

Sanchin no Kata - 三戦の型

7^e Kyu

Sanchin no Kata - 三戦の型 literally means 'Kata of three battles or conflicts', from the characters **San** - 三 ('three') and **Chin** - 戦 ('war', 'battle' or 'match'). **no Kata** - の型 means 'Kata of ...'. But the real meaning of *Sanchin no Kata* is interpreted as the battles of the **Body**, **Mind** and **Spirit**.

Sanchin no Kata is considered to be the oldest *Kata* and the most important *Kata* of *Karate* (along with *Tensho*). The true history of *Sanchin no Kata* has been lost to antiquity. But according to the *Karate* lineage, Kanryo Higaonna (Higashionna in Japanese; **Naha-Te**) brought *Sanchin no Kata* back to Okinawa from Southern China (Fujianese). His student Chojun Miyagi (founder of **Goju-Ryu**) made changes to *Sanchin no Kata* (open spear hands to closed fists, and changed the breathing to more direct and less circulatory in nature). This version *Sanchin no Kata* is still used in most styles of *Karate*, including *Kyokushin*.

Three elements are practiced with *Sanchin no Kata*. The *Body* component is the most apparent, it involves breath control, muscle tension and relaxation, grip, proper posture, proper *Kamae* and balance/stability. To conquer the *Mind* requires intense concentration, shime conditioning and visualisation, among others. The battle of the *Spirit* has to do with creating harmony between the physical and mental aspects of *Sanchin no Kata*. This is our will, or intention, to push our abilities to the highest level.

In practicing *Sanchin no Kata* we strive for **Kime** - 決め, the exact amount of power, focus and speed to make a technique effective. The right combination not only leads to the strengthening of the body, but also to the development of the inner power **Ki** - 気 ('vital energy') and the coordination of mind and body. **Ki** is located in our **Nōten** - 脳天 ('crown of our head'), the **Hara** - 腹 ('diaphragm') and our **Tanden** - 丹田 ('lower abdomen'). With **Ibuki** - 息吹 ('deep breathing'), by expanding our diaphragm and creating a spine perpendicular to the earth, we optimize the conditions for building good **Ki** and transferring the energy through our bodies. The cultivation of our spiritual energy is the basis of our entire practice both in and outside the *Dojo*. *Sanchin no Kata* can be classified as 'moving Zen', our way of meditating in *Karate*.

It is easy to see why Mas Oyama would want the *Kata* as part of his *Kyokushin Karate*. He considered the three most important principles of *Kata* training to be **Waza no Kankyu** - 技の緩 ('the tempo of technique'), **Chikara no Kyojaku** - 力の強弱 ('the points of power stress'), and **Iki no Chosei** - 息の調整 ('breath control'). *Sanchin no Kata* teaches all the three aspects, and as well, through its **Shime** - 締め testing, it would demonstrate **The Ultimate Truth**.

Sanchin no Kata made its way into the curriculum of *Kyokushin Karate* as a **Southern Kata** because of Sosai Oyama's extensive background in *Goju-ryu*, under *sensei* Nei-Chu So, and his teacher, Gogen Yamaguchi. Mas Oyama trained from time to time with Gogen Yamaguchi, even joining the latter's *Goju-kai* and obtaining the rank of 7th Dan Black Belt.

Important elements of Sanchin no Kata

Sanchin no Kata is a sort of moving meditation, whose purpose is to unify the *Body*, *Mind* and *Spirit* battles. The techniques are performed very slowly so that the student masters precise movements, posture and stability. It is also an isometric *Kata* where each move is performed in a state of complete tension, accompanied by powerful, deep breathing, **Ibuki** - 息吹, that originates in the lower abdomen, **Tanden** - 丹田. The practice of *Sanchin no Kata* not only leads to strengthening of the body, but to the development of the inner power, **Ki** - 気, and the coordination of mind and body.

Mind

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 no Kata* is how you learn to stay stable. The very act of practicing *Sanchin no Kata* changes the way that one looks at *Karate* and fighting. Once the student gains the realization of what fighting truly is—the power and damage that can occur—the mind of the practitioner changes.

Body

At the muscle contraction, the force, *Chikara*, is concentrated in the *Tanden*, the energetic center in the lower abdomen. The muscles do not relax until the *Kata* is complete. This form of training is important for the development of physical strength, stamina and control of breathing. Apart from the training of body and mind, and adding strength to the technique, *Sanchin no Kata* is partly intended as a training for reflexes and an exercise in patience. In addition, the *Kata* has a beneficial effect on mental health in old age.

The attempt to fight will be halfhearted if the technical aspect of the *Kata* 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 the *Kata* in order to build a body for *Karate*.

Karate posture is created by the *Sanchin no Kata*. It is important to have a stable posture when fighting. A student has to be able to stand firm when attacked, and be ready to attack back. The most important aspect in the *Sanchin Kamae* or posture is the power of *Tanden*, which is the central strength in a student. A student 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.

Spirit

Spirit is changed when the mind comprehends what it is truly doing with respect to fighting, the body begins to adjust to its *Sanchin no Kata* structure posture, and the resulting increased power and speed begin to show themselves.

Breathing

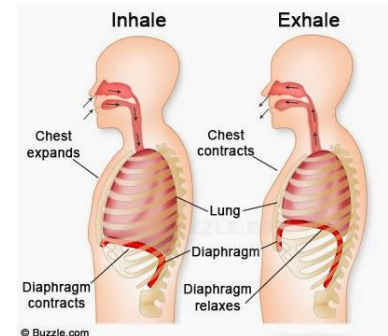
Breathing, body and mind are indissolubly connected at *Sanchin no Kata* of the *Kyokushin* of Mas Oyama. During the kata's training, breathing is deep. This increases oxygen intake, both to the body and the brain, and results in faster and sharper response of the nervous system and brain. This increased awareness allows the *Karateka* to optimally focus on the tightened muscle groups and the techniques to be performed, achieving a full development by pooling all the strength in any common technique. In addition, this breathing form stimulates the diaphragm, making it work more efficiently. Through regular training of *Kata*, not only the coordination between breathing and movement is promoted, but also a correct attitude is developed.

Although the origin of controlled breathing has been lost, there are some theories on its beginning. The Chinese influence on Okinawan *Karate* may have brought their *QiGong* breathing techniques into *Karate*. *QiGong* is an ancient Chinese exercise and healing technique that involves meditation, controlled breathing and movement exercises. It's also possible that *Yoga* breathing methods from India could have originally influenced and was shared with the Chinese.

We can distinguish two types of breath, breast and abdominal breathing. At the lifting of the ribs the chest cavity in sagittal as in cross diameter becomes larger. If the ribs sink, both diameters are smaller. Abdominal breathing interacts between the diaphragm (diaphragm) and abdominal muscles.

By contraction of the diaphragm, the abdominal organs are pushed down, leading to bulge of the abdominal wall, so that inspiration is. Contraction of the abdominal muscles, on the other hand, caused that the diaphragm is pressed upwards and that expiration follows.

Both breath types are usually inseparable in their common function, but work together with different intensity. However, in *Kyokushin*, attention is specifically focused on abdominal breathing. The essence of this breathing technique is based on letting the air through a certain pattern to the nucleus, from middle of man (**Hara, Tanden**), to gather there and leave the body again. When we attach a certain action to this type of breath, for example a punch, kick or block, these actions are always carried by the middle (pelvis), supported by the base (legs) and run through the spine; so-called nuclear or integrated movements.



Breathing in happens when the diaphragm begins to pull down. This creates a negative pressure in the lungs and the air rushes in. The lungs expand to accommodate the increasing air volume. As the diaphragm pulls down, the gut has no room so the abdomen must expand. There should be no shoulder activity at all.

When exhaling, the process reverses, the diaphragm pushes up, the gut is sucked in and the chest compresses. This causes the air to rush out of the lungs. Watch an infant breathe when sleeping. You will see this whole process in action.

In the *Martial Arts* several types of breathing techniques are taught. Specifically, **Nogare**, **Ibuki** and **Kiai** breathing are important aspects of breath control. Both **Nogare** and **Ibuki** breathing are used in *Sanchin no Kata*. They come from low in the abdomen and are controlled use of the abdomen.

The control of breathing is very important. In a fight the dynamic tension of the muscles should be constant. This keeps the diaphragm under control at all times. Learning to do so when fighting avoids having the wind knocked out of you. Having the wind knocked out of you is caused by a strike to the abdomen that sends the diaphragm into fibrillation. Fibrillation is a spasm of the muscles in the diaphragm. This interrupts the inhalation and exhalation of air for a few seconds that seem like forever. It would take a tremendous amount of control to fight through this condition.

In *Kata*, the gentle control of the breathing is a different extension of breathing control. The dynamic tension is less and the breathing is timed with individual techniques or series of techniques. Breathing is more forceful to punctuate a technique. *Kata* also makes clear use of the **Kiai**. In *Sanchin no Kata*, breathing is even more controlled. A tight dynamic breathing in an out with the techniques with hardening of all muscles helps to harden the body to resist attacks.

In his books about *Kyokushin Karate*, Mas Oyama emphasized the importance of correct breathing while practicing *Karate*. He explained there are two types: **In-Ibuki**, that is used in combat or while training, and is nasal in nature (**Nogare**) breathing and **Yō – Ibuki**, which is employed as a training method and is the strong hissing sound which aids in dynamic tension training (*Sanchin no Kata* and *Tensho Kata*).

In-yō is the Japanese translation of Chinese **Yin and Yang** - 陰陽. In Chinese philosophy, *Yin* and *Yang* describe how seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and

interdependent in the natural world, and how they may give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another. Hence you can see how this relates to the two different breathing techniques mentioned above. The combination of these breathing techniques promotes rejuvenation of energy and insures the body is exercised internally and externally. The goal is to consciously control breathing to unite the mind and body, activate the internal organs and to reach a state of total awareness.

Nogare Breathing (In-Ibuki)

Nogare is a soft quiet breathing, inhalation through the nose and exhalation through the mouth. It can be meditative or controlled breathing. In *Sanchin no Kata*, *Nogare* breathing is more controlled. This keeps the diaphragm under control at all times. Learning to do so when fighting avoids having the air knocked out of you. This is caused by a strike to the abdomen that sends the diaphragm into fibrillation, which is muscle fibers twitching without any control.

Nogare is also known as '*combat breathing*'. By breathing slowly the lungs fill more deeply, without tiring out, and by pausing we allow the air in our lungs to fall still for the crucial time for Osmosis to take place. This is an exceptional skill for any *Karateka* to cultivate, especially the novice who will become overwhelmed with the lack of air from not breathing within the movement, which can take years to learn.

Nogare I

Stand in a comfortable position with the hands at the side. Inhale through the nose bringing the hands, palms up, to chest high. Exhale through the mouth turning the palms down and return to the side.

Nogare II

Stand in a comfortable position with the hands at the side. Inhale through the nose bringing the hands, palms up to chest high. Rotate the hands inward, pointing the first two fingers forward. Extend the arm out while holding the breath. Turn the palms up, thumb on ring finger, and drop hands to the sides while exhaling.

Ibuki Breathing (Yō – Ibuki)

Is the hard style of breathing, a noisy breathing technique, with the aim of absorbing any opposing force; it is made with a long exhalation and ends with a short breath and voiced. This technique is the channel through which the *Hara (Tanden)* connects the spirit to the body, through *Ki* (internal energy). This technique serves to contract the muscles of the body in a single moment and is able to absorb a blow without suffering much harm, or at least a small part. This contraction, which takes place through the breathing, is called ***Kime***.

Yō - Ibuki is not actually forced, as some people may describe it. As forced breathing would indicate you're using the throat to throttle the airflow. You are not to constrict the airflow or throat muscles. Instead, *Yō Ibuki* is the measured but powerful controlled pressure of the abdomen. Heavy abdominal breathing, concentrating in collapsing your diaphragm (and thus your lungs) down instead of inflating them outwards (the breathing movement should be seen in your lower abdomen, not in your ribcage), then breath out by slowly contracting (with or without tension) the abdominal wall (like a stomach vacuum but without holding your breath), which will then push the diaphragm and lungs back up, compressing them and pushing the air out again. This contraction of the abdominal muscles also pulls the ribcage and hips a bit together, and aids in the development of correct posture for *Sanchin Dachi* (gluteal and abdominal muscles contracted, without excessive pelvic tilt caused by using only the glutes and hip flexors).

Alternatively, use *Ibuki* when blocking a strike or delivering a strike, exhale with force and *Kiai* – or shout. Weight lifters shout as they exhale, pushing heavy weights. Many athletes, including baseball and football players, even tennis players grunt, groan, or shout during practice or competition. They have been trained to realize that forceful exhaling makes their effort more effective and their body stronger.

Ibuki

In a comfortable standing position with the hands at the side.

Take a deep breath in through the nose, cross the arms up to chest level and move into Uchi Hachiji Dachi.

With the tongue relaxed behind the upper teeth, exhale slowly, tightening the abdomen, chest and throat. At the same time bring the fists down and to the sides just below the obi, and move feet into Heiko Dachi.

Kiai Breathing

The *Kiai* is an offshoot of *Ikuki* breathing. The *Kiai* forces the diaphragm rapidly with rapid chest and abdominal compression. It is accompanied by a deep guttural sound. Most *Kiai* are done incorrectly. The use of the vocal cords in a loud scream, saying 'Hiya' or yelling the word 'Kiai' are most common. These methods eliminate the controlled pressure on the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. Without control of the diaphragm, you risk having the wind knocked out of you.

Kime

Kime - 決め is the relaxed application of exactly the right amount of power, conviction, focus and speed to make a technique effective. An inner strength that is used to give the techniques the strength needed to defend yourself and overcome your attacker. It's incredibly important in *Karate*. **Kime** can also be seen as an extension of the power of the soul. The Chinese then talk about *Qi* (*Ki* in Japanese). **Ashi-Sabaki** - 足捌き, **Tai-Sabaki** - 体捌き, **Kamae** - 構え and **Shisei** - 姿勢 are conditions for **Kime**. **Kiai** - 気合, **Ibuki** and **Metsuke** - 目付け are an expression of **Kime**. **Kime** is followed by **Zanshin** - 残心.

Shime

Some *Karate* styles use a method of checking strength, posture, hand concentration during the performance of the *Sanchin no Kata*, called **Shime** - 締め. This involves a range of techniques from hard strikes to check the tone of the student's muscles and overall strength to very soft and slow pushes and pulls to test the student's ability to react in order to maintain his (or her) position.

Checking the students during *Sanchin no Kata* with **Shime** has two main purposes. First, it provides conditioning for the student, and secondly it checks the concentration and balance of the student. In a proper *Sanchin no Kamae*, a *Karateka* is well protected from attacks, by mostly exposing areas of the body that can be strengthened by body conditioning. Weak points such as the neck, groin and armpits are protected by a straight spine and tucked chin (neck), relaxed knees and forward foot turned in slightly (groin), and elbows being closer together than your fists (armpits).

That means a *Sensei* is always checking your 'armour' parts of your body that you will use to defend yourself. Doing **Shime** to someone performing *Sanchin no Kata* requires care and some training to make sure you're benefiting the student and not injuring them. When striking the body, the palms should be open and relaxed. When striking the legs, the middle of the thighs and calves are aimed for, away from the joints. A modern **Shime** is striking the student with a *Shinai*, which is only allowed by an experienced *Sensei*.