

KATA Waza - 型技

Kata means fairly translated 'pattern of form' and literally translated 'way of doing things'. The *Kanji* for **Kata Waza** is composed of: **Katachi** - 形 ('form' or 'pattern'), **Kai** - 刻 ('cutting'), **Tsuchi** - 土 ('earth' or 'soul') and **Waza** - 技 ('technique' or 'skill'). Literally *Kata* means 'shape which cuts the ground' and *Kata Waza* thus 'practice *Kata*'.

Kata contains all the techniques, backgrounds and strategies needed for combat and are a succession of defense and attack techniques in different modes and movements in different directions. The number of movements and their order are accurately recorded. The balance between offensive and defensive techniques, the postures, direction and execution of the movements give each *Kata* its own specific character.

Kata are poured in a particular pattern, also called the **Embusen** - 演武線. For each *Kata*, the *Embusen* is fixed and should be followed precisely for a good control of the style. Japanese *Kata* start and end at or around the same point on the floor, **Kiten** - 起点 ('starting point'), of the mostly small *Dojo*'s. Many of the original Okinawan versions have been modified to comply. In many *Embusen* movements are symmetrical and mirrored in the opposite direction.

The basic techniques in a **Kata** are both offensive and defensive, but each *Kata* always starts with a defense action. Each technique is carried out in a *Kata* with maximum effort when implemented. If you defend weakly, you can lose a fight and if you attack weakly, you will never win the fight. In each *Kata* there are short rest points. Good breathing is essential not to get exhausted during intensive execution. Alertness and sharpness should manifest itself in both mental and physical components of the execution. The constant change of rhythm in *Kata* is closely related to the idea that different imaginary opponents from different directions, at different times and with different techniques attack the practitioner.

Kata Waza knows the **Renma** - 錬磨 ('always improving') principle. This means that the movements of *Kata*'s must be practiced frequently and concentrated in order to become master of it. The attention to detail, which is necessary for a perfect execution of a *Kata*, stimulates self-discipline. Concentration, dedication and exercise ensure that a higher level of learning is achieved. A level in which a *Kata* is so integrated into the subconscious mind that a good performance of a *Kata* becomes a matter of course. This is called **Mushin** - 無心 no spirit by *Zen* masters. What was once consciously trained, is now spontaneously implemented (from unconscious-incapacitated via consciously-incapacitated and consciously-competent to unconscious-competent). Performing a *Kata* is also a way to show respect to the origins and history of *Kyokushin Karate* and *Martial Arts* in general.

The origin of *Kyokushin Kata*'s

There are different types of **Kata** in *Kyokushin Karate* with different origins or different intentions. One is more graceful, the other can contain more speed changes, the next *Kata* can be especially powerful while in yet another *Kata* it is mainly about the way of breathing.

Technically, *Kyokushin Karate* is a circular style. This is unlike *Shotokan Karate*, what is seen as a linear style, but again closer to *Goju-ryu Karate*, that is more circular. *Shotokan* and *Goju-ryu Karate* were the two *Karate* styles that Mas Oyama learned before creating his own style. In the beginning he studied *Shotokan Karate* and after a few years he switched to *Goju-ryu Karate*, where he received his advanced education. This is reflected in the *Kyokushin* system, where the training of the first principles is similar at *Shotokan Karate*, but where gradually, the higher and further you develop, increasingly the circular techniques and strategies of *Goju-ryu Karate* are adapted. In addition, the influences and elements that Mas Oyama has implemented from other *Budo* styles, such as *Judo*, *Wrestling*, *Boxing* and *Taiki-ken*.

KATA Waza (型技)



The **Kata** from the *Kyokushin* syllabus thus reflect the development, style and nature of Mas Oyama. He implemented the *Kata's* with a few modifications, to adapt the *Kata* to the *Kyokushin* system, with its own postures and techniques, where more emphasis is placed on effectiveness and strength. The *Kata* must therefore be intensely experienced, both graceful and effective, with different rhythms, fast and slow, to contain and radiate strength and suppleness.

Visiting Shihan Loek Hollander in the Netherlands, I heard Sosai Masutatsu Oyama argue that Karate can be seen as a language in which the **Kihon** can be learned as the letters of the alphabet, **Kata** form the words and phrases and **Kumite** form the conversations.

Mas Oyama also emphasized three fundamental principles of a *Kata* (**Kata no San Tiyoso**):

- **Waza no Kankyu** - 技の緩: the pace of the techniques.
The pace of a *Kata* varies, some techniques are carried out slowly, others quickly.
- **Chikara no Kyojaku** - 力の強弱: the intensity of execution.
The effectiveness of the techniques comes from a good balance between strength and relaxing.
- **Iki no Chosei** - 息の調整: breathing control.
The timing of in- and out and the power of breaths are important for the technique.

The first *Kata* to be practiced in the *Kyokushin* system are mainly based on the **Northern Kata** of the **Shuri-Te** tradition, which Mas Oyama learned from Gichin Funakoshi *sensei* and has taken over from *Shotokan Karate*:

- **Taikyoku Kata** (balance and arm techniques) ^{10,9}
- **Pinan Kata** (based on the *Heian Kata*) ^{7,6,5,4}
- **Kanku** (based on the *Kanku Dai Kata*) ^{3D}
- **Sushiho** (based on the *Gojushiho Kata*) ^{4D}

The later, more impressive *Kata*, known as the **Southern Kata** of the **Naha-Te** tradition, which Mas Oyama learned from So Nei Chu *sensei* and Gogen Yamaguchi *sensei*, are derived from *Goju Ryu Karate*:

- **Sanchin no Kata** (parts of *Goju-ryu*; *Kyokushin* practices the old version of Kanryo Higaonna) ⁷
- **Tsuki no Kata** (based on the *Kihon Tsuki no Kata*, created by Seigo Tada, *Goju-ryu Seigokan*) ³
- **Tensho** (inherited) ²
- **Gekisai Dai** (inherited) ²
- **Gekisai Sho** (inherited) ¹
- **Saiha** (based on the *Saifa Kata*) ^{1D}
- **Seienchin** (inherited) ^{2D}
- **Seipai** (inherited) ^{2D}

Finally, Mas Oyama has developed a number of 'own' **Kata** for *Kyokushin Karate*, with a **Naha-Te** perspective and not traditional, not from *Okinawa Karate* or other *Karate* systems:

- **Sukugi Taikyoku Kata** (balance and kicking techniques: developed from *Taikyoku Kata*) ⁸
- **Taikyoku Kata** in *Ura* (balance and turning; developed from *Taikyoku Kata*) ⁴
- **Yantsu** (developed from the Chinese *Kempo* with parts of *Shito-ryu*) ¹
- **Pinan Kata** in *Ura* (balance and turning; developed from *Pinan Kata*) ^{1D}
- **Garyu** (fully developed by Mas Oyama) ^{3D}

Copyright © 2017-2020, Jaap Kooman, made for teaching purposes only.

The images came from the Internet and classes from Shihan Loek Hollander, Shihan Henny Ruberg and Shihan Jan Vleesenbeek.

Adapted to the new KWF Kata-syllabus (Shihan Antonio Pinero - May 2019) with feedback of Shihan Paul Lorist.