

By Steve Wilson, November 2017

SANCHIN – MIYAGI VERSION

Meaning: Three battles; referring to mind, body, and spirit

Purpose of Sanchin: 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.

Level: Green belt adults

Notes of Importance to Understanding:

- Naha-Te Karate is Sanchin based
- Sanchin is imperative to mastering Naha-Te
- When you root it is Sanchin
- When you breathe it is Sanchin
- When you punch and kime at the point of contact it is Sanchin
- When you exhale and tighten to receive a hard blow, it is Sanchin (Iron Shirt)
- The ability to focus and or to block out distractions is Sanchin
- Proper body alignment is Sanchin
- Chudan Kamae (middle body posture) is the most important kamae in the system and is the one most utilized in the kata of Goju Ryu. The reason is that it protects your center. Chudan Kamae permits both defensive and offensive actions from the same position.

Concerns with Sanchin Dynamic Tension and Breathing: some people have expressed concerns that the Sanchin training can be harmful to one's health due in part to the artificial spiking of the vascular, cranial, and pulmonary pressures, especially if you happen to have a predisposition to hypertension, peripheral vascular disease, or congenital vascular abnormalities (A-V malformations, aneurysms, etc). So, I asked my cardiologist about these concerns and demonstrated Sanchin. He stated that doing Sanchin does not cause a high enough level of spiking or pulmonary pressures to do any damage and that the duration is not long enough to do any damage. Sanchin should never be done in a manner where the veins in your neck are popping out, where you are causing so much pressure due to your breathing that you feel light headed, see yellow spots, or become dizzy. In short, any of these feelings mean that you are doing it incorrectly; specifically with too much tension and with too forced of breathe.

Purposes and Benefits

1. Teaches rooting
2. Teaching proper posture
3. Teaches proper breathing (abdominal)
4. Teaches harmonization of breathe to movement
5. Teaches proper body alignment; i.e. feet, knees, legs, hips, buttocks, torso, shoulders, arms, elbows, neck, and head
6. Develops iron shield
7. Utilizes backward stepping
8. Teaches dynamic tension; individual muscle isolation and whole body isolation
9. Teaches to kime (focus) in an instant

10. Develops the ability for the mind to block out distractions and pain to focus on technique and body control
11. It is said that if practiced properly it massages the internal organs and stimulates blood flow to the organs
12. It increases oxygen to the blood
13. Achieve total awareness

Key Points

- a. Begin with the feet. Keep soles of feet flat to floor, no arch
- b. Spread toes wide and grip floor, but do not permit an arch due to gripping
- c. Begin tightening calves and thighs until you reach hips, then curl and lock Tanden
- d. Keep chest open
- e. Do not curl or hunch shoulders
- f. Keep neck straight
- g. Slightly tuck chin
- h. Rotate both Chudan Yoko Uke outward
- i. Keep elbow one fist distance from body, top of triceps should touch body
- j. Fist tight at all times
- k. Fist slightly below shoulder height

Performance

1. Slide feet when stepping, do not raise heel or arch foot
2. Move forward and backward foot to foot
3. Inhalation is in through the nose and out through the mouth – stomach should expand during inhalation. Do not expand chest cavity with air
4. Inhale and exhale as long and slowly as you are capable of harmonizing breathe to movement
5. Do not relax arms or fist when moving
6. After third step do five punches, then open both hands and press Morote Chudan Osae Uke
7. Then perform three Morote Hiki followed by Morote Nukite Chudan
8. Then step backward and perform Mawashi Tora Guchi, step back again and execute final Mawashi Tora Guchi.

SANCHIN – HIGAONNA KANRYO VERISON

Meaning: Three battles; referring to mind, body, and spirit

Purpose of Sanchin: 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. This version includes two turns. The turns are a very important component of this kata.

Level: Shodan and above

Notes of Importance to Understanding:

- It is believed that Higaonna Kanryo closed the hands in 1905
- This version is longer which results in more exertion and a longer period of time focusing
- This version has two turns in it. The proper breathing, stepping over correctly, posture, and actual turn are very important.
- When turning, keep knees bent, step across the correct distance, maintain posture, keep weight evenly distributed, keep chin slightly tucked, maintain arm position (left under right) and do not let arms move up and down or in and out during turn. Test student's balance during turn.
- Three Sanchin steps forward, turn, three Sanchin steps forward (after the turn), turn, one Sanchin step forward, execute one Zuki followed by three Nukite, step back execute Mawashi Uke Tora Guchi, step back execute Mawashi Uke Tora Guchi, end. Note that Higaonna Morio Sensei only steps back once and ends with the left foot forward. We end as we began with the right foot forward. This change was made by O'Hara Sensei for consistency.
- Unique breathing and movement with the left hand before both turns. With left hand extended from Zuki position, retract hand/arm while inhaling all of the way to Hiki-Te position, then while continuing the long inhalation move the hand/arm across body to under the right arm. As you turn hold breath and exhale during the Zuki. Note, not all Ryuha go all the way under the right arm with left arm, but the Jundokan does.

SANCHIN – OPEN HAND VERSION

Meaning: Three battles; referring to mind, body, and spirit

Purpose of Sanchin: This version is completely for martial purposes, thus the very quick breathing and striking, while maintain tension (iron shirt) in the body (to receive blows).

Level: After one is proficient at the turning Sanchin, usually Nidan or Sandan.

Brief History of Sanchin: The open hand version is the oldest and original Sanchin kata. It was most likely developed in Fukien Province China in the City of Fuzhou and then modified in Okinawa. It is unclear if Higaonna Kanryo learned it from Wai Xinxian, Kojo Tatai (of Kojo Ryu Dojo), and or, Iwah at the Kojo Dojo in Fuzhou, China. Another possibility is that Higaonna Kanryo learned it from the Monk Fist Boxing (Luohan Quan) that Aragaki Tsuji Pechin Seisho taught, who was Higaonna's first teacher in Okinawa. What is known, is the Higaonna Kanryo made Sanchin famous and he was considered an expert at the form.

This form has become almost extinct and as such, it is important that we keep it alive and pass it on to future generations. I learned this form from Jin'an Matsumura Sensei in 2001. He trained with Miyagi Sensei from 1930-1935. Because of Matsumura Sensei, we know that Miyagi was still teaching it in the 1930's. However, Matsumura may have been taught it because he was a private student of status. In my research, I have not been able to find anyone learning it or passing it on after 1936. It is clear though, that prior to 1905 when Higaonna Kanryo closed the open-hands, this was the only Sanchin in existence. As such, both Higaonna Kanryo and Miyagi Chojun Sensei's versions can be considered modern versions.

Notes of Importance to Understanding:

- This form is not for health purposes and is for martial training
- Everything in regards to stance, posture, etc. is the same as the other two Sanchin kata. What differs is that the hands are open and the breath when exhaling is a very quick burst.
- The arm/hand draws back to Hiki-Te smoothly and somewhat quickly, then it thrust out very straight, with a quick bursting exhalation, and kime at point of contact (extension).
- The Mawashi Uke Tora Guchi's on the turns are strikes, not blocks, and they are done quickly.
- The last two Mawashi Uke Tora Guchi's are done as Kamae's used as covers and are performed slowly.
- Keep the thumbs tight in the Nukite's and the Mawashi Uke's.
- Focus on protecting your center.
- The Nukite are done at solar plexus level during the kata, but in application the Nukite can and should strike the eyes, throat, solar plexus, and groin.
- From the waist down you have the same tension and stance as the other two Sanchin. The torso and arms are more of a controlled tension instead of an all-out full tension. You must have enough tension to maintain posture and keep arms in place, while allowing enough realization to smoothly draw hand/arm back and to strike with speed and focus.
- You should be able to receive a strong blow while striking and it not disrupt you or your strike.