

Chinto Kata

According to legend, Chinto is named after a Chinese sailor, sometimes referred to as Annan, whose ship crashed on the Okinawan coast. To survive, Chinto stole from the crops of the local people. Matsumura Sōkon, chief bodyguard to the Okinawan king, was sent to defeat Chinto. In the ensuing fight, however, Matsumura found himself equally matched by the stranger, and consequently sought to learn his techniques. Always keen to further enhance his formidable skills, Matsumura made a deal with Chinto: Matsumura offered to provide for Chinto and to help him return to China in exchange for instruction in Chinto's fighting method. This is how Matsumura began his study under Chinto. The kata is said to be the embodiment of the techniques learned from Chinto.

Chinto, which roughly translates to "Fighter from the East" or "Fighting to the East," and may not be the correct name of the person, although the name Chintou has been thrown around a bit as a possible name. Chinto is also often referred to as Annan.

Chintō is an advanced kata practiced in many styles of karate. The kata is very dynamic, employing a diverse number of stances, including the uncommon crane stance, unusual strikes of rapidly varying height, and a rare one-footed pivot.

When Gichin Funakoshi brought karate to Japan, he renamed *Chintō* to *Gankaku* (meaning "crane on a rock"), possibly to avoid anti-Chinese sentiment of the time. He also included the use of high side kicks instead of the original front kicks and modified the actual pattern of movement to a more linear layout. It is sometimes said that Chintō should be performed while facing eastwards due to its name.

Upon Chinto's return to China, Matsumura formulated a kata named after the originator of the methods it contained to ensure Chinto's methods were recorded and passed on to future generations. Many years later when karate made its way to mainland Japan, Gichin Funakoshi changed the name of the kata to Gankaku in order to give the kata a Japanese name. Funakoshi did this with all the kata to make karate more accessible to the Japanese. It is by this name that the kata is known in Shotokan today. The other styles sticking with the original name of Chinto.

From this little bit of history we know that the kata is a record of the methods that the great warrior Matsumura learnt from Chinto. We also know Matsumura was interested in these methods because he thought them effective and because he had not seen them before. Essentially the kata is a record of the "unusual" methods in Chinto's armoury. The kata's bunkai is therefore highly unlikely to be basic in nature. Many kata start by showing basic skills and as the kata progresses so does the technical level of the skills shown. However, this is not the case with Chinto as it shows fairly advanced methods straight from the start.

Perhaps Matsumura had hooked his hand around Chinto's neck during the fight only to have it wrenched off and then be punched for his trouble? That's certainly what the first part of the kata shows, so perhaps that was the first lesson Chinto gave Matsumura all those years ago? The initial move of the kata which hyper-extends the enemy's elbow. The second move of the kata which positions enemy for two punches. Maybe Chinto then also showed how he could have thrown Matsumura from the same position? Following the initial stripping of the grip as an alternative to locking and punching the kata instructs us to move our rear foot in while pulling the enemy towards us. The kata then instructs us to turn and pull around. This will pull the enemy over the hips and on to the floor. This is not a simple technique and yet it is found towards the start of the kata which would again emphasize Chinto kata's advanced nature.

There are no "basics" to be found in Chinto kata. Many of the drills within the form are longer and more intricate than are found elsewhere. The kata has changed over the years. The kata performs a jodan juki-uke (upper level cross receipt). This is a response to the enemy seizing your wrist in order to neutralize an attempted eye-gouge. Push the enemy away as you cross your arms. Your free arm goes under your seized wrist and over your enemy's wrist. By following the kata and pulling the arms in towards your centre the grip will either be stripped, or, if the enemy maintains their grip the wrist will become locked and they will bend at the waist. In most modern versions on the kata this motion is followed by a leaping double level kick (Nidan Geri), but this would not fit the position of the enemy. The kata originally instructed the practitioner to forcefully kick the lead leg twice in order to break balance and bring the head even further forward for the following techniques. Following on from the two kicks to the shin, the kata then shows how to apply a strangle from that position. Should the strangle fail,

the kata shows how to throw the enemy from a neck crank. Should the crank / throw fail, the kata shows how to re-secure an alternative strangle. And if that should fail, the kata shows how to keep control of the enemy such that strikes can be delivered to the neck and base of the skull. This long flow is typical of the methods found within Chinto kata. They are methods that should be studied after one has a solid grasp of the combative basics. They represent skilled alternatives that could be used if the enemy is managing to neutralise the more direct methods shown by the other kata. It is therefore right that these methods are taught late on in a student's martial education as the kata Chinto frequently is to this day.

Those who study bunkai on a regular basis will note that many of the techniques found in Chinto, are also found in Pinan Godan kata. The Pinan series of kata were created by Anko Itosu who was a student of Sokon Matsumura's. Within the Pinan series we can see techniques and drills drawn from older kata including Bassai, Kanku-Dai and Chinto. It is no coincidence that the techniques drawn from Chinto are all found in the most advanced form in the Pinan series. The most basic bunkai is found within Heian Nidan with each of the kata building on the last such that the Pinan series presents a structured training program in old style karate. The fact that the Chinto elements are found late in the fighting system that is the Pinan series again reflects the fact that Chinto is a record of the things the experienced warrior Matsumura had not come across prior to his fight with Chinto.

Although the kata gives us a record of Chinto's teachings to Matsumura, we must keep in mind that it is an imperfect record. In particular, students of bunkai must be sure to filter out what is for show and for athletic development, which is a pretty easy task if we understand the historical development of kata.