



*Ateru Worldwide Association*

## **Sanchin kata - a seminar by**

**U. Huunjin Cullen 10<sup>th</sup> Dan Ateru Goju-Ryu Karate-Jutsu**

Sanchin kata is the cornerstone of a number schools such as Goju Ryu and Uechi Ryu having been taken to Okinawa from Fukien province in South China. It is widely held that this form embodies the essence of karate and that without a profound understanding of this, the higher levels will not be perceived.

Sanchin has a legendary tradition that traces its introduction into China from India by the Buddhist monk Bohdidarma @520AD. Bohdidarma was sent as a missionary by his teacher Prajnatarata to the Shaolin monastery to succeed the monk Bohdiruci.

The Chinese monks were in such a poor physical state due to their severe ascetic meditation practices that Bohdidarma strove to introduce a system to help strengthen their physical bodies and to increase their vitality.

This he achieved by introducing the introspective spiritual kata methods from the Indian martial art of Kalaryi with two yoga methods known in Japanese as the Ekkin Kiko (Tendon transforming vital energy exercise) and the Senzui kiko (Marrow cleansing vital energy exercise).

It should be noted that at this time, in the context of the fledgling Shaolin temple, this practice would have been specifically for enhancing the study of Buddhist teachings and not for martial purposes. There were seen to be three inner conflicts that the monks should be mindful of; that of the mind, body and speech with all three having to be controlled to allow spiritual progression but this required energy and vitality.

As the use of physical movement became an integral part of a monk's training, then the combination of esoteric hand and body positions known as Mudras that were symbolic expressions of the Buddha's teachings, could have been introduced and may have resulted in new forms having been created. Over the centuries new forms would have been created by the monks to embody different spiritual levels, whereby the perfection of the form went hand in hand with the level of spiritual awakening. In this context forms of moving meditation for ritualized combat against the demons of the self.

These teachings would have evolved and changed over generations to the point where the martial teaching was emphasized, as the influence of the temple grew politically and financially so they found themselves threatened at different points though out the centuries by both bandit forces and the armies of the Emperors. Over time the Buddhist temple arts filtered out to the general populace and were taught and propagated as civil martial arts.

Thus legend would propose that a composite yoga, unarmed self protection and mediation method was developed at the temple and went on to become an integral part of Chinese martial arts.

In later centuries these arts would be taken from the Fukien province of South China to Okinawa and would be incorporated by Okinawan teachers into the indigenous fighting methods.

One of the many forms to surface in Okinawa was the Sanchin form, in the Fukien dialect it is San-Chien and in Mandarin it is "San Chan". Its translation is San meaning three and Chin as battle, conflict or war. The kata is commonly referred to as three battles or three conflicts. My personal preference being for Three Conflicts.

Those Okinawan teachers who had a penchant for body conditioning continued to develop this form to suit their purposes. It is very popular as a dynamic tension method to produce the 'Iron Body' effect whereby the Ki is concentrated on the exterior of the body to produce a hardening effect to whist stand impact to the body.

Chojun Miyagi, founder of Goju Ryu, simplified the kata by removing the turns and changing from open hand to closed fist. By closing the fist this was intended to redirect the Ki back into the body so keeping the energy in the body and to aid developing the exterior muscles. This also emphasized the Okinawan preference for striking the Makiwara.

Now that the art and with it Sanchin has come to the West its practice now is very much a method of physical development and a demonstration of tension and strength. It's exterior practice to promote physical strength is often over emphasized and not counter balanced with the internal phase which is also required to develop pliability and sensitivity.

This is most easily done in the initial stages by performing the firm exterior muscle contraction with yielding abdominal breathing. By concentrating on the two dynamics; firm and yielding, the two feelings can be combined and the integration experienced. This experience of flux in balance gives us an insight into the natural energies that we already process. From this point the energies can be developed as part of the practice known as Kiko or energy cultivation.

#### TYPES OF SANCHIN KATA

- 1) Standard Japanese/Okinawan Sanchin Kata
- 2) Sanchin Testing
- 3) Uechi Ryu / Isshin ryu Sanchin Kata
- 4) Kihon Ido version of Sanchin Kata
- 5) Healing Sanchin
- 6) Extended Healing Sanchin Kata
- 7) Sunrise/Sunset version of Sanchin
- 8) Sanchin Tensho Kata

# Standard Kata

From Hudo Dachi come into right sanchin , sanchin no Kamae with breath  
Left hand pulls back (breathe in) then pushes straight out (breathe out) then perform first half of middle block (breathe in) and finish block (breathe out)

Step into left Sanchin stance  
Right hand repeats movements and breath of left hand.

Step into right Sanchin stance  
Left hand pulls back (breathe in) and then shoots straight across midsection and lies under right elbow (breathe out) turn (right foot steps across into Kosa Dachi and do 180 degree turn ending in a Left Sanchin while BLOCKING MIDDLE BLOCK WITH LEFT ARM (breathe in quickly – half time) Breathe out on slow right punch with right hand , breathe in on first part of middle block and out on second half of middle block

Step into Right Sanchin stance  
Left hand pulls back (breathe in) and then shoots straight across midsection and lies under right elbow (breathe out) turn (right foot steps across into Kosa Dachi and do 180 degree turn ending in a Left Sanchin while BLOCKING MIDDLE BLOCK WITH LEFT ARM (breathe in quickly – half time) Breathe out on slow right punch with right hand , breathe in on first part of middle block and out on second half of middle block.

Step into Left Sanchin stance (final step forward)  
Left hand performs hand sequence and breath THEN WITHOUT STEPPING Right hand performs hand sequence and breath THEN Left hand pulls back (breathe in) Then Out (Breath out and hold for 2 seconds)

NEXT The Right Hand (Currently in middle blocking position) and left fist meet in the middle in a Cupping Up movement (elbows may not come any more than one fist away from the rib cage – elbows are in tight to eachother) STOP

THEN they both move outward slightly down and in towards the opponents ribs. THEN

The opposing hands meet backhand to backhand and then making them into fists , first finger, middle fingers ring fingers and pinkys all pulling into fists that then pull back into hiki-te palms up slow movement and Strong Breath In. THEN Both Hands spear out slowly towards the ribs with Strong Breath out.

REPEAT 2 MORE TIMES THEN

Right Foot steps back ending in Left Sanchin - Perform Right Mawashi Uke. Part one is performed at a moderate speed (breathe in) Part Two – pushing out, is performed at the same speed breathing out.

Left Foot steps back ending in Right Sanchin – Perform Left Mawashi Uke as above.  
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## SANCHIN TESTING

This version of the kata is hard both physically and mentally. Each practitioner will have a black belt testing them while they perform the kata. The student comes out into the first posture Sanchin No Kamae and then holds. The tester then tests the frontal areas of the body with telling blows delivered to the chest and mid section. Flinch punch to the face and checks all aspects of the body positioning on the front side including quadriceps. They then go to the rear testing calfs, buttocks, lats, traps, and shoulders. Then after the semi severe beating, they perform the rest of the kata while being checked for the proper position and tightness of hands, arms, techniques and body.

## UECHI RYU VERSION

These guys do the kata with open hands. The blocks and stances vary also. It is a simpler version of the kata but performed very strong. The Chinese brought the kata to Okinawa as open hand but the Okinawans changed it to close hand to emphasize the hard aspects of Goju.

## ISSHIN RYU VERSION

Kata resembles Japanese/Okinawan versions but all punches are straight vertical punches

## KIHON IDO VERSION OF SANCHIN KATA

This version of Sanchin training walks you down the length of the floor performing Sanchin stances and hand movements but instead of turning on your third step you continue on till the wall and then turn and continue back all on the Sensei's call. This is the method that the Shaolin Monks used to meditate while moving; strengthening the body and building stamina in the karateka.

## PRE-HEALING SANCHIN EXCERCISES

Before one attempts to perform a Healing Sanchin they must first open the KI flow throughout their body and open Chakra areas first. This is necessary to get the full effect of the Healing Sanchin. These Chi-Gung excersises are good for mind and body to do either with Healing Sanchin or as a stand alone exercise for health.

## HEALING SANCHIN

In this application of Sanchin Kata the practitioner focuses on the energy flows that occur between hands and chest, hands and feet, circulating the spine and concentrating additional energy on the triple burner, the tam den and the brain stem/top of head.

Breaths and hand movements are done normal speed if not a bit slower with each portion (where a breath ends) ending in a hold for a few seconds while you concentrate on the flow of energies listed above.

## EXTENDED HEALING SANCHIN KATA

This one is done for length not speed. It can be done hard or soft but the key is to extend the length of time each single movement and breath take. This kata can take up to ten

minutes or more to do. After which the performer will feel completely refreshed and full of health.

#### SUNRISE/SUNSET VERSION OF SANCHIN KATA

This method of performance is done either as Sunrise or Sunset. Sunrise starts like a soft breeze and ends like the blazing sun. Sunset starts blazing and ratchets down so last moves are wispy and almost meditative. Sunrise ratchets up each technique more and more till you almost explode and Sunset ratchets down the same way. Each technique will become a little less or a little more depending on which version you are doing.

SANCHINTENSHO KATA this runs sanchin standard till the first step after the second turn where we would usually take the left hand back and then bring it straight out and block. INSTEAD we pull the hand back WITHOUT A BREATH.. THEN we perform Tensho kata normally on out with applicable breathing. The combination Kata is performed by many Goju sects as a training method and also as a kata in its own right.

Train hard, with good breath, you will live well and begin to know yourself deeply.

Kevin "Huunjin" Cullen