



Section 3

Basic Kata

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CHAPTER 1



NAMES OF THE KATA

Changing the Names of the Kata

There are basically 15 types of kata, all of which are listed in the “Schools and Types” portion of Section 1. They are: Hei-an sho-dan, or peace first; Hei-an ni-dan, or peace second; Hei-an san-dan, or peace third; Hei-an yon-dan, or peace fourth; Hei-an go-dan, or peace fifth; Bassai, or penetrating a fortress; Kan-kū, or sky gazing; En-pi, or swallow flying (these all belong to the Shō-rin-ryū school); Jitte, or ten hands; Han-getsu, or half-moon; sho-dan, ni-dan and san-dan of Kiba-dachi or horse-riding stance first, second and third; Gan-kaku, or crane on a rock; and Ji-on, or mercy-compassion (these all belong to the Shō-rei-ryū school).

Historically, kata have had names like “pin-an,” “sei-shan,” “nai-han-chi,” “wan-shū,” “chin-tō,” etc. because our oral tradition has told us so. However, the meanings of some of these names are unclear. Even for teaching purposes they are confusing and ambiguous. Besides, kara-te distinctively and completely has become the kara-te of Japan, and thus, I do not wish to cling to the old traditional and incomprehensible names of the Chinese style. Therefore, after giving careful consideration to the names that seem to be unsuitable, I decided to use my humble opinion and change them while maintaining the old names for the others. Some students of kara-te may feel that this sudden revision is inconvenient, so for their sake, I have included here the old names (in parentheses) along with the new.

Hei-an - peace (Pin-an)

There are five kata in Hei-an (Hei-an sho-dan or peace-first up to Hei-an go-dan, or peace-fifth). They are the easiest to learn; they are full of variety, and include nearly all of the basic postures and techniques. Therefore I would recommend that the beginner to start with this kata. These five kata, once you’ve become proficient in them, will become very useful for ordinary self-defense. Therefore you can have peace of mind, which is the reason this group of kata is called Hei-an, or peace.

Also, the name of the kata which has traditionally been called ni-dan, or second, is changed in this book to sho-dan, or first. Also the name of the kata that has been traditionally called sho-dan, is changed in this book to ni-dan. I made these changes based on the relative difficulty of the kata and the teaching sequence.

Bassai - penetrating-a-fortress (Bassai)

In this kata you often switch hands immediately after blocking, changing your disadvantage to an advantage. This technique is so spirited and vigorous, it is as if its force could penetrate through an enemy's fortress. This is why the kata is called Bassai or penetrating a fortress.

Kan-kū - sky-gazing (Kū-shan-kū)

This kata originally was named for the Chinese military officer, Kū-shan-kū. I have given it a different name, Kan-kū, or sky gazing, since at the beginning of the kata, there is a movement of your hands coming together with you looking up at the sky through them.

En-pi - swallow-flying (Wan-shu)

The distinctive characteristic of this kata is in the way you thrust up at your opponent's jō-dan (upper body) by jumping forward and grabbing and pulling him towards you. These movements look similar to the way a swallow can be flying high in one moment and flying low the next, instantly dodging and turning adroitly in the air. That is why I named this kata En-pi, or swallow flying.

Gan-kaku - crane-on-a-rock (Chin-tō)

The distinctive characteristic of this kata is in its posture. In it, one appears as a crane on a rock, standing on one leg, ready to jump at his enemy. The look of this is quite magnificent. This is why I named the kata Gan-kaku, or crane-on-a-rock.

Kata listed after this point belong to the Shō-rei-ryu school

Jitte - ten-hands (Jitte)

Kata of the Shō-rei-ryu may be a little slow in movement if compared to those of the Shō-rin-ryu, but they look imposing and majestic. They are rather difficult for beginners, but are excellent in terms of strengthening muscles and bones. The reason why this kata is called Jitte or ten-hands is because once you become proficient in this kata, your work can be equaled to that of ten men.

Han-getsu - half-moon (Sei-shan)

In this kata, your hands and feet trace a semi-circular shape as you keep moving forward. That is why I have named it Han-getsu, or half-moon.

Kiba-dachi - horse-mounting stance (Nai-han-chi)

This kata is characterized by its standing posture. You stand with your legs wide apart as if you are mounted on a horse, and your feet are planted firmly on the ground. Tighten your inner thighs with strength. The outer edge of the soles of both feet must feel like they are being pulled towards center. This is why it is named kiba-dachi, or horse-mounting stance.

Ji-on - mercy-compassion (Jion)

I did not change this name. The Chinese character Ji-on appears in an old Chinese document. There was also a temple called Ji-on as well as a great monk named Ji-on. Clearly, this kata must have been passed down by someone associated with the Ji-on temple, as was the case with Shō-rin-ji temple ken-pō.