GKK Kata

As in all schools of Karate, the Kata are designed to teach the practitioner the fundamentals and the practical applications of unarmed combat. Goju-Ryu Karate, as practiced by the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai (GKK) today, practices and performs the following kata:

Fukyu Kata - Geki Sai Ichi, Geki Sai Ni, Kihon Kata, Uke No Kata

Kihon Kata - Sanchin, Tensho

Kaishu Kata - Saifa, Seiunchin, Senseiru, Shisochin, Sepai, Seisan, Kururunfa, and Suparunpai (also known as Pechurin).

One of the distinguishing features of Goju-Ryu Karate is that each of the Kata teach, or focus on, different types of fighting skills.

In the following paragraphs you will find interpretations of what some of the Kata mean, something about their origins, and descriptions of some of the fighting skills taught by them.

Gekisai Ichi and Gekisai Ni
These Kata were originated by Master Miyagi in 1940 in order to teach basic, or fundamental, fighting skills to beginning students. These Kata also display a noticeable influence of Shuri-te, as taught by Master Itosu. Geksai means destroy and demolish, or crush and destroy, and illustrates the “go”, or hard aspect of Goju-Ryu. Jodan Uke, or rising block, is unique to the Geki Sai Kata and is not performed in any of the other classical Kata taught in Goju-Ryu karate. It should also be noted that Mawashe Uke (round, or circular block) and Kake Uke (hook block) make their first appearance in the Gekisai Kata.

Saifa
Saifa translates to Sai – smash and Fa – tear. Saifa may be interpreted to mean grabbing and tearing of tissue in close-quartered combat. Important aspects of Saifa are that it teaches the practitioner to “get-out-of-the-way”, and this is paired with primarily attacking techniques; grappling and some escaping techniques. Many of the hand movements and “folding techniques” shown in this Kata illustrate joint manipulation, joint locks, breaks or throws. Generation of power through twisting of the hips and the abrupt dropping/grounding of stances is also important in this Kata. It mixes swift, light stances (Neko Ashi Dachi and Sagi Ashi Dachi) with solid, grounding stances (Shiko Dachi). Crane stance makes its first appearance in this Kata.

Sanchin
The name of this Kata translates to San – three, Chin – to root, or root of. Sanchin is known as the three battles Kata, mind-body-spirit! This Kata teaches breathing and proper use and control of muscle tension/relaxation and focus. Sanchin is an excellent tool for developing and conditioning both the physical and mental aspects of the practitioner. By performing this Kata you first develop Yushin, conscious mind, because of the intense focus placed on controlling muscle tension throughout the body, Ibuki (strong, hard) breathing, and harmonizing breathing with body tension and movement. With effective, and consistent practice one eventually should advance to the state of performing Sanchin Kata in Mushin, or unconscious mind (or no mind). This Kata is said to have very ancient roots going back to the origins and development of Chan Fa (Chinese Hand). Kanryo Higaonna (Higashionna) brought Sanchin Kata to Okinawa from China. The Kata was later modified by Chojun Miyagi, thus creating two variations. Miyagi’s version replaced the open hands of the Chinese version with the closed fist, emphasizing the “go”, or hard aspect of Goju-Ryu. Sanchin is a very important and fundamental Kata of the Goju system.

Tensho
Tensho Kata was created by Chojun Miyagi. Tensho means rotating hands, rotating palms, or flowing hands. This Kata combines hard dynamic tension with deep breathing, concentrating strength in the Tanden, with “soft” flowing hand movements. Tensho demonstrates the “ju” or soft aspect of Goju-Ryu. It is important not to mistake “ju” to mean weak. There is a noticeable influence of the White Crane system. Tensho teaches the generation of power, various open hand techniques and escapes.

Seiunchin
The meaning of this Kata is: Sei – control; Un – to pull (also sucking in, drawing in, or setting-up the opponent); Chin – to root, or root of. Other interpretations of what the Kata means, or illustrates, include: Attack, Conquer and Suppress, or Subdue from a Distance. Balance and control is important in the performance of Kata Seiunchin. This Kata contains many techniques to unbalance, throw or grapple with an opponent, and contains close-quartered striking, sweeps, take-downs and throws. Seiunchin illustrates its Chinese origins through its considerable use of hand techniques, possibly coming from the Hsing-I system. Although there are no kicks performed in this Kata, it

would be a grave mistake not to consider the possible applications of "ashi barai" and "suri ashi" that can represent footsweeps, parries and traps. Seiunchin is the first Kata in the Tiger series of fighting forms practiced in Goju-Ryu.

Shisochin
The name of this Kata translates as Shi – four, So – direction(s), Chin – to root, or root of, or battle. It is also translated as the “27 hands, or movements”; as "Four Gates”, "Four Directions of Conflict", or “Subduing the Four Sides”. This is illustrated by the performance of the four Shotei, or palm heel strikes, done in four different directions in the Kata. The Chinese characteristics of Shisochin can be seen in the use of open hands and classic Chinese techniques such as the "angry tiger walking through the forest". This Kata demonstrates both long distance and close quarter combat techniques. Explosive movements (flowing out with power), joint locks and breaks are features of Shisochin Kata.

Sanseiru
The name of the Kata translates as San – three, Sei – ten, Ru – six. Sanseiru means "36 hands", or 36 Positions of Attack and Defense, and is also referred to as the Dragon Kata. It focuses on fighting in all four directions. The techniques in Sanseiru seem basic, direct and hard, however there are some unique and advanced, close-in techniques. A feature of this Kata is use of Morote Ko Uke (two handed wrist block), which has many close-in fighting applications. It is said that with proper technique and timing there is no defense against the attacks shown in this Kata.

Seipai
Seipai translates as Sei – ten, Pai – eight, or "18 hands", or 18 types of movements, and is of Chinese origin (Monk Fist Boxing). It contains many hidden techniques designed to confuse the opponent in combat. It is said to be impossible to understand the true meaning of the techniques by simply watching them performed. This Kata, which includes body twisting techniques and rapid, whipping techniques combined with pulling techniques requiring Muchimi ('heavy sticky hands'), and is another of the 7 original Kaishu Kata that were brought back to Okinawa from China by Kanryo Higaonna in 1881. Seipai contains a variety of unusual movements and techniques including one that requires the unique use of a fist shaped like it would be when one knocks on a door.

Seisan
Seisan literally translates as "13 hands", or “13 movements”. Sei means ten and San means three. The number 13, a prime number, is a symbol of good luck and prosperity in China. It contains 8 defensive and 5 offensive techniques, both of which involve a change in direction. Seisan illustrates grabbing and controlling an attacker while striking vulnerable parts of the body. The form stresses close range fighting which involves the use of punching, striking and low kicking techniques to break through the opponent's defenses. Seisan is an extremely important Kata in Goju-Ryu and many hours should be given to its practice. It has a wealth of knowledge and information contained within it. Seisan epitomizes both the “go” and “ju” aspects of Goju-Ryu in its utilization of both “hard” and “soft” techniques. This Kata is a considered to be a continuation of Seiunchin, and is also known as the Advanced Tiger Kata.

Kururunfa
The name of this Kata translates as Ku – long time, Ru – keep in place (or stop from moving}, Run – immediately or suddenly, Fa – break or defeat. It is also said to translate as "Forever Stops, Peacefulness and Tearing". Another meaning, or translation, for Kururunfa would be to “hold position and suddenly break and destroy”. Kururunfa is an advanced Kata brought back from China and features graceful evasive maneuvers, and very quick (sudden, abrupt) focused movements and techniques. This Kata illustrates ways to “stick to”, or “stay with”, your opponent as he attacks or escapes and suddenly, and devastatingly break through the opponents defenses with a counter attack. Kururunfa contains a wide variety of open-hand/hip coordination techniques that, depending on the circumstances, can either be interpreted as joint locks, blocks or strikes or any combination of the three. The use of the hips to aid some hand techniques enhances both the power and effect of the joint locking and breaking applications. Kururunfa also epitomizes both the “go” and “ju” aspects of Goju-Ryu in its utilization of both “hard” and “soft” techniques.

Suparunpai
The pronunciation, or name, of this kata translates as Su – one, Pa – one hundred, Ren – zero, and Pai – eight, or 108. Suparunpai (also known as Pechurin) with 108 techniques is known as the supreme Kata of the Goju-Ryu system. Suparunpai requires great breath control and great skill in execution of its slow and fast, and hard and soft, movements. This Kata utilizes many techniques and contains a great number of applications. Suparunpai not only contains many of the techniques from earlier Kata but also introduces two kicks not found in any other Kaishu Kata.