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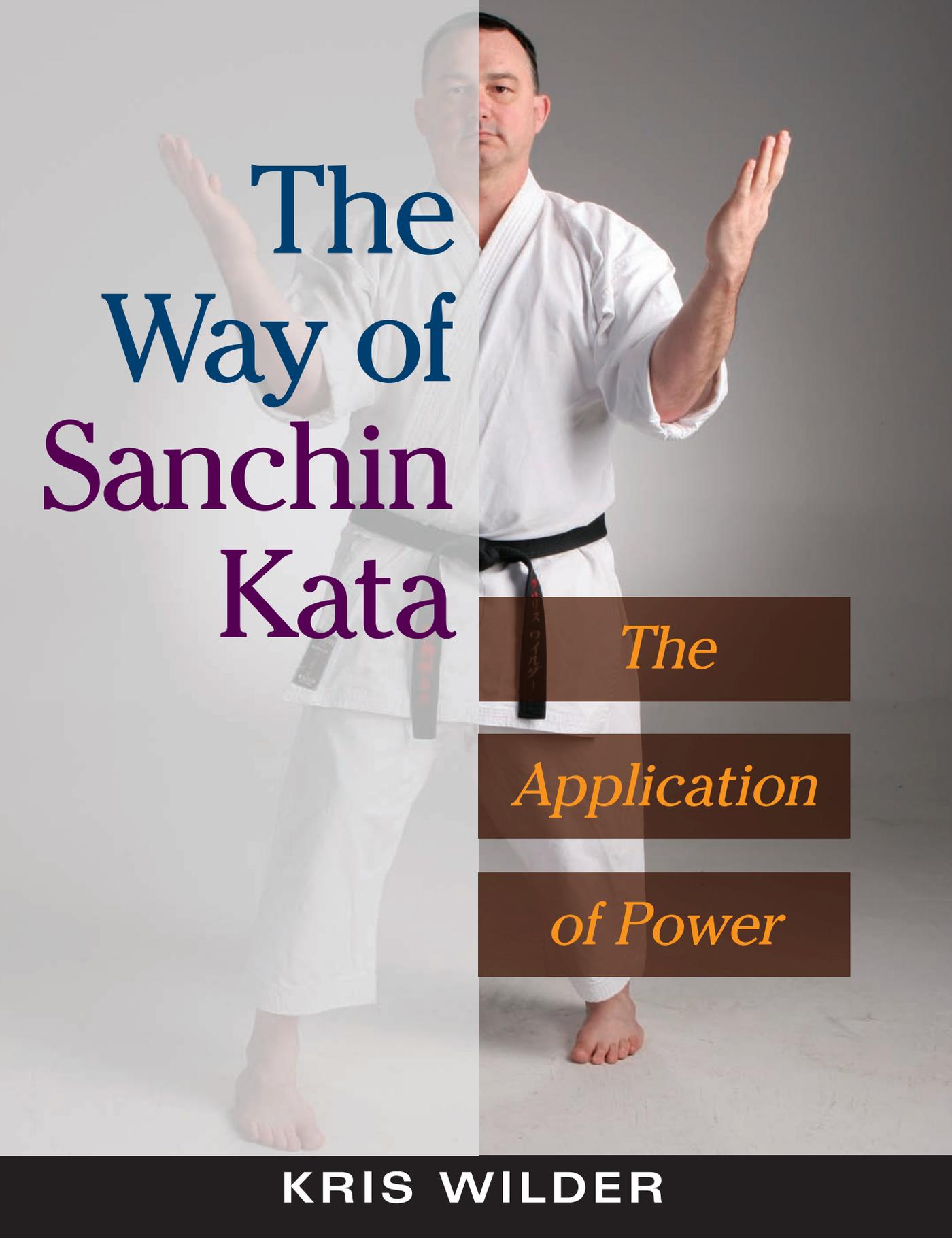
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The Way of Sanchin Kata

The

Application

of Power

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Foreword

by Hiroo Ito

Historic Background of Okinawa-Style Karate 那覇手系の型の流れ

昔から基本型（三戦）があり、その他応用技のための（砕破 サイファー）、（制引戦 セイエンチン）、（四向戦 シソウチン）、（三十六手 サンセイリュウ）（十八手 セイパイ）（久留頓破 クルルンファ）、（壹百零八手 スーパールンペ）が残っている。そして剛柔流に引き継がれ宮城長順が考案した（撃砕第 ゲキサイ）開手型の（転掌 テンショウ）等がある。この中の基本型である三戦は基本、鍛錬型として、いかなる人でも‘この型に先んじて他の型を演じてずることは許されない’と言うことが歴史の中で不文律として残っている。

The basic *kata sanchin* has existed a long time, and has developed into variations called *saifa*, *seiyunchin*, *shisochin*, *sanseiryu*, *seipai*, *kururunfa*, and *suparunpen*, which are still practiced. The *Goju-Ryu* karate formed by Chojun Miyagi created the *tensho kata*, which is an open-fisted *kata*, as opposed to the *gekisai kata*.

Sanchin is the basic *kata* used to build karate strength (*kanren kata*), which is the foundation for all of these *kata*. It has been an accepted historical fact that, “It is not possible to do any other *kata* without first having mastered the basic *sanchin kata*.”

The Importance of Sanchin 三戦の重要性

空手の動作は独特なもので普段の日常生活や日常的に使う動きではないため型によって正しい姿勢、体の極め、呼吸、等、空手に必要な筋肉が要求されます。特に那覇手系である三戦の型は空手の基本中の基本であり、昔からこの型が出来れば空手が出来るといわれています。また昔から空手は三戦に始まり三戦に終わるといふ言い伝えが有り、しかも空手をやる者は一日三回この型を鍛錬しなければならぬとされている。

Karate is made up of movements that we do not ordinarily do in daily life. It is therefore necessary to study the correct posture, the use of fixed poses, breathing techniques and more, in order to develop physique necessary for perform karate.

The very basic *kata* in Okinawa-style karate is *sanchin*, and it has been understood historically that you master karate only if you master this *kata*.

There is also a saying that karate begins with *sanchin* and ends with *sanchin*, and karate fighters should practice *sanchin* every day, three times.

Why is Sanchin Important? なぜ重要か？

空手の姿勢をつくる。戦いにおいては最も安定した姿勢が求められます。どこから攻撃されても崩れず、また反撃出来る姿勢です、そして最も三戦において重要なのは丹田力があります。そもそも丹田力とは人間の力の中心である処と武道では言うておりますが、これが使えないとただ筋力だけでは体の大きい者に負けてしまいます。これは独特の呼吸と正しい姿勢が合体して大きな力となるわけです。したがってこれが使えるようになるといくら年をとっても十分に戦えるわけです。空手にあった体づくりとは、ただ筋力だけでなくバネのような体を作らなければ空手はつかえません。ウエイトリフティングによる筋肉づくりはかえって逆効果になってしまいます。昔の侍がウエイトリフティングをしたと云う記録は皆無であります。かえってそのような筋肉は体の動きを遅くしてしまいます。

Karate posture is created by the *sanchin kata*. It is important to have a stable posture when fighting. A practitioner has to be able to stand firm when attacked, and be ready to attack back. The most important aspect in the *sanchin* posture is the power of *Tanden*, which is the central strength in a practitioner. A practitioner will lose to a bigger fighter if only muscle strength is used, and not the *Tanden* power.

Power is created in a combination of correct respiratory breathing and correct posture, which creates tension. It is therefore possible to continue fighting and practicing strong karate as you get older, when this *kata* is used. A physique strengthened from karate is not created only from muscle strength, but from a flexible muscle tone. It is not possible to perform strong karate without this characteristic. A body strengthened with bodybuilding will have an adverse effect. There are no historical documents describing weightlifting among samurai soldiers. Bodies with hard muscles will slow the karate movements of the body.

Mental Preparations When Practicing Sanchin 三戦を稽古するための心構え

そもそも日本の武道において（心、技、体、）の一致をめざす事が最も重要とされている。常に心は平常心を心がけ、いかなる時でも平常と同じ心で行動しなければならない。戦いに挑む時、心が乱れていては、平常の実力は発揮できなません、この平常心を養う方法が三戦呼吸法である。そして次は技であるが、全て技をかける時、極めがなければ中途半端な技になってしまう。正しい技は正しい姿勢によって作られる。正しい姿勢は背筋を伸ばし顎を引き肩をおとし脇をしめいかなる方向からでも倒されない姿勢を作る事である。最後に体、空手における体とはただ単に力や筋肉があるだけでは不十分であり、骨格の構造を利用し、理にかなった動きとバネに似た筋力が求められる。この体をつくるには三戦の型を繰り返し鍛える他は無い。

伊東 博夫

Important elements of martial arts (*Budo*) are the combination of mind, body, and spirit. The mind should be in a stable normal state, and actions should always be taken in a stable mental state. It is not possible for a peak performance if the mind is unstable when preparing for a fight. The respiratory technique of *sanchin* is how you learn to stay stable. The attempt to fight will be half hearted if the technical aspect of *sanchin* has not been mastered. The beginning of a correct technique is correct posture, which is to straighten the spine, pull in the chin, and tilt pelvis up. This posture will enable you to receive blows from any angle. In order to build a body for karate fighting, you do not only build muscle strength, but make use of the bone structure in order to use logical movements and flexibility from muscles. It is therefore vital to repeat training of *sanchin* in order to build a body for karate.

— by Hiroo Ito

空手における心構え

人にうたれず人うたず事なきことをもととするなり。
宮城長順¹

The spirit of karate

*Not to attack, and not being attacked
Act as if there is no fight*

— Chojun Miyagi

Thoughts on Hiroo Ito's Words

by Kris Wilder

The richness of knowledge presented in the *sanchin kata* is a treasure that has been lost or limited to a very few for a long time. To discover this treasure, we must challenge ourselves to participate in the *kata* as it was originally intended. As we do so, we will certainly find that *sanchin kata* is a far cry from the modern form of karate as practiced by most today.

The tradition was that a person learned one, maybe two forms, or *kata*, and then *sanchin kata* or at least that is the legend. Each *kata* was examined from three perspectives—mind, body, and spirit. Using this method of examination with *sanchin kata*, let us first consider the mind. The very act of practicing *sanchin kata* changes the way the one looks at karate and fighting. Once the practitioner gains the realization of what fighting truly is—the power and damage that can occur—the mind of the practitioner changes. Now, let us consider the body, which experiences change as well. This physical aspect of *sanchin kata* is the most sought after aspect of training in this *kata*. Oddly, it is the easiest of the three to achieve. The *sanchin kata* posture is not like that of the typical Western body, with its broad shoulders and tightly strung muscles. It is, in fact, unattractive by Western standards—the crunched down and rolled shoulders of *sanchin kata* at first glance imply an aged or infirm body. However once the strength of *sanchin kata* is trained and understood, the body will choose this physical position over the classic Western position of shoulders held high, chest puffed out and leaning up on the balls of the feet. Finally, the spirit is changed when the mind comprehends what it is truly doing with respect to fighting, the body begins to adjust to its *sanchin kata* structure posture, and the resulting increased power and speed begin to show themselves. This change can best be described as the kind of spirit an adult would demonstrate to a child who was attempting to fight or cause injury to the adult. The adult understands the situation in a different way and as a result behaves differently—their intent, their spirit, is not the same as the child's.

To the classic practitioner of *sanchin kata*, none of these perspectives—mind, body, or spirit—excludes the others. Some difficulty in understanding *sanchin kata* comes from the source of the *kata*. Although there is no one fountainhead, the language barrier is the largest of these founts of misunderstanding. Chinese, translated to *hogen*, to Japanese, then to English, with regional dialects at each juncture and translations of translations makes for a difficult transfer of accurate information and knowledge.

The importance of what appears to be the simplest of *kata* should not be overlooked because *sanchin kata* forms the hub from which all other *kata* radiate. It is not

important as to whether a *kata* was created before or after *sanchin* because *sanchin kata* holds within in it certain undeniable truths. A useful analogy for the relationship of *sanchin kata* to the other *kata* of a given system is that of a bicycle wheel—with *sanchin kata* as the hub and the other *kata* as spokes. The hub must be precisely at the center of the wheel or the wheel functions poorly. It must be made of very good metal to withstand countless rotations over a lifetime of use. A poorly cast or inferior quality metal will fail under stress and usage resulting in the feeble support of the outer rim of the wheel and the eventual collapse of the entire structure. To continue that analogy, when a person looks at a bicycle wheel, the main things they notice are the tire and the spokes. The untrained person will just look at the tire, the most basic and elementary aspect of the bike rather than the structure behind it, the spokes and hub that makes the tire solid.” However, to the skilled craftsman who makes a living tuning bicycle wheels, the spokes and the hub are the greatest concern. A spoke that is too taut or too loose will, over time, create damage to the rim on which the tire rests and cause undue stress on the hub. It is also clear that without the hub, the bicycle wheel would turn into a jumbled mess of spokes, collapsed wheel rim, and rubber tire.

Sanchin kata is given a place of honor and respect within the many karate systems that use it, yet it is often not explained, taught, or examined with the intensity and depth required to gain better understanding. For those who practice *sanchin kata*, the impact of the techniques inside this book will be immediate and positive. For those who do not practice *sanchin kata*, there is still much to be gained in understanding body mechanics and application of techniques found within this most universal and comprehensive form. *The Way of Sanchin Kata* illustrates long-overlooked techniques and principles that when applied will radiate throughout your karate, making it more powerful and effective than you will have thought possible.

Preface

No one ever attains very eminent success by simply doing what is required of him; it is the amount and excellence of what is over and above the required that determines the greatness of ultimate distinction.

—Charles Francis Adams²

The Way of Sanchin Kata: The Application of Power, will set you on a new course of *sanchin kata* practice. This path of training is overarching and will ultimately buttress your techniques at their very core, making your *kata* and fighting more robust and effective regardless of your level of experience, or *kata* practiced.

Sanchin kata is not like other *kata* in that it stands alone, different and unique. It simply is not cut from the same cloth of other *kata*. In the past, karate masters learned *sanchin kata* and maybe one or two other forms. This way of instruction formed the core of the empty-hand martial arts from the Ryukyu archipelago. The reasoning was clear and uncomplicated: understand the context of empty-hand fighting through *sanchin kata* and learn the content of a fight with other forms.

Today's understanding of the human body exceeds the knowledge of the past immeasurably. Whether modern Western medicine with its magnetic resonance scans, or the revisions and additions made in the East to Traditional Chinese Medicine, the human mind continues to change and adapt increased physiological understanding to today's world.

The basics and practices contained in this manuscript in the past have been buried in "family hands." The techniques, methods, strategies, and tactics were held closely and only passed down from father to son or trusted student. The reasoning behind this veil of secrecy was that once properly trained and with practice, a person could maim another in an instant changing their lives forever. In today's world, a torn medial collateral ligament means surgery and rehabilitation. In six weeks, the knee is functional if not normal again. For most of human history, the same injury may have meant death, or most certainly a diminished life. This helps to explain the primary reason for the veil of secrecy and trust needed to impart this kind of knowledge from teacher to student in the past.

The famous magician Penn Jillette has said to the effect that magicians do not tell how a magic trick is done, which frustrates many people. However, if you really want to know, you can go down to your local magic shop and for twenty dollars, they will sell you the trick and even show you how to do it. Nevertheless, people do not do that because it requires effort, and practice.

Although very different in their goals and methods, magic and *sanchin kata* share

a commonality of effort—they both take effort, discipline, and a discerning mind to become good.

This book brings the worlds of modern information and ancient wisdom together. By focusing on the methods of the past masters and proving that knowledge via modern methods, the nature of *sanchin kata* can more readily understood.

This book is not about changing the fundamentals of *sanchin kata*, it is about using the modern mind to gain understanding of the wisdom from the past and to view the wisdom with a modern mind. No matter what the practitioner's goals—enhanced mechanical understanding, advanced mental practice, or a deep spiritual discipline—this book explains it directly and points the way explicitly.

The Way of Sanchin Kata: The Application of Power, will ultimately put *sanchin kata* in terms for the reader that not only dispels mistaken methods but also provides an accurate methodology.

Introduction

There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all argument, which cannot fail to keep, and in everlasting ignorance. That principle is condemnation before investigation.

—Edmund Spenser³

The Separation of Body, Mind, and Spirit

This book will illustrate the complex and sometimes controversial aspects of *sanchin kata*, a traditional karate form with a rich and varied history. To do that, it is necessary to discuss the cultural precepts that lie in its core. Among these is a holistic view of mind, body, and spirit, a view that is not typically held in the Western world. It was not until recent times that people made such a distinction between the three elements. This distinction or separation of body, mind, and spirit did not happen overnight. In the Western world, it can be traced to several sources, but the primary source in Western thought is René Descartes.⁴

Descartes, the French philosopher, changed the relationship between philosophy and theology when he exclaimed, “I think therefore I am.” At that point, Descartes brought about the separation of the mind from the body. Allopathic medicine or Western medicine is firmly rooted in this mind-body separation. To its credit, it is arguably the most successful form of medicine ever known for treating trauma. It achieves this success with a combination of many factors such as pharmacology and a sophisticated physiological understanding of the body.

However, Western medicine, as a guideline, separates the injury from the injured. If you look at a modern operating room, you can see that in many instances, the surgeon cannot see the patient’s face. In fact, the entire body except for the area of the operation is covered. Clearly part of this has to do with sanitation and focus, but the obvious representation of the separation of the body from injury should be noted. While this is not a condemnation of Western medicine, it demonstrates a key difference from the way medicine is practiced in the East. Having personally experienced great pain from a viral infection and having modern medicine reduce the fever, deadening the pain in a matter of moments, I would certainly vouch for the benefits of Western medicine. Nevertheless, the understanding of the mind/body/spirit connection is critical in discussing and subsequently understanding *sanchin kata* because *sanchin kata* originated in the East, from a community that used and still uses holistic medicine. *Sanchin kata* is not well suited to being broken down in a Western, deductive reasoning method because of the inherent interaction of the body, the mind, and the spirit.

Of course, these are broad statements used to illustrate a thought and not all examples fit into neat boxes. The same is true of Traditional Chinese Medicine. This discipline seeks harmony of the elements, as do other disciplines such as Ayurvedic medicine, practices that have achieved growth in understanding and acceptance in the West over the past years. *Sanchin kata* can bring these worlds, East and West together. *Sanchin kata* offers a compelling illustration of these Eastern precepts, aiding the practitioner in unifying the body, mind, and spirit, helping to connect with the earth and bring a balance to one's existence.

A simple example of this balance would be the feet. Most of the day, our feet are inside of our shoes, save for when we are bathing or sleeping. Being in shoes is not necessarily a bad thing, but it creates a physical separation from a part of your body, which is not healthy in the long run. The feet become weak and function merely as appendages rather than full participants in the locomotion of our bodies. While performing *sanchin kata* in bare feet, tendons and muscles are activated that are simply not exercised while wearing shoes. In addition, a connection to the earth is achieved, especially when done on the bare ground or a wooden floor. Today it is possible to go a day, even a month without touching the earth unless you seek it. Some people live in an apartment, ride an elevator, walk on concrete ride in a car, park in a garage, sit at a desk, and repeat the process at least five days a week. This is not the way the human body is meant to exist. Movement, breath, and action are an important part of the very existence of a person. *Sanchin kata* incorporates movement, breath, and action, but does it in a way that focuses on self-defense as well.

Generally, the musculature of the body is moved during *sanchin kata* in ways that are not common in the modern world. Taking control of a muscle group, actively with your mind, and with deliberation moving that muscle group is not as common as you might think and is not done while watching television, sitting at a desk, or riding in a car.

Because there are many versions of *sanchin kata* in existence, there are also numerous differing opinions about the execution and meaning of its movements. Opinions and interpretations are often influenced by such factors as 'tribal thinking,' where points of view are kept intact out of allegiance to a person or group, or sometimes an unrealistic adherence to preservation of a form that borders on stagnation. Over the years, different versions of *sanchin kata* have arisen, many of which are in use today. Even within the same systems or styles, one will find differences. Some versions of the form include one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turns. Other versions of the *kata* have no turns. The placement of hands, the speed, and rhythm vary from teacher to teacher depending on what version of the form one chooses to practice. Some of the versions are misplaced in their emphasis. Nobody, when given a choice, would choose the second best when it comes to their karate, their church, or clubs

to which they belong. However, sometimes choices are exercised—not by free will, but by example or pressure from peers. For example, my father preferred Chevrolets when it came to cars and, influenced by my father's preference, my choice was the same for years. The reason he liked them was at that time he was able to work on his car, a fact that with today's sophisticated models would no longer hold true. Add to this that in our small town the only dealership was a Chevrolet dealership, a ready resource for parts and that my father worked for the dealership—the preference then makes a world of sense. Following my father's lead, if you had asked me as a young man what I preferred I would have stated, "Chevrolet," without hesitation or thought. Moreover, if you asked me why, I would have said because, "They are the best." Today, while I have a car that I do not work on, live in a major metropolitan city rife with every make and model of car, and do not owe any allegiance to my employer, I still find I hold a preference for a Chevrolet. Tribal allegiances can be very difficult to understand let alone break. The bottom line is it is hard sometimes to break the ties of tribalism, history, and perceptions without deep thought and sense of purpose.

Another factor influencing choice is "preservation." Often times the word, preservation is used in the world of karate leading people to feel like karate should be placed in a jar and placed in the root cellar like fall fruit. Webster's Dictionary lists preservation as "To keep safe from injury, harm, or destruction." Another story from my childhood to illustrate a point is that of the fall ritual of preserving fruit and vegetables. During my childhood, every fall my aunt and my mother would do the season's canning, or preserving, working in the kitchen over cucumbers, peaches, pears and other fruits and vegetables as they came ripe in the garden. Preserving was of course done in preparation for the winter to ensure that we had vegetables and fruits for the winter months. However if given the choice between the fresh peach off the tree that fall or the preserves, I think we would all choose the fresh peach.

A practitioner of *sanchin kata* should preserve the form, protect it from injury or harm, but the student must also be balanced with keeping the form vibrant like the fall peach. To continue the analogy, both the *kata* and the peach should be hanging from the tree limb ripe and colorful. They should not be blanched of their color and syrup added to create a false flavor to make up for the natural flavor now removed—preserved, as fruit placed in a jar.

To that end, it is important to make the distinction between striving to gain the skills of one's teacher and trying to be the teacher. An adherence to just doing what has been done before and presented to you, not having critical thought process for and of one's self will ultimately lead to disappointment. It is said that one may choose to have twenty experiences or the same experience twenty times. At a certain point, one must, without exception, find their own way. In the *Goju Ryu* system of

which I am most familiar, the originator or person who standardized of what became *Goju Ryu* karate, Chojun Miyagi⁵ made changes to *sanchin kata*. Miyagi took the open hands of the form and closed them to fists. Miyagi then took out the turns in the form his instructor Kanryo Higashionna⁶ taught to create another version of the *kata*. Miyagi also changed the breathing taught to him making it more direct and less circulatory in nature.⁷ Jigoro Kano,⁸ the founder of judo took the principles of the *jiu-jitsu* he had learned as a young man, removed the crippling techniques, created rules for competition, and emphasized throws. Gichin Funakoshi⁹ changed his native karate from an Okinawa tradition into a Japanese way to better suit the needs of the Japanese mainland culture. Morihei Ueshiba¹⁰ created *aikido* from his experience with *jiu-jitsu* after an epiphany. Today all of them are cited as masters without question. The list of people changing their art to suit their needs more closely and the needs of their students extends well beyond these examples given. The changes made by these three masters are profound. They were not made without going through a very clear process of gathering the data, analyzing the information, and then making the leap to wisdom. The path to wisdom in these instances has three phases: data, information, and wisdom—each of which has their own unique attributes. In describing those attributes, let us start at the smallest and initial phase: data. The nature of data is that we have no perspective about what it is or how it relates to anything else. Imagine the letter “V” with a line through the middle of the letter, “∇”. Now it is not a letter at all, it is a “∇”, it is data. We have no way to determine value or meaning to this symbol. The data has no position in relation to anything. It is not known where or from whom the data came, what made it, or how it relates to anything. Information, the next piece in the progression, is based on context or how the data relates to other data. Once you have determined the relationship among the data, you have information, a pattern. Turn the “∇” upside down and you have the letter “A”. Now we have relation. We can see that it is the first letter of our alphabet and it makes sense to us now. Wisdom comes from observation of pattern in context of experience, and then a judgment can be made. It is as if we were in English class staring at the upside down letter “A” and someone turned the paper right side up for us. The person turning the letter around for us used their wisdom to recognize the letter and gave us means to comprehension.

Real World Example

A real world example of data, information, and wisdom is the story of my father and a marble. My brother and I were riding in my father’s truck up on a plateau above a popular fishing lake in our hometown on a summer day. He pointed to a grove of trees on the plateau. We drove over to the trees, the only ones that I could see for any distance. If my father had not pointed them out, I would have thought

nothing of them. When we got out of the truck, I could see old grey wood, which had once been a house, collapsed upon itself. It became clear that it was a homestead. I was in awe that someone had lived there. My mind went wild with the idea that someone lived all the way up here with no roads and no stores. In amazement, I asked my father as he began to walk around how he knew this was here. He explained that a grove of trees in a circle when no other trees are around usually means water and trees grow naturally around water, or somebody planted them. If you have a circular planting of trees, you usually have both water and a homestead because people planted trees for shade. He continued to walk around looking at the ground, then noticing something, knelt down, and called us over as he scratched the ground and pulled out a small clay ball about the size of a dime. Holding it between his thumb and forefinger, he pronounced, "No holes in it." He dropped it in his palm and began to roll it around, noting, "It's not a bead, boys, it's a marble." He went on to say, "It was made by a kid, it is a hand-made marble." My brother and I stood there in the weekend summer sun mesmerized by this thought. A marble made by a kid that has probably already lived and died. My father stood up and put it in his pocket. "These folks probably had a kid or more." My father had applied wisdom based on experience to see the trees, their unique structure, what they most likely meant, and upon exploration found a small clay marble in the dirt made by an unknown child who was part of an unknown family. This is the application of wisdom to understand the context of a pattern and enter into that pattern to find the richness that wisdom can provide.

Kano, Miyagi, Ueshiba, Funakoshi all applied wisdom and inspiration to the information at hand and created living, growing arts.

It is important for practitioners to use the knowledge their instructors have passed on, exercising wisdom and one's life experience. Finally, one must preserve, but not entomb a *kata*. Rather, look to what the *kata* is saying and act accordingly.

This book is not the complete and comprehensive work on *sanchin kata*, it cannot be. The layers, versions and the very nature of *sanchin kata* make it impossible to cover in one book because the form is both deep and broad. A person wishing to integrate *sanchin kata* into their training and essentially their life will find the answer in the application of the principles herein. It is always in the doing. It is always in the experience that true understanding takes place.

CHAPTER ONE



The History of Sanchin Kata



History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon.

—Napoleon ¹¹

The true history of *sanchin kata* is lost to time. Many will claim they know the true and correct history of *sanchin kata*, but factors such as where one chooses to begin and end can create one of many versions of the same history. The goal of this book is to achieve a better understanding of *sanchin kata* through the mechanics, history, and applications of the *kata*. However, the viewpoints between the versions of the history of *sanchin kata* are difficult to make clear. It is only possible to touch upon a handful of points on the timeline with reasonable assurance when looking at the history of *sanchin kata*. Finding the root, or the clear origin, of *sanchin kata* is as difficult as it was for the British and French in 1854 to find the headwaters of the Nile River.

When a person chooses to begin in a different place or, say, with particular instructor, and move backward a different length of time, you have a different history. Just as an explorer, seeking the headwaters of the Nile River, had to make choices when the waters forked, changing the path of the exploration, every student of *sanchin kata* serves as a fork in the flow of history.

For example, in the southern states of the United States of America the title, “The War of Northern Aggression” is used to describe the Civil War. Was the westward expansion in the United States truly a “Manifest Destiny” or a land grab combined with genocide? Again, one’s perspective determines their outlook or conclusion.

Oral history is by its nature fallible, the following is a version of the history of *sanchin kata*; again, a history, not the only history.

A Buddhist¹² holy man named Bodhidharma¹³ is credited with leaving India in 539 A.D. to spread the Buddhist faith to China. He left his monastery in Southern India not knowing that he was going to spread Buddhism in a most unique way. Bodhidharma traveled enormous distances compared to the people of his time who were born, lived, and died in and around their home village or city. He crossed the

Himalayan Mountains and the Yangtze River on his way to the capital of the Henan Province, located in the eastern part of what is China today, halfway between the northern border with Mongolia and the southern border of the South China Sea. Bodhidharma arrived at the Shaolin Temple. It is unclear if the Shaolin temple was his destination or simply a stopover to another place. Nevertheless, it became a profound juncture in martial arts history.

During Bodhidharma's time, people often would come to the temple for many reasons, hunger and shelter to name a few. Many were turned away. After several attempts to enter the temple, Bodhidharma, an Indian foreigner was finally admitted. It is said that at this point he found the Shaolin monks weak from lack of physical activity. It seems that the monks spent so much time in meditation that their bodies had been neglected. Bodhidharma introduced his methods of exercise that began to change the physiology of the monks and strengthen their bodies. These exercises changed over time and became part of the now famous practice of Shaolin *kung fu*.

Now let us jump ahead some eight hundred years where, as Chinese tradition has it, part of the *sanchin kata* history can be traced to a 13th century priest. Zhang San Feng began his martial arts instruction with the Shaolin monks. He learned the external, or hard, methods that involved strengthening the body through repetitions of techniques and the use of other items like bags full of sand or rock serving as rough dumbbells, striking poles, and other means to bring more power to his *kung fu*. At some time in his training, Zhang San Feng left the temple. The reason given is he felt he had learned all he could and needed to explore other means. Whatever the reason, the story has it his next destination was on the Wutang Mountain at a temple called the Purple Summit Temple. The Purple Summit Temple was said to be among the most sacred Taoist Monasteries at the top of the Earth suspended between Heaven and Earth.

At this time, he is said to have seen a snake and crane fighting and was moved by their fluidity and power of their movements. With this inspiration, Zhang San Feng set out to recreate what he had learned in this new environment. Over time, the hard (external) methods of his previous training gave way to softer internal methods of training. His system was soon known as *Wutang Lohan Chuan-fa*,¹⁴ or thirty-two pattern long fist. He taught this system to his students and over time, the forms underwent a drastic metamorphosis into *Tai Chi Chuan-fa*, or Grand Ultimate. Today there are many forms of *Tai Chi Chuan-fa* and the major forms Chen, Yang, and Wu are named after the families who propagated their particular version.

Over time, the martial and health attributes of *Tai Chi Chuan-fa* became more widely known. In the same fashion, Zhang San Feng had changed what he had learned to suit his needs and the forms continued to change as his students changed what they were taught to better suit their needs.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX



The Kata

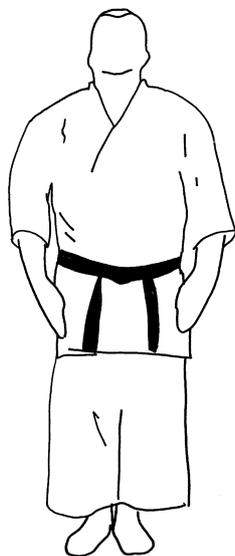


Nothing will work unless you do.

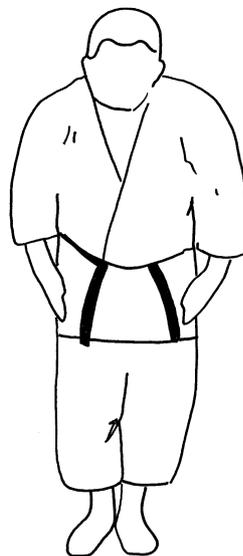
—*Maya Angelou*⁵⁸

This chapter shows a pattern for *sanchin kata*. As discussed earlier, there are several patterns of *sanchin kata*. The pattern is generally a preference of the instructor and is often directly aligned with what their teacher taught them in respect to the *kata*. No pattern is inherently superior to another. The key lies in the techniques that build the pattern, the understanding of those techniques and their application.

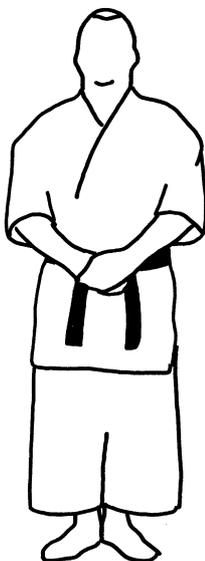
This pattern is a long version and is attributed to Kanryo Higashionna. It is often referred to as the Higashionna version of *sanchin kata*.



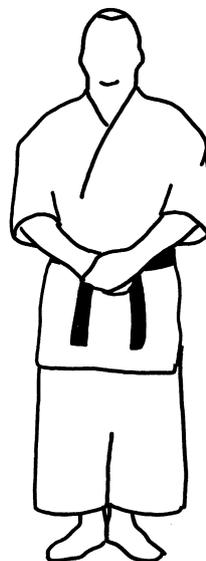
MOVEMENT: NONE
BREATH: IN AND OUT, SHALLOW.



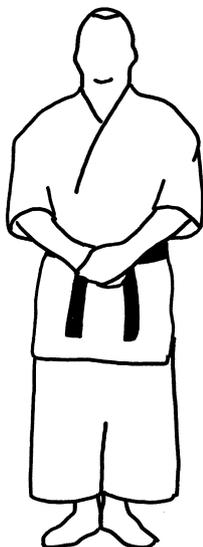
MOVEMENT: BOW
BREATH: NONE.



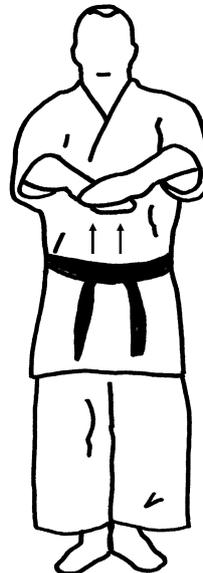
MOVEMENT: NONE
BREATH: IN AND OUT, SHALLOW.



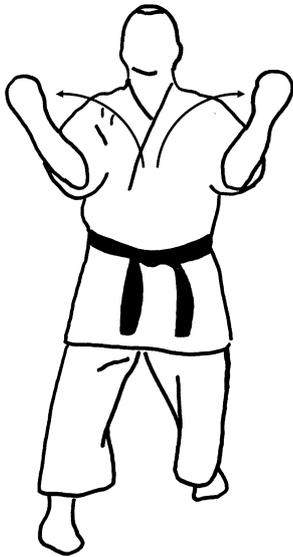
MOVEMENT: NONE
BREATH: IN AND OUT, DEEPER, ONE HALF OF YOUR MAXIMUM CAPACITY.



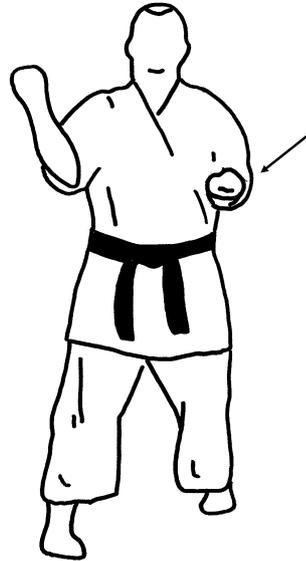
MOVEMENT: NONE
BREATH: IN AND OUT,
DEEPER, MAXIMUM CAPACITY.



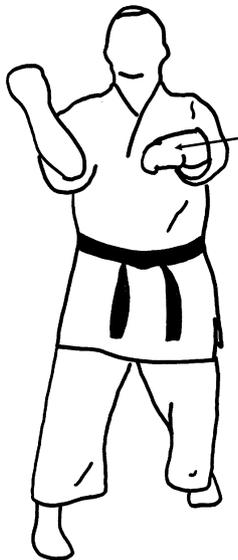
MOVEMENT: RIGHT STEP FORWARD TO SANCHIN DACHI
BREATH: IN THROUGH NOSE.



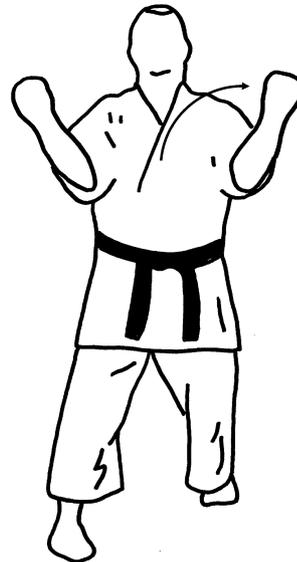
MOVEMENT: RIGHT STEP FORWARD TO SANCHIN DACHI
BREATH: HOLD, RELEASE THROUGH MOUTH.



MOVEMENT: LEFT ARM BACK TO CHAMBER
BREATH: IN THROUGH NOSE.



MOVEMENT: LEFT PUNCH
BREATH: OUT THROUGH MOUTH.



MOVEMENT: LEFT ARM TO CHEST BLOCK
BREATH: IN THROUGH NOSE

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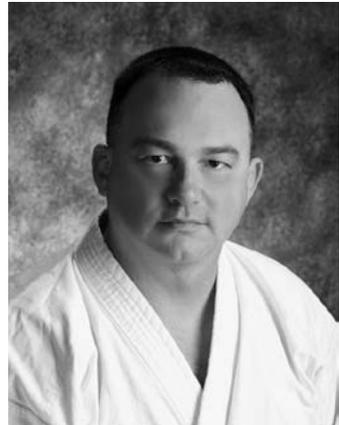
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About the Author

Kris Wilder is the author of *Lessons from the Dojo Floor*, *The Way of Sanchin Kata* and coauthor of *The Way of Kata*. He started practicing the martial arts at the age of fifteen. Over the years, he has earned black belt rankings in three styles, *Goju-Ryu* karate (4th dan), *Tae Kwon Do* (2nd dan), and *Judo* (1st dan), in which he has competed in senior national and international tournaments.

He has had the opportunity to train under many skilled instructors, including Olympic athletes, state champions, national champions, and gifted martial artists who take their lineage directly from the founders of their systems. Kris has trained across the United States and in Okinawa.

A former public affairs and political consultant, Kris' work has ranged from local issues to presidential campaigns. His business client list included several multistate corporations with interests in telecommunications and property development. As a former United States Senate staffer he also worked in the Washington State legislature. He now teaches karate full time. Kris can be reached via e-mail at kwilder@quidnunc.net or visit www.westseattlekarate.com.



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Kris Wilder has been involved with martial arts since 1976. Earning black belt ranks in Tae Kwon Do 2nd Degree, Kodokan Judo 1st Degree, and Goju-Ryu Karate 4th Degree, which he teaches at the West Seattle Karate Academy. He has trained under Kenji Yamada; Shihan John Roseberry, a student of Seikishi Toguchi; and Hiroo Ito, a student of Shihan Kori Hisatake, the founder of Shorinji-Ryu Kenkokan Karate. Kris is co-author of *The Way of Kata* (YMAA), author of several books, contributor to *Traditional Karate Magazine*, and promoter. Kris Wilder resides in Seattle, WA.

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