

Origins & History of Goju Kata

Kata or Quan (Chinese for Kata) History

In China over 1600 years ago kata was developed and practiced for the purpose of self-defence, whereas the Buddhist monks would practice kata for the purpose of strengthening the spirit as well as the body. Almost all of the Okinawan Goju kata were handed down from Higaonna Kanryo Sensei. Higaonna Sensei had studied and trained for many years under Ryu Ryuko Sensei in Fukien Province, China. The following kaishu kata were handed down by Higaonna Sensei from Ryu Ryuko Sensei: Sanchin, Saifa, Seiyunchin, Shisochin, Sanseru, Sepai, Kururunfa, Sesan, and Suparinpei. The original creators of these kata are unknown.

There are certain influences from Buddhism. I assume that they used numbers from Buddhist worldly desires (bonno) as names of kata, because in olden times, temples were the popular place to train for martial artists, who could be both regular citizens and monks.

One of the scriptures of Buddhism, "Hannya Shinkyo" describes "When the six aspects of kon ??? (eye???, ear???, nose???, tongue???, body???, and spirit???) touch the six aspects of jin ??? (color???, voice???, smell???, taste???, touch???, and justice???), the six kon create three worldly desires of good???, bad???, and peace???, and become eighteen worldly desires, which is **Sepai**. Then another three worldly desires; pain???, pleasure???, and abandonment???, touch the six kon to make another eighteen worldly desires, which added up to thirty-six (**Sanseiru**). These thirty-six worldly desires are related to the past, present and future, and then it becomes one hundred and eight (36 x 3), which is **Suparinpei**. ([See our history for more details](#))

****** Indicates the classic original 9 Okinawan Goju Kata passed down by Higaonna Kanryo.
(See link for more info on Goju katas at <http://www.Goju-Ryu.info/> courtesy of Mr Russ Smith)

<u>Okinawan / Chinese Name</u>	<u>English Name</u>	<u>Heishu (Closed Hand Kata) or Kaishu Kata (Open Hand Kata)</u>	<u>Origin & or Characteristics</u>	<u>Numbering</u>	<u>Passed down by</u>
Gekisai Dai Ichi	Smash & Destroy 1	(Kaishu Kata)	Miyagi Chojun		Miyagi Chojun
Gekisai Dai Ni	Smash & Destroy 2	(Kaishu Kata)	Miyagi Chojun		Miyagi Chojun
<u>*Sanchin</u> Derived from the older forms called Happoren (or its older form again, Paipuren)	Three Battles	(Heishu Kata)	White Crane and Monk Boxing system KungFu		Ryuryu Ko Sensei & Revised by Higaonna Kanryo & Revised by Miyagi Chojun Revised by Bob Jones
<u>Tensho</u> Derived from the Chinese form called Rokkisho	Rotating Palms	(Heishu Kata)	Miyagi Chojun	6 hands of Shaolin	Miyagi Chojun & Revised by Bob Jones
<u>*Seinchin</u>	Lull Before the Storm or Tiger Kata	(Kaishu Kata)	Chinese Boxing: Hawk Style		Ryuryu Ko Sensei to Higaonna Kanryo
<u>*Saifa</u>	Lightning Strikes Twice	(Kaishu Kata)	White Crane KungFu		Higaonna Kanryo Revised by Bob Jones.
<u>*Sanseru</u>	Eye of the Tornado	(Kaishu Kata)	Chinese Boxing: Crane, Tiger & Dog KungFu	36 step or hands	Ryuryu Ko Sensei to Higaonna Kanryo Revised by Bob Jones

*Seisan	Wrath of the Python or Advanced Tiger Kata	(Kaishu Kata)	Chinses Boxing, Dragon, Lion, Monk Fist Styles.	13 hand positions or 56 Movements	Ryuryu Ko Sensei to Higaonna Kanryo Revised by Bob Jones
*Shisochin	Master of Darkness 4 Directional Battle or Dragon Kata	(Kaishu Kata)	Chinese Boxing: Crane, Tiger & Dog KungFu	27 Movements Continuation of Sanseiru	Ryuryu Ko Sensei to Higaonna Kanryo Revised by Bob Jones
*Sepai	The Dragons Way	(Kaishu Kata)	Monk Boxing systems	18 Hand Positions Continuation of Seisan	Ryuryu Ko Sensei to Higaonna Kanryo
*Kururunfa	To Remain still then attack and destroy	(Kaishu Kata)			Ryuryu Ko Sensei to Higaonna Kanryo Revised by Bob Jones
*Suparunpei or Pecchurin	108 evil passions of man and efforts to conquer them	(Kaishu Kata)	Chinese Boxing: Dragon, Tiger & Monk Fist KungFu	108 hands	Ryuryu Ko Sensei to Higaonna Kanryo Revised by Bob Jones

Gekisai Ichi & Gekisai Ni (Soon 2010)

Chujun Miyagi created Fukyu Kata Ni. Miyagi adopted Fukyu Kata Ni as Gekisai Dai Ichi and went on to develop Gekisai Dai Ni with its Naha Te influence. The component kanji Geki means to fight, attack or strike whilst Sai means to smash or break. Gekisai translates as 'to Pulverize', though the kata is commonly transliterated as 'to Attack and Smash'. The name reflects the period in history when they were created i.e. WW2 and its inference was 'attack and smash the enemy', i.e. the American soldiers. The original upper punch taught was higher than head height, reflecting the height difference between the Okinawans and the Americans. In post war years many Goju schools have changed the opening punches to standard upper and middle punches.

Gekisai-ichi and Gekisai-ni use the same kanji for the first three characters of the name. The difference in the names of the kata are found only in that one is number one and the other is number two. These kata were developed before 1940 and their relative simplicity was to help spread goju to the public. 1st year of karate.

Sanchin - Three Battles

The kata three battles - Sanchin(or its older form, Paipuren) - are of the mind, the body and the spirit. In Goju , "go" mean hard as in sanchin kata. Combined in Sanchin kata, we find peace of mind, body and spirit only if worked properly and under proper instruction. Sanchin did not take on combative elements until it was adopted by Shaolin recluses much later in history.

To amplify the kata Sanchin, it should be noted that there are, in fact, two forms used in Okinawan Goju. The original open hand version was brought from China by Higaonna Kanryo Sensei and is the most important kata in Goju Karate called Happoren.. The second version was developed by Miyagi Chojun Sensei Higaonna's most senior student and developed a variation of the original version with closed fists. The version All Stars teach is that of the closed fist. Move feet first then hands on breathing in or out. The 4 second breathing, both 4 seconds inhalation and 4 seconds exhalation done , are slower as are the individual movements within the kata. There are four basic types of sanchin ibuki (breathing):

1. Inhale quickly and exhale quickly;
2. Inhale quickly and exhale slowly until completely done;
3. Inhale slowly and completely, then exhale slowly and completely;
4. Inhale slowly and completely, then exhale quickly

The sanchin kata of Miyagi Chojun Sensei, utilizes the breathing method of number 3 which uses the slow and complete inhalation and exhalation. Higaonna Kanryo Sensei's sanchin ibuki could be classed as number 1, where one would inhale and exhale quickly and sharply. Info above on Sanchin breathing courtesy of the Buddy Govenders South African Goju Ryu web site <http://www.eastcoast.co.za/buddy/index.htm>. In this form we are trying to understand the principle of triple locking. In the stances we drop the weight down, turn the heels out and then roll the pelvis forward to lock the stance in. **Performing the stances in this manner also starts to activate the first and second of the bodies Charka ie (Base and Sacrel Chakra) therefore stimulating our Chi.**

We also learn to breathe deeply from the pit of our stomach. The rolling of the pelvis drives the breathing; this enables us to completely empty the air from our lungs. In short, Sanchin teaches one about the summation of total joint forces: how to bring everything together at one time to unleash great amounts of power. It is also a way in which to keep the body electrically charged and physically in tune. Done correctly, using diaphragm breathing technique similar to Hatha Yoga, it should not cause undue strain, rather it should massage one's inner organs and invigorate the body. The purpose of Sanchin is not "spiritual development" but to prepare the body to absorb strikes without pain or damage (this was known as "iron shirt") and develop the forearms to absorb shocks ("iron bridges").

Tensho or Rokkisho - Rotating Palms or 6 hands

Tensho is a relatively new kata and was created by Miyagi Chojun Sensei.

Goju-Ryu kata are Kaishu, meaning open hand, and Heishu, meaning closed hand. Tensho is classified as a HEISHU KATA. Heishu basically means closed hand. This DOES NOT refer that the kata is done with closed hands. Heishu means end, closed, finished, or, the last form to be done. It means that you end your training with this kata. The HEISHU form for Goju-Ryu is Tensho. The name "tensho" literally means "rotating palms" and is also known as "rokkisho" from Chinese white crane style. Rokkishu which later became the building block on Kata Tensho. With his additional martial art training Okinawa-te, Naha-te and the Chinese arts Sensei Miyagi developed a refined form of empty hand, and even today its Whooping Crane Chinese Gung Fu roots can still be seen in its forms or Kata. Rokkishu, "6 Hands of Shaolin", denotes the different hand positions that are used in pressure point striking and high level breath control found in this kata. It is a hand technique kata and within these soft hand movements tremendous power is generated. In Goju "ju" means soft as in tensho kata. Six also refers to the number of directions from a central starting position: up, down, left, right, forwards and backwards. Tensho is a higher level breathing Kata.

This kata is done entirely in tension, but entirely without tension. The theory is that during the breathing in on Tensho your breath is done in through the nose and out through the nose like in certain yoga breathing exercise. The chest should be expanded and the stomach should not be contracted while expanding the chest. In rotating palms we are trying to tie in our breathing with our striking and blocking. **We breathe out and rise up (slightly) when we strike. We breathe in and sink down (slightly) when we block.** As these movements occur we achieve a slight pulsating effect in the body. **Performing the kata this way will activating the the third, fourth, fifth of the bodies Chakra (Solar Plexus, Heart and Throat Chakra) stimulating chi.** As we rotate the palms in this form we also rotate around the central axis of our bodies. This helps us to absorb our opponent's energy and to redirect their energy into our counter strikes. As these movements occur we achieve a dual rotating and pulsating effect in our body.

Seinchin - Lull Before the Storm

Many translations exist for the name of this kata, but "to pull in and fight" seems the most appropriate. This demanding form contains no kicks, and the majority of the hand techniques are performed in shiko-dachi and neko ashi dachi with some grappling and pulling techniques and take downs. This kata when done properly, strengthens and increases the flexibility of the legs and hips. Mentioned as one of the 2 training kata of Goju (along with Seisan) by Meitoku Yagi. Seinchin is taught as the brown-belt kata in many modern Goju organizations. **(Part of the information above is courtesy of Mr Russ Smith at <http://www.Goju-Ryu.info>)** In Lull Before the Storm we learn to drop our level lower and to move and attack whilst maintaining the lower level. The principles learned in our three key Kata need to be put into practice when performing this kata. This is the first kata we study that has variations in rhythm and timing. Slow powerful movements are mixed in with fast explosive movements. Developing the correct timing is very important.

Saifa - Lightning Strikes Twice.

Saifa kata uses the same kanji found in Gekisai kata. The second portion of the name is traditionally pronounced "ha", but due to the Okinawa influence it is pronounced "fa", giving us Saifa. It means to "smash, beat and tear away". There are several bottom-fist and back-fist strikes in Saifa, which is a more aggressive kata. The bunkai of the kata reveals a grappling technique where the hands are literally torn away from the opponents grip. Evidence from other Chinese disciplines shows Saifa to be one of the oldest of the classical kata and taught as the first kaishu kata in many Goju schools. In Lightning Strikes Twice we learn to make our opponent carry our weight when we lock onto them. We also learn to use our hips to create power when we need to break our opponent's balance. These applications are all applied as a result of the opponent grabbing hold of us. We take advantage of their hold and create space and break their balance by hanging our weight and using our hips.

Sanseiru - Eye of the Tornado - (Means 36 steps or hands movements)

Sanseiru represents the number thirty six ($6 \times 6 = 36$) or 36 hand positions. When the six aspects of kon (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and spirit) create three worldly desires of good, bad and peace, and become eighteen worldly desires, which is **Sepai**. Then another three worldly desires; pain, pleasure and abandonment touch the six kon to make another eighteen worldly desires, which added up to thirty-six (**Sanseiru**).

Sanseiru develops low kicks and double hand techniques. It is believed that this kata was taught in the Kume section of Okinawa and taught by Aragaki Seisho before Kanryo Higashionna made his trip to China. Several Fujian Quanfa styles practice a kata with this name, for instance, Kanbun Uechi brought back the Fujian Tiger Quanfa version back to Okinawa. Ryuei-Ryu also practices Sanseiru, their kata being very similar to the Goju-ryu version. Considering that Nakaima Kenko and Miyagi Chojun were good friends, I believe it more likely that one borrowed from the other than the likelihood that both descended from the same "Ryuruko". **(Part of the information above is courtesy of Mr Russ**

Smith at <http://www.Goju-Ryu.info>) Eye of the Tornado teaches us to fight multiple attackers whilst we rotate around one fixed point. The body twists and turns repeatedly with the left foot remaining in place. This kata teaches us to be in the middle and accept attacks from all angles. This kata also teaches us the importance of awareness and to stretch our peripheral vision, so that we can turn and anticipate attacks.

Seisan - Wrath of the Python (13 steps or hand positions)

Seisan represents the number thirteen. Thirteen is a prime number, and in China is a number representing good luck and prosperity. Practiced by many Okinawan (both Shuri and Naha) styles, as well as Fujian Quanfa styles. Believed to be one of the oldest kata on Okinawa, this kata seems to stress fundamental stepping, punching, and kicking techniques. It contains 8 defensive and 5 offensive techniques, both of which involve a change in direction. Called one of Goju's two training kata by Meitoku Yagi, this kata begins like Sanchin, contains techniques aimed at dominating the opponent's centerline, and contains several low kicks. Strangely, many current Goju organizations include this near the end of the curriculum. **(Part of the information above is courtesy of Mr Russ Smith at <http://www.Goju-Ryu.info/>)** Wrath of the Python teaches us to use 2 hands to grab and control one arm of our opponent. Many powerful chokes and leg sweeps are also affected by using the principles of this kata. By gripping with our hands apart and then snaking our hands into a position where they are aligned, we can squeeze as strongly as a "python". This form also has many explosive changes of pace.

Shisochin - Master of Darkness (Means 4 - directional battle)

Shisochin also uses the same kanji for "chin" as in Sanchin. In this case it is combined with the kanji "shi" (four) and "so" (redirection) to form Shisochin or "four-face battle". It can also represent the four elements represented in Chinese medicine (Acupuncture is one) of Wood, Fire, Metal and Water with man representing Earth. Shisochin uses the characteristic open hands of tiger techniques, and classic Chinese techniques such as the "angry tiger walking through the forest". The Master of Darkness teaches us the importance of having a lower level than our opponent. Typically this is achieved by ensuring that our hips are lower than our opponent's hips. Apart from increased stability it makes it very difficult for an opponent to control you or take you down. The deep stances and long searching blocks could also help you to locate an opponent if you were fighting in the dark.

Seipai - The Dragons Way (18 steps or hand positions)

Seipai represents the number eighteen ($3 \times 6 = 18$). When the six aspects of kon (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and spirit) touch the six aspects of jin (color, voice, smell, taste, touch and justice), the six kon create three worldly desires of good, bad and peace, and become eighteen worldly desires, which is **Seipai**. The six in this case is the same as the second six in **Sanseiru** (colour, voice, taste, smell, touch and justice), while the three represents good, bad, and peace. It is said it is based upon the crane techniques which can be seen in the leaning stances, whipping style of striking, and evasive footwork. Seipai is made up of a variety of unusual hand, foot and body techniques. Dragon's Way teaches us the importance of controlling the center of our opponent's body. We are constantly breaking their balance by bending their body and shifting their weight over and away from the support of their hips. This is done in a variety of different techniques, sometimes it is by grabbing them around the waist, sometimes by pushing their hips away and at other times by controlling the top of their bodies and pulling them off balance.

Kururunfa - (To remain still, then quickly attack and destroy)

Kururunfa was handed down to us from Ryuryu Ko Sensei to Higaonna Kanryo Sensei, but the original creator of this kata is unknown. Kururunfa contains a wide variety of open-hand techniques and especially hand/hip coordination techniques. Like Sesan, Kururunfa [Kududunfa] has soft movements followed by hard movements. However in Kururunfa the difference between hard and soft are much more marked, with slow drawn out movements followed by a pause with devastating explosive techniques to follow, then the cycle repeats again. (Involves a lot of grappling, bear hugs, chokes, full nelsons, head locks)

Suparunpei or Pecchurin - (108 hands or The 108 evil passions of man and his effort to conquer them).

According to oral tradition, there were three levels of Suparinpei, which were Jo (high), Chu (middle) and Ge (low). The Suparinpei, which we practice now, is Jo. Suparinpei Chu and Ge were lost sometime in the past. Suparunpei represents the number 108 ($3 \times 36 = 108$) and has special significance in Buddhism. It is believed that man has 108 evil passions, and so in Buddhist temples on December 31, at the stroke of midnight, a bell is rung 108 times to drive away those spirits. The number 108 is calculated from 3×36 . When the six aspects of kon (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and spirit) create three worldly desires of good, bad and peace, and become eighteen worldly desires, which is **Seipai**. Then another three worldly desires; pain, pleasure and abandonment touch the six kon to make another eighteen worldly desires, which added up to thirty-six (**Sanseiru**). These thirty-six worldly desires are related to the past, present and future, and then it becomes one hundred and eight (36×3), which is **Suparinpei**. Suparunpei is Goju's longest kata. It utilizes a large number of techniques, including breath control, and it contains the greatest number of applications and depth of meaning.