

The USA Karate Federation Kata Training Guide



USA Karate Kata Training Guide
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PREFACE

Notes From Master's Seminar - Japan, 1986 Taken from WUKO Website

Kata is really the reason for the existence of Karate-do itself. We, JKF (Japan Karate Federation), have come here to determine eight standards of kata by taking into account the inheritance of each school's training system. These have been handed down through the ages, from their origins to their present contest forms. Therefore, these standards of Kata define the order of precise kata.

Regarding the problem of the original contents of the kata, the personal independence of each contestant shall, by and large, be respected. Because kata is composed of a "certain assumption", katachi, a form, shall be created as a result of this process. At the same time, a "certain assumption" requires practical kata skills and that is why JKF has come to determine katachi, a form.

As each performer of kata has been striving in compliance with his or her school, they naturally should have their own assertions. There should be many stages in the process of the growth of a human being and one is digesting kata into humanity. The personal independence of each contestant is going to be considered a matter of great importance as, JKF asserts, kata symbolizes a real expression of humanity.

Although kata is determined in its form, katachi, it never means controlling each contestants mind. Therefore, we strongly believe that kata training, as a means of expressing human spiritual culture, shall serve to refine and enrich the minds of all practitioners.

From the author

Research into karate styles (ryuha), their kata, the translation of the names of the kata, the interpretation of the movements, history of the style and the development of the various kata, can be very informative. It can also be very confusing as there are often different explanations even within the same style or school. I have tried to best reflect the general flavor and beliefs of each of the styles and the kata represented herein. Since much of what we are dealing with is oral history, it is difficult to say with much certainty what actually transpired. I have tended to use older resources, however, some newer resources may be more accurate. Further, names (places and people) are pronounced differently and referred to differently among Japan, Okinawa, and China. Thus, there may be more than one "name" for someone and spelling can change based on the particular oral history being translated into the English language. Thus I have had to make some decisions on the sources to use for the spelling and for the specifics as they are related in this treatise.

What is perhaps more important is the general outline of the development of the karate styles discussed herein. One can disagree on some of the specifics. Finally, as respects the kata, this treatise is taken from the vantage point of the Japan Karate Federation karate styles and kata. There are many other styles of karate that exist with their own version, historical development and opinion. I do not intend to indicate that any one form or style is preferable to any other. It is important for the purposes of international karate competition, as expressed by the Japan Karate Federation and the World Karate Federation, to understand the kata styles that are encouraged within their rule system if one is to participate successfully within that rule system. This treatise is written to assist with that understanding.

Patrick M. Hickey

KATA - INTRODUCTION

Each school or ryu has its own characteristic kata that it performs. Strictly speaking, there are hundreds of different kinds. If all practitioners participating in competitions demonstrated kata which are peculiar to their own school, referees, who are not always well versed in all these forms, would have no way to accurately judge the kata. Therefore, The USA Karate Federation embraces the Japan Karate Federation official kata system that enables fair, accurate, and strict judging of kata competition while preserving the characteristics of each school. This is possible because of the technical cooperation found between the major style leaders in the USA and the USAKF. In this way, the USA joins with Japan in reforming the karate world to become an extremely creative national organization respectfully maintaining the characteristics of each school (ryuha) that are unique to karate, while maintaining administrative control.

In the JKF, 8 kata are considered while in WUKO karate there are 17. The 8 JKF kata were chosen because they clearly demonstrate the kihon of the major styles of international karate. The kata chosen are from:

Japan Karate Association (Shotokan) - Kanku and Jion,

Shito-ryu - Seienchen and Bassai Dai

Goju-ryu - Saifa and Seipei

Wado-ryu - Chinto and Seishan.

These fundamental style kata form the basis for understanding and judging kata on the international level.

In judging kata, one should know the basic kihon of the style of the performer as well as the principles the kata contains, the pattern of the kata, and the most common mistakes and serious faults that the performer makes. If the kihon is correct the appropriate score should be given regardless of how the judge personally trained. The kata must be judged according to the specific style standards. The judge should not impose his or her own standards.

For example, in Shito-ryu, in the cat stance, the back of the knee bends in the direction of the back of the foot and generally when the hands are clenched in a block, the hips are forward, but with an open hand block, the hips are side facing. This is different than Wadoryu, Shotokan and the Goju cat stance. For another example, close study will reveal that the Shotokan and Shito-ryu focus the downward block differently.

OVERVIEW OF KARATE

In the United States today, karate has become integrated into our culture and our way of thought. The understanding of karate by the student is influenced by the traditions and myths presented by the karate sensei or instructor. Because there are many instructors who do not understand the reality of karate - they teach what they were 'taught' believing that is what it is all about - there is much misunderstanding as to what karate-do is. This is especially so because these instructors were not trained to be senseis and assume on their own that they know what karate-do is. There is a desire in the martial arts world for true karate-do. This is what The USA Karate Federation is attempting to accomplish. In essence, the USAKF is providing a true method of karate and kata based on traditional beliefs but as expressed throughout the world.

Karate was introduced to America in an era when the press of physical confrontation was rare or could be defended by other than personal violence. In Japan, the method of Okinawa-te was designated by the characters meaning Chinese hands. The idea of a foreign system that could absorb the Japanese cultural phenomenon of bu-do intrigued the Japanese in much the same way that karate has intrigued those in the United States. The present concept of do or 'way' was instituted in the practice of Karate in Japan. This "do" is expressed through the practice and performance of kata. Bu-do - the way of the warrior, arose from Bu-jitsu - the act of war and violent subjugation. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, the Japanese definition of the samurai was redefined. The concept of bu-do developed at the end of the feudal system as the embodiment of the virtues attributed to the bushi (warrior) class that the Japanese respected. Karate was not part of the original bu-jitsu practiced, but readily fitted the concept of bu-do allowing a rationale for the continued practice of the martial way. Funakoshi's introduction of Karate into Japan in 1922 allowed karate to develop from a fighting method employed by a subjugated and peasant class to a respectable martial *do*.

On a historical note, Gichin Funakoshi introduced karate into Japan in 1922. In 1931, the Nippon Butoku-kai formerly adopted karate as a martial art in Japan. The Butoku-kai was an organization formed to structure the martial arts of Japan including the determination of which martial arts were truly Japanese. It was not until the mid 1930's, probably 1936, that the meaning of kara-te would be defined as empty-handed self-defense method or weaponless art of self-defense. Philosophical

reasons played an important role. For that matter, Te - Okinawa self-defense - and to-te - Chinese self-defense - did not combine until the late 17th and early 18th centuries. They did this by integrating the Chinese kata with Okinawa Te.

At the time of its adoption in Japan, karate-do was expressed as the method for man to attain those virtues recognized by the Japanese culture which were found in the exceptional person. Bu-do is also an expression of all those virtues man could hope to attain as expressed by the Japanese culture through a long period of feudalistic rule. The bushi or warrior had simple ideals that were followed: excellence, personal loyalty to immediate rulers and the readiness to fight and die without hesitation. The austere simplicity of Zen, conceived as thought in direct action, contributed to the concept of the pragmatic warrior. Both bu-do and Zen led to inner peace. As the non-acceptance of violent means arose in Japan, kara-te, originally meaning Chinese hands, became Japanese in its nature and fulfilled a need in their society and became to be known as empty hands.

Today in America and throughout the world, karate as a sport is expressed as a part of Bu-do. Influence of the American sports system, by design and implication, has made Karate in the United States, American in its character and definition within our society. There are those of us who do not desire to lose the benefits of the mind/body/spirit found in what is now called traditional Japanese Karate. The expression of those Japanese and American instructors who are true masters of the art and its teachings in the United States needs to be heard. One way this is accomplished is through the USA Karate's implication of the JKF system and the cross training between styles so that the kata of the various ryu-ha can be understood and correctly performed and evaluated.

OVERVIEW OF KATA

In past times, kata had a positional impact on martial training, reflecting not only past martial beliefs, but also the needs and demands of the culture where the particular practice method (kata) were found. Kata has always been modified to meet the particular demands of the culture in which it is practiced, and it has also adapted to the physical and psychological attitude or make-up of the practitioner. Training in kata underscores the relationship to personal combat, and it was the major training method that the old masters, who were the fighters of their day, used to formulate their thoughts to hand down their concepts to their successors. Kata became the bu-do textbook of combat training by the karate masters - not a sports system.

In the performance of kata, a clear understanding of what kata is and of what the kata is attempting to induce is primary. Kata can be defined as a limitless study of a master's technique, training, and plan of attack; a statement of flexibility; and an exercise of mind/body/spirit in concentration and awareness. Kata differs from dance in its philosophical and psycho-physiological values, which is to say its intent. Dance developed from man's desire to express impulses, emotions and desires. Kata attempts to imprint a deep ethical base - the ability to endure harsh physical punishment until victory or death. This cannot be achieved by mere practice and fighting. It must be the product of an inculcated and cultured mind. In the practice of kata, the same feelings and reactions found in actual fighting must be induced such that the appropriate psycho-physiological responses necessary to combat (breath, kime, etc.) occur allowing the performer to attain, without an opponent, whenever and as often as desired, the same mental and physical accomplishment needed in actual fighting. Kata induces the ethical base and develops the appropriate responses for combat. This is the essence of the kata competition. Karate-do is thus the translation of this lesson into modern life. Through kata the utilization of karate insight in our battle with ourselves carries over into our whole life allowing us to understand ourselves and how we fit into the world around us.

Both kata and dance utilize movement (space, time, and force) as the means to express their particular physical and psychological value. Inherent in both are body position, dimension, and direction of movement (whether to or from the gaze) and floor pattern. Tempo, accent, and beat reflect time; and force is expressed by dynamics (light and heavy). There is quality (staccato and legato) and range of movement. The strength of the performer and agility expand the energies that can be used to enhance the performance. Understanding these cardinal rules of kata allow the form, content, and means of the kata to become apparent taking on a special significance not found in dance.

A kata can be divided into two types of movement - basic and intermediate. Basic movements include the postures, stances, blocks, attacks, and kicks found in the kata. These are the fundamental defensive and offensive movements that are often paired in sets or sequences. Intermediate movements are those that connect the basic movements. They are fighting postures linking the paired sequences of defensive and offensive movements responsible for positional coincidence - that is, staying on the embusen of the kata. These movements are logical and philosophically sound, and are workable and effective in addition to being important for the body's development. Finally, intermediate movements provide a break in the beat of a kata similar to a rest in music. By thusly affecting the rhythm of a kata, these movements help to lead the practitioner into the expression of zanshin.

Kata is the foundation to the practice of kumite. It is the practice method, (sometimes with philosophical overtones) that the masters, who were fighters in their own day, thought valuable to the proper training of the fighter. Much of what is practiced

in kata is the same as that needed in actual combat - kime, vigor, good form, breathing, zanshin, etc. Kata, by eliminating the pressing moment of combat, allows for correct training of the physiological and psychological responses necessary for combat that are difficult to practice in jiju-kumite (free fighting).

Essential to kumite training are the positions of the upper body (kamae), stance (tachi), the proper fixing of the eyes (mesen), and zanshin - all of which can be studied from the various kata strategies. The understanding of the physiological movement, timing and distancing, are needed in kumite, and kata based ippon kumite facilitates the expansion and interpretation of the kata. Thus the combined training of kata with forms of kumite (kihon) allows the correct performance of technique and the development of the attitude necessary to combine the ability to mount vital strike capacity with the ability to overcome a countermeasure.

UNDERSTANDING KATA

Showing an understanding of kata means that the special characteristic movements and postures are adequately performed and that the important lessons of the kata are properly demonstrated.

Each kata has its own particular value and character. Some kata are merely drill kata, while others are philosophical statements. Certain kata - especially those of the Shorei or Naha-te variety - exhibit strength and dignity when performed and are appropriate for the strengthening of bone, sinew, and muscle. Shorin or Shuri-te kata are quick and flowing. Their movements require great agility due to their light and swift, rapid motion often described as a bird in flight.

The above two schools vary in their basic movement and method of breathing. Shuri-te utilizes natural patterns of movement, especially in the foot patterns by virtue of a natural walking motion. Speed and proper timing are essential and breathing natural. Naha-te is characteristically steady rooted movement with the feet stepping in a crescent shaped pattern. Both systems breathe with the movement, but in Naha-te breath while rhythmical is forced (exaggerated) in accordance with each of the movements.

A Shuri-te kata like Bassai Dai represents the uses of opposites - composure and agility, strength and change, fast and slow movements in techniques and utilizing light and heavy application of strength to turn the adversaries advantage into disadvantage. Direction changes are swift and the feeling of turning disadvantage into advantage must be expressed. Hangetsu (Seishan), on the other hand has characteristic circular movement of the hands and feet for getting in close and off-balancing the enemy. Techniques are alternately fast and slow, but hands and feet move in coordination with breathing and the sliding of the feet. Neither system of kata is necessarily superior to the other and many styles use both in their systems.

Competent performance of kata demands an enthusiasm always bold and powerful, sometimes swift, sometimes slow. Awareness of the opponent, hand-foot-eye-breath coordination and the expression of the meaning of each movement must be expressed. Are intermediate movements - those responsible for positional coincidence (beginning and ending the kata at the correct place) performed correctly? Is the breathing adequately controlled and the maximum physical response during the intermediate movements given? Is the performer's rendition balanced both in the design and in the movement? These are all important considerations in the practice of kata. Gravity center stability, breath adjustment, gaze and proper focusing of the eyes, distribution of strength within the movement, internal consistency, as well as balance in the performance are also important. The beginning should be relaxed with no tension in the body - particularly in the knees and shoulders. The center of the gravity is in the tandem. During the performance there is perfect coordination of breath, stance and movement; continuity of rhythm; and exemplary attitude and spirit. Zanshin - being relaxed and alert ends the kata bringing it to a perfect finish. Finally, during the performance there is the expression of the psychophysical responses necessary to remove the kata from a purely rote performance into an artistic fighting mode.

BASIC PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS AND JUDGING POINTS

In this section, we treat the basic considerations of the karate kata. This is designed to provide a background for those interested in taking part in the World Karate-do movement. That is, this book is for those who desire to retain the traditional value of karate-do as expressed in the international sports world. The solid foundation provided here will assist the practitioner not only in preparing to judge for national and world-class kata competition, but will also improve the karate-ka's own daily practice.

In the performance of kata there are many important considerations. The most important considerations are noted below and must be studied in relation to each kata and style as they are learned.

Each kata must follow the embusen - the line of the kata movement. To do this, all movements must be done and done correctly. It is said whatever goes must come back, and the kata must begin and end in the designated place. Not all kata in all styles begin and end at the same place, but the proper line of the kata movement must be followed.

Stability of the hips/hara is very important for proper karate technique. Not ending at the correct place indicates a variation in length of stride or stance that unbalances the hara, disturbing the inner rhythm of the kata and therefore the performance.

Each kata movement, as well as the entire kata, has its own meaning and characteristics. In performing a technique, the nature of the technique - offensive or defensive, straight or hooking, etc. - must be fully understood and expressed. The execution of the movement and what the movement is in the context of the kata and style as it is performed must clearly be shown as well as the overall character of the kata and style from which the kata is taken. Both must coincide. Movement is what it is in the context of the kata as it is performed. In this light, awareness of application and target is of vital importance. Without knowing where the opponent is attacking or how, you cannot be sure of the target and how best to express the meaning of the kata.

Breathing is also important. Breath will change with changing circumstances and control of breathing within the basic sequences of the kata must be correctly demonstrated.

Kiai is part of the breathing in the kata. In many kata, two kiai points are designated at either the strongest or weakest points of the kata. These kiai points are designed to elicit the maximum psychological and physical response of the performer and are usually found at the end of a major sequence or statement.

Once the movements of the kata are understood, the next step is to begin study of the rhythm of each kata. Each kata has its own internal rhythm. The rhythm is part of the requirement for the kata and can vary by performer or style in its expression. It must, however, be internally consistent.

Gichen Funakoshi expressed his three cardinal rules of karate in his book the *Karate-do Kyohan*. These rules are:

Light and heavy application of strength - correct application of power at the proper moment;

Expansion and contraction of the body - body flexibility; and,

Fast and slow movements in technique - fluency of movement.

As the features of a kata are fully grasped, and the exact meaning of each movement understood, knowing the application (degree) of strength at the correct time, controlling the speed of the technique and speed between techniques, and developing smooth transitions of the body from one technique to the next, the internal rhythm of the kata can be perfected. This internal rhythm is expressed as part of the mind/body/spirit and demonstrated during the performance.

Zanshin at the end of a kata is directly related above to the correct rhythm pattern of the kata. Kata performed with correct understanding and rhythm creates the condition for the mind to express zanshin. Incorrect performance of the kata will disturb the internal rhythm and zanshin will not be accurate as the hara will be disturbed and the mind un-centered and confused. Zanshin literally means "remaining mind". The kata, when performed correctly, will lead to the expression of zanshin at the end of a kata. During the kata performance zanshin is a state of watchful waiting and the feeling of extending the mind/body/spirit dominating the opponent. In taking zanshin at the end of the kata, the ending should not be rushed and the performer must remain in control.

During the performance, eye level and eye contact should be maintained. Bobbing up and down and weaving when stepping is to be avoided. The alignment and stroke of the technique should be smooth along the proper path to the target. Reaction force, the natural muscular opposition, is important as it stabilizes and balances the movement of the technique. The head and eyes should always gaze in the direction of the attack or defense. Speed and power must be appropriate to the technique. Finally, the ability to assume each stance properly and the ability to move smoothly from stance to stance with proper execution of technique must be demonstrated.

One resource on kata simply summarizes the above by stating the performer of a kata should have a mind that is in control and not disturbed by anything (shin), mental energy (ki) extended outward, physically focused power with speed (ryoku), smooth continuation, and proper rhythm of movements.

THE ART OF JUDGING KATA

When judging kata, it can become difficult in the larger divisions to remain alert. A kata judge must remember that the competitors are striving for the best that they can do. It is the duty of the judge to give each one equal consideration. In doing so, the judge sits up straight with feet flat on the floor. This helps the judge remain alert and not be lulled into inattention.

Judges must not slouch in their chairs nor flip the scorecards while observing what the other judges are doing. The judge shows interest in the competitor's performance and judges the performance and not the kata. Only in the advanced kata divisions does the style of the kata make a difference. In most open divisions, any traditional kata is acceptable from any traditional style of karate. The most often heard complaint is that judges are copying each other and that their scoring is not independent. Special care should be taken to not show any bias - favorable or unfavorable - to any competitor. No judge should discuss a kata performance or assist a competitor in last minute practice before, during, or after the kata match. This leads to charges of favoritism. If it is necessary to discuss a situation amongst the judges, all judges should be in on the conversation. It is impolite to discuss questions without informing the other judges of what is being said.

In judging kata, take great care to remove yourself from the outcome. The spectators, coaches and other competitors closely watch your actions. Make sure your actions are such that your integrity is without question. Be alert and use common sense to avoid any intimation of not being fair and impartial, or of not being alert to the kata performances. Your reputation as a judge is affected by your actions.

JUDGING OTHER STYLES

Judges often find themselves judging kata in a style outside their system. Different principles apply to the various kata in other systems. In open style competition, the usual method to judge is to determine a base score and a range above and below for scoring. This is done to prevent embarrassment or hard feelings. Competitors are essentially ranked by means of the composite score assigned. Those who the judges feel have performed exceptionally well and should place are given a score in the upper ranges. If two or more judges have the same opinion, that person will stand a good chance of placing.

In closed system competition, a perfect score is assumed. Then points are deducted for errors in performance. The score is determined by the flaws in the performance and not on an individual comparison as in open competition. To effectively use this system, the judges need to know what flaws to look for and how to recognize them in the performance of the kata in the closed system competition.

In the World Karate Federation, there are generally 8 recognized kata from the 4 main styles of karate recognized by the WKF. These are:

Japan Karate Association (Shotokan)	Jion (Shorei) Kanku (Shuri-te)
Goju Ryu (Goju Kai)	Saifa and Seipai (Naha-te)
Wadoryu	Chinto (Shuri-te) Seishan (Naha-te)
Shitoryu	Bassai (Shuri-te) Seienchin (Naha-te)

The characteristics of each style and type of kata lie in the basic movements and breathing. Shuri-te uses natural movements and walking patterns with natural breathing. Naha-te uses steady, rooted movement and breaths artificially in accordance with each of the movements (see *The Essence of Okinawa Karatedo* by Shoshin Nagami and the *Karatedo Kyohan* by Gichen Funakoshi). Many concepts are the same in the various styles, such as chakugan, kime, ma (interval), and zanshin but are expressed differently and with different physical movements. The most definitive differences between the styles will be found in the different emphasis in the breathing, duration of kime and variation of stances.

Stylized differences within the kata should not be penalized so a proper understanding of the kihon of each system and kata within that system has to be understood by the judge. In general Shuri-te Kata should

Move naturally, not artificially

Control the hara

Have mesen – proper eye vector (gaze)

Proper combining of techniques with no extra or unnecessary movement

End on the embussen (usually where you start the form)

Move the hips with the actions in the kata

Wrists should not be bent, hand forms should be correct, and the body should not tilt

Rhythm should be smooth with no jerky movement.

Naha-te kata should

Have a consistent level of performance for both stances and breathing throughout the kata

Stances should have continuity throughout the kata

Ibuki breathing must be correct with the exhale closed off correctly

Due regard given to all actions without rushing them

Stances should be steady and supportive

Breathing should not be uneven or lack rhythm

Blinking should be controlled

Feet should grip the floor.

Further, judgment must be consistent. One judge should not be deducting 2 points where another judge deducts only 1. All judges should deduct the same amount for specific flaws in the performance. Thus, in assessing the kata performance, the criteria for judging each kata should be known. That is, each judge must study the various karate styles and their kata and the judges as a group need to have clear direction on how to go about evaluating the kata performance. This can be summed up in five questions:

What is considered a competent performance of each kata in each style?

What are the principles contained in each of the kata by style?

What is the correct focus of attention, use of power, balance and breathing for each kata?

What are the correct stances and movement within each kata?

What other proper performance of other discerning points of each kata and style should be considered?

How are each of the above questions to be numerically evaluated to produce a winner. It is to begin to answer these questions that this document has been provided.

CRITERIA FOR DECISION IN KATA – General International Standard

A Kata starts with a perfect score. Deductions are made for errors in the performance.

Criteria:

Competent performance realistically demonstrating the meaning of the kata

Demonstrate clear understanding of the principles of the kata and the techniques being used (bunkai)

Correct kihon of the style being represented

Demonstrate

Correct focus of attention ("chakugan") and concentration

Use of power and focus of power (kime)

Good balance

Balance is the ability to maintain equilibrium against opposing forces either stable or dynamic in nature.

Correct breathing in support of the movement

Other important points.

Zanshin

Following the embussen

Kihon

Kihon is the method of executing the mechanical details and manner of performance of a karate technique and varies by style.

Good Timing of movements and rhythm, speed, power, and balance

Timing is the ability to coordinate techniques properly to nullify an opposing technique and to strike back effectively. Consideration must be given to principles of body shifting, deflection and conservation of momentum.

Coordination of hand, foot, breath

Body control and coordination is the ability to regulate and combine muscular movement into harmonious and smooth action through the exercise of karate technique.

Proper hara movement and tension, no bobbing up and down when moving

Correct stances including proper tension in the legs and feet properly poised on the floor.

Control

Control is the ability to govern or direct karate technique with proper speed, power, and degree of extension.

Posture

Posture relates to the manner in which the body is aligned to keep the center of gravity (mass) over the base. Proper posture affords the best position for the execution of karate techniques.

Some competitions will allow points to be added for exceptionally accurate and enhanced performance of the kata principles.

A contestant is disqualified if the contestant interrupts or varies the kata, or if the contestant performs a kata different from that drawn or announced. If the performance is brought to a halt, or the kata is varied, the contestant(s) will be disqualified.

GENERAL INTERNATIONAL OPERATION OF THE STANDARD KATA MATCH AND METHOD OF SCORING

Three Rounds

First round

Shitei Kata - standard kata

Reduces to sixteen contestants

Second round

Shitei Kata

Reduces to Eight contestants

Third round

Tokui Kata - free selection

Winner and final placing

Result is based on the summation of points accumulated during the final round

Summing the scores

Delete the maximum and minimum scores before the total

If tie

Add first the minimum score deleted

If still tied

Add the maximum score deleted

If the tie persists

Perform a further kata of the contestant's choice not already performed.

OPTIONAL GENERAL INTERNATIONAL OPERATION OF THE STANDARD KATA MATCH AND METHOD OF SCORING

Competitors are arranged on a bye sheet similar to kumite. Two competitors perform their kata at the same time and the judges by means flags (usually red and blue) indicate the contestant who moved forward on the bye sheet to the next round.

OFFICIAL SCHEDULES OF WKF KATA

Shito Bassai Dai
Seienchen

Shoto Kanku Dai
Jion

Wado Chinto

Seishan

Goju Seipai
Saifa

Additional Shitei kata of the JKF

Goju Kururunfa & Seisan

Shoto Kankusho & Empi

Shito Matsumara Rohai & Nipaipo

Wado Nisheshi & Kushanku

Styles, Ryu-ha, Systems

Karate derives from the combination of the Okinawa martial art Te and Chinese styles of the martial arts. This combination was called To-te or Chinese style martial arts. In Japan a similar assimilation took place as To-te became integrated the Japanese culture. Of the four main styles, Shito and Goju claim to hold true to the To-te of certain instructors while Shotokan adapted more to the Japanese culture and Wado, a derivative of Shotokan combined with Jujitsu.

The secret nature of the martial arts came about in 1609 when Japan had conquered Okinawa and banned the use of weapons. This lasted for about 300 years allowing the development of Te. There were many styles of Te as there was little communication during this period between stylists, however most can be generally attributed to the area where they originated. The most important styles were Shuri (Shorin) and Naha (Shorei) and to some degree Tomari (Shorin). Of the four World Karate Federation major styles, Goju developed out of Naha. Shitoryu and Shotokan have elements of both and Wado ryu developed out of the Shotokan. Also during this period of time, certain Chinese instructors became involved with various Okinawa schools. One of the most famous was Kushanku around 1761. Other Okinawa masters traveled to China to study. They intermingled what they learned with Te and thus To-te was born.

When Okinawa officially became recognized around 1875 as part of Japan, karate became visible and its popularity increased when it became introduced as a physical education requirement in Okinawa public schools. In 1922, Funakoshi is considered as introducing karate to mainland Japan. By 1931 the Nippon Butoku-Kai recognized karate in Japan and shortly afterwards the four major styles were formed and officially recognized.

Style Sheet – Shitoryu (Shi Toh Ryu)

Founder: Kenwa Mabuni (born 11/14/1889 in Syuri [sic], Okinawa, died 5/23/1952)

Date of Style: March, 1934

Founder's History

Born in 1889, the 17th generation son of a famous Samurai Onigusuki, Mabuni started the martial arts to overcome poor health and began extensive training at the age of 13. He studied Shuri-te under Itosu (Nai-haun-chi) and Naha-te with Kaneryo Higaonna (Sanchin) and also studied bo, sai, tonfa, kama and nunchaku from Aragaki. He mixed the teaching of Itosu and Higaonna to form Shi-to-ryu. Mabuni came to Osaka, Japan in 1929 and taught in the Kyoto and Osaka areas of Japan. He died May 1957 at the age of 64. In Japan he taught Police and at the Universities. Since he lived in Osaka, the western part of Japan was influenced greatly by Shitoryu.

Style History

The style of karate known as Shito-Ryu originated on the island of Okinawa. In ancient times the art of karate could not be practiced openly, however, and so those who chose to practice the art did so secretly, hidden from public view. In these early days there were not styles, names, belts, ranks, etc. which today are part of karate. Lacking formal names, people sometimes referred to the various schools of karate by putting the names of grand masters and the kata together thus creating a sort of label for the particular school. Sometimes schools of karate were known by the districts, or by the most famous centers of karate on Okinawa. These were Shuri, Naha, and Tomari. In the late 19th century the most famous Grand Master in Shuri was Mr. Itosu, and in Naha it was Mr. Higaonna. These two men represented the highest karate authorities of the time. There were, however, significant differences between them. Mr. Itosu emphasized speed where Mr. Higaonna placed more emphasis on hardness of the body.

The originator of Shito-Ryu, Grand Master Kenwa Mabuni, initially practiced under Mr. Itosu and then went on to study under Mr. Higaonna. Mr. Mabuni was not only skilled in karate, but also practiced weaponry such as bo, sai, and nunchaku, etc. Mr. Mabuni founded his new style of karate by blending together that which he had learned from his two great teachers. This blending is reflected in the name of the style. The two grand masters, Itosu and Higaonna have two and three Japanese characters respectively representing their names. The 1st character representing Itosu is pronounced Shi (she) and the first character representing Higaonna is pronounced To (toe). This combination is the name of the style Shi-to-ryu where ryu means style.

Shitoryu was adopted as one of the first 6 schools of the Federation of All Japan Karate Organizations (FAJKO), known now as the Japan Karate Federation (JKF.).

Main Influences

Naha-te under Higaonna, Shuri-te under Itosu, and weapons under Aragaki.

Characteristics

With Mabuni's instruction, Shito has the most variety of kata in both Shuri-te and Naha-te. The Shitoryu practitioner practices both Shuri-te and Naha-te kata.

Major Kata

Shuri-te	Naha-te
Naihan Chin Shodan, Nidan, Sandan	Sanchin
Pinan (Hei An) Shodan, Nidan, Sandan, Yodan, Godan	Gekisai I and II
Jutte, Jiin, Jion	Ten Sho
Rohai Shodan Nidan, Sandan	Seisan
Ko So Kun Dai, Ko So Kun Sho	Sei En Chin
Shi Ho Kosokun	Seipai
Bassai Dai (8to 16 different variations such as Tomari Bassai, Matsumura Bassai, Itosu Bassai)	San Sei Ru

Bassai Sho

Chinto

Chinte

Wan Shu

Gojushiho

Suparimpei

Saifa

Kururunfa

Shiso Chin

Others: Niseishi, Unshu, Sochin, Nipaipo, Seiru, Aoyagi (Seiryu), Shinpa, Shin Sei, Hakkaku, Matsukaze, Jyuroku, Hakucho, Pachu, Sochin, Heiku, Paiku, Annan, Unshu, Annanko, Papuren, Chatanyara Kushanku

Kata Reference Sheet - Seienchin

JKF Official Kata based on Shitoryu School

History:

The inventor is unknown. Naha-te, Higaonna's style kata and well known.

Descriptive Information:

There are many side stances that practice very symmetrical movements of the left and right. Dual repetitious movements are found. The embussen is in four diagonal directions intersecting the straight front line from the starting point. The kata is performed quietly and smoothly, but powerfully with dynamics.

Characteristics of the kata:

This kata does not have any kicks, however it has all the elements of body dynamics. It is performed quietly and smoothly with strength and explosive movements to show contrast for timing and smoothness of movements. Focus is in the tandem. Physical movements and breathing have to accordingly be executed properly. That is, the movement of the hara is coordinated with breathing and the action of the body, feet, eyes, etc. The floor pattern is symmetrical with the stances chosen symmetric to the pattern of the kata. Most everything else is also symmetrical developing identical movements of left and right side techniques to keep the body in balance.

Principles the kata teaches:

Quiet, smoothness with dynamic movements. When the performer transfers from one stance to another the body should shift at the same height without bobbing up and down. By performing this kata you are practicing symmetric repetitive movements to the left and right side of the body.

Major performance points:

Breathing and body movement in harmony - Breathing is essentially hidden or obviously over exaggerated. There is not as strong a tension in the body as there is in some styles.

Hara moving horizontally

Duration of the movements should not be overlong

Correct rhythm of the form- the strikes are fast in the kata, and the movement while slow is not real slow. It should take about 2 minutes to do the kata.

Proper kihon - all preparatory positions must be accurate. Do not move too quick or too slow. There should be an even flow throughout the kata. Posture should be upright and the pelvis should be tucked correctly and not ruin upper posture through over-exaggeration. Cautiously observe the tightness of the armpit.

There should be smooth movement in stances with no accent. The shiko-dachi must be accurate, elbow placement is close to the body, and the hands should not do strange things. Keep the wrists straight. The back should be straight and the spine should not lean.

Correct stepping in moving into and out of the Sanchin-dachi. Pivoting is done on the balls of the feet. Failure to do this interrupts the embussen.

Minor errors made in the kata performance:

Execution of kakete, kurite, change of breathing, interval movements of changing stances, etc.

Difficult features:

Do not shake your body or make shoulder gesture that some performers tend to do. Stances should be all performed at the same height. Movement must be in straight lines. Transfer your body smoothly showing dynamics of your body.

Stance and movement:

Shiko-dachi, sanchin-dachi, su-dachi, neko-ashi-dachi, etc. Generally, when you take a stance like shiko-dachi, movements are slower/powerful and in neko-ashi-dachi techniques are snaps. There are exceptions to this even within the same Shitoryu kata. In Seienchin, the height of the stances from shiko-dachi to neko-ashi-dachi must be kept the same.

Breathing:

Generally, the first part of the kata is slow and powerful and the last half of the kata changes. Breathing takes place between shifts in the kata that should be short as possible and in a relaxed manner.

Rhythm:

First are slow movements, changing to a mixing of slow/powerful movements, followed by snapping sharp movements and then finally to the climax of this kata.

Fundamental errors:

Bobbing up and down, making face like tensing the body but not actually tensing.

Movements are not coordinated with breathing.

Cannot show in the execution the difference from kakete to kurite.

Taking too low a shiko-dachi. Inexperienced competitors have some myth that the lower the stances, the better the stance.

Other styles where the kata is found and the differences:

Goju. In Goju, The meaning of this kata is: sei; control; Un; to pull (also sucking in, drawing in, or setting-up the opponent); and Chin: to root, or root of. Other interpretations of what the kata means, or illustrates, include: attack, conquer and suppress, or subdue from a distance. Balance and control is important in the performance of Seiunchin. This kata contains many techniques to unbalance, throw or grapple with an opponent, and contains close quartered striking, sweeps, takedowns and throws. Seiunchin illustrates its Chinese origins through its considerable use of hand techniques, possibly coming from the Hsing-I system. Although there are no kicks performed in this Kata, it would be a mistake not to consider the possible applications of ashi barai or suri ashi that can represent foot sweeps, parries and traps.

Kata Reference Sheet - Bassai Dai

Style: JKF Official Kata based on Shitoryu School

History

The inventor is unknown. Shuri-te type kata, Itosu influence. There are over 30 known variations of Bassai. The most popular are from Itosu's influence: Itosu Bassai, Tomari Bassai, and Matsumura Bassai. It is said this kata was taught by Kosaku Matsumura in Tomari, in Okinawa, around 1869. Chotuka Kyan (1870-1946) and Choki Motubi (1871-1945) also taught this kata.

Descriptive Information:

There are four different directions in the first part of the kata. The later part of the kata will change to a straight line (forward and back) and ends with two 45 degree directions. Kata shows variety of blocks and changes in direction.

Characteristics of the kata:

Typical Itosu type kata, emphasis in speed and snapping movements to many directions. Shows a variety of blockings.

Principles the kata teaches:

Accurate direction changes against multiple attackers through lateral turning of the body and proper focus of the hara. Considers two defensive movements against one opponent's attack to apply proper technique. Movement opposes and the kata is not symmetric in that sense. Reversing of direction is common in the early part of the kata, which also teaches balance, and quick execution of movements.

Major performance points:

Kihon. Everything must drive from the hips with circular lateral movement of the hara only - no up or down action of the hara when changing direction. The body moves under the head.

Demonstrated ability to flex at the waist during the performance of kakete.

Do not hold the breath causing excessive blinking destroying zanshin

Correct foot placement - the feet do not wander

Rhythm of the kata must reflect the bunkai

Keep the same posture even while changing stances.

Do not shake the body or twist the entire body during execution of two consecutive defensive techniques.

Obvious breathing in the kata is incorrect.

Minor errors made in the kata performance:

Execution of kakete, neko-ashi-dachi and timing of hand movements. Inability to flex at the waist in the performance of the dual blocking maneuvers.

Difficult features:

Executing the hand techniques without exaggerating or losing timing. Difficulty in turning while maintaining proper upper body posture. Maintaining the tightness of the armpits during blocking techniques. Balance, and distribution of weight and accuracy in the execution of techniques. The performer tends to move too fast and to lose technique connection from one direction to the other.

Stance and movement:

Neko-ashi-dachi, moto-dachi, hanzenkutsu-dachi, zenkutsu-dachi, Shito-dachi, etc. Variety of blocks, shito, kakete, chudan-uke, etc

Breathing:

Considerably easier than Naha-te type of kata. Essentially hidden except for a few parts.

Rhythm:

Since there are two defensive movements against one opponent's attack, the defensive movements are executed in two rapid movements. The movement of the upper portion of the body should not be exaggerated, but natural.

Fundamental errors:

Performer should move with co-inheritance of prior movements.

Other styles where the kata is found and the differences:

Japan Karate Association, Wado Ryu (Patsai/Passai)

There are four basic versions of Bassai (Patsai) Kata. Bassai Sho, breaking the small fortress. Bassai Dai, breaking the great fortress, Bassai San, penetrating the mountain fortress, and Bassai Tomari, thunder in the forest.

Shotokan, JKA Bassai Dai. Shotokan Bassai includes the use of opposites such as composure and agility, strength and change, and fast and slow techniques. Also included are the dynamics of strength, changing blocks (switching blocking arms), turning disadvantage into advantage. The kata should be full of vitality and have the will necessary to break an opponent's fortress.

Style Sheet – Wadoryu (Way of Peace)

Founder: Hironori Otsuka (born 1/29/1892 and died 1/29/1982)

Date of Style: April 1, 1934 in Tokyo

Founders History

Otsuka was a former head master of the Shindo-Yoshin Jujitsu Ryu at the age of 29 and he also studied under Gichin Funakoshi. He started his study at age 6. At age 13 he entered the Shindo-Yoshin school of jujitsu studying under an instructor named Nakayama. In 1934 he developed rules and regulations for kumite within the Wado system. In 1972 he was recognized by the Emperor of Japan receiving the Hanshi Award. With this honor he was ranked as the head of all martial arts systems within the All-Japan Karate-Do Federation. He resided in Tokyo and his dojo was located in the Osaka police station.

Style History

Wadoryu was founded in 1934 although it was not called Wadoryu until 1940. With a background in both jujitsu and karate, Otsuka combined the karate and jujitsu movements into one unique style of karate. Wadoryu numbers the Pin-An kata in the original manner but teaches Nidan before Shodan thus recognizing the tradition but respecting Otsuka's instructor Funakoshi who changed both the ordering and numbering. Thus Wadoryu is based on respect for the teacher and the traditions of the martial arts system.

Called Wado (way of peace), because of the belief that the basis of Budo is the way of peace.

Wadoryu was adopted as one of the first 6 schools of the Federation of All Japan Karate Organizations (FAJKO), known now as the Japan Karate Federation (JKF.).

Major Influences

Otsuka Sensei developed Wado-Ryu after studying the Samurai martial art of Jiu-jitsu, and Shotokan (another style of Karate). This combination, according to Otsuka Sensei, is a softer, more natural means of self-protection.

Characteristics

Wadoryu seeks to be the most efficient style of karate using time tested movements to provide the speed of karate and the balance of jujitsu thus providing a balanced style of offense and defense. Wado uses takedowns and throwing techniques as well as kicking, punching and striking and the ability to go low and high and sidestepping on both defense and offense. Wado stances are generally more upright and center-weighted so that the practitioner may be able to move both forward and backward (and sideways) with equal ease to encourage speed and evasion tactics prevalent in the interpretation of the kata.

Major Kata

Pinan, Kushanku, Naihanchi, Seishan, Chinto, Passai, Niseishi, Rohai, Wanshu, Jion, Jitte.

Kata Reference Sheet - Chinto

JKF Official Kata based on Wado-ryu

History

The origin of this Kata is unknown. However, it was said a shipwrecked Chinese sailor taught the kata to Master Matsumora during the 19th century. Based on a mixture of Chinese Kempo and southern Shaolin version of White Crane Kung fu it includes several one legged stances characteristic of the latter style. The Kata is known as Chinto (fighting toward the east) except in Shotokan where it is called Gankaku (crane on a rock).

Descriptive Information:

Quick snappy, birdlike action with jujitsu type meanings. The kata follows a straight line of movement.

Characteristics of the kata:

Difference of Wadoryu is in the applications. Wado-ryu teaches to avoid attack showing the jujitsu influence. Other styles retreat to avoid technique from the bunkai. The jujitsu influence provides a different perspective of the movement of the kata and Wadoryu presents the kata differently. This kata is also known by the use of the one-leg stance and there is one jump kick.

Principles the kata teaches:

Actions should be quick snappy, birdlike with jujitsu type meanings. This kata works balance on one leg, simultaneous kicking and striking from a one-leg position and should develop a feeling of inhibiting and overpowering the opponent's movements.

Major performance points:

Move on the floor to cover distance.

Unity in action

Do not move things that should not move

Uniqueness of stance and style

Minor errors made in the kata performance:

Loss of balance in one-leg stances and movements between stances

Lack of timing the movement with the setting of the stance.

Improper placement of the elbows

Poor jump and landing

Loss of rhythm as the performer changes directions

Difficult features:

The kata must live its interpretation and not just be a dance

Movement must come from the hara

The correct exchange of tension and relaxation between the techniques

The kata contains action and non-action. Waiting, how techniques are combined create the rhythm and character of the kata

Stance and movement:

Seichusen, the centerline a strike or kick follows toward the opponent or the line the defender must defend is important.

When the kata is correctly done this centerline should accurately reflect the embussen of the kata.

Breathing:

Breathing must consider the entire kata and relate to the timing of force. In doing so, stamina must be considered.

Rhythm:

Balance breathing, movement, force, speed keeping zanchin in all techniques. How all this is combined affects the rhythm of the kata.

Fundamental errors:

Letting the centerline wander both in attack and defense

Telegraphing of movement

Incomplete actions, rushing the slow movements

Allowing the center of gravity to get so low that you are rooted to the floor.

Other styles where the kata is found and the differences:

JKF Shotokan – Gankaku. Gankaku uses side kicks not front kicks and different stances.

Shito - Chinto

Kata Reference Sheet - Seisan

JKF Official Kata based on Wado-ryu

History

Seishan Kata is one of the oldest Kata taught today. It bridges the gap between Shorei and Shorin kata. It contains both the slow tense movements and semi circular stances that are characteristic of Shorei Kata together with the fast and hard snapping techniques-of the Shorin system. Translated Seishan means 13 movements or 13 defenses.

Descriptive Information:

The first half of the Kata consist of strong stances, slow motions, and powerful techniques, while the second half emphasizes fast body motions and techniques. Many sequences are repeated, some 3 times. There is a broad range of hard and soft techniques.

Characteristics of the kata:

Seisan clearly works to develop both hard (goho) and soft (juho) techniques. Movement is continuous but there are pauses. The length of a pause will vary depending on the objective and logic of the kata sequence as performed.

Principles the kata teaches:

Synchronizing movement while creating energy that is hard but arises from suppleness. The kata also shows the hand techniques and footwork of shuri-te, how to get inside an opponent's attack to destroy his stability, while simultaneously developing a strong foundation.

Major performance points:

Essential points of the kata must be shown. These are posture, effort, correct technique and balance.

Every movement has its specific objective and principle. This can be using gravity, a firm posture, good balance, rotation, and so forth.

Pauses are permitted and should relate to the practical explanation (bunkai) or to the key points of the kata (balance, use of gravity, rotation etc) is being expressed by the performer.

Zanshin must be expressed before, during and after any technique throughout the kata

Minor errors made in the kata performance:

Not completing punches and strikes

Not fulfilling the objective of the technique

Errors in posture, balance, effort, technique, timing, alertness and fighting principles

Difficult features:

Coordination of breathing with techniques

Keeping quick movement on the line of the attack.

Proper execution of the slow movements

The fast actions must be balanced and fully completed

Stance and movement:

Wadoryu stances are mostly different from other styles and judges must understand their unique characteristics and how they inter-relate with Wado technique to correctly judge the kata.

Breathing:

Controlled breathing in the first part of the form changing with the faster actions. The breathing in the first part of the kata should not be so intensely done that it inhibits the force and stamina in the second part of the kata. Moving between action and no action with looking

Rhythm:

Slow and consistent repetitious rhythm in the first part of the kata, fast movements balanced on both sides in the second part of the kata. The kata changes between action and no-action. This change with watchful waiting between movements creates the rhythm of the kata.

Fundamental errors:

Not balancing the performance

Impatience with slow movements

Other styles where the kata is found and the differences:

Shotokan – Hangetsu (half moon). Semi-circular movements with hands and feet, fast and slow techniques, hand and foot coordinated with breathing. This kata exemplifies close in attacks – getting inside the opponent's legs and destroying the opponent's balance. This is exemplified by sliding the feet in arc shaped movements.

Shitoryu – Seisan

Goju Kai – Seishan

Shotokan – Hangetsu

Style Sheet - Goju

Founder: Chogun Miyagi (born April 25, 1888 in Naha-shi, Okinawa, and died October 8, 1953)

Date of Style: 1930

Founders History

Student of Kanryu Higaonna (Higashionna) (3/10/1853-1917) of Naha-te (Higoshi-Maki, Nahi-shi, Okinawa). Higionna is considered the father of Goju-ryu. Higaonna trained under Master Ryu (Rou Rou Koh), a renowned Chinese martial artist in Fukken, China. Miyagi, a student of Higaonna, also trained in Shaolin Chuan and Pakua Chang. He came to Japan in 1934.

Style History

Miyagi studied Shuri-te and traveled to China to learn Chinese boxing - probably Shao Lin Chuan at Fuchou (Fukken), China, as well as Pakua Chang. Combining these elements he created the style of Naha-te. In 1930 Miyagi developed the name Goju. In addition to traveling to China, he studied theory with Anku Itosu of Shuri-ryu. In 1929 or 1930 Gogen Yamaguchi invited Miyagi to Japan and karate was also admitted to the Butokai in that year. Shortly after that, a Goju headquarters was started Japan. Miyagi was succeeded in Okinawa by Motuku Yagi and in Japan by Gogen Yamaguchi. The Japanese Goju headquarters moved to Tokyo in 1950. In 1952 the Goju Ryu Association was formed under Gogen Yamaguchi in Japan and it became the Goju-kai Federation in 1954. In 1964, Goju-kai became one of the first six schools of the Federation of All Japan Karate Organizations (FAJKO), known now as the Japan Karate Federation (JKF.) Goju claims it was the first organization to be considered a style in Japan. Okinawan Gojuryu developed separately from Japanese Gojuryu but today are now cooperating more closely than in the past.

Goju gets its name from *go* and *ju*, hard and soft.

Adopted as one of the first 6 schools of the Federation of All Japan Karate Organizations (FAJKO), known now as the Japan Karate Federation (JKF.).

Major Influences

Shuri-te, Chinese martial arts from Fukken, China as learned by Higaonna, and Naha-te. Goju is the most popular school of Naha-te and a strain of Chinese Nanpa Shorin-ken.

Characteristics

Goju is derived from two words meaning go, hard, and ju, soft. By combining the two extremes of shao lin chuan with pa kwa chang, Miyagi created his Goju style. There are 5 progressive programs of instruction in Goju ryu. Warming up exercises, kihon, kihon gata, kaishu gata and then kumite. There are both functional and ceremonial forms of practice. Ceremonial forms of posture are used in the traditional and ritual manner.

A trademark of Gojuryu is Sanchin with its firm stance, sliding of the feet and controlled abdominal breathing - ibuki. There is also the Tensho kihon kata.

Major Kata

Fukyu Gata - Taikyoku Kata (5 each with a variation making 10) and Gekisai I and II

Kihon Gata – Sanchin and Tensho

Kaisu Gata – Saifa, Seisan, Sanseru, Shisochin, Seiyunchin, Seipai, Kururunfa, Suparimpei (Pecchurin)

Kata Reference Sheet - Saifa

JKF Official Kata based on Goju Kai

History

Saifa is the first of the classical combative kata taught in Goju-Ryu. Goju-Ryu's kata origins come from the martial arts taught in the Fukken area of southern China, as well as other internal and external martial arts. Kanryo Higaonna was taught this Kata, along with the other Kata of Goju-Ryu, while he studied in China. These Kata and martial strategies would become the basis of the quanfa of Higaonna, which later Miyagi Sensei would call Goju-Ryu.

Descriptive Information:

Saifa translates to Sai to smash and Fa to tear. Saifa may be interpreted to mean grabbing and tearing of tissue in close-quartered combat. The kata trains you to move close and strike down opponents using grappling and striking techniques. The kata is designed on a front to back line with some side-to-side movement. Starting with a break from a hold, it ends with circular movement. Containing mostly attacking movements, it generally represents the "hard" aspects of Gojuryu.

Characteristics of the kata:

The kata uses many strikes by elbow, knee, back fist, palm heel, ridge hand, and hammer fist. Even blocking movements can be used offensively against an opponent when in close. Important aspects of Saifa are that it teaches the practitioner to get-out-of-the-way, and this is done with primarily attacking techniques, grappling and some escaping techniques. Many of the hand movements and folding techniques shown in this Kata illustrate joint manipulation, joint locks, breaks or throws. Generation of power through twisting of the hips and the abrupt dropping/grounding of stances is also important in this Kata. It mixes swift, light stances (neko-ashi-dachi and sagi-ashi-dachi) with solid, grounding stances (shiko-dachi).

Principles the kata teaches:

Trains movement using arm and leg as whips - snap motion.

Trains relaxation of the joint - wrist, elbow, and shoulder.

Also, uses circular motion - striking with centrifugal power - focus, tensing lower abdomen, mental concentration.

Use toes and feet to balance and improve focus.

Major performance points:

Generation of power and movement through the abdomen and hips.

Switching between soft and hard movements of the arms.

Continuous flow of movement in the various sequences of the kata.

Minor errors made in the kata performance:

Timing of the hands and feet together with breathing.

Inability to move the hips/abdomen because incorrectly placing the feet.

Heel or knife-edge of the foot pulling off the floor in certain stances.

Difficult features:

Muscle control (relax/tense), balance, timing, focus.

Concentrate strongly with eyes, keep back straight.

Smooth sliding footwork and large range of movement.

Stance and movement:

It is important to keep soles of foot flat for strong balance as the toes and feet are used to balance and improve focus.

Breathing:

Kiai in two places. Breathing and movement must coincide.

Rhythm:

Slow and steady (patient) but with quick attacks. Leads to a climax at the end of the kata. Movements should be combined into sequences of fast and slow with forcefulness.

Fundamental errors:

Rushing the kata

Not being correct in the stance

Not using the hara and not using quick snapping actions

Incorrect stepping.

Poor balance in the stances

Other styles where the kata is found and the differences:

Shitoryu

Kata Reference Sheet - Seipai

JKF Official Kata based on Goju Kai

History

It is one of the 9 original Kaishu Kata that were brought back to Okinawa from China by Kanryo Higaonna. Seipai contains a variety of unusual movements and techniques including one that requires the unique use of a fist shaped like it would be when one knocks on a door.

Descriptive Information:

Seipai is of Chinese origin (Monk Fist boxing) and translates as Sei – ten and Pai - eight, or “18 hands”, or 18 types of movements. The number 18 most likely refers to many and not 18 specific movements. It contains many hidden techniques designed to confuse the opponent in combat.

Characteristics of the kata:

This kata includes body twisting techniques and rapid, whipping techniques combined with pulling techniques requiring Muchimi (heavy sticky hands). There are many hidden techniques in the kata, including throwing, sweeping and close in techniques.

Principles the kata teaches:

The kata teaches techniques to use against an opponent grabbing from front, back, and side, techniques for close distance fighting, and use of throwing or joint attack techniques.

Major performance points:

Proper focus when striking

Correct hand motion and footwork

Breath control for tensing and relaxing and control of muscles should not be lacking or performed incorrectly

Motion must be circular and snap.

Stances must be in balance

Minor errors made in the kata performance:

Timing of the hands and feet together with breathing.

Inability to move the hips/abdomen because incorrectly placing the feet.

Heel or knife-edge of the foot pulling off the floor in certain stances.

Difficult features:

Muscle control (relax/tense), balance, timing, focus.

Concentrate strongly with eyes, keep back straight.

Smooth sliding footwork and large range of movement.

Combining movements into applications (bunkai) and the movements as combined should be consistent with the application demonstrated by the performer.

Correctly going back and forth between hard and soft movement

Stance and movement:

It is important to keep soles of the feet flat for strong balance as the toes and feet are used to balance and improve focus. This kata also has sliding movements for getting in close, throwing or sweeping.

Breathing:

Kiai in two places. Breathing and movement must coincide with the action as interpreted by the performer.

Rhythm:

This kata emphasizes changing speeds, both fast and slow. The kata sequences should be performed as units and have their own internal rhythm.

Fundamental errors:

Rushing the kata

Not using the hara and not use quick snapping actions

Incorrect stepping.

Off-balanced movement between stances

Mixing up hard and soft techniques within the performance application

Other styles where the kata is found and the differences:

Shitoryu

Style Sheet - Japan Karate Association (Shotokan)

Founder: Gichen Funakoshi (born 11/10/1968 in Yamakawa Shuri, Okinawa – Died 4/26/1957)

Date of Style: 1936 (Date Shotokan formally used – means House of Pine Waves)

Founders History

Gichin Funakoshi was born in Shuri, Okinawa, in 1869 of samurai lineage and began his study of karate at the age of 11. His instructors included Aragaki, Matsumura, Azato and Itosu. Funakoshi is called the father of modern karate and is considered the first to formally introduce karate into Japan in 1917 and 1922. He formed his first dojo in Tokyo. In 1929 he began advocating the characters of kara-te change from Chinese hands to empty hands. His book, *Karate-do Kyohan*, was published in 1935. Funakoshi held the first dan ranking certification in April of 1924 and formalized dan (grade) and kyu (class) ranking as well as the rules and teaching schedules in 1936. In 1948 Funakoshi saw the formation of the Japan Karate Association with himself as chief instructor. He died in 1957 at the age of 88. His book, *Ryukyu Kempo* in 1922 did much to promote karate in Japan

Style History

Shotokan dojo was first built and named in the spring of 1936. In 1948 the Japan Karate Association was formed. In October of 1957 the first All Japan karate-do Championships was held by the JKA.

The name Shotokan comes from the dojo his students built him in 1935. Funakoshi had adopted the pen name Shoto (pine waves) for his calligraphy and the name was used as the name of his first training hall in Japan. The hall was damaged in WW II.

JKA was adopted as one of the first 6 schools of the Federation of All Japan Karate Organizations (FAJKO), known now as the Japan Karate Federation (JKF).

Main Influences

Shuri-te and Shorie-Ryu

Characterizes

Shotokan scientifically based physical movement and theory with emphasis on kihon, the basic foundation techniques – form, angle and balance. Kata are powerful, solid, stable and smooth flowing

Shotokan kata are classified into Shorin-ryu and Shorei-ryu. The Shorin-ryu kata are light and quick with rapid motion front and back. Taikyoku, Heian Kata, Bassai, Kwanku, Empi, and Gankaku are found here. Shorei-ryu kata emphasize the development of physical strength and muscular power performed in a forceful manner. Shorei-ryu kata include Tekki Kata, Jutte, Hangetsu, and Jion.

Major Kata

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|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Bassai-Dai | 12. Jion |
| 2. Bassai-Sho | 13. Sochin |
| 3. Kanku-Dai | 14. Nijushiho Sho |
| 4. Kanku-Sho | 15. Goju Shiho-Dai |
| 5. Tekki - Shodan | 16. Goju Shiho-Sho |
| 6. Tekki - Nidan | 17. Chinte |
| 7. Tekki - Sandan | 18. Unsu |
| 8. Hangetsu | 19. Meikyo |
| 9. Jitte | 20. Wankan |
| 10. Enpi | 21. Jiin |
| 11. Gankaku | |

Kata Reference Sheet - Kanku Dai

JKF Official Kata based on JKA School (Shorin influence)

History:

First called kosokun after its inventor Kosokun, Funakoshi altered it to its present practice and changed the name to mean To Look at the Sky. This kata was named after a Chinese military attaché who introduced it. His name is said to be Ku Shan Ku or Kang Siong Chun.

Descriptive Information:

Characteristics of the kata:

Long kata of basic, soft and hard movements in which timing and balance are important. Quick changes in direction, and defending a variety of attacks from a number of opponents in a number of directions. Designed to counter nighttime rather than daytime attacks.

Principles the kata teaches:

Timing, balance, and strong basics. Fast and slow techniques, dynamics of strength, body flexibility, and oblique twists and turns of the body - vertical dynamics, and both pushing and pulling techniques as well as rotational movement, jumping, and going to the ground. Most notably is the development of transition movements from one technique to the other. Kanku means looking at the sky - be ambitious means the same thing. The three cardinal points of kata are found here - expansion and contraction of the body, fast and slow movements in techniques, light and heavy application of strength

Major performance points:

Correct hara movement - the waist must be thrust forward, the ankles bent and the back foot forward

Ability to move waist - needs flexible ankles

Weight distribution of body - in motion, in stances, in kicking

No tightness in the shoulders and elbows

Kihon - impelled from the hips, head does not bob up or down - basically the same height

Proper rhythm, no loss of balance, correct sequencing of techniques

Minor errors made in the kata performance:

Techniques not fully completed, a rushed performance, improper stances

Difficult features:

Changing directions, rotation, jumping and going to the ground. Difficulties with concentration, breathing, posture, and fatigue due to the length of the kata. Energy must be utilized with maximum efficiency. Strength must be applied where it is called for and movements must be fast or slow when appropriate.

Stance and movement:

Higher stances are found internationally. Movement emphasizes coordination, speed, power, balance and focus. The performer should demonstrate good target and a concentration on the imaginary opponent.

Breathing:

Should be silent. Exhaling when focusing a technique and inhaling when pulling back from a technique (except in double or triple techniques.) Performers should not have shortness of breath or hold their breath especially when jumping or going to the ground.

Rhythm:

There is an individualistic rhythm that must be such that this rhythm prevents the kata from appearing stilted.

Fundamental Errors:

Rushing the kata, poor balance, and lack of movement coordination – not coordinating the actions with the hara movement and unbalancing the hara as you transition between stances.

Other styles where the kata is found and the differences:

Different applications of the kata are found between the JKF Shotokan and the Shotokai. Different names are such as:

Shotokai – Kanku

Wadoryu – Kushanku

Shitoryu – Ko So Kun Dai

Okinawa Shorin-ryu – Kosokun

Kata Reference Sheet - Jion

JKF Official Kata based on JKA School (Shorei influence)

History

Jion means temple sound. Jion was the name of a temple in China where martial arts were emphasized and it is believed that this Kata was developed at the temple or by someone associated with it or who used the name Jion.

Descriptive Information:

Jion is a long physically demanding Kata and practice of this Kata will develop a strong body. The Kata contains techniques for dealing with both armed and unarmed opponents.

Characteristics of the kata:

Jion exemplifies calm movements with strong strength of spirit, the mastery of rotational movements and shifting directions. There are no particularly difficult movements. This kata can be used to master fast and slow movements/tempo and simultaneous arm and leg movements while changing directions or moving forward.

Principles the kata teaches:

Defending in different directions with equal use of left and right side motions – balanced bilateral development of the body. Proper movement of the hara along the embusen with no bobbing up or down.

Major performance points:

Correctly combining the movements of the kata into sequences – can be individualistic but must be performed such that they combine fluidly

Slow and powerful at the end of each sequence of movements, but fast in the performance of individual technique

Keeping the hara movement horizontal and behind the technique.

Movement of the upper torso with certain strikes and defends – the upper torso moves in opposition with the lower torso or slightly overturns to express power in certain techniques.

Minor errors made in the kata performance:

Incorrect positioning of the arms in the last two movements of the kata.

Not completing movements – cutting movements short

Rushing the performance

Difficult features:

Correctly performing the two high blocking actions with following punch in the first line forward in the form.

Timing of movement of the hands with the feet.

Correct performance of the double arm actions throughout the form – those performed at one time and those performed separately.

Timing of the stamp and arm actions near the end of the form

Stance and movement:

Jion utilizes a number of stances, notably zenkutsu-dachi (front stance) and kiba-dachi (horse stance).

Breathing:

Breathing is natural with two kiai points in the kata. The rhythm of the kata should lead naturally to these kiai points.

Rhythm:

The rhythm should change with the direction of the movements. That is the rhythm to the sides is different then the rhythms to the front and back. The pauses between sequences must not be rushed and also should be equal bilaterally.

Fundamental errors:

Unbalanced rhythm

Cutting the movements short

Stilted movement

Timing off in sequences

Other styles where the kata is found and the differences:

Shito, Wado

Wadoryu jion, while it flows from Shotokan uses shiko-dachi in place of the kiba-dachi and neko-ashi-dachi in place of some of the front stances.

Appendix

Shotokan Karate by T. Mikami

Introduction

From the earliest days of kata training, performance and application have remained an integral part of karate. However, it is believed that the purpose of kata training itself may have undergone a change. Originally, katas were used to learn sparring combinations. They were practiced to develop sequential execution of techniques that could be used in life and death situations. As karate developed from a system of self-defense to a martial art, greater demands (both physically and mentally) came to be placed upon the karate-ka. The purpose of kata became that of developing the component parts of the body. In the present times, kata training helps generate quickness by emphasizing the coordination of the various muscle groups. It helps develop strength by requiring low stances and large motions and it develops power thorough isometric tension. In other words, focus. Kata has therefore evolved into an important training aid for the all around development of the karate-ka.

General Concepts

Kata begins and ends at the same spot. Every kata is created with a balance of movements – forward, backwards, and to the side. Apart from developing both sides of the body, kata allows a karate-ka to gauge mistakes in footwork by noting how far he finishes from the mark. Unlike sparring, which focuses attention on only one opponent, kata visualizes opponents in all directions and develops a total awareness.

Mental development: The practice of kata teaches a karate-ka how to control an opponent from a distance. Intimidation through loud kiai and perfect posture and slow movements to confuse and also to control the pace of the opponent are studied. Kata training is an exercise in the search for perfection, and therefore, a karate-ka must always practice it according to specifications. However, when the time comes to apply the techniques, the karate-ka must do it as is best suited to his personality and body. To quote Mr. Gichin Funakoshi, “Learn kata by book and find application by self.”

Important Points for Overall Performance of Kata

Contrast: There must always be a contrast between relaxations. While in motion, the muscles need to be relaxed to generate speed and at the end of the technique, they need to be completely tense for focus and, therefore, power.

Extension and Contraction: This aspect of kata has to do with range and distance. The body needs to be “coiled” or contracted before it can “uncoil” or extend to cover longer distances. Such sequences in kata should find proper emphasis.

Timing: The understanding of the correct timing is a kata teaches a karate-ka how to utilize energy with maximum efficiency.

General Points

Keep the back straight in all stances (posture straight and upright)

The head is always kept upright and fixed over the body

The hips are always straight and level

Use the strength of the lower abdomen to control entire body movement (use hip strength)

Do not tamp feet for shifting movements – control motion from hips

Take proper support from the legs for a strong stance

Proper eye position and concentration – always look at imaginary target

Coordinate body movement for proper timing

Proper focus timing – should not tense too soon or too late.

No wasting of motion – avoid unnecessary movement like jerking of head or over blocking

Brush the elbows against the body and use the muscles around the armpits

The shoulders are kept down and relaxed

Correct use of hands and feet depending on the application of the technique.

Bassai Dai

The meaning of the words Bassai Dai is breaking of a fort.

Characteristics of Bassa Dai: Dynamic motions with strong focus (isometric tension) and with hip movements quickly switching from one side to the other. 42 movements.

Kanku Dai

Kanku Dai literally means a view of the sky (world) and refers to the first movement of the kata.

Characteristics of Kanku Dai: The movements are executed lightly with quick change of direction. 65 movements

Jion

Jion is a common name among Buddhist priests and it is believed that the creator of this kata was called **Jion**.

Characteristics of Jion: The movements are executed with strength. There are many combination techniques with quick timing – 47 movements.

Anderson Cup

The Anderson Cup is a competitive event in what is known as form, forms, patterns, hyung, poomse, kata, talou or weapons kata competition. It is defined by its unique method of operation and scoring.

In general the Anderson Cup is for men and women age 18 and over. An Anderson Junior Cup for ages 17 and under can also be held. Competition may be further divided into various age, sex, weight, experience, style or other categories or divisions.

The Anderson Cup consists of form competition in the Martial Arts. For Karate, this is kata competition, for Taekwondo poomse or hyung competition and for Kung Fu talou competition and for weapons, weapons kata competition. Other martial arts may have different names for their form competition. The Anderson Cup can be conducted with open hand forms, weapons forms, synchronized or group forms, bunkai and or a combination of form methods. The specific rules for an Anderson Cup event can require competitors do specific forms for each performance, limit the performance to one style or type of martial art, require forms from various martial arts or styles of other manner of determining the performance in each heat. Requirements can also vary by heat.

Anderson Cup Competition Rules

The competitors are divided up into groups that compete in a heats. If there are 8 or more entries, each preliminary heat can have a little as 8 or as high as 15 competitors. If there are less than 8 entries, the preliminary heat consists of all competitors entered. After each heat, no more than 6 places will move forward to compete in heat(s) in the next round. Heats continue in this manner until there are 12 or fewer competitors. A semi-final heat will cut the number of competitors the top 6 places. The final heat will then take place.

A heat consist of one or more form performances. Semi-final and final heats can have additional performance requirements. Each performance consists of all competitors in a heat simultaneously performing one form as prescribed by the particular rules for that instance of the Anderson Cup. Judges will rank competitors from 1 to the number of competitors in that heat for each performance. That is, the each judge will assign 1 to their first place choice, 2 to the second and so forth. The competitors with the lowest composite ranking of all judges for each performance in a heat will move to the next heat. In the case of a tie in a preliminary heat, the tie shall not affect the number of competitors moving into the next heat as placement. Placement, not number of competitors determines who will move forward to the next round of heats.

The winner of the Anderson Cup Competition will be the competitor with the lowest composite ranking of all judges in the final round. In case of a tie in the final round, additional performances will be required until the tie is resolved. Each competitor in the final round will be recognized for their position placing (1-6th place). Preliminary heats should have no fewer than 6 judges. The number of judges in a semi-final round should not exceed the number of competitors in that round. The number of judges in a final round shall be the same as in the semi-final round.

The Anderson Cup event may also recognize or make an award to the competitor receiving the 1st place choice based on the cumulative total of all judges for each performance in the final heat. This is in addition to the competitor placing first overall.

USA Karate Anderson Cup and Junior Anderson Cup

Each kata contestant will present 4 representative kata in each of the major karate styles recognized by the WKF. These styles will be called categories and are Goju, Wado-ryu, Shito-ryu and Shotokan. Representative kata will not be limited to the WKF shitei kata list. Men will compete against women. There will be a separate Junior Cup for those 17 and under.

The Anderson Cup is an open event. The competition will be conducted in heats. There will be four kata performances per heat - one for each category of the kata styles except for the final heat. Each heat will be conducted with all competitors on the floor presenting simultaneously their selected kata for each category as it is announced. The results for each kata category in each heat will be accumulated and the winners of each heat will advance to the next round. The number of heats in each round will depend on the numbers of competitors entered in the Anderson Cup. The winner of the Anderson Cup will be from those that succeed to the final round. Kata selection for each heat will be the choice of the competitor as long as they perform the representative kata category from the required styles. Thus the same kata can be repeated in each heat or a different one from the same style can be substituted.

In the final heat, there will be 5 kata with the last kata performed being the competitors choice from any recognized style or system.

Judges will use the kata standards of the WKF and the kata for each style must exemplify the kihon of that style of kata announced for the specified performance in the heat.

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