

Katas of Wado Ryu

The Pinan Series

The Pinan katas were developed by Anko Itosu in the early 1900s. Itosu learned the kata “Chiang Nan” from a Chinese martial artist who lived in Okinawa, and later remodelled this into five simpler katas, calling them Pinan because he found the Chinese “Chiang Nan” too difficult to pronounce. These katas also contain many techniques drawn from the katas being practiced in the Shuri region of Okinawa at that time. Pinan means “peaceful mind”. The name is taken to mean that once the five kata and their bunkai (application) are mastered, the karateka will be able to defend themselves adequately in most situations. Ohtsuka was taught these katas by Gichin Funakoshi and Kenwa Mabuni.

Kushanku

Kushanku was the name of a Chinese public official who came to Okinawa in the 1700s. Tode Sakugawa was taught Chinese kempo by Kushanku, and Sakugawa devised this kata to record Kushanku’s striking and grappling methods. Kushanku is one of the longest katas and it contains a wide variety of techniques. This kata is a requirement for brown belt gradings upward. Students will also be taught the applications of the form and are required to demonstrate these applications for gradings. Ohtsuka was taught this kata by Funakoshi and Mabuni.

Naihanchi

The word “Naihanchi” is said to mean “surreptitious steps” or “sideways fighting”, although there are also other meanings given for this name. It is said that Sokon Matsumura brought this kata back to Okinawa after a trip to China. Master Ohtsuka was taught this kata by Choki Motobu, who was one of the most feared fighters on the whole of Okinawa. The kata contains grappling, throwing and striking vulnerable areas. Many masters regard the techniques of this kata to be amongst the most effective of them all. Ohtsuka himself said that there was something deep about Naihanchi and it would take more than a lifetime to master. Naihanchi is a very old kata and no one is sure of its exact origin.

Seishan

This kata is said by some to be the oldest of them all. It was introduced into Karate by Sokon Matsumura who was taught it while studying in China. Seishan means “thirteen hands”. This kata emphasizes close-range self-defence techniques, with the distinctive foot movement being used to destroy an opponent’s stability.

Chinto

Chinto was the name of a shipwrecked sailor and martial artist who taught Matsumura Chinese kempo. Matsumura formulated this kata as a means to record Chinto’s methods. Practise of this form will teach the student many grappling and throwing techniques in addition to developing stability and balance. Ohtsuka was taught this kata by Gichin Funakoshi.

Passai

Passai means “to thrust asunder”. This kata was one of the most popular katas in history and it is believed to have originated in China. Passai – sometimes pronounced “Bassai” – contains a wide variety of striking and grappling techniques including throws, chokes, locks etc.

Wanshu

Wanshu was the name of a Chinese envoy who came to Okinawa in the 1600s. Whilst stationed in Okinawa, Wanshu taught a small group Shaolin White Crane Kempo. Wanshu taught the importance of fighting using evasive foot movements and this is reflected in the kata he inspired. This kata also contains a number of throwing techniques.

Rohai

Rohai translates as “vision of a white heron”. The name of the kata reflects the large flowing arm movements contained in it that resemble the movement of a heron’s wings. The version of Rohai practiced in Wado-Ryu is derived from Rohai Shodan as created by Anko Itosu. Ohtsuka was taught this kata by Kenwa Mabuni.

Neiseishi

Neiseishi means twenty-four steps and was created by Aragaki. With the exception of the Pinan series, Neiseishi is the only kata in Wado-Ryu of Okinawan origin, with the remainder originating from China. This Kata includes grasping and countering techniques along with close-range striking.

Jitte

Jitte means “ten hands”; this is frequently taken to mean that if this kata is mastered it will give the karateka the power of five men. It is believed that this kata was developed by monks in China.

Jion

Jion means “Temple Sound”. Jion was the name of a temple in China and it is believed that this kata was developed at the temple, or by someone associated with it. Jion contains striking, locking throwing and methods of trapping the opponent’s limbs. It is a long physically demanding kata and consistent practise of Jion will develop a strong body.