

SANCHIN KATA

All kata have gone through a series of ongoing development and modification through the years, even by the original "masters".

Sanchin, which was in part developed by Chojun Miyagi, like most Sensei's of the time, he chose to teach kata that emphasized certain aspects of their training that they particularly liked or related to. Miyagi was a strong and powerful man and he emphasised this in his training & teaching, hence he chose kata that aided in this emphasis.

The origins of Sanchin may well be found in the Chinese systems (like so many others). The Fujian Chinese style of "Tiger Boxing" has a form called "San Jan" (3 Battles). Jujian White Crane Boxing also has a form called San Zhen (3 Corrects), which apparently indicated a correct and proper body, a correct and proper head and correct and proper stance.

Sanchin is sometimes called Saamchin in Chinese. It is also said that this form was developed to build, contain and release one's power (chi), and emphasizes regulating the flow of air synchronizing it with the expansion (floating) and contraction (sinking) of muscular activity.

In short, it is said, 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.

KEY POINTS

Stance: Sanchin Dachi

Classically feet hip width, toes of back foot in line with heel of front foot, back foot straight to slightly turned inwards is better. The front foot turned 45 degrees. Knees slightly bent, hips/pelvis flexed. Because of these stances were designed for a race different to us Caucasians, the width and depth can be slightly more exaggerated.

Posture:

Back Straight, shoulders back, chest up, chin tucked back, hips flexed.

Breathing:

Co-ordination between the hand movements and breath is essential. As the hands move so is the breath. Once the hands finish their techniques, the breath is finished (exhausted). This means that you should not still be breathing out while the fists have finished on the extension. In this case, one should either speed up the rate of the breath and slow down the speed of the hand movements. Generally speaking, I usually find that students tend to do Sanchin far too fast. The same co-ordination applies to in the inward breath and the retraction of the hands. Once the hand(s) have reached the withdrawn position, you should not be able to breathe inwards anymore. You should be full (so to speak).

On the extension of the fist(s), the breath should be exhausted. The movement to the Chudan position of the fist after the punch (extension of the fist) is accompanied by a

harder/forced outward breath. Everyone cheats! You may think that there is nothing left but almost always you can find that little extra to push out. Now, hold the breath locked out whilst you move to the next stance position, stabilize your self then retract the fist and breath inwards in co-ordination. This takes some practice to get it right. This is why Sanchin is a very miss-understood form. If you look as though you are going to have a stroke while your doing this form, you are doing it wrong! If your face is red, eyes popping, veins bulging, you're doing it wrong. If the ibuki breathing sound is like you are trying to bring up phlegm, you doing it wrong! There is no correlation between the hardness of the breath and the form with the loudness of the breathing.

One of the strongest ibuki breathing used (and probably still is) was by Dave Berry (one of the very first original ZDK students. His ibuki was nearly silent...but very strong. The throat should be partially constricted to encourage some muscular contraction for the breath to pass. The pelvis is rotated down & back on the inward breath and up & forward on the outward breath. The major muscles of respiration are the Diaphragm, the intercostals and the sterno mastoids. All these muscles should be utilized to ensure full expansion & contraction of the lungs.

Hand Postures:

In the chudan position, the fist is shoulder height, forearms 45-degree's outward, elbow 1 fist distance from the ribs. The punch should be, I suggest, in line with the height of the wrist (not the fist) of the extended hand in the chudan position. Many a time, students tend to punch forward to a height higher than the shoulder because they try and line up with the forward fist. This is deceiving, as the fist tends to be higher. It will always be stronger if it is just slightly below the shoulder height.

After the final turn, facing forward, after the completion of the three punches, you end up with both fists extended. Here, the hands open, come to the centre of the body (on same height as they were), touching back to back, drop to solar pelxus height, clench with the index finger first (still back to back), then turn upwards (still at solar plexus height), withdraw the side of the rib cage with the forearms touching the side of the body.

Next, the hands open, extend forward parallel to each other and parallel to the floor, until The elbows leave the perimeter of the body. Here, the elbows lift and turn forcing the hands to the centre of the body, where the fingers of each hand will touch the corresponding fingers of the other hand, stopping at solar plexeus height.

A slight pause, then, then hand move forward, fingers extended, hands turning so the backs of the hands are touching (thumbs now are facing down wards and are tucked in). Clench the fists starting with the index fingers first and repeat as above.

The breathing with this part of the form is as follows. When the hands are extending forward you breath out. The breath stops when the hands have reached solar plexus height. The breath is held while you extend the hands forward from this position (fingers extended, thumbs down, clenching the fists). The inward breath starts when the hands are withdrawn and fists clenched.

The mawashi position is also very important. The key points here are that the hands must come back to the just above the hips and beside the peck, but pulled right back, not half hanging forward. When extending the mawashi, the hands first come to the centre of the sternum (top hand) and navel (bottom hand), with blade of top hand & ridge of bottom hand facing forward. When the hands move forward from this position they then turn to

expose the palm heels. Then there is a slight tilt in the wrist; the angle along the forearm, back of wrists, back of the hands should be constant and relatively straight. The wrist should not bend forward past the angle of the forearms.

The body tension:

Grip the floor with the feet/toes. Tighten the legs/gluteal muscles (as if you are holding a beach ball between you legs). Tighten the fists, arms, shoulders, back, chest stomach. This basically means everything!

To this discussion, I would like to add some comments by Kyoshi Patrick McCarthy of the International Ryukyu Karate Research Society....

"Thank you for inviting me to comment upon sanchin. Ignoring the defensive themes and application principles extant in any of the many variations of this 'kata,' karate's sanchin-style training, regardless of its ancient origins (probably India first anyway,) was handed down to us from those spiritual recluses who vigorously embraced Buddhism inside the monastic sanctuary of Shaolin. They understood that breath was/is the gateway between the mental & the physical and vigorously cultivated its practice primarily for holistic purpose. The value of regulating the flow of air from within the body and synchronizing with contracted muscular oscillation has an profound over all & specific holistic effect upon the human anatomy. It not only strengthens bones, muscle and tendon while making the body strong enough to withstand powerful blows, it also helps massage the internal organs and oxygenate the blood. Using methodical introspection, the exercise becomes as much mental as it is physical.

On the issue of defensive themes, I reiterate my position: "It has always been the human body, its unique function and common anatomical weaknesses which have ultimately dictated what ways of seizing and what tools of impact, along with corresponding biomechanics of transferring both low intensity and higher velocity kinetic energy, best impede motor performance: the dispassionate aim of self-defense."

Kata configurations may vary from tradition to tradition depending largely upon that 'styles' understanding (or lack thereof) of what context the technique addresses, but application principles remain infinite.

Historically, "styles" represents varying delivery systems and also reflect the costume, language, rituals etc., of the culture in which it is/was forged."

Summary:

The hard part in this form, is maintaining the body muscular tension, complete and full breathing, proper techniques in the movements, and accurate co-ordination of the breath with the movements (body). The focus should be uncompromising, stern, fixed, unmovable and determined (mind). An attitude of complete commitment should be the over all impression (spirit).

The three battles of the Body, Mind & Spirit.

Kyoshi Steve Nedelkos

