

# Matsubayashi-Ryu Kata Notes

**The following notes relate to the Matsubayashi kata compiled from various sources.**

## **Fukyugata 'Promotional Kata'**

In 1940, the Governor of Okinawa, Gen Hayakawa, organized a special committee on Okinawan karate- do. One of the committee's acts was to authorize two new formal basic kata to help propagate the art. These came to be known as fukyugata ichi and fukyugata ni, and were created by Nagamine Shoshin and Miyagi Chojun (1888-1953), respectively. Miyagi had recommended Nagamine for his renshi grade. Fukyugata ichi was a truly new kata, being created in its entirety by Nagamine Sensei. Fukyugata ni, in contrast, was based on a pre-existing gekisai kata practiced in Goju-ryu. Miyagi Chojun, the founder of Goju-ryu and the most well-known student of Higaonna Kanryo (1853-1915) of the Naha-te tradition, simplified the movements of gekisai for the new basic kata. The ending of the new kata (tomoe-zuki- circular blocks and punches in zenkutsu dachi), in particular, differs from the older version (tomoe shotei-ate-circular palm-heel smash in neko-ashi dachi). In some Goju-ryu schools today, the two fukyugata kata are known as gekisai dai ichi and gekisai dai ni.

The word fukyugata means "basic kata." Fukyugata ichi in particular, features very basic movements: only two stances (zenkutsu dachi and shizen dachi); three strikes (chudan-zuki, gyaku-zuki, and jodan-zuki); and two blocks (gedan uke and jodan uke). There are no kicks in the kata. The kata covers all eight directions and, true to the Shuri-te and Tomari-te traditions, begins and ends in the same spot (referred to as "positional coincidence").

## **Pinan Peaceful mind**

Most historians believe that the Pinan kata were composed and introduced after 1902 by Anko Itosu(1813-1915). Itosu was one of the most accomplished student of Soken Matsumura. and a teacher to Chotoku Kyan and Choki Motobu, two of Grandmaster Nagamine's most prominent instructors. Pinan kata clearly has many similar techniques and sequences as the Matsubayashi-shorin-ryu version of the kusanku kata. Therefore many believe Itoshu derived Pinan from this form. When Karate was first introduced publicly in the high school in okinawa. Itosu did not want to give the impression that Karate -do was about violence or aggression. Consequently, he introduced Pinan kata, which translated means "Peaceful Mind".

Pinan kata strives to develop a mental state in the practitioner similar to the state of awareness in Zen Buddhism. That is, where the mind is completely relaxed, yet completely alert at the same time. In Pinan kata, the practitioner is surrounded on all sides by several imaginary opponents, but does not know in which direction the first attack will be unable to react to an attack by multiple opponents. it is essential to clear your mind of all distractions in order to change direction and prepare for the next attack. All five Pinan kata begin with an imaginary opponent attacking from the left. In Matsubayashi shorin-ryu it was decided for the first move of each Pinan kata that the practitioner should move away from the attack by steppingback with the right foot and twisting into a cat stance. In other Shorin-ryu styles the practitioner, however, moves into the oncoming attack by moving the left foot first. Psychologically this is an enormous difference. The way this technique is performed can change the entire nature and philosophy of the Pinan form. Pinan kata is about developing the skill to move out of the way of harm by stepping at an angle in the cat stance. The practitioner must land with the weight down so that the spring is already tightly compressed once the practitioner's leg touches the ground. In Pinan, the practitioner learns to move away which is a basic for beginner and intermediate Level practitioners. In more advanced kata, the practitioner develops the skill to move in when being attacked.

The first time in the Matsubayashi-shorin-ryu curriculum that this technique is used is at the

beginning of Wankan kata. In pinan, step at an angle, away from the attacker so that it is advantageous to deliver the counter attack. As soon as the toes of the right foot touch the ground, use the legs to snap the hips and generate power on the blocks. When the practitioner steps back to avoid the attack they must land with their weight already dropped, so that the coil is already compressed. This creates greater speed and power on the subsequent counter attack. Before turning or changing direction in pinan, the practitioner must remember to look in the direction of the attack before moving their bodies.

### **Naihanchi** Holding your ground

The composer of this kata is unknown, but it has long been treasured by karateman from Shuri and Tomari. Many traditions assert that Soken Matsumura created Naihanchi or based his version on older forms known to him. Most Shorin-ryu styles practice three distinct short forms of Naihanchi. Before Pinan's invention in 1907, Naihanchi kata were the first forms taught to beginner level practitioners.

The most important purpose of Naihanchi lies not in the fighting skills it develops, but in training the lower parts of the body through slow and steady sideward movements. Developing strong legs and hips are indispensable to karate training. According to Grandmaster Nagamine the posture for Naihanchi is similar to the sitting posture for Zen, with strength concentrated in the abdomen. Nagamine recalls that the Naihanchi kata were a favorite of Choki Motabu. Naihanchi kata is useful when there is limited space.

The punching and blocking motions are short because space is very restricted. The short techniques make Naihanchi a very difficult kata to master, and some consideration might be given to thinking of Naihanchi as a more technically advanced level form. Naihanchi, or Tekki in Japanese, translated means horse when riding. Some practitioners perform Naihanchi with the knees directed inwards. This is incorrect posture and the practitioner do this because they have not properly developed their legs. When performing each of the Naihanchi kata, once the practitioner drops into the horse stance it is critical to keep their height consistent throughout the entire kata. The practitioner's height should not fluctuate up and down. This is not a stance that is a strong stance for defense from the front and rear of the practitioner. However, it is extremely strong from the left and right sides of the practitioner. The weight distribution is equally spread between the two legs. If the weight is ever transferred to one leg the practitioner loses all strength in the stance from the sides and is vulnerable to attack from the left and right sides of the body. Therefore, when stepping over to move in the horse stance in a sideways direction, the practitioner must try and shorten the time the weight distribution is over the supporting leg. This is one of the primary skills developed in the three Naihanchi forms.

### **Ananku** Peace from the south

The composer of this kata is unknown. The characteristic of this kata is noted by the lunging stances for defensive and offensive movements. The history of Ananku is short. Chotoku Kyan (1870-1945) either learned the kata from the Taiwanese who visited Okinawa, or brought it back with him following a journey to Taiwan.

### **Wankan** King's crown

The composer of this kata is unknown also, but it has a long history. This kata was practiced mostly in Tomari Village. The characteristics of this kata are its elegance combined with powerful movements of attack and defense sequences.

### **Rohai** Vision of a crane

The composer of this kata is also unknown, but it has a long history as well. This kata was mostly practiced in the village of Tomari. The characteristic of this kata is the one-foot stances

where the other foot is drawn to deliver a quick snap-kick. It is a short kata but is very elegant looking.

#### **Passai** Penetrating a fortress

Passai has long been cherished by karateka from both Shuri and Tomari, and was said to be the favorite kata of Chotoku Kyan. The composer of this kata is unknown. Indeed, the Shuri-te and Tomari-te versions of this form are discernably similar, but which version pre-dates the other is uncertain. There are several versions of this form: Matsubayashi-Passai, Oyadomari-Passai, and Matsumura-Passai and it has been suggested that his personal version reflects elements of all three.

#### **Gojushiho** Fifty four steps

The composer of this kata unknown. Most modern versions can trace their genealogies back to either Itosu or Kyan. Kyan learned versions of this kata from Matsumura of Shuri and Oyadomari of Tomari. The spear hand movements distinguish Gojushiho from other kata. Gojushiho has been labeled the "drunken monk" from because certain movements are designed to appear off balance to the unsophisticated eye. The practitioner, however, should maintain perfect control and balance during execution of these movements.

Literally, however, Gojushiho is translated as "54 steps" The 54 steps, however, does not refer to the number of counts or movements in the kata. According to Zenko Heshiki, Kyoshi 7th Dan in Matsubayashi-ryu, the 54 steps refers to the concept of 108 Defilements in Buddhist philosophy. These defilements or faults cause both the body and mind to suffer in Buddhist philosophy. When a Buddhist sees numbers, that are factors of 108 (54,36, or 18) according to Heshiki, he is reminded of the Defilements. In Goju-ryu there are kata like Sepai, which means 18, Sanseru which means 36, or Supernpei which means 108. The relatedness of these numbers between kata from different styles is striking and suggests more than pure coincidence. Many Buddhist temples have 108 steps leading to the shrine. As each of these steps are climbed, a defilement is enlightenment. Perhaps in the same way, as the Karateman practices Gojushiho he is symbolically polishing his spirit to receive the true benefits of karate training.

#### **Wanshu** Named after a chinese military envoy

Wanshu kata was introduced into the Tomari district of Okinawa in 1683 by a Chinese envoy or Sappushi of that name. Sappushi were the official governmental contact between China and Okinawa. Following Wanshu, there is nearly a century gap until our knowledge of the development of Karate re-surfaces with Kung Shang K'ung or Kusanku. The ready positions in all other Shorin-ryu kata are quite different than the ready position in Wanshu. However, this position is consistent with many opening salutations in Chinese style forms. Historically, these postures were ways of identifying and differentiating between specific organizations. According to Grandmaster Nagamine, the hidden fist strike is the signature technique of this kata. Wanshu lived and worked in Tomari, and aside from his diplomatic responsibilities. He also instructed a small following of disciples in a style called Shaolin White Crane Fist Boxing. Wanshu taught the practitioner also develops the secrets of taking the opponent up and off his feet and throwing him to the ground. Many believe the original version of Wanshu was much longer than the modern kata, which derives from either Kyan or Itosu.

#### **Chinto** Fighting to the East

The composer of this kata is unknown, but we know the form was a favorite of Kyan and Ara kaki. Chinto means "fighting to the East" , and the embusen for the kata is performed in a straight line but in a diagonal from the opening stance. Most version of Chinto derive from either Matsumura of Shuri which use a straight forward and back embusen, or Matsumura of Tomari, which use a

side a side to side embusen, or Chotoku Kyan which use a diagonal embusen. The Kyan version of Chinto clearly traces its origins back to the Tomari-te kata of Matsumura.

The Matsubayashi-ryu version of Chinto comes directly from Kyan. The kata is characterized by dynamic movements using kicking techniques including the flying front kick. Chinto contains many changes of direction all along the same straight line pattern, and requires an advanced level of skill and balance to perform properly. The signature movement where the right arm moves in a backwards, circular movement is performed three times during the kata. The verb "to invite" in Japanese provides insight into the application of this movement in the kata. Indeed, many kata contain movements that suggest an invitation to the opponent to attack.

**Kusanku** Named after a Chinese martial artist

"Kanku" in Japanese can be translated as "to view the sky" which is often used to explain the opening movement of the kata. However, according to most experts, Kusanku or Kung K'ung is the name of a Chinese military envoy who introduced the kata in Shuri around 1761. Many believe the kata Kusanku derives from Sokon Matsumura. Kusanku instructed Tode Sakugawa, Matsumura's principal indicate an earlier origin than Matsumura.

The Matsubayashi-ryu version of the kata comes down from Chotoku Kyan who learned the kata from Yomitan Yara, the grandson of Chatan Yara. Kyan also was familiar with both Matsumura's and Matsumora's version of the kata. According to Grandmaster Nagamine, Kusanku is the most magnificent of all Matsubayashi-ryu kata. It is also the most difficult to perform. The signature stance of Kusanku is a perfect example of the athleticism required to perform this kata. The practitioner is also required to go down to the ground and leap in the air to execute a kick. Furthermore, Kusanku is clearly the longest kata in Matsubayashi-ryu and requires advanced levels of stamina and strength to perform well. Many experts have asserted that Kusanku is the form that Itosu based the Pinan series of kata. Clearly many movements are used in Pinan. Therefore, for technical explanations on these important sequences, it is best to refer to the chapter on Pinan kata.