

Seisan & Hangetsu



The Hangetsu & Seisan Kata Comparison seminar.

Saturday 31st January 2009 saw John Burke sensei and Damien Birch sensei teaching the applications to these two kata. The attendees were taken through the performance of Seisan by Ann Johanssen sensei.

These Open Seminars are taught to allow students of different lineages, and different associations to learn and grow together under the guidance of experienced instructors who have more to share than simply pacing the class up and down the training hall.

Attendees are encouraged to ask questions, train with those outside of their own club, and to enjoy the experience. The only prerequisites are an Open mind and a willingness to learn.

Taking Itosu's 10 lessons to heart, we must admit that some parts of the art of Karate are for exercise, and that others are for application. It is the student's task to know which is which.

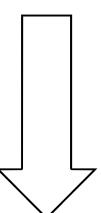
As Karate was pieced together over hundreds of years from eclectic sources, it is no surprise that there is variety in the way it has been handed down and become accepted and spread to today's society.

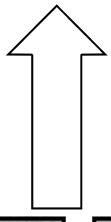
If we are to believe that the original intention was to use the movements of Karate for Self Protection, then that is what we must keep within our training today.

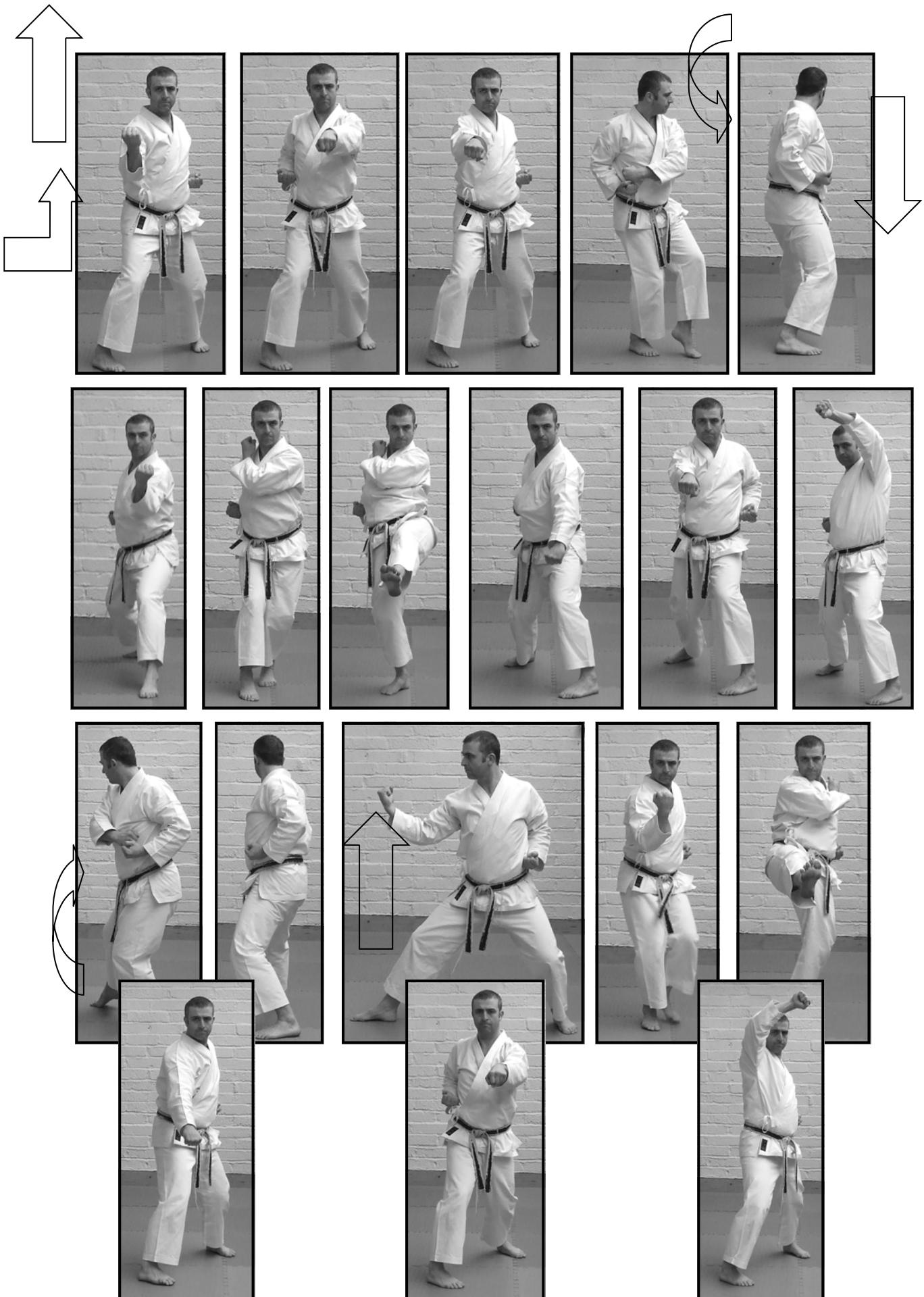
In the Kata Comparison Seminar, the instructors sought to show the applications in real self protection terms rather than the usual, sporting, kumite distance with techniques at full extension.

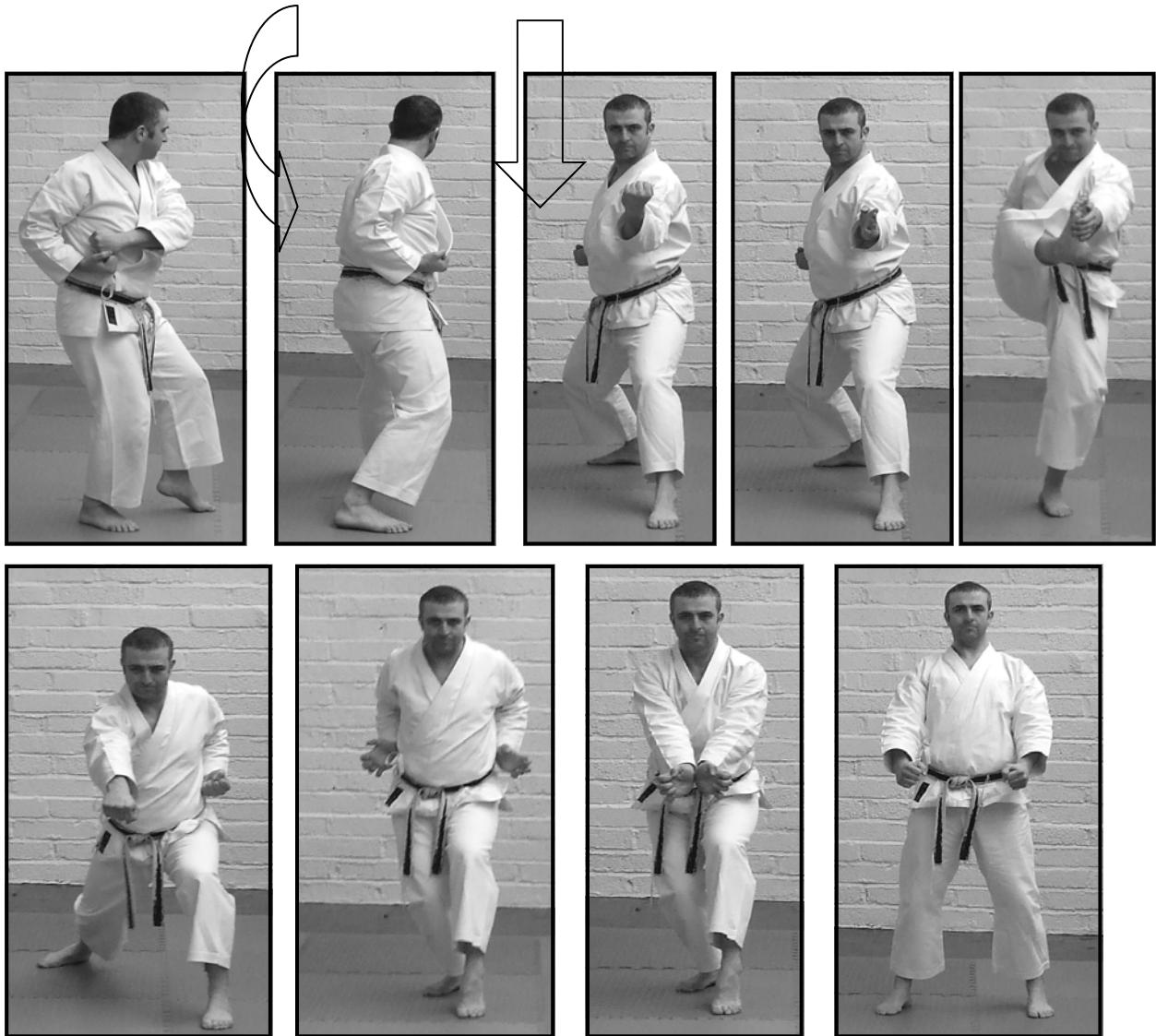
As always, there is never enough time to have every permutation of every posture covered.

Hangetsu

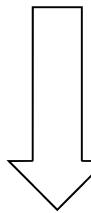


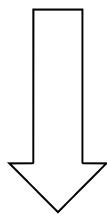


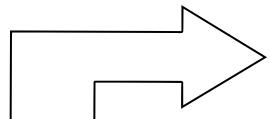




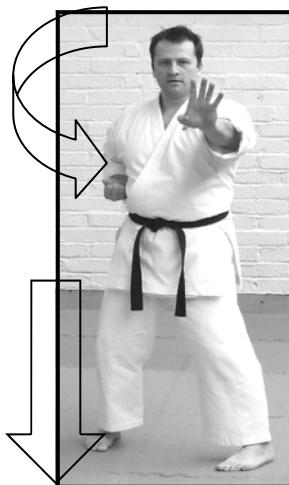
Seisan











Karate 空手 means Empty Hand. The original term may have been just Te—hand. It was quickly known as Tou-di 唐手 or Tang Hand, in reference to the Tang Dynasty of China where much of it originated.

Sometimes the terms Shuri-te and Naha-te are used. These just refer to the type of “hand” used in those towns—which were only 9 miles apart. Today Shuri is a district of Naha City.

The art used to be taught to small groups, in private. As such there could be personalisation, and the teacher would know the capabilities of each student.

Kata 型 or 形 means form, and they were developed in pre-industrialised society in order to transmit the teachings and act as a memory aid for serious students of self defence.

That means that the moves have to be a martial artist’s response to an attacker, who should be an untrained commoner rather than a martial artist. The Karate-ka’s code of ethics suggests that we would not fight each other. And if we are trained properly—hands and feet as deadly weapons, so the myth has it—then any contest between martial artists would be potentially fatal.

As Karate became acceptable, and was taught in mainland Japan, it grew to adopt the Japanese cultural trait of making ryu-ha or schools. This tradition of lineage was not entirely sought out by the pioneers. Funakoshi, for instance, is known to have wished that there were no different schools, just Karate, with all its diversity.

That said, the most popular “style” of Karate is Shotokan, which comes from Funakoshi’s school. While another major lineage is the Goju-ryu of Myagi Chojun.

Hangetsu is of the Shotokan, while Seisan is of the Goju-ryu.

Essentially it is the same kata, but the distinctions and diversification are interesting.

Hangetsu 半月 Half Moon

Seisan 十三手 13 (hands).

Shotokan 松濤館 Waving Pines Hall

GojuRyu 岡柔流 Hard & Soft School.

The big two styles of Karate share this form. There are differences, certainly, yet fundamentally it is the same form.

The roots of this form are believed to be in Yong Chun kung Fu “Four Gates” form. 永春白鶴拳 四門 As with most Kung fu, the style was probably named after a person/family.

It is known that Funakoshi sensei of the Shotokan changed the name of Seisan to make it more approachable to Japanese students who he feared would be alienated by a Chinese name at the time of increasing Nationalism when he took Karate to Japan.

It is also known that Seisan is not an Okinawan or Japanese pronunciation of “13”, which is the usual translation.

“Half Moon” or “13”? What relationship have these to each other?

For us the guarded stance and the engineering of a yin-yang balanced kata are seen as a work of genius.

Are there 13 directions?

Are there 13 attackers?

Are there 13 major ways to defend ones-self?

Is it about 13 Vital Points?

Is the crescent moon relative to the stance?

Does the crescent refer to the method of stepping?

Are the hand techniques naturally crescent shaped within the form?

There are 13 lunar months in the year. There are 13 Books of TaiChi Chuan.

The general shape of the kata drawn on the floor is of the Japanese number 10 (十).

The method of moving the foot in a wide arc is known in TaiChi as “pick up golden needle”. In Traditional Chinese Medicine the Liver 3 point on the foot is known as “golden needle”.

Try performing either kata in a relaxed fashion with continuous movement and you will see certain similarities to TaiChi, more so than with other forms.

All that is certain is that Hangetsu and Seisan deserve plenty of study to find the glories hidden within by time and translation issues.

Enjoy the search.

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Posing with
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I can pay this work no higher compliment than to place it at the very top of my list of recommended products.

Keep up the great work, John
Russell Stutely 6th Dan Renshi



How you can come in here and teach Goju people Goju kata I'll never know
DB, nidan

I very much enjoyed your session and even though our school views kata similarly to you, I felt I learned a lot in your session.
Stuart Saddler, Karate Instructor

Twice now, you've changed my life and my training. Thanks

DC, Shodan.

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Just received a copy of your new book and wanted to congratulate you on your publication. I know exactly how much work it takes to accomplish such a task and I am proud of you.

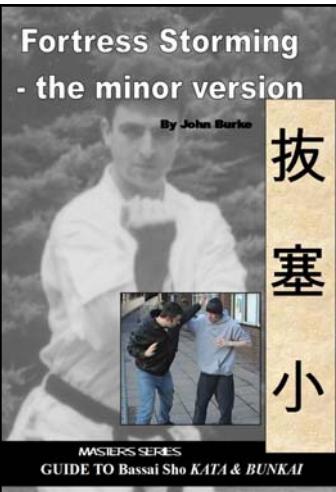
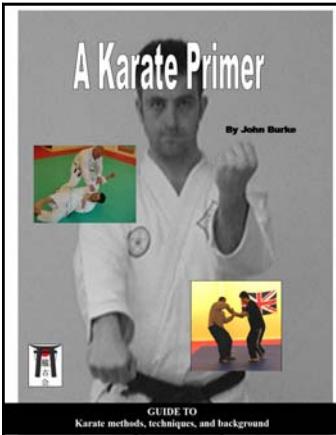
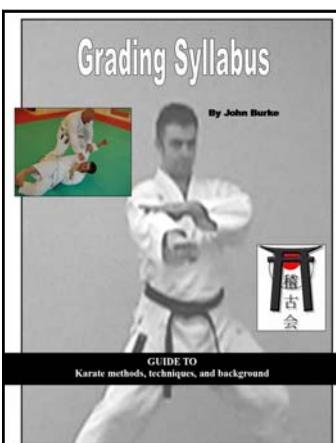
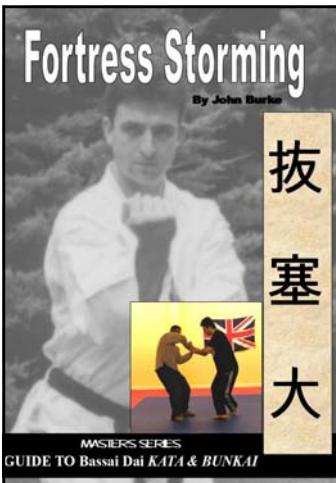
Patrick McCarthy 8th Dan Hanshi,

it somehow teases itself nicely into a new niche within a genre which I thought - mistakenly - was already crowded.

Kevin Peat Karate 1st kyu

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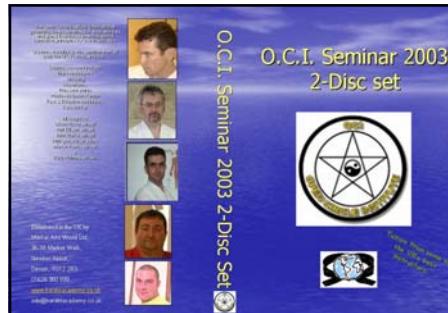
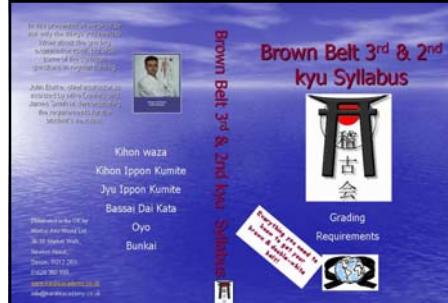
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