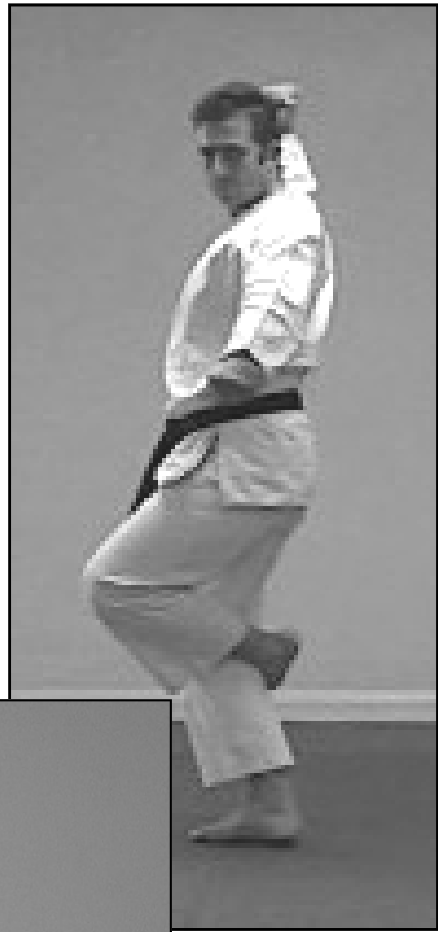


The Black Belt Study Group

MASTERS SERIES

GANKAKU



Students should be aware of the Law and how it pertains to "Use of Reasonable Force".

Black Belt Study Group

MASTERS SERIES

Kata remain one of the most misunderstood facets of the martial arts. Seen by many as being without use, sweeping statements are often made by accomplished martial artists:

“Learning kata just teaches you how to do kata.”

“Kata doesn’t teach you anything about combat.”

Some *realists* have even gone so far as to stop teaching kata, or have made up their own “fighting kata” to more accurately resemble combative situations as they perceive them.

In order to honestly teach a kata, one must have an understanding of where the kata comes from and it’s reason for being. Patrick McCarthy Hanshi often likens this to trying to learn a song in a foreign language. It may sound pretty but without it’s context it is ultimately meaningless.

I have made it my life’s study to investigate kata and disseminate the information to limit the amount of bad karate practice in the world. There is nothing wrong with learning a kata for competition and making it as pretty as you can, but to then go on and teach that method as the “right” way to perform it is, in my opinion incorrect.

Gankaku

This study guide is to remind practitioners of the Gankaku kata, how it looks, and how to get the best out of it.

The version shown within heralds from Shotokan, nominally the style of Funakoshi Gichin, credited by many as the father of modern karate-do. Certainly, many movements within Shotokan have become homogenised and made safe for practice by school children. This does not mean that the old, dangerous techniques are removed, they have merely been overlooked in favour of simplistic explanations favouring the aesthetic required for competition.

More important than which version is shown here are the principles espoused, which are universal.

Principles can be broken down into what is useful for performance (*embu*), what is important for health and exercise, and what is important for combat.

Performance Principles:

Funakoshi’s Three Cardinal Points:

- i) Light and Heavy application of Strength.
- ii) Expansion and Contraction of the body.
- iii) Fast and Slow movements of the body.

1. Ikita Kata. Feeling and purpose. Alive.

2. Inen. Spirit.

3. Chikara no Kyojaku. Proper application of power. Technique can be strong or yielding, hard then soft.

4. Waza no Kankyu. Variations in the timing of movement, sometimes fast, sometimes slow.

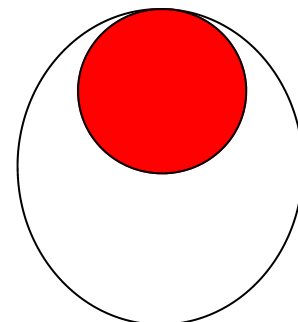
5. Kisoku no Donto. Rhythm of breathing, when to inhale and exhale.

6. Balance. Proper balance must be maintained in the performance of Kata.

Kanazawa’s 10 rules:

<i>Yoi no kisin</i>	The spirit of being ready.
<i>Inyo</i>	The contrast and transition of active and passive
<i>Chikara no kyojaku</i>	The degree of Power. Where you put your strength.
<i>Waza no kankyu</i>	The speed of the technique
<i>Tai no shinshuku</i>	The degree of expansion and contraction.
<i>Kokyu</i>	Breathing.
<i>Tyakugan</i>	The points to aim for.
<i>Kiai</i>	Spirit Shout. Everything together.
<i>Keitai no hoji</i>	The correct positioning.
<i>Zanshin</i>	Remaining awareness

Practitioners will note that even amongst those concerned with how a kata *looks*, it is important understand what the moves are *for!*



inyo

BACKGROUND

The Gankaku kata is nominally a Sandan kata, reserved for those attempting or those who already possess the grade that is most associated with the term "Sensei". In many Japanese schools one does not consider themselves anything more than a class senior, even when they wear a black belt, until they reach the Sandan (3rd degree) stage of their training. If there is more to Kata study than randomly ascribing them to various belts/stages of development, then this should tell us something about the importance of Gankaku.

Gankaku is a strange kata for the **Shotokan** style of Karate-do, nominally the style of **Funakoshi Gichin** who is credited with introducing Karate to Japan in the 1920s, although it is one of the original kata listed in Master Funakoshi's book.

When we know the origins of Master Funakoshi we can ascertain that the kata is of the Shuri area of Okinawa. The Okinawan name for this kata was Chinto. The kata can be traced back as through Funakoshi to his teacher Itosu, from Itosu to Matsumura. It is unknown where the kata really came from, but Gankaku is recorded as having been taught to Kanagusuku by a "shipwrecked Chinese Sailor" from Annan, China, in southern Okinawa. This is highly fanciful, and a popular myth to credit the Chinese origins of the Karate Kata. It is highly likely that the kata did come from a Chinese martial artist, as the name would indicate, "shipwrecked" would appear to be an analogy for someone based on Okinawa when it was formally a Japanese state and as such Chinese people would be officially unwelcome. This is a peculiar situation, as a proportion of the Okianawan residents could trace their ancestry to China following an incursion (the famed "36 families") in the 1300s.

This mysterious castaway seemed to have a lot of time to teach kata to prominent Okinawan martial artists. One might theorise that the castaway was, in fact, the mysterious Kosokun/Kusanku—a job description meaning "envoy" or "ambassador", and that because he was Chinese (from Fuzhou) his presence in a Japanese area without official recognition from the Japanese would present an "outlaw" status, like "castaway".

As Gankaku translates as "Crane on a Rock", we can say that it is a "crane kata".

The story goes that "Chinto" translates as "Fighting to the East". As we well know, mis-translations can occur, and names become "what they sound like" rather than what they originally meant.

The following information comes from Joe Swift:

There is a Chuan Fa form (kata) called Chen Tou in Mandarin Chinese (the Japanese version of these characters is "Chinto", literally "Sinking the Head") in Wu Zho Quan (a.k.a. Ngo Cho Kuen, Five Ancestors Fist), which was a style popular in the Quanzhou and Shamen (Amoy) districts of Fujian, or Fukien (Kinjo, 1999), the southern Chinese province facing modern day Taiwan. This was a popular destination and departure point for both trade and immigration to and from Okinawa before the 20th century.

Chen Tou refers to sinking the body and protecting the head. In the Okinawan Chinto kata, this is the first technique, but in the Five Ancestors Fist (style of kung fu) it is the last (Kinjo, 1999). As this comes from written testimony rather than pictorial, though, we cannot tell for sure.

There are three distinct "families" of Chinto in modern Okinawan karate: (1) Matsumura/Itosu lineage (performed front to back), (2) Kosaku Matsumora lineage (performed side to side), and (3) the Chotoku Kyan lineage (performed on a 45 degree angle). The version practiced by Funakoshi is clearly from the Matsumura/Itosu lineage.

In recent years the crane kata have become synonymous with Okinawan secret fighting techniques, in no small part due to the popularisation of them by Matayoshi Shinpo. Matayoshi taught that crane kata were the heart of Karate. Interestingly, Master Funakoshi listed that many kata were crane kata, and he included Naihanchi in that list. The current craze for Hakutsuru must lead us to re-evaluate our own crane kata for it's unexplored depths!

As a crane kata, one might expect the movements to reflect the lightness and speed of a crane when fighting. This would classify the kata as a Shorin kata. The kanji for "shorin" are the same as "shaolin". Rather than indicating a speed or a lightness of movement, the term indicates to us something of the kata's origins. In this case, it indicates an antique relationship to the northern Shaolin temple. As we know, everyone would like to think that their study goes back to the monastery, but unfortunately it cannot be proven.

Commonly taught as a "Black Belt" kata, it has small variations in the way it is taught within Shotokan, WadoRyu, ShitoRyu, and as Poomse in certain Taekwondo associations. As stated before, the principles are universal.

Historian **Joe Swift**, of ejmas.com has the following to say:

According to a 1914 newspaper article by Funakoshi Gichin (1867-1957, founder of Shotokan karatedo), based upon the talks of his teacher Asato Anko (1827-1906), student of Matsumura Sokon):

"Those who received instruction from a castaway from Annan in Fuzhou, include: Gusukuma and Kanagusuku (Chinto), Matsumura and Oyadomari (Chinte), Yamasato (Jiin) and Nakasato (Jitte) all of Tomari, who learned the kata separately. The reason being that their teacher was in a hurry to return to his home country." (sic, Shoto, 1914).

It is believed by this author that the "Matsumura" in the above excerpt is a misspelling of Matsumora Kosaku, of Tomari. The fact that Matsumora Kosaku, is evidence that Matsumora may have also been taught this kata as well (Kinjo, 1999).

It is noteworthy that all of these martial artists got to meet with the castaway!

Questions raised include "How good a martial artist was the castaway?" and "Didn't they all really just learn the same thing in different ways?"

Gankaku Kata Pictorial Reminder



Gankaku Kata Pictorial Reminder



PRINCIPLES

Remember:

- If you can avoid the confrontation, do.
- If you can talk your way out of it before it gets messy, do.
- If you can hit then escape, pre-emptively or otherwise, do.
- If you hit an attacker and it doesn't finish it then use the time you buy yourself to use your technique. An aggressor will be more compliant if you have already hit him.
- If one technique does not fulfill your requirements use another. Don't stop. Carry on until you are safe. Kata applications show a snap shot of action, not the whole fight.
- If you can, move to a position of relative safety/strength (off-line rather than directly in front of his "other" fist).
- Safety first. Practice the moves with speed, power, and visualisation only on a bag or thin air, not on a partner. This is what kata are for. When practicing on empty air don't lock out joints, use your muscles to stop the movement.

Awareness.	Be aware of your situation. Your surroundings, potential threats. <i>During</i> a confrontation— as soon as contact is made you can find any other part of the assailant.
Pre-Emption	If possible, and morally/legally correct, always advisable. Action beats reaction.
Off-line	It is best to have your centre-line aimed at the opponent and to have theirs aimed away from you! This makes it harder for them to aim any of their "weapons" at you.
Shock (BAR)	Dealing with the "adrenaline dump", and causing the shock to occur others. All tactics take place after BAR (Body Alarm Reaction) has been caused.
Mind, Breath, Body.	In that order. Intention, energy, then the physical movement.
Focus on the "One Point"	All power comes from the dantien/tanden/belly.
All force directed to the centre.	Aim everything you have towards the centre of the opponent for depth of penetration.
All limbs in motion/active	Always strike with more than one limb. Your feet are a part of the technique, even if they don't appear to be.
Leave No Gap	Any space between your limb and the opponent will present a weakness.
Controlled Pliability	Tension prevents movement, so we remain able to move, but without becoming flaccid. We need to control where and when we are pliable.
Heavy Hand	Always penetrate, never bounce off.
Waveform	The motion of any strike is a figure of 8/infinity loop.
Quadrant Theory	Yin-yang taken three-dimensionally.
Pressure Points	The last 5% of any given technique.
Five-Phase Theory	To get the best out of T.O.M., you should follow the Law of 5 Elements.
Small Circle Big Result	Centrifugal force, and the ability to use the smallest lever to move the biggest object.
Give a Little to Get a Little	Direct force often needs to be slightly absorbed before it can be resisted.
Complex torque	The human body can resist one directional force, but 3?
Stances	are the application of bodyweight to finish a technique. The stance is the last part of any technique, not the first.

Methods

Impact, seizing, controlling

Blood, Nerves, Airways, Concussive force, Joint manipulation (levers, hinges), tearing

Location, Tool, Angle, Direction, Intensity,

The moves of the kata reflect retaliations conducted on an attacker. The movements do not exist to block an attack, but rather to leave the defender in a better position (preferably with the attacker unable to continue).

Application Principles

We don't just want you to learn what we have to say; we seek to empower learners to discover applications for themselves. In this way we return to Funakoshi sensei's maxim that one doesn't need to know many kata; just to know a few really well. It is perfectly possible to take the principles and apply them to any kata, regardless of style, for workable applications.

We don't know the original applications—no-one alive today does. The arts have not been handed down complete but as methods of movement. Anyone who claims to have the original applications is actually showing *their* interpretation and understanding of their kata.

All kata applications today are "reverse engineered" - i.e.: the movement has been analysed (*bunkai*) until its method of use (*oyo*) has been revealed. Those who are teaching applications that were passed down to them have only repeated someone else's *bunkai-oyo jutsu*.

Just because the kata consists of fists does not limit the application.

The kata movement is what happens *after* the initial engagement.

There are *no blocks* in kata. All kicks make contact *below* the belt.

All chudan punches are to the *head*. We do not begin in a stance or "on guard", merely aware.

The responses are to attacks that commonly occur, at a distance where there is a real danger (unlike so many sparring practices where the distance is only applicable to a touch).

The kata does not reflect directions to face opponents, but directions to displace opponents.

The end point is the dead point, the action occurs in the middle.

The weapon is not always the end of the limb.

Kata applications have surface (*omote*) and hidden (*ura*) applications.

The Cosmology of kata

The basic shape made by this kata reflects the kanji for "a stick". This is probably not relevant. In certain schools the kata is performed diagonally instead of forwards and backwards.

More interesting are the number and type of turns in each kata. Notice how often we add up 360 degrees or multiples of it. Notice how each turn in the kata will take you through North, East, South and West and how these things link together. We first move backwards, face south, then north, turning anti-clockwise. We turn south continuing our path by the shortest route: forwards, then a turn clockwise, then continue by the shortest route. We step forwards twice, then turn anti-clockwise to the side. The following movements indicate spiralling (as all energy does), and then unravelling.

There is a nice mix of fast and slow movements in this kata, with plenty of breath regulation and that hardest of subjects: balance.

If the kata were symbolic of Buddhist monks' practice methods then consider that the turns may have been to offer prayer in each direction, to be protected in each direction, to cast out imperfections in each direction, and to allow the state of mind of a practitioner to pass from their worldly thoughts due to complex stepping rituals. Consider that as a code of exercise the kata makes these turns habitual. It's telling you to face all directions, to turn in any direction.

Every move takes you through multiple angles. There are no "linear movements".

Gan Kaku

The image shows the kanji characters for 'Gan Kaku', which are 岩 (Iwa) and 鶴 (Tsuru). The characters are written in a bold, black font on a light gray background.

NOTES

Kata as Meditation

As the *jutsu* forms became popularised as *do* forms the object of training theoretically trained. Funakoshi sensei's idea was that Karate would be treated as *moving meditation* for the betterment of character. Yet the majority of those taking part could only see the older fighting method, and so the art became a split personality.

The idea that you can lose yourself in the performance of kata is laudable, and something that all practitioners should try. Some will argue that this method prevents fighting applications from being made part of the subconscious, but we would argue that it internalises the movements to the ultimate degree, leading the martial arts practitioner back to the idea of "becoming the movement" instead of "doing the movement". Isn't this one of Bruce Lee's maxim's—"Don't think, feel."?

Kata performed hard and fast become internalised as combative movements which flow together.

Kata performed slowly and with the *idea* of fostering greater *ki* become a form of what-the-Chinese call "*Chi-Gung*". That is a life-enhancing exercise for healthy body and internal energy.

In today's society, when we have so much to worry about, and so many things wrong with the world, there is very little that can totally absorb us. Distractions abound. Maybe, just maybe, you can lose yourself for a time training. It helps if that training has a pre-arranged form, something that you can just repeat, mindful of movement and betterment, yet slipping from being totally conscious. The Japanese have a word for the flash of inspiration and enlightenment that can be visited upon us at these times—SATORI.

There's no better way to leave you than that.

Seminars with John Burke sensei are available internationally to cover

*Traditional Karate,
Kata Bunkai,
Oyo,
and Pressure Points.*



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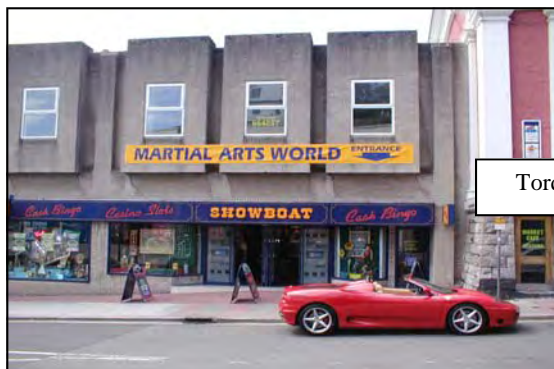


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