are stretched. The nukite is to ganka, the space between the fifth and sixth ribs at suigetsu-level. The fingers are not quite the extension of the arm, but are slightly lowered at the moment of impact. After the sting, the hand springs back into chudan shotei uke like a ball bouncing off a wall.

### **Hazusu wasa (freeing technique)/Morote gedan barai (double sweeping block)**

From morote chudan shotei uke, the hands make a small circular motion downwards, touching each other in front of the lower abdomen and moving up together in a scooping motion, palms up (like the bunkai). At the level of your collarbone, the hands become fists, pinky first, all with muchimi. As the hands rise, the breath goes down, the pelvis closes, the arms curl up and the shoulder blades separate (the back remains straight and you continue to look straight ahead). You step back forcefully into zenkutsu dachi while simultaneously opening your pelvis and releasing the tension in the shoulders and arms. You use the release of the tension in the morote gedan barai, the fists end next to your body, knuckles forward. Turn the fists in slightly at the end.



### **Chudan ura kake uke (open hand mid-level hook block) and shotei gedan barai (open hand sweeping block)**

Cross your arms for suigetsu, fingers extending slightly past the elbows. At the same time you sink. From your back leg, bring your body forward from your tanden in zenkutsu dachi; make sure you are

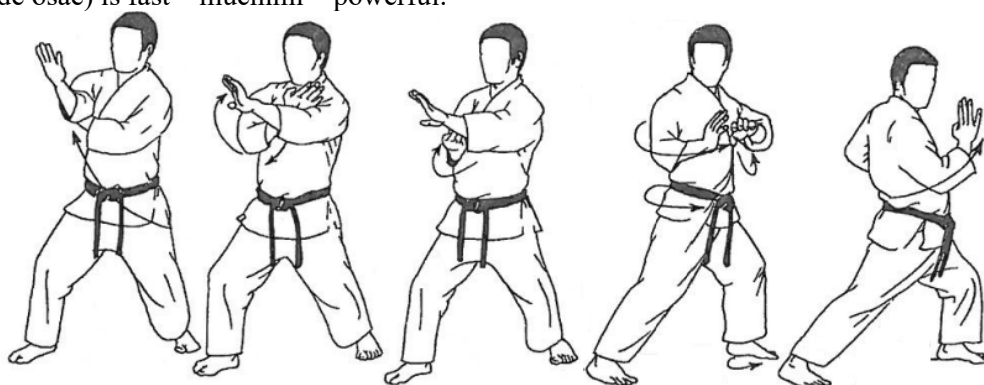
45 degrees to the shomen (otherwise you won't be on two lines in the next technique). The arm that makes the kake uke goes under the gedan uke arm. The kake uke is like throwing a frisbee, but your arm stays with your body: the elbow is and remains a fist's width from your body and the elbow makes an angle of 90 degrees after the kaki uke. The gedan barai arm (went through the elbow of the other arm) is relaxed and straight down.



### **Chudan uchi kake uke (midlevel inward hook block), hiki uke (pulling block) and ude osae (arm on elbow control technique)**

Both blocks are performed with muchimi. The arms move together and keep as much contact as possible, imagine that your arms are glued to an arm of an opponent. The hiki uke hand starts angled below the elbow and at the end of the technique both hands move out to the side together.

The ude osae is started from the push-off of the leg and the hips, the shoulders and hips move together, make sure you don't use muscle power from your shoulders or arms. The head initially turns with the body, but continues to look forward. The grasping hand pulls while rotating the hip; the ude osae is fast and powerful. The rhythm of the whole movement (ura kake uke/shotei gedan barai, grab the arm, ude osae) is fast – muchimi – powerful.



### **Age hiji ate (rising elbow strike) and ushiro hiji ate (backward elbow strike)**

Bring your weight to your left foot and join both feet together (heisoku dachi). This is of course a practice position to get more balance. During the movement to heisoku dachi, inhale and close the pelvis by tilting it back. Simultaneously, your hands become fists. You open your pelvis and simultaneously let your body fall while performing both elbow strikes. The knuckles of the ushiro hiji ate hand stay up. In the bunkai, the ushiro hiji ate is a strike backwards and you should pay more attention to your knuckles for that.



### **Jodan shotei zuki (high palm strike) and shotei gedan barai (low open hand sweeping block)**

From heisoku dachi you stay low. You turn on your left foot 180 degrees, the feet stay close together. When you are rotated, the right foot steps back into zenkutsu dachi and this right foot stays more or less in place during the four palm strikes, it turns of course. Bring the hand of the striking arm up to the side during the twist, fingers up as your belly fills with breath. Perform the shotei zuki and the gedan barai simultaneously. The shotei zuki is slightly higher than the shoulders. When performing, don't think too much about the gedan barai: this arm simply swings down (but doesn't sway) and barely focuses. Imagine striking and pushing at the same time. Concentrate in the palm and tanden. The shotei zuki is a tanden zuki, in this series of



movements the concentration in the tanden is crucial. Stay low on the moves.  
Note: In the bunkai, the palm strike is more upwards than in the kata.

### **Chudan hiki uke (mid-level pulling block), mae geri (forward kick) and hiji ate (elbow strike)**

Step from zenkutsu dachi with a circle (ankle along ankle) into sanchin dachi. The hiki uke is with muchimi; stay in (virtual) contact with the opponent's arm. The hikite is to the side with an open hand, fingers up. Hold the block at the keage mae geri with the ball of the foot to the crotch. The hikite remains open but moves to the solar plexus during the elbow strike. The elbow strike is to ganka and the hand is open. Kiai!

### **Hiki uke (pulling block)**

Both hiki ukes are with muchimi, move with a circular motion (ankle along ankle) and the hikite is to the side, open hand, fingers up. Hand and foot naturally move simultaneously.

### **Shotei osae (open hand controlling block) and hiji uchi (elbow strike)**

The movement begins with a small step and twist of the left foot. Block with muchimi. The blocking arm moves with the rotating body and goes past the side of your body in a circular motion in front of your face. Just before the blocking hand moves in a straight line back to the solar plexus, the elbow strike goes over the wrist. This elbow strike makes a circular rising movement, it is a heavy strike (from the tanden, ensure as little tension as possible in the arm) and up to the lower jaw. This elbow strike is therefore very different from the earlier elbow strikes and those in the Gekisai dai-katas for two reasons. Firmly pull the other hand toward the solar plexus.

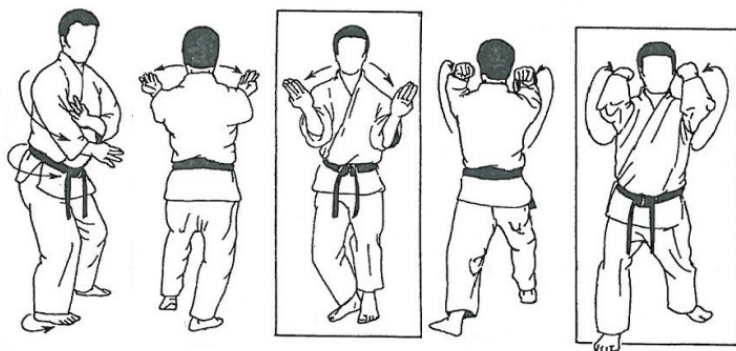
### **Morote chudan kake uke (double mid-level hook block)**

You turn on your right foot in neko ashi dachi. For this, both hands initially go together to the right side. Then they extend horizontally (especially the right to the left side) in front of the solar plexus (suigetsu), palms up. Both arms extend far to the side (fingers are outside the body) before the morote kake uke, at the end of the twist, is performed with muchimi. The hands are held in such a way that if you put a large book on them, you can start reading (more horizontal than the morote chudan shotei uke at the beginning of the kata).



### **Morote hiji ate (double elbow strike)**

Step with the left leg into zenkutsu dachi, twist the hands (keep elbows by the body), lower them slightly and make fists (as if you were gripping something tightly) - index finger first - which immediately grab and twist and pull. In the pulling motion, imagine that you are pulling a little tree out of the ground, which at first remains attached, but then comes loose. Both "elbow strikes" are high, fists end next to ears, knuckles up, the focus is in the wrists.



### **Chudan ura kake uke (mid-level hook block) and shotei gedan barai (open hand sweeping block)**

From heisoku dachi (you don't come up) take a long sliding step with the right leg to the back of the dojo. During the move, the hands move to your sides, crossing in front of the solar plexus and extending past your body. Quickly twist onto your right leg and use the twist for the blocks. The blocks are the same as for the ude osae (control technique on the elbow): frisbee and relaxed down. The bottom hand is a fist from the knee.

Bring both open hands together in a circular motion in front of your face and down again in a circular motion. Place the right hand in the left, pull your foot back into musubi dachi and twist both hands.

Close the kata.



## Sanseru

Sanseru was introduced to Okinawa by Kanryo Higaonna. He learned the kata from Ryu Ryu Ko. The original maker of the kata is unknown but it is suspected that this kata comes from Dog boxing (Dog Kung Fu). This is (also) a southern Kung Fu style, with a special feature quite a lot of techniques for short-range combat such as throws, chokes and ground fighting. Sanseru means '36': 6 (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) x 6 (color, voice, smell, taste, touch and justice).

There is an important anecdote about Sanseru. In 1915, Chojun Miyagi traveled to Fuzhou in China, where Kanryo had lived and trained. There he met another student of Ryu Ryu Ko and he showed the katas he had learned from Kanryo, except Sanseru. The student was impressed but also said that Sanseru missed. Miyagi said he learned this one, but didn't perform it because it was his least favorite kata. Thanks to this incident, we know two important things: Kanryo has learned all 9 katas from Ryu Ryu Ko and he has not removed any kata from the system.

## Morote chudan uke (double midlevel block), chudan zuki (mid-level punch) and chudan kake uke (mid-level hook block)

As with the beginning of Shisochin, these techniques should involve the image of a tiger slowly stalking its prey and then suddenly striking. So ground and center well, then punch. The block immediately follows the punch, like a ball bouncing off the wall. The elbow stays in the same place, a fist away from the body. You hardly use your arm muscles for the block. After the third punch, keep the left arm straight.

## Hazushi waza (freeing technique)

Open the right hand and rotate the hand in a small circle from the wrist to the front, the elbow remains more or less in place. Simultaneously pull the other hand back to the side (both with muchimi), the hand still a fist. Open the fist while simultaneously striking the right upper arm, just above the elbow (as if you were catching something), fingers up, thumb down. Perform the hazushi waza vigorously and quickly. Step back into zenkutsu dachi with the right leg while simultaneously pulling the right arm back (the open hand becomes a fist). The left arm/hand goes strong along the arm obliquely forward; like stripping the plastic protective layer from an electrical wire. This hand ends above the knee.



## Tsukami and nage waza (grabbing and throwing technique)

Step forward in a straight line with the right leg into zenkutsu dachi, bend over (keeping the back straight) and grab to the bottom of the knee of an imaginary opponent of the same size, pulling it towards you. Immediately/simultaneously follow this up with a palm punch to the opponent's imaginary upper knee. The arms end slightly crossed, the wrists one above the other.



## Ippon mae geri (double forward kick)

The hands turn slightly, come one above the other and point forward, you keep this during the execution of both kicks. Try to perform these kicks as quickly as possible, but of course keep an eye on the correct execution, such as a straight back. The keage mae geri is with the ball of the foot to the crotch (be careful not to perform this technique too low), finish in zenkutsu dachi and continue with an equally fast mae geri with the other leg.

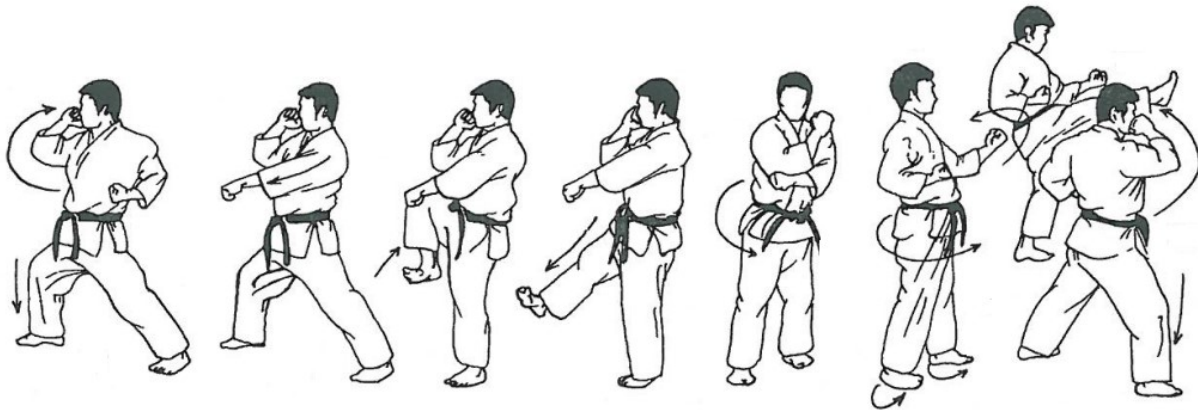
### **Hiji ate (elbow punch), gedan zuki (low punch), kansetsu geri (side kick to the knee), chudan uke (mid-level block), and mae geri (front kick)**

The hiji ate, the gedan zuki and the kansetsu geri must be performed with great force and speed. After the second mae geri (of the previous technique), the foot is stamped down and the rebounding impulse is used for the forward hiji ate. With the gedan zuki, the leg does stretch, but the hip does not turn in, the body remains hanmi (= half turned out). After the elbow strike and the low punch, the arms point slightly inward.

Pull the right foot back across the floor and only pull it up when it reaches the other foot.

Simultaneously fill the tanden and lift your foot next to your knee before performing the kekomi kansetsu geri (knee kick with the side of the foot) and fill your abdomen after the kick as you withdraw the foot to your own knee. During the kick, keep the arms in their positions. Pull the foot/knee back strongly and fairly high (the foot is next to the knee) and use this impulse for a 180 degree turn. After the turn, step back into sanchin-dachi with the right foot and simultaneously perform a chudan yoko uke. Filling the abdomen, lifting the foot, turning and blocking are virtually one movement.

Take a rest after the block before performing the mae geri. The keage mae geri is with the ball of the foot to the crotch, ending in zenkutsu dachi when you stamp the foot down.



### **Seiken and shotei gedan kosa uke (scissors block with fist and open hand)**

From zenkutsu dachi, put the back foot on the line of the front one, simultaneously twist and fall from a high into a very low shiko dachi and simultaneously perform a kosa uke (scissor block) fists down. Feel the impulse of the falling of your body being used. The right one is at the fist block for the left arm. Then shift your weight to your left foot and pull the right foot close to the left, turn and perform a shotei gedan kosa uke (scissor block with open hands) in deep shiko dachi, also straight down and this time the left is for the right arm. Make sure that you do not lift the shoulders during the movement and that you keep the back straight.

### **Shotei jodan age uke (high open hand rising block) and osae hiki waza (pulling, controlling technique)**

Transfer your weight to your left leg, stay low and move from your back leg - quickly at first, but this transitions into muchimi as you move - into shiko dachi, feet passing close to each other. Perform a jodan age uke, at the end the arm is bent slightly upwards and the eyes look just under the forearm.

The movement is initially fast, then with muchimi. Simultaneously withdraw the left hand with muchimi in a pulling motion, in a straight line, palm up, fingers extended sideways, ending under suigetsu.

### **Awase zuki (double straight and reverse punch)**

This is the most powerful movement in the kata. Shift your weight to your left leg again and pull your right leg back into a high nekoashi dachi (not a stance but a moment in the movement). Move the hands to your sides in a circular motion, they will still be open. Push off and move forward forcefully and quickly; the right foot first, followed by the left and finish in sanchin dachi. The storm/strike starts (only) when all the breath has arrived in the tanden and with making fists by tightening the thumb and

forefinger, then in the side. During this move, focus on making the fists and perform a very powerful awase zuki. Kiai! Make sure you inhale deeply into the tanden. Focus strongly on the tanden and knuckles of the fists while hitting. The ura zuki is above the knee of the front leg, just like in Gekisai dai ichi.

### **Ippon chudan uke (double middle block)**

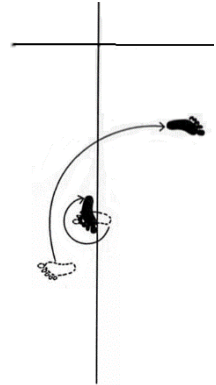
Shift your weight onto your left leg again, step sideways with your right leg (the body sinks sharply) and turn 180 degrees into sanchin dachi. Simultaneously perform a chudan uke, fists closed. For the second chudan uke, step through in a circular motion, foot and hand move synchronously.

### **Morote ko uke (double wrist block)**

Rotate the body 180 degrees, stepping back with the left foot, ending in shiko dachi. The foot makes a circle (so the ankles do not pass close to each other) and keeps contact with the floor. Simultaneously open the hands. The top hand (the right) falls inwards, most close along the body as both arms wrap around each other, and eventually becomes the front/upper hand of morote ko uke (double wrist block or praying mantis stance).



The right hand bounces up and the left can move to the side. This is why the thumb of the right hand (up) supports the ring finger (the part of the back of the hand below the pinky/ring finger becomes harder); the thumb of the left hand (may turn sideways) supports the middle finger (the middle part of the back of the hand becomes harder). In the kata the left hand does not move to the side and remains in a waiting position, in the bunkai it does



turn to the side. Make sure to focus your attention on points of contact between both wrists.

Raise both hands slightly, circle them back and place the right one in the left. Only now pull your foot back into musubi dachi and close the kata.

## Sepai

Sepai was introduced to Okinawa by Kanryo Higaonna. He learned the kata from Ryu Ryu Ko. The original maker of the kata is unknown. Sepai literally means 18 (hands), 6 (color, voice, taste, smell, touch and justice) x 3 (good, bad and peace).

The last four katas are the most characteristic of Goju-Ryu karate. They contain more contrast between hard and soft, fast and slow and large and small. For example, the hikite is less common and most movements are two handed techniques, often with a difference in the movement quality of the individual arms.

### Two circles

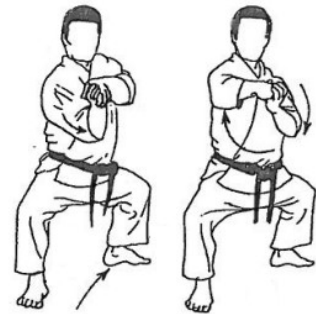
From musubi dachi, step back almost straight and only then sink into shiko dachi. Both circular movements begin during the turn of the body. Move the left hand in a small circle, past the shoulder in front of the head and it ends for suigetsu, fingers up. The right hand initially circles at the level of the crotch and remains close to the body, making a much larger circle, past the side, passing just above the forehead and ending at the level of the eyes. The arm is then almost stretched, the fingers in line with the arm.

### Hazushi waza (freeing technique or two-handed punch)

Step forward with the back leg (ankle along ankle, then out). Simultaneously move the left hand in a circle, initially slightly down and then up. The right hand goes down slightly and put both hands together. Pull the hands in slightly, but especially move from the tanden with the whole body forward (because the body moves forward, the hands also move forward not back). Rotate the hands and punch/push/twist them forward. Use your body with this loosening technique, as you do in the bunkai. Finish in han zenkutsu dachi (three feet long).

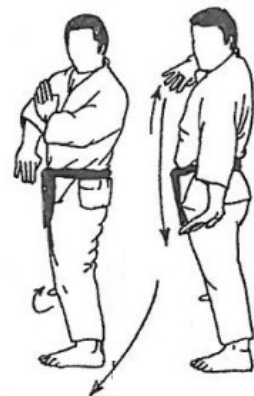
### Hazushi waza (freeing technique)

Rotate the heels so that you can fall into shiko dachi. Keep the hands together and so the left elbow against the body. Pre-tension by curling up your body - just like in the loosening technique with the hiji ate in Seiyunchin: pelvis tilted, shoulders forward (but back straight) and arms twisted together - and fall into shiko dachi, simultaneously letting go of the release tension and pop the right arm up (as if you were popping the cap off a beer bottle).



### Hazushi waza (freeing technique)

Put your weight on your right foot and move the leg slightly toward the other foot, then slide it forward in a straight line into kokotsu dachi (backward stance), simultaneously bringing your left hand just above the right elbow (as in Sanseru). Pull the right arm back up strongly in a straight motion; the hand ends at the shoulder and the elbow points obliquely up to the back. The movement is fast, but also heavy and sticky, similar to this technique in Sanseru. The left hand slides over the right arm and ends above the knee/lower thigh (also has an electrical wire stripped), the hand opens at a nearly 90 degree angle at the wrist.



### Mawashi osae uke (controlling circle block), jodan shutei uchi (knife hand strike), mae geri (forward kick), morote hiji ate (double elbow strike) and uraken uchi (knuckle strike)

Still in kokotsu dachi, move the left hand with muchimi forward in a fairly large circle (e.g. along the right shoulder), arm bent, looking just over your hand. During this whole controlling movement, the elbow stays in the same place and the angle between the hand and the forearm (almost 90 degrees) is maintained.

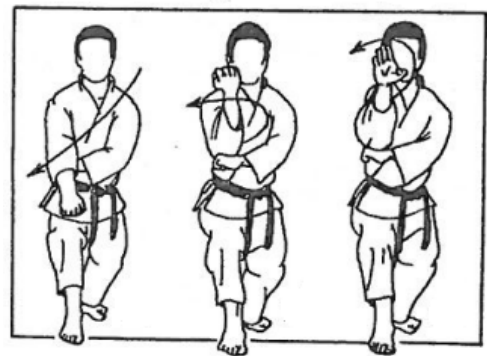
Slightly rotate the body and shift the body weight from kokotsu dachi to zenkutsu dachi (feet remaining in line), taking the right arm in the twist from the hip and performing a quick shuto uchi to

the temple. The right arm is relaxed until the moment of focus. To do this, also use a forceful pull of the left hand to the side, palm down, still holding the angle between the hand and the forearm. Perform a keage mae geri to the crotch with the back leg, maintaining the position of the hands on the kick. Step back into shiko dachi, simultaneously (at the moment of landing) perform an ushiro and hiji ate (the fist rotates). For this, the right fist first goes to the left side, just above the left fist, twisting the fists during the morote hiji ate. Followed by a uraken uchi to the nose bone of an imaginary opponent.



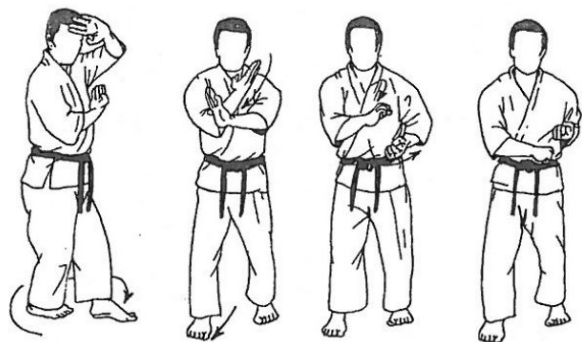
### **Gedan barai (low block), chudan uke (mid-level block) and 'tsukami' uke ('catching' block)**

Turn your left foot to the back of the dojo to a low nekoashi dachi. Simultaneously perform a gedan barai with the right hand with muchimi, pressing the left fist against your body and the elbow of the right. Perform a chudan yoko uke and a chudan hiki uke (it doesn't pull but does grab), also with muchimi and the left fist and right elbow more or less stay in place.



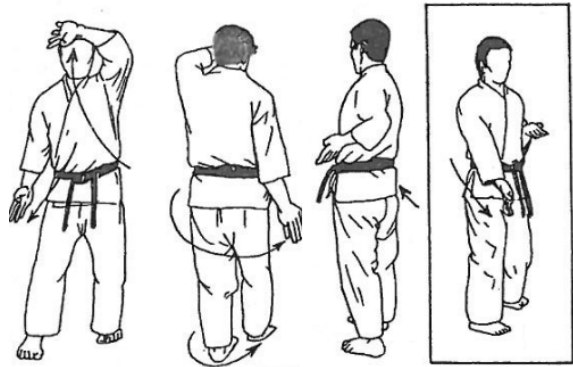
### **Maki age (breaking technique)**

The following breaking technique is almost impossible to explain on paper. Start by dropping the right hand out and continuing to drop down. Simultaneously, you rotate 180 degrees in sanchin dachi. Also simultaneously, the left hand opens up in a circular motion along your side and your forehead. Then this arm goes down in front of the right arm and both arms pass each other for your ganka/seigetsu. When the forearms have passed each other, the hands become fists, the circling, controlling movement ceases and your body prepares for the powerful breaking technique, you 'twist and pull' both arms straight up and down; the right fist ends slightly above the knot of your band (knuckles up), your left fist at left ganka/stomach (knuckles down). The breaking technique is powerful from the tanden, the pelvis tilts backwards during the technique.



### **Gedan furi uchi (low strike)**

From sanchin dachi, slump slightly and turn 270 degrees to a right sanchin dachi. The foot is not lifted during the movement, but remains on the ground. Simultaneously, the left hand goes up and goes past the back of the head (!) and circles as a controlling hook block through an open hand hikite, fingers down. The right arm goes to the side and makes the gedan furi uchi to the crotch of an imaginary opponent. The arm is of course free from tension, the whip-strike is not focused. Use the twist in both movements as well. Note: The bunkai also uses the opponent's movement.



### **Shotei oshi (open hand push) and gedan harai uke (low sweeping block)**

Sink quite deep into sanchin dachi and push off from behind for a long stride: left foot first, then right slide forward into renoji dachi. This suri ashi is smooth and fast, the body remains slightly turned out. Simultaneously rotate the left hand to the side in a circular and controlling motion in front of your chest and move it across into shotei oshi, the hand ends inwards slightly next to your hip. The other hand makes a small shotei oshi, ending for suigetsu, fingers up. When you sink, inhale deeply and exhale only after both techniques have been performed and the move has been completed. This is called noon breathing. The power of the push comes from the push-off, the movement and the breathing, not from muscle power.

### **Morote nakadaken zuki (double chicken fist punch), ashi barai fumikomi (stamping foot sweep) and gedan barai (low sweeping block)**

Step from renoji dachi into shiko dachi, keep looking sideways. The right arm goes up and in front of the left; the right hand ends at the left ganka (5th inter-rib space, on the line with suigetsu) and the left in front of the right-denko (the seventh rib). Then, with muchimi, pull both open hands to the side, where they become nakadaken fists (chicken mouth fists). At the same time, look straight ahead and perform a large ashi barai fumikomi with the right foot. Your body falls down, keep looking forward and perform a morote nakadaken zuki straight down. Your body falls into a deep shiko dachi, feel that you use the body fall in the execution of the swipe and the double punch. The ashi barai is much larger than in other katas. The fumikomi is the most powerful moment of the kata; you stamp your foot down hard. Kiai! Push off firmly and stay low for the gedan barai.



### **Chudan yoko uke (mid-level strike) and jodan furi zuki (high swing punch)**

After the previous moves have also been performed in the other direction, you end up in a deep shiko dachi. Shift your weight to the left foot and move the right one toward the left, then move it straight back again. Then turn 180 degrees on the right foot into nekoashi dachi.

Use the twist for the jodan furi zuki (with the top of the fist) and the chudan yoko uke. Although both movements are performed at the same speed, the movement quality differs considerably between the two. The furi zuki is a large circle with the arm completely free of tension. The power of the movement comes from the tanden, the twist of the body and the speed and weight of the arm. The yoko uke is relatively small, powerful and focused (to master this it is desirable to initially train both blocks separately in the turn).

In nekoashi dachi, slide (suri ashi) with the right foot far and slightly obliquely forward and cross with the left behind in bensoku dachi (scissor stance, knees touch and both feet press on the floor) and perform the furi zuki and yoko uke again, with the same speed and with the different movement qualities.

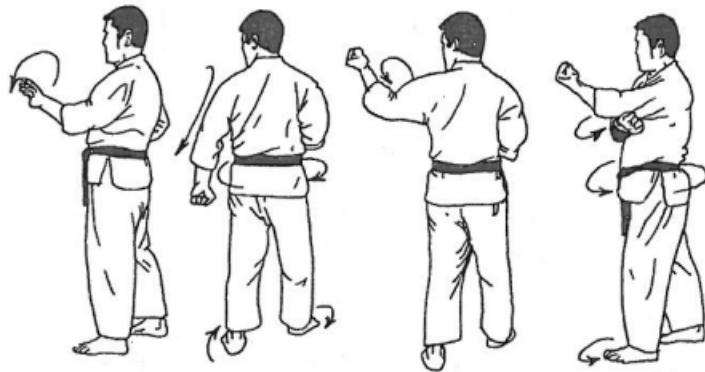


### **Chudan hiki uke (mid-level pulling block)**

Sink deeply inwards and turn 180 degrees into sanchin dachi on the balls of both feet. Simultaneously with muchimi perform a chudan hiki uke, the right hand ends in the side as an open hand, fingers up.

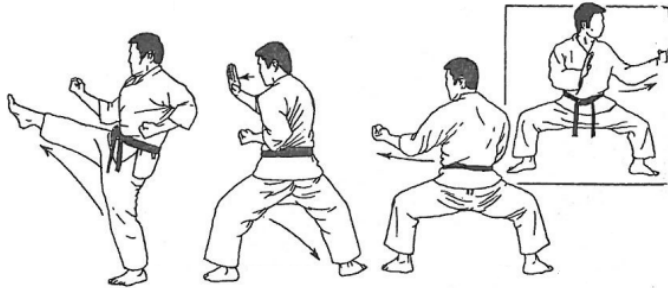
### **Gedan hiraken furi uchi (flat fist low strike) and jodan uraken uchi (high knuckle strike) and chudan yoko uke (mid-high side block)**

Again twist on the balls of the foot and simultaneously perform a gedan furi uchi with the middle of the fingers (flat fist or bear hand), the thumb is firmly pressed against the side of the hand. The right hand becomes a fist and moves to the side. After the gedan hiraken furi uchi you immediately turn on the balls of your feet back into sanchin dachi and simultaneously perform a uraken uchi to jinchu, the hand is then a 'normal' fist, so the thumb moves between both quick strikes. Both strikes are not focused and the arm is free from tension; the speed of the arm comes from the tanden and, among other things, from the (opposite) pelvic movement. The pelvis should move quickly as you rotate on your feet. The other hand remains a fist in the side. Both strikes should be executed with as little tension as possible and maximum use should be made of the twist, imagine that the strikes describe two circles in air, which are perpendicular to each other. The techniques are followed by a chudan yoko uke with the fists.



### **Mae geri (forward kick) and ura zuki (short punch)**

Kick vigorously (keage) with the right leg to the crotch of an imaginary opponent and withdraw the foot into shiko dachi. Keep the block during the technique. Use the pull back of the leg and drop of the leg and the pull back of the other hand for a powerful ura zuki, the forearm is parallel to the floor (slightly lower than in the drawing), the shoulder blades are actively pulled back/down. Pull the other hand to suigetsu, open hand, fingers up. The feeling for both strikes, the deflection and the kick is: loose and fast (both strikes), muchimi (the block) and powerful and hard (both kick and punch).



### **Ninoji no kamae (ninoji stance)**

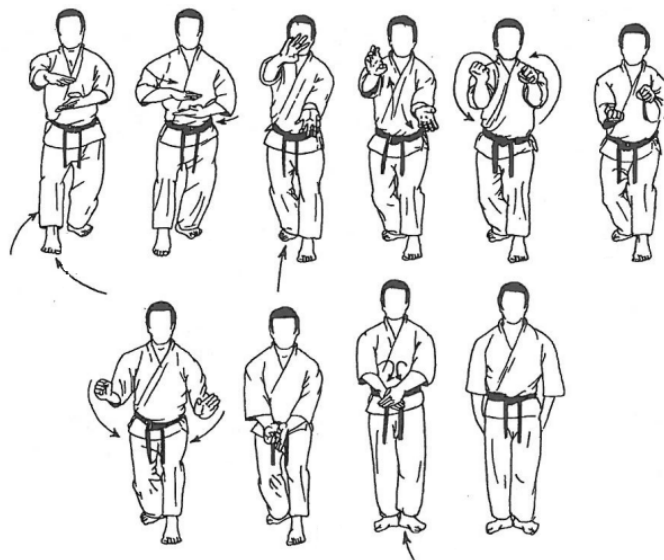
From shiko dachi, step with the right foot (with suri ashi) in a large circle backwards into nekoashi dachi. Draw the left leg in a circle. In the backward motion, pull both arms along as well, starting nearly extended, and ending against the body. They end a fist-width apart, with open hands, the right hand above the left (i.e. the left hand up and the right hand down). This is called ninoji no kamae. During the performance, have the image that you catch a fist (with two hands) and then pull the opponent backwards.

### **Nage waza (throwing technique)**

Take a big step back with the right leg and pull the left one into nekoashi dachi. At the same time, turn both arms with open hands with muchimi around clockwise, the right one in front of the face, the left in front of the crotch and then continue to about shoulder height (both hands end at shoulder height). They grab (muchimi), become fists and then pull vigorously towards the body, both elbows ending a fist away from the body.

### **Morote mawashi uchi (double circling strike)**

Both fists circle out and fall down, with no tension in the arms (similar to the gedan furi uchi in Saifa, but smaller). The right hand opens into the swing, the left fist falls into this (the open hand is, unlike Saifa, above the knee). While hitting both hands, focus on the fingers of the open hand still extended. Pull the left foot back into musubi dachi, simultaneously twisting the arms in a fairly large circle (approximately in front of the throat) and close the kata.



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## Appendix. Text from Traditional Karate, Morio Higaonna, volume 2, page 29 - 37

Part Three. Sanchin Kata of Miyagi Chojun Sensei

### Why He Changed the Kata

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When a part of the human body is not used, it degenerates. For example, since human beings began wearing shoes, the toes have lost most of their coordination and agility. This fact is demonstrated clearly when you compare the toes to the fingers. So it is with movement: human beings naturally move forward, not backward, and have developed their muscles and instincts accordingly. Therefore, when moving backward, you must concentrate on what you are doing since it is not a natural movement.

It was to develop this kind of backward movement that *Miyagi Chojun Sensei* revised *Higaonna Kanryo Sensei's* original *sanchin kata*. When moving backward, concentrate on your heels, soles of your feet, knees, back muscles, and anus muscles. As your development progresses, the muscles in these areas become more and more powerful and your technique more precise. Also, for people who have lower back problems, this type of training will strengthen these muscles and so help to prevent injury.

When moving backward, your stride naturally becomes shorter than when you are moving forward. In karate it is important to maintain the same length of step while moving backward as you use while moving forward. When you move forward three steps and then move back three steps, it is important to return to your original starting position.

### Posture and Foot Movement

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Begin in *musubi dachi kamae*, keeping the *tanden* tensed. As you begin your first inhalation, execute a *morote chudan yoko uke*, simultaneously sinking your body and sliding your right foot smoothly forward in a circular movement into *migi sanchin dachi*. As the block is focused, exhale in one quick, strong breath, tightening the *tan den* even more. When in *sanchin dachi* make sure that the heel of the front foot is on the same plane as the toes of the rear foot. If you want to measure the correct distance, without moving your feet, lower the knee of your rear leg to the heel of your front one. If the width of your stance is correct, they should just meet. Your feet should grip the floor using *tako ashi*, in which you first spread your toes as wide as you can and then grip the floor, rooting yourself firmly to the ground. This also helps in maintaining tension in the muscles of the legs and buttocks, like clenching your fist in order to tense the arm muscles. Your toes and knees should be turned inward, the knees bent and directly over the toes in a vertical line. Draw the anal muscles and buttocks under and inward, and the testicles up, concentrating all of your power in the *tanden*. To execute this *sanchin* stance properly, you must keep your chin slightly down and your eyes must be

fixed straight ahead, focused in the distance. You must keep your chest open so as not to restrict your breathing.

You must take care to keep your spine straight, shoulders down, and chest open. When executing *chudan yoko uke*, keep the upper arms close to the sides, elbows one fist from the body and bent at a 90° angle (it is at this angle that you have greatest power) with the fists slightly lower than the shoulders. The fists should be tightly clenched and turned out from the body slightly. This is *sanchin* stance.

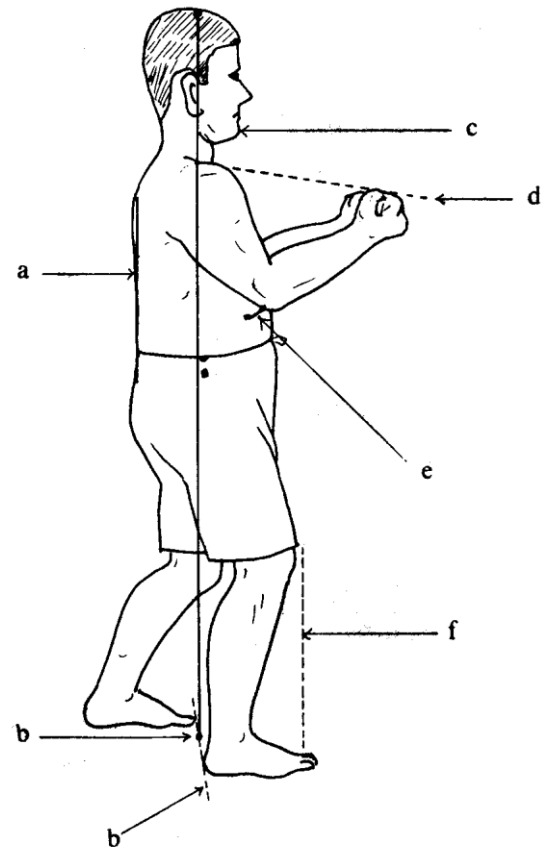
In the next movement, sliding your forearm against your body, pull the left elbow backward as far as possible, keeping the shoulder down, until you feel as if your shoulder blades are touching. Open the chest and breathe in deeply as you do this. Then, as you slowly exhale, push your fist forward, keeping your muscles tensed and utilizing all of your power. Concentrate your power in the first two knuckles and exhale completely, using one quick "hatt", at the point of execution. As you exhale this "hatt" you must tighten the *tanden* and all the muscles of the body even more. This sequence of movements is then repeated once in left *sanchin dachi* using the right hand, and then once again in right *sanchin dachi* using the left hand.



It is important to remember when moving in this *kata*, never lift your foot from the floor. Always move in *suri ashi* (sliding your foot smoothly and in a circular motion, forward or backward). When moving forward or backward, you must keep your muscles tightened, never releasing the tension, keeping your posture correct. When moving backward be extra careful not to lift your heel from the

ground, which is a common error. You must move your foot as if you are searching for something with your heel. When moving in this *kata* you must concentrate on all the muscles of the body.

- a. Straighten your back.
- b. Your body should be positioned so that if you drew a line from the top of your head to the floor, it would end at the back of the heel of the forward foot.
- c. Draw your chin slightly inward.
- d. Elbows should be bent so that the fists are slightly lower than the shoulders in such a manner that water would slowly flow down between the two points.
- e. The distance between your elbows and your sides should be one fist width.
- f. The knee and the ends of the toes of the forward foot should be in line.
- g. The beginner should use the inside of the foot (the shaded area) when sliding the foot.
- h. The inside of the foot (the shaded area) should be firmly gripping the ground.
- i. For a firm stance, first spread your toes and then grip the floor. The grip should be so strong that you feel as though you are rooted into the ground like a tree.



# Basic Breathing

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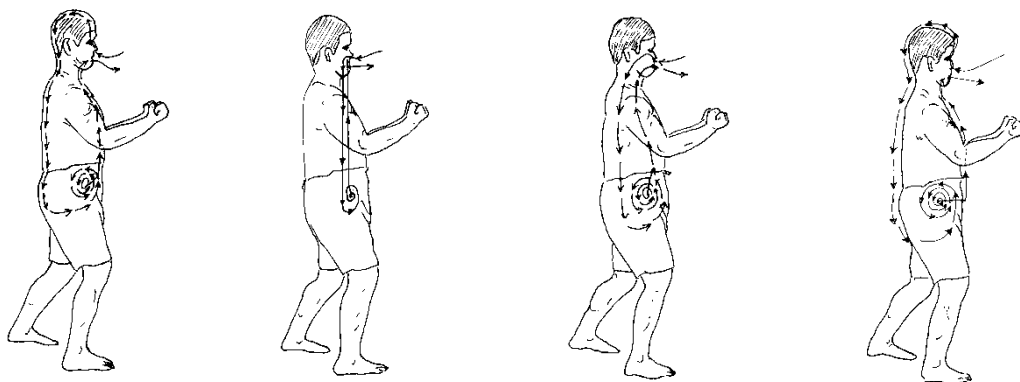
There are four basic types of breathing in *sanchin kata*.

- a. Inhale very slowly and deeply, then exhale slowly and completely.
- b. Inhale very slowly and deeply, exhale quickly.
- c. Inhale quickly, exhale slowly and completely.
- d. Inhale quickly, exhale quickly.

In normal everyday breathing, you inhale air through the nose which then goes to the throat, windpipe, and into the lungs. It is in the lungs that oxygen enters the blood and carbon dioxide is expelled. But when you perform *sanchin kata*, you imagine that the air does not stop in the lungs, but continues down into the lower abdomen: *sanchin* breathing is abdominal and does not cause the chest to rise up.

To further explain, the *sanchin kata* most practiced is that of *Miyagi Chojun Sensei* which uses type a breathing. When you practice this type of breathing you must imagine a stream of air entering your body through the nose and following a path up and around the head, down the neck and back, passing under the groin to be concentrated in the *tanden*, where it is coiled into a tight ball as you complete your inhalation. As you exhale slowly and smoothly, the air rises from the *tanden* to the navel, to the solar plexus, to the throat, and out slowly from the mouth. As you complete your exhalation, you must give one last strong push, tightening the *tanden* and all of the muscles, and expelling the air completely (image 1). The most important things to remember when performing *sanchin kata* are that the breathing and movements should be completely coordinated and that the muscles must be kept tensed throughout the performance.

*Higaonna Kanryo Sensei's sanchin kata* utilizes the quick breathing technique (type d). When the air enters the body through the nose, it is visualized as taking the quickest route to the *tanden* through the throat, to the solar plexus, to the navel and into the *tanden*. It follows the same path on exhalation (image 2).



These two different breathing techniques of *sanchin kata* can be further illustrated. For example, imagine you have a handful of powder on a table. Using *Miyagi Chojun Sensei's* breathing technique, upon exhaling you would strike the powder away particle by particle, and it would take quite a-long time for all the powder to disappear, whereas with *Higaonna Kanryo Sensei's* breathing technique,

the powder would be stricken away all at once, as if a small tornado had suddenly struck and whisked it away.

## Summary of Key Points

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- a. Maintain the correct posture at all times.
- b. Use abdominal breathing.
- c. The muscles of the body must be kept tensed at all times and never relaxed.
- d. Be conscious of every part of the body.
- e. Breathing and movement must be completely coordinated.
- f. Practice *sanchin kata* every day, with extra practice in the areas where you are weak.

## Points of Concentration in Sanchin Kata

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- a. Eyes look straight ahead.
- b. Draw the chin in slightly.
- c. Keep the shoulders lowered.
- d. Keep the chest open and the stomach muscles tightened.
- e. Straighten the spine.
- f. Tighten the latissimus dorsi muscles.
- g. The elbows, when drawn in, are one fist width from the sides of the body.
- h. Turn the forearms outward, keeping the fists tight.
- i. Tighten the anus muscles.
- j. Tighten the buttock muscles and the inner thigh muscles.
- k. Bend the knees and turn them in.
- l. Turn the front of the thighs inward and tense the muscles.
- m. Spread the toes and grip the ground with both the toes and soles of the feet as if you are trying to root yourself to the ground.

## Checking for Proper Muscle Control and Concentration in the Student

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The teacher, by using this teaching method, helps the student to concentrate more fully on tightening his muscles. These steps should be performed in order.

- a. With hands flat on the floor, the instructor should press the outer edge of his hands against the insides of the student's feet to ensure that the arch is not raised.
- b. Grasp the ankles to make sure that the student is concentrating power in the legs and that the feet are rooted to the floor.
- c. Slap the sides of the thighs to make the student concentrate on the muscles there, then slap them again harder to make sure that the muscles are fully contracted and to keep his concentration acute.
- d. Slap the buttocks to make sure that the muscles are kept tightened.
- e. Run your hand along the student's spine to make sure that he concentrates on straightening his posture.
- f. Press the lower abdomen lightly to make sure that the muscles are tightened.
- g. Pressing, draw the flats of your hands down along the student's back to help the student concentrate on keeping his back muscles tightened and posture correct.

- h. Place your hands on the student's shoulders to help him concentrate on tightening the muscles and then slap the shoulders hard, being careful not to strike the vulnerable area near the neck.
- i. Press the fingers into the muscles surrounding the shoulder blades to ensure that the muscles are tightened.
- j. Starting from the neck, slide your hand down the length of the spine to ensure correct posture.
- k. Slap the shoulders lightly first with both hands, then once more with power to make sure the muscles are tight.
- l. Make sure that the student's posture is still correct.
- m. Face the student. As he extends his arm forward, push back on his fist to apply resistance. Likewise when the student is executing *chudan yoko uke*, the instructor should apply *kake uke* for resistance to make sure that the student is exerting his full power.
- n. When the student is executing any *morote* technique such as *tora guchi*, you should apply resistance to both hands equally.
- o. The instructor should be aware of each student's physical condition, applying resistance to each technique and controlling the power of his slaps accordingly.
- p. The instructor should also make sure that the student is properly coordinating his breathing with his movements.

## Things to be Aware of While Assisting Sanchin Kata Training

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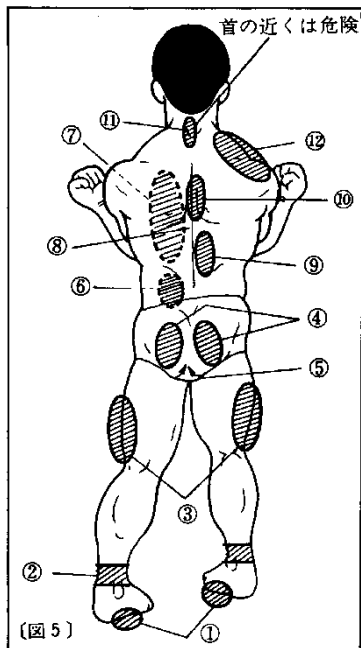
The instructor should carefully observe each student's physical condition; for example, noting whether the skin is too pale or too flushed; or when grabbing the ankles, checking the pulse to determine the student's condition. If the student is strong, then the training can be stepped up; but if he appears weak, you must adjust accordingly, reducing the severity of the conditioning. In some cases the training should be stopped immediately.

When *Miyagi Chojun Sensei* supervised the novice student during *sanchin kata* training, he would not slap the body very hard, but would feel and press the areas to be concentrated on. In this way the student could develop the necessary focus in the muscles throughout his body. As the student progressed and his body developed and his strength increased, *Miyagi Sensei* would intensify the power of his slaps against the body, striking areas such as the shoulders, thighs, and buttocks. Similarly, when the student performed *chudan tsuki*, *chudan yoko uke*, or *tora guchi*, *Miyagi Sensei* would apply resistance according to each student's condition and ability, lightly with a beginner, but powerfully with a more advanced student.

When one part of the body is being used, it is natural to focus everything on that part and to forget about the rest. When you are assisted during *sanchin* training, it develops your ability to be able to control your entire body, keeping all of the muscles tight, regardless of which part is being used.

Assisted *sanchin kata* training is more for developing the spirit than the body. When the instructor slaps the shoulders, the back, or the inside of the thighs, it is very painful, and the skin can become very red and swollen. To be able to endure this kind of training maintaining the proper form, muscle control, and concentration, is more spiritual than physical. Continued training using this method not

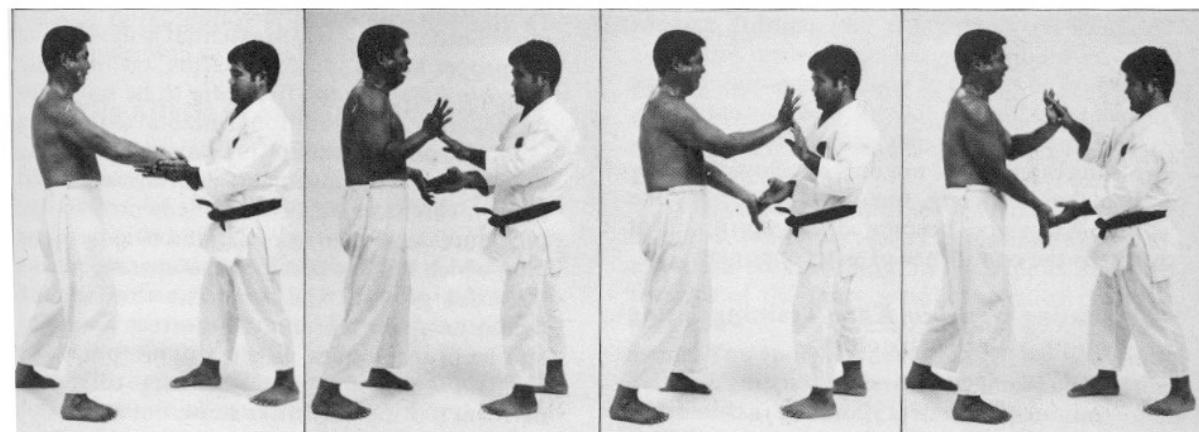
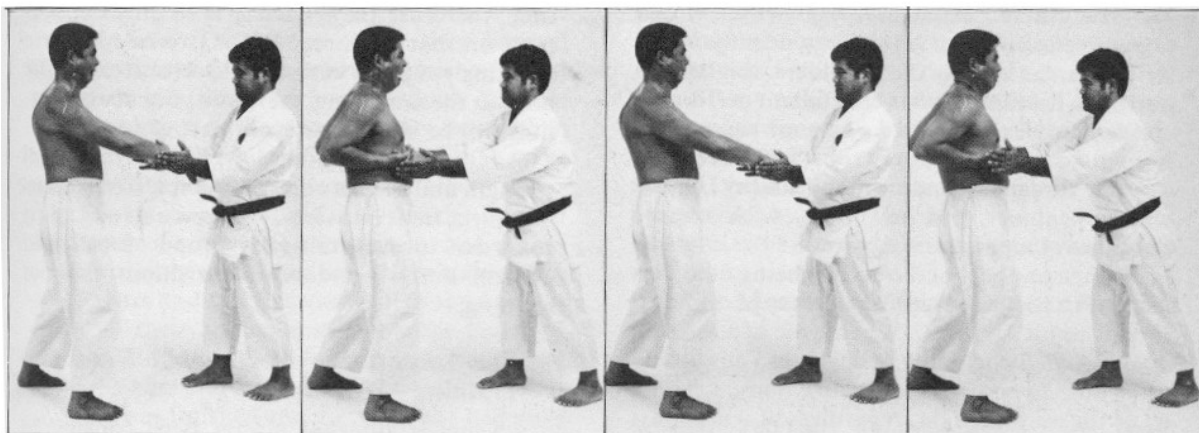
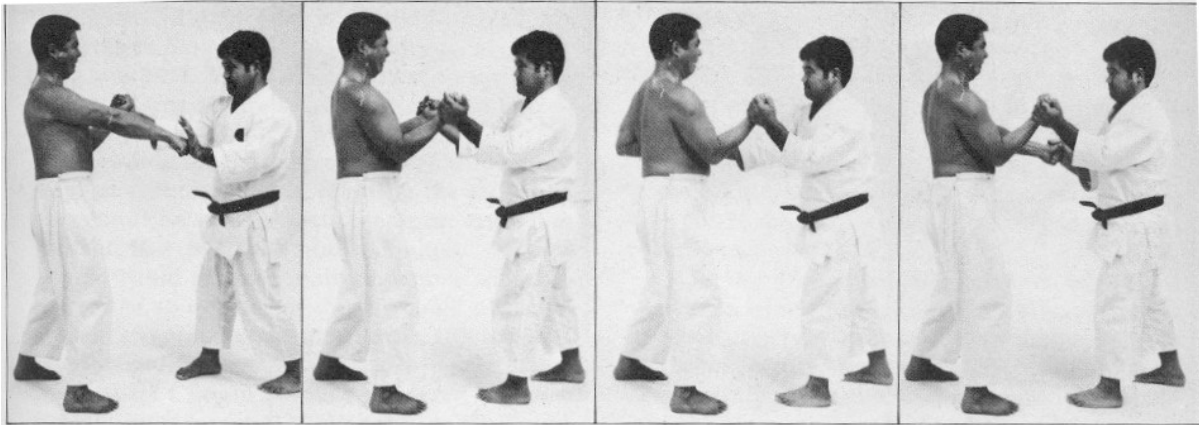
only develops the body and makes it strong, but it also develops the spirit. When you become strong spiritually it weakens the confidence of your opponent.



Figuur 2: shime zones from Sensei Higaonna's Japanese books on goju-ryu.

## Assisting Sanchin Kata Training Using Two or More Instructors

When two instructors are assisting *sanchin kata* training, the student should be in the middle with one instructor in front and one behind. This type of training is much more severe than if only one instructor is assisting. You cannot say that you have practiced *sanchin kata* until you have practiced it being assisted by at least two instructors. If you are being assisted by one person, that person can only strike one area of the body at a time, therefore the tendency is to only concentrate on that one area. But if two or more are assisting you, they can strike several areas of the body at the same time, therefore your concentration will be on almost every part of your body. This type of training develops not only physical strength and breath control, but it also develops the spirit, for it is essential to have a strong spirit in order to maintain the proper focus and control and so endure this arduous type of training.



## The Importance of Sanchin Kata and Training Method

*Sanchin kata* has always been considered the most important *kata* in *goju-ryu* karate training. Every karate student must practice this *kata*. By practicing this *kata* you not only develop proper breathing technique, power, and musculature, but it is also essential in developing the proper karate spirit. Therefore, traditionally *sanchin kata* was the first *kata* to be taught to the beginner. The traditional method of teaching involved spending the entire first month learning only correct foot movements.

During the second month, this training was supplemented by the introduction of *nigiri game* (hand held gripping jars), which help to develop a solid stance and a powerful grip for the feet. The third month would be spent learning the correct breathing and hand techniques. When you are practicing *sanchin kata*, it is not necessary to always perform it using only three steps, but to develop and improve your technique you should continue stepping forward from one end of the *dojo* to the other. Likewise, when stepping backward, instead of the two steps backward, you can continue all the way back across the *dojo* again.

When *Miyagi Chojun Sensei* trained his students in *sanchin kata*, the training would be long and hard. When a student got to the point where he was so tired that he could no longer control his breathing or his techniques, *Miyagi Sensei* would tell the student to do only one more step, or technique, thus focusing the student's concentration on that last technique. After the student had executed the technique, *Miyagi Sensei* would tell him to do one more, and one more, and so on. In this way he could push the student to greater endurance, while still keeping him focused.

*Miyagi Chojun Sensei* considered *Sanchin kata* the most essential of all the *kata*. He would teach it to his students as the first *kata* and would have them practice it over and over again, sometimes for as long as five years depending on the student, before he would teach them their second *kata*. Then, even when they learned another *kata* and began practicing it, they would always begin their *kata* practice with *sanchin* before going on to the next one. They would then practice this second *kata* for an average of three years before being taught the next one.

*Miyagi Sensei* would only teach the next *kata* when he felt that the student was ready, therefore some of his students might train for 10 or 15 years and still not know all of the *kata*, or many of their applications. Only his youngest student and protégé, *Miyagi An'ichi*, was taught all of the *kata* and all of their applications. After training was finished and everyone else had gone home, *Miyagi Chojun Sensei* would ask *Miyagi An'ichi* to stay and would spend hours speaking with him about the history of karate, teaching him many of the hidden meanings and techniques in the *katas*. They would often talk and train until well after midnight.

## The Effects of Sanchin Kata Training

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During *sanchin kata* training you are breathing very deeply, thus increasing the oxygen supply to the body as well as the brain. With this, the brain and nervous system become particularly sharp and more aware. This heightened awareness allows the student to improve his concentration, power, and focus when executing each technique.

This type of deep breathing stimulates the diaphragm, which causes it to work more efficiently. It also helps to stimulate the stomach, liver, pancreas, kidneys, and intestines to become more active, therefore becoming stronger.

When practicing *sanchin kata*, your muscles are in a state of constant tension, thus they become extremely expanded and this combination creates a feeling of tremendous power. After *sanchin* training you feel very good, which is an indication of just how good this kind of training is for you. When you practice *sanchin kata* repeatedly, you develop coordination between your breathing and your movements, thus helping you to more fully develop focus and power in each technique.

In the Okinawan dialect there is a word *kukuchi*, which means key point. *Miyagi An'ichi Sensei* often told me that if you practice *sanchin kata* repeatedly, even when it is difficult, then you will come to know the key points in all of the other *kata* as well.

When you are young you practice *sanchin kata* with all your strength to develop power. As you get older, your focus should shift to developing the movements of the *kata* into smooth, flowing techniques, as well as utilizing strength and power.

After you have practiced *sanchin kata* over a period of time you will be able to concentrate all of your power in the *tanden*. This accomplishment, I believe, will not only help you to live a longer life, but will also help you to deal with stressful situations in a much calmer manner.

## The Meaning of Heishugata and Kaishugata

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*Heishugata*-Both *sanchin* and *tensho kata* are *heishugata*. *Heishugata* means literally: 'closed-hand *kata*', but this is a misnomer. What is really meant by *heishugata* is the constant state of tension maintained throughout the *kata*, that is 'closing' or contracting the muscles. Thus, in *sanchin* and *tensho kata* all the muscles of the body remain in this constant state of tension and power is concentrated in the *tanden* throughout the performance of the *kata*; the muscles are relaxed only when the *kata* is completed. This type of *kata* develops physical strength, stamina, and breath control.

*Kaishugata* - All other *kata* belong to this category. It literally means 'open-hand *kata*', but again this is misleading. In this type of *kata* the muscles of the body remain 'open' or relaxed, thus allowing for quick and free flowing movements. You contract the muscles of the body and concentrate power in the *tanden* only at the point of execution of each technique.