

Seishan-Seisan Kata

Seishan kata of Wadokai is one of the Shiteigatas (official kata) of Japan Karate Federation (JKF). JKF has taken two katas from each major style - Shotokanryu, Shitoryu, Gojuryu and Wadoryu - and standardized them. In such a way everyone, regardless of styles, should train katas from other styles and get some knowledge of them. In the official competitions, as far as Japan is concerned, kata competitors must perform katas at least in the first round according to Shiteigata versions. Shiteigatas are as follows:

Jion, Kanku Dai (Kushanku)	Shotokanryu
Bassai Dai, Seienchin	Shitoryu
Seipai, Saifa	Gojuryu
Seishan, Chinto	Wadoryu

It means that Seishan kata of Wadokai should be practised not only by Wadokai members but also by other stylists, which makes this kata more important for us in Wadokai.

The name, Seishan-Seisan

Until today, it has not been too successful in finding out the original meaning of the names of karate katas, especially those of Shurite. For example we do not know what exactly Kushanku, Bassai or Wanshu mean. All we can do is guessing. Most probably the original names were Chinese in Fukien-dialect, but have been Okinawanized during the history.

But with Seishan we can guess as the number 13 as Sanchin is 3, Seipai is 18, Sanseiru 36 and Suparinpei 108. Let us look at how 13 is pronounced in various dialects of Chinese and Japanese:

Shih-san	Peking-dialect of Chinese=Mandarin
Se-sei	Shanghai-dialect of Chinese
Sei-san	Fukien-dialect of Chinese
Tsa-san	Taiwan-dialect of Chinese
Sap-sam	Kanton-dialect of Chinese
Ju-san	Japanese

The closest we can come with Seishan-Seisan is the Fukien-dialect of 13 Sei-san. In Gojuryu, Shitoryu, Uechiryu and Ryueiryu katas are called Seisan. this is understandable as Okinawa is situated quite near to Fukien of China geographically and has had close relations with it for a long time. Seishan seems to be an Okinawanized pronouncing of Seisan of this Fukien-Chinese.

(According to Fuzhou-English Dictionary by Li Zhuqing which I recently purchased, Sei-san is spelled Seik-sang.)

Why just 13? Kinjo Akio has researched that 13 is a strong number in Fukien and used in various Peiho Chuan (white crane boxing) in the Fukien province in China. And besides, most of the katas which have number in their names have something to do with 3 (Sachin, Seipai, Sanseru, Suparinpei and even Niseishi-24 and Gojushiho-54. They can be divided by 3.)

Seisan-Seishan in the past

Let us look at Seishan-Seisan kata one by one in the history.

1. 24 March 1867

On 24th March 1867 *Seisan* kata was performed by Aragaki at a welcoming party for the Chinese delegation (Sapposhi) together with other martial arts demonstrations, poem-reading, singing, dancing and music.

This is the first documentation of *Seisan*.

(Sapposhi was a Chinese delegation to approve the Okinawan king. One Sapposhi delegation had about 500 people, whereof approximately half were civilians and half military. Sapposhi was sent to Okinawa each time Okinawa=Ryukyu Kingdom changed her king. The first Sapposhi was sent in 1404 and this (1866-1867) was the 24th and the last one. Strangely this was the only time when a performance of martial arts was recorded at the welcoming party.)

It proves that *Seisan* was practiced in Okinawa already in 1867.

2. Ryueiryu

It is said that Nakaima Kenri (1820-1897) went to Fukien in China and trained for a Chinese Liu Liuko 1839-1846. Katas in Ryueiryu include *Seisan* together with: Sanchin, Niseishi, Sanseiru, Seiyunchin, Ohhan, Pachu, Ahnan, Paiku, Heiku and Paiho.

According to the video 'Ryueiryu' (Champ 1997) *Seisan* kata of Ryueiryu is rather close to that of Gojuryu and Shitoryu.

3. Uechiryu

Uechi Kanbun (1877-1948) trained for Chu Chiwo in Fukien 1897-1906. He opened a dojo in China in 1906, but came back to Okinawa in 1909. Katas which Uechi brought back from Fukien were *Seisan*, *Sanchin* and *Sanseiru*.

4. Matsuda Tokusaburo (1877-1931)

Matsuda went to Fukien together with Uechi Kanbun. Matsuda trained at Kogusuku-dojo in Fuchao 1897-1902. He came back to Okinawa 7 years earlier than Uechi. His katas were: *Seisan*, *Sanchin*, *Sanseryu*, *Suparinpei*.

5. Nahate-Gojuryu

Higaonna Kanryo (1853-1915) went to Fuchao and trained mainly for Liu Liuko 1872-1887??. Liu Liuko is a mystery in the history of karate. We do not know very much about him.

Seisan kata is inherited in Gojuryu and in Shitoryu.

6. Shotokan

Funakoshi Gichin (1868-1957) has written four books where he presents *Seishan-Hangetsu* kata as follows:

1922	Ryukyu Kenpo Karate	<i>Seishan</i>	Shoreiryu
1925	Rentan Goshin Karatejutsu	<i>Seishan</i>	Shoreiryu
1935	Karatedo Kyohan	<i>Hangetsu</i>	Shoreiryu
1958	Karatedo Kyohan	<i>Hangetsu</i>	Shoreiryu

He introduces 15 katas in his books and the katas are assorted to Shorinryu and Shoreiryu. He changed the name from *Seishan* to a Japanese word *Hangetsu* (half moon) in 1935 book. *Seishan-Hangetsu* in these four books are approximately the same.

7. Motobu Choki (1870-1944)

In his book 'Okinawa Kenpo Karatejutsu' (1925) Motobu mentions about *Seisan* kata as one of the katas which are trained both in Okinawa and in China.

8. Miki Nisaburo (1903-1951)

Miki (then a student of Tokyo University) went to Okinawa with Mutsu Mizuho (agraduate of Keio University and worked at Tokyo University) in summer 1929 and wrote a book 'Kenpo Gaisetsu' (1930). He presents *Seishan of Ohshiro* in this book.

9. Karate Kenpo (1934)

Mutsu Mizuho went to Okinawa together with Miki Nisaburo and was a co-author of 'Kenpo Gaisetsu'. But 5 years later he wrote a gigantic book 'Karate Kenpo' by himself. He presents *Seishan* kata which is quite identical with Shotokan-Wadoryu *Seishan*. Mutsu must have learned this kata from Funakoshi.

10. Karatedo Nyumon (1938)

Mabuni Kenwa (1889-1952) wrote this book in 1938. In this book he mentions that 5-6 different *Seisans* are practised in Shuri and Naha.

11. Butokukai registration

In 1940 a big budo demonstration was arranged by Butokukai in Kyoto. Karate groups presented their technical systems beforehand. *Seishan-Seisan* was included as follows:

Wadoryu	<i>Seishan</i>
Shotokanryu	<i>Hangetsu</i>
Gojuryu	<i>Seisan</i>
Shitoryu	<i>Seishan and Seisan</i>

Shitoryu has registered two katas: *Seishan and Seisan*. *Seisan* must be the same *Seisan* as Gojuryu, but how about *Seishan*?

Classification of Seishan-Seisan

Seishan-Seisan katas are performed in various ways in various styles or schools, but I think that they can be classified as follows:

Nahate-type

Let us temporarily call this type - the type which we can see in Gojuryu and Shitoryu - Nahate type. The character of this type is:

1. When you perform a right hand punch, you keep your left hand in sotouke position. You draw back your punch immediately to sotouke position.
2. In two hands movements, your front hand is upper and rear hand is down.
3. You finish this kata with mawashiuke (round blocking - or koko=tiger mouth).

In this type you start your kata by moving your right foot forward first, in contrast to the other types where you start with your left foot forward first.

Even Ryueiryu *Seisan* is quite similar, but they start this kata with left instead.

Uechi-type

In Uechiryu Seisan, kata is performed mainly with open hands. It is most probable that Uechiryu Seisan is close to the original form of Fukien, China, as in many Chinese schools they more commonly use open hands.

1. You keep your left hand in sotouke position when you perform right nukite in the same manner as in Nahate-type.
2. Two hands movements are not interpreted as blocking techniques as in Nahate-type but in Uechiryu the finger top strikes to forward and backward are used.
3. The finishing movements are block with left hand and attacking twice with right hand.

Matsumura-type

Let me call this type Matsumura-type because the most well known of this type is called Matsumura no Seishan. Matsumura Sokon (1809-1896) had students like Asato Anko and Itosu Anko.

1. You draw back your left hand when you perform punch with your right and draw back your right hand immediately to sotouke position.
2. In both hands movements your front hand is upper and rear hand is down in the same manner as in Nahate-type.
3. You finish kata with shotei downward.

Ohshiro no Seishan (Kenpo Gaisetsu), Isshinryu Seisan (Seisan Kata of Isshinryu Karate by S. Armstrong, Ohara, 1973) seem to belong to this group. Even Aragaki Seisan (video tape The McCarthy Seminars) seems closer to this group. Ohshiro Choujo (1887-1934) was a student of Itosu Anko. The founder of Isshinryu Shimabuku Tatsuo (1906-1976) trained for Kyan Chotoku (1870-1946) who was a student of Itosu Anko.

Funakoshi-type

I do not know if it would be proper to call this type the Funakoshi-type. But the only person who showed this type of Seishan was Funakoshi Gichin. Wadoryu Seishan - Shiteigata - must be a direct heritage of Funakoshi's Seishan. Funakoshi trained for Asato Anko (1829-1906) and Itosu Anko (1831-1915) in his life (Karatedo Ichiro, Funakoshi Gichin, 1976), so he must have learned this kata from one of them - or it is also possible he may have learned from someone else, because people were training for various teachers in Okinawa in those days. But as Itosu seems to be the person who modified many katas in Okinawa - or to modernize katas to suit in the school curriculum, there is a possibility that Itosu modified Matsumura no Seishan to this type. But no document indicates that Itosu taught Seishan. Or it can be Funakoshi himself who might have modified.

1. You perform left sotouke block and right punch drawing back your left hand.
2. In both hands movements front hand performs gedanbarai and rear hand sotouke block. This is different from any of the other types.
3. You finish this kata with two palm hand blocks.

To keep your one hand in defending position and perform an attack with the other (Nahate-type and Uechiryu) is more advanced than to draw back the defending hand to the side of your body. This type gives an impression to be very basic. In both hands movements you perform gedanbarai with your front hand. This is quite unusual comparing with other types. But was it Itosu or Funakoshi who changed these movements?

Historical development

It is quite difficult to trace the historical development of Seishan-Seisan Kata. But I would like to guess as follows:

Seisan kata in Fukien, China

Seisan kata in Okinawa

Matsumura no Seishan

(Itosu?? Asato??)

Funakoshi no Seishan=Hangetsu

Seishan of Wadoryu (Shiteigata)

Seisan in Fukien, China

Seisan of Ryueiryu

Seisan of Uechiryu

Seisan of Gojuryu

Seisan of Shitoryu

Pictures

Ryukyu Kenpo Karate, Funakoshi Gichin 1922, Seishan

Rentan Goshin Karatejutsu, Funakoshi 1925, Seishan

Karatedo Kyohan, Funa-koshi, 1935, Hangetsu

Kenpo Gaisetsu, Miki Nisaburo 1929, Ohshiro no Seishan

Karatedo Kyohan, Yama-guchi Gogen, 1974, Seisan of Gojuryu

Okinawaden Gojuryu Karatedo, Miyazato Eiichi, 1978, Seisan of Gojuryu

Karate Kenpo, Mutsu Mizuho, 1934, Seishan Kata

Seishan Kata of Wadoryu: The pictutres from 'Karatedo' by Ohtsuka 1970

From 'Shiteigata' book published by Japan Karate Federation 1982. Seishan Kata is perfoemed by Arakawa Toru.



