

# Sanchin Kata

## Quick Guide

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# Introduction

*“A practitioner who doesn’t know Sanchin, doesn’t know Karate”*

(a common phrase in the world of Karate)

Our first experience with Sanchin might be deceiving, making us believe that it is something relatively simple. It is a fact that a beginner Karateka does not need more than one or two months to mimically execute the moves of Sanchin Kata. However, this is only the surface. The outer, visual part, we observe when a Karateka performs Sanchin Kata, is no more than 10% of the total ongoing experience. 90% of Sanchin is internally executed among senior practitioners. Reaching the level of a totally correct execution of Sanchin Kata is a real challenge. The elements that cannot be shown are the most important ones. It is an attempt to raise the energy from the ground upwards. The ensample of our body is expressed in each thrust, starting with the toes and the position of our feet on the ground. This is a common principle for all Okinawan Karate styles. In Uechi-Ryu, the basis of the techniques, and the following Kata is Sanchin. Sanchin Kata is the foundation on which Karate skills are built, and we always return to Sanchin since the perfection of Sanchin never ends. For the correct execution of Sanchin, and for any other Kata after that, we need correct stance, step, focus, breath, physical condition, strength, explosive movements and penetrating gaze origination at the base of our soul. Every Kata is a battle with the most “realistic” imaginary opponent, our self, the training is limitless.

## Sanchin, or else, the Training of the “Iron Body”

Sanchin is a method for building the “Iron Body”. In Chinese martial arts, the “Iron Body” is a part of Qigong\*, which is a holistic system of self-improvement. Based on the style it can be used even for healing purposes. Qigong is mainly an “internal” way of exercise utilizing techniques of “Qi”, or “Chi” (breathing, relaxation) and body movement. It is always accompanied by some form of “external” exercise that may include conditioning of bones, muscles and several vulnerable parts of the body. The result is the total strengthening and the preparation of the practitioner to receive and manage a hit minimizing, in real time, its negative consequences. The aim is to manipulate our body in such a way that it can “reflect” the energy of the received blow. The trained body responds to this action by returning it back, just like a ball hitting a wall, undergoing elastic deformation and changes direction, regaining its shape. Sanchin Kata, known as “San Chiem” or “Shan Zhan” in China, is a form of meditation in motion which has passed from China in the Karate style of Okinawa, known today as Uechi-Ryu or Pangai-Noon. The Chinese name “Panagai-Noon”, meaning “half-hard, half-soft” and bears witness to the direct relationship of Uechi-Ryu with China, but also with the other “hard-soft” school of Okinawan Karate, known as Goju-Ryu, which is considered a sister style.

*\* Qigong: It is a practice of synchronization of breathing, movement and mental focus aiming the body conditioning, self-healing, and meditation. From a philosophical view, Qigong is believed to help in the development of perspective and foresight, allowing the practitioner to reach higher levels of awareness and awaken his real nature.*

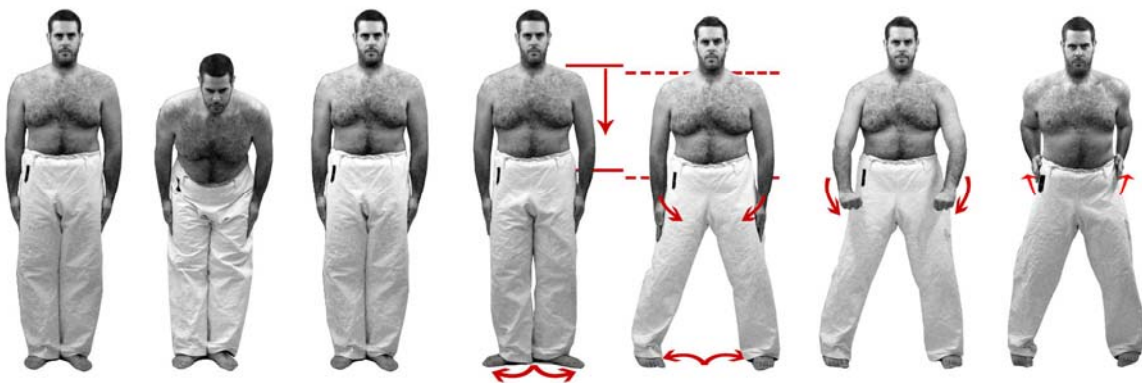


*Symposium of Fuzhou Wushu and Karate of Okinawa, Fuzhou, China (31 Aug - 4 Sept 1988). Sensei Loukopoulos beside Chinese Wushu teacher, studying the Chinese forms which presented the basis for many of the Kata in Karate. Practitioners from Okinawan and the rest of the world continue to visit Fuzhou seeking the roots of traditional Karate.*

## Short description of Sanchin Kata

(Performing with right foot in front – Migi Asi Mae)

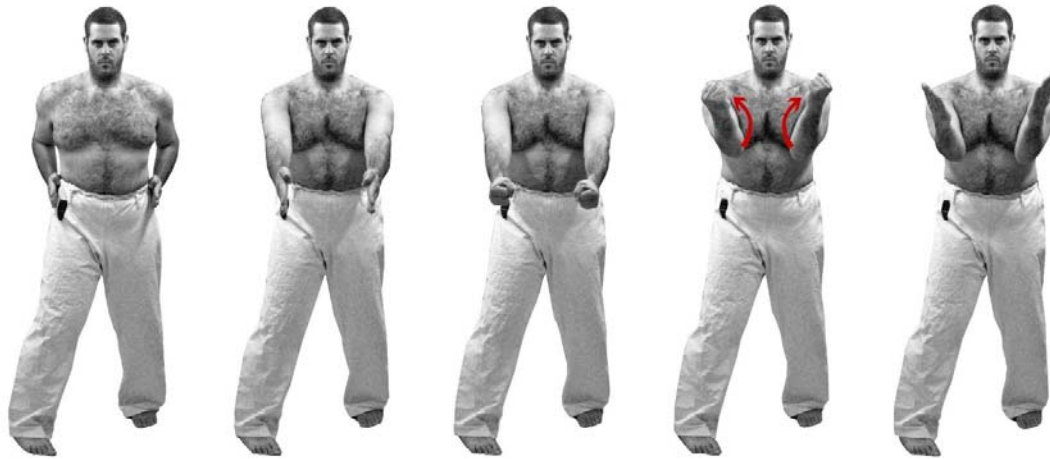
We start with the “Sanchin Opening”. We lower our upper body keeping our spine straight. We fill our lungs with air, starting first from their lower part and incrementally fill with air up to the top. We lower our center of gravity and we try to “root” to the ground. The inhalation is done naturally through the nose. (Picture 1)



*Picture 1. Bow and Sanchin Kata opening.*

1) We bring our palms in vertical position next to our waist (we push our bent ankles inwards, forcing our chest to open widely to host even more air in our lungs). At the same time, we do our first Sanchin step forward with our right foot.

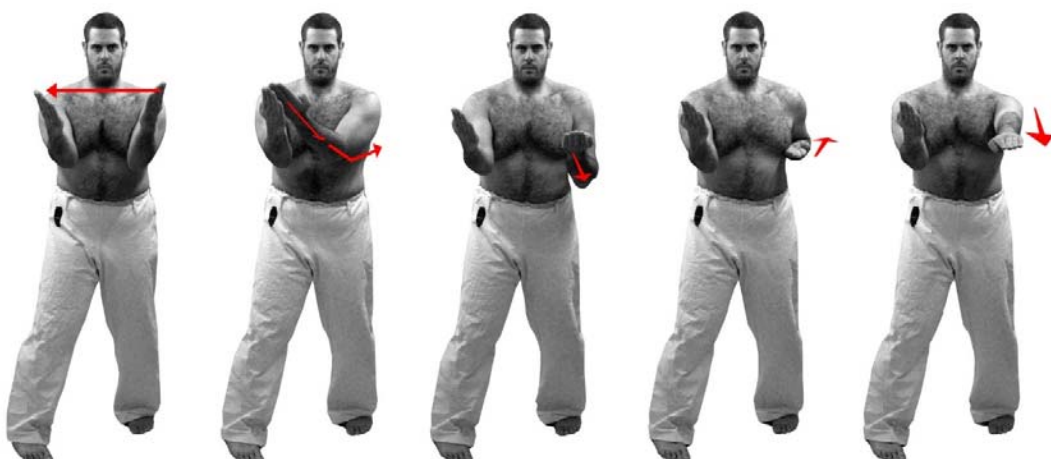
2) Without changing the angle of our palms we thrust straight in front with our fingertips (Nukite), at the height of our waist. We grab, exhale, elevate our fists in semicircular trajectories, and take our Sanchin stance (Sanchin Dachi), opening our fists, bringing our hands in Nukite position. Our palms face the sky. We exhale a small amount of air (Picture 2).



*Picture 2. The first step, double Nukite thrust at the height of the waist and the setting of our hands at Sanchin Dachi.*

3) We bring our left (rear-side) hand with the palm facing the sky over our right palm and pull it back next to our body, at the height of our torso. We try to keep our shoulders down and relaxed. The moves are straight. We always pull and strike following simple, straight lines, without exaggerating or adding “ornamental” curves in our moves. The straighter the move is, the shorter the distance the hand travels. While executing the above mentioned move, we inhale (always from the nose).

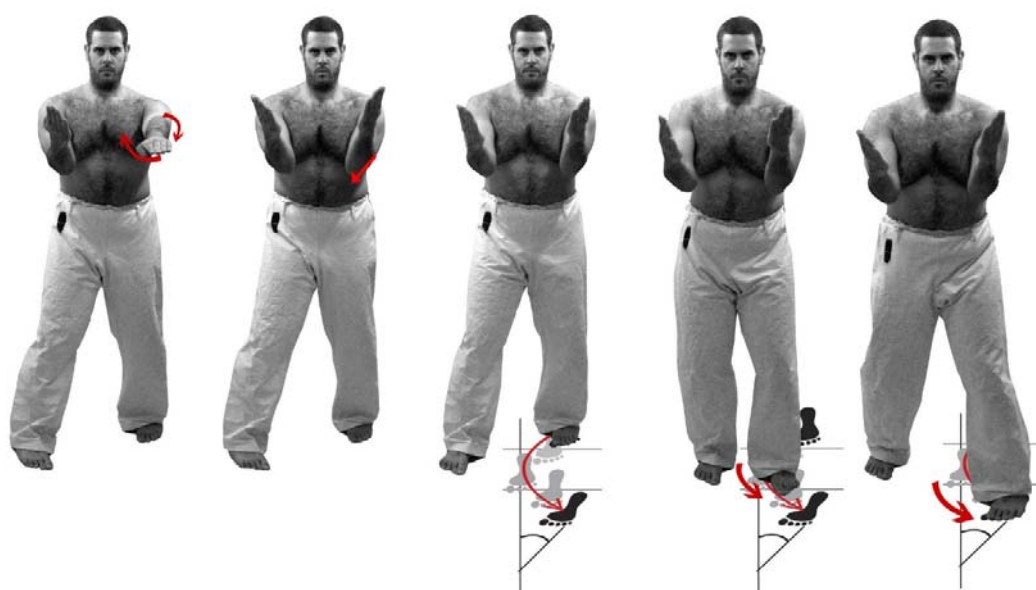
4) We strike with the left hand straight in front. We have set our open hand (Nukite) with the palm facing the sky at the beginning of the move, and, incrementally, the hand turns until it completes the strike (Nukite) with the palm facing the ground. – First strike, exhalation (Picture 3).



*Picture 3. The first Nukite strike.*

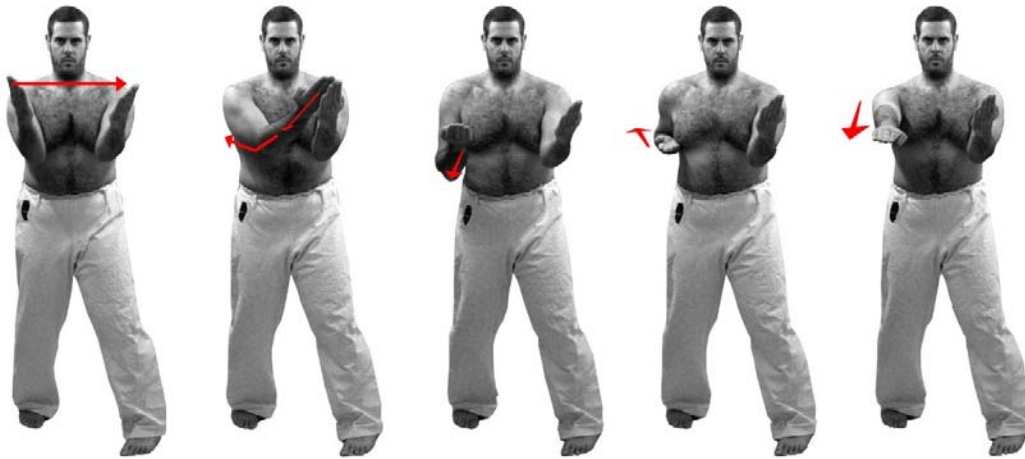
5) We turn our forearm and hand semi-circularly, returning to the initial Sanchin position, with the elbow facing the ground. While our hand and forearm return to their initial position, it is important to keep our elbow unmoving, one punch (around 10 ~ 12cm) away from our body, leaning inwards protecting our torso and ribs. The returning of the forearm and the bending of the elbows come naturally by relaxing our muscles.

6) We bring our forearm and hand in their initial position and make the second Sanchin step forward (Picture 4).



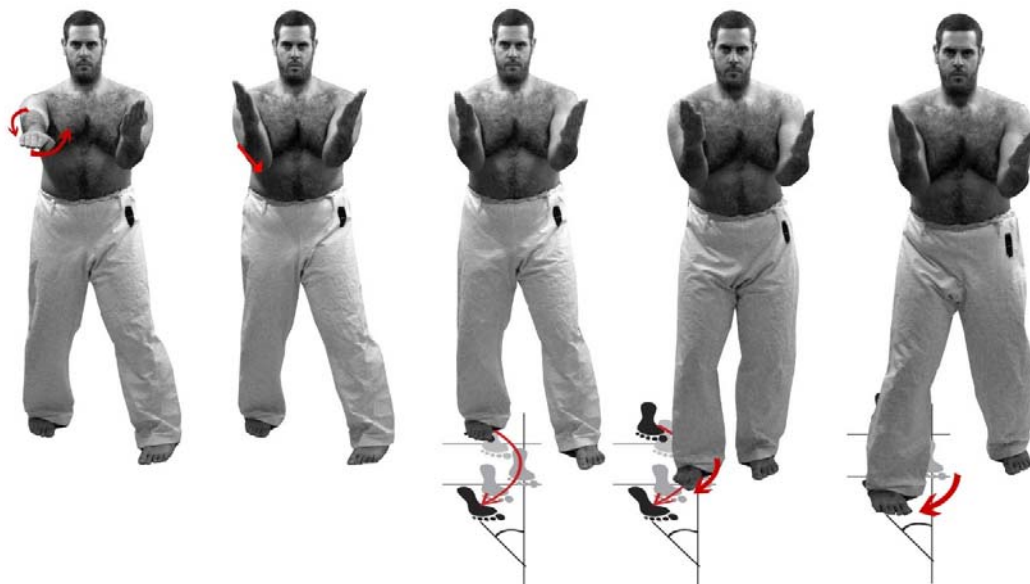
*Picture 4. The return of the hand in its initial Sanchin position and the step forward.*

7) We pull our right hand back, inhalation. Strike with the right hand (see steps 4 and 5) – Second strike, exhalation (Picture 5).



*Picture 5. The second Nukite strike.*

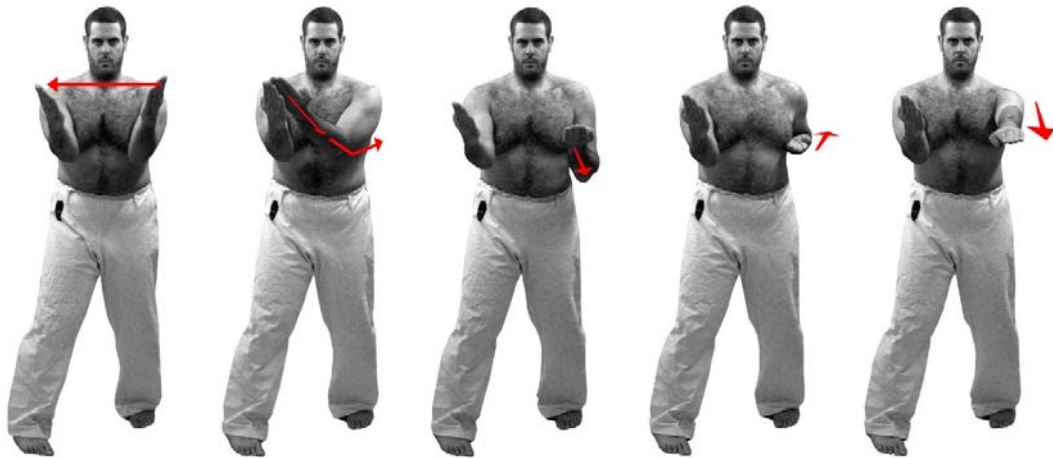
8) We bring our forearm and hand in their initial position and make the third step forward (Picture 6).



*Picture 6. The return of the hand in its initial Sanchin position and the step forward.*

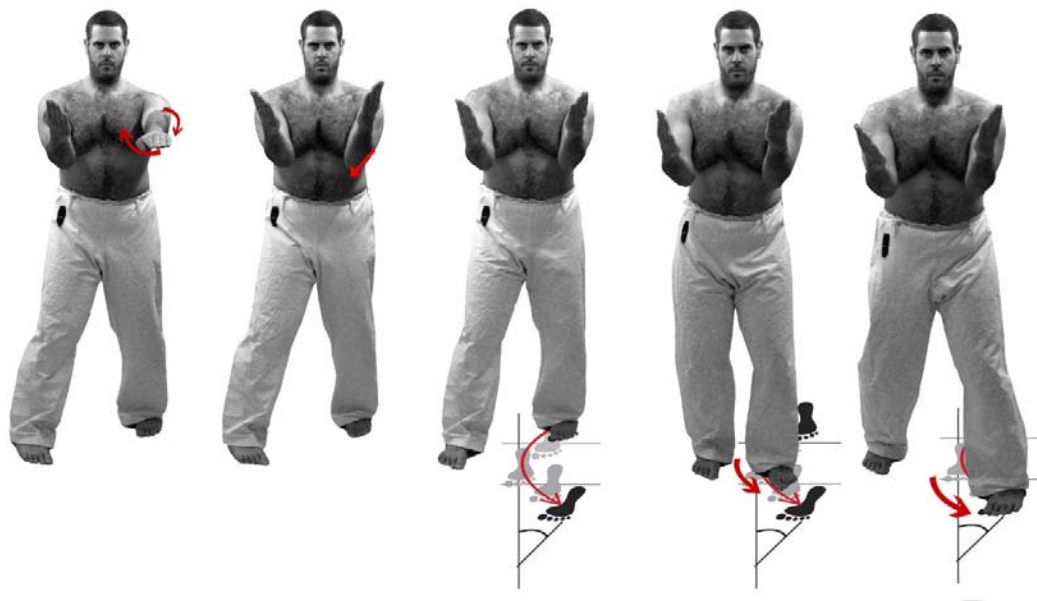


9) We pull our left hand back, inhalation. Strike with the left hand – Third strike, exhalation (Picture 7).



*Picture 7. The third Nukite strike.*

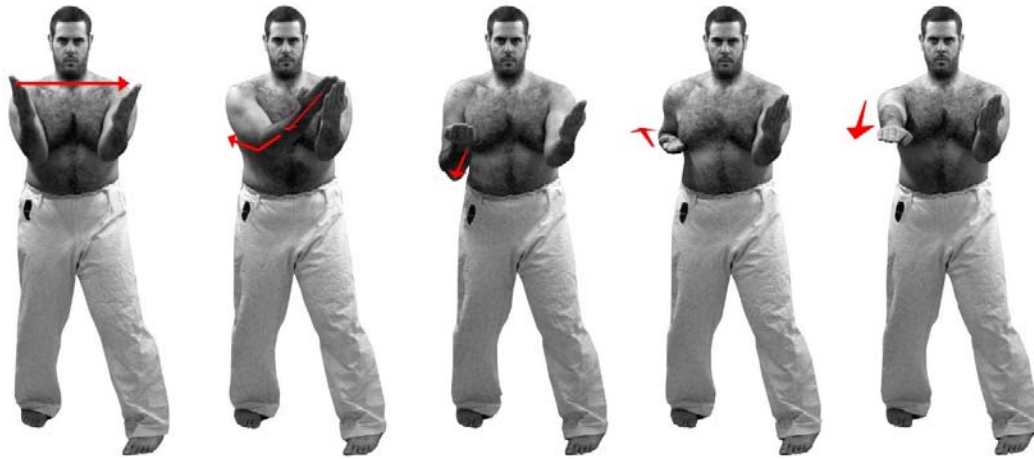
10) We bring our forearm and hand in their initial position and make the fourth step forward (Picture 8).



*Picture 8. The return of the hand in its initial Sanchin position and the step forward.*



11) We pull our right hand back, inhalation. Strike with the right hand – Fourth strike, exhalation (Picture 9).



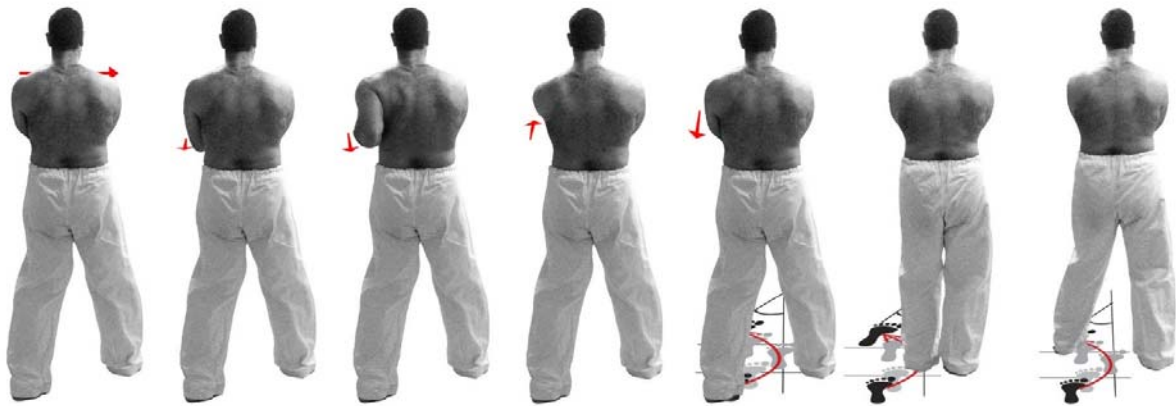
*Picture 9. The forth, and last, Nukite strike (in this direction).*

12) Mawate (turn-about), inhalation – If the Mawate is executed correctly, we should complete our turn in a right-side (Migi) Sanchin stance (Sanchin Dachi). We exhale after we have completed the move (Picture 10).



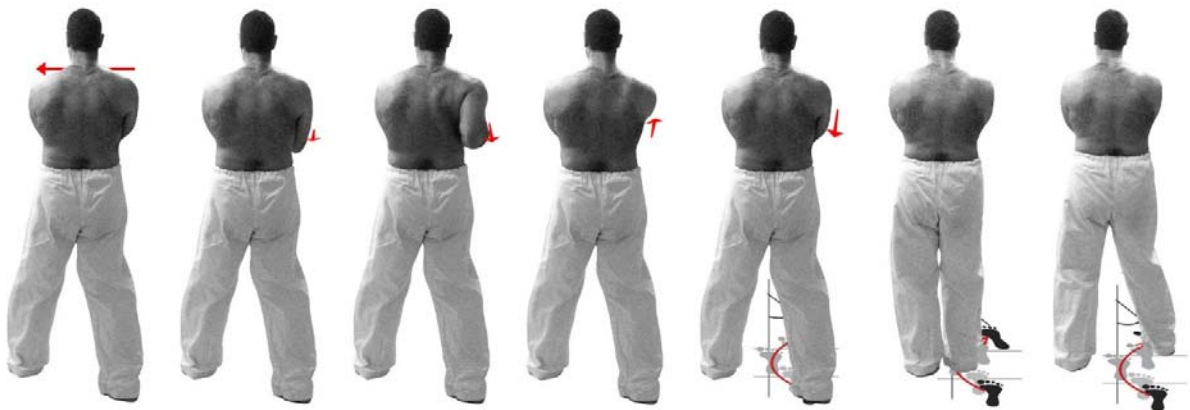
*Picture 10. The turn-about Mawate.*

13) We pull our left hand back, inhalation. Strike with the left hand – First strike in the new direction, exhalation. Sanchin step forward in the new direction (Picture 11).



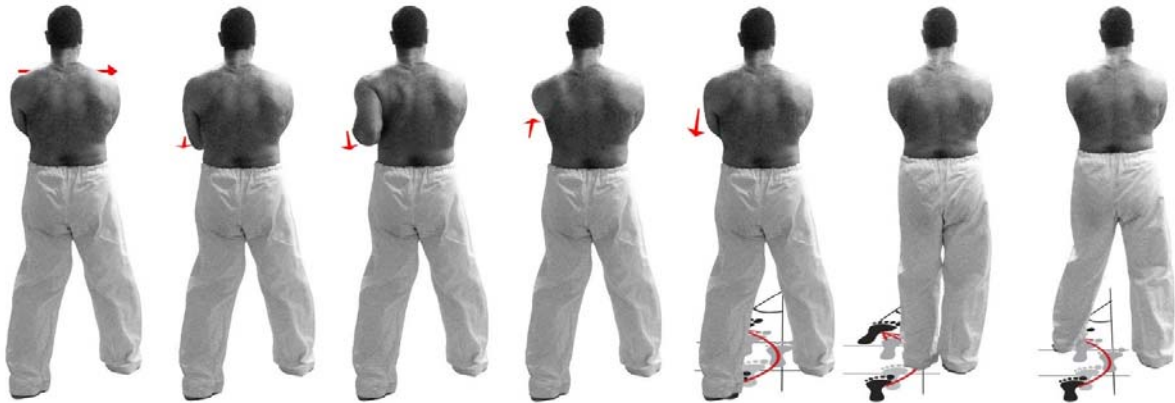
*Picture 11. The first strike and the step towards the new direction.*

14) We pull our right hand back, inhalation. Strike with the right hand – Second strike, exhalation. Sanchin step forward (Picture 12).



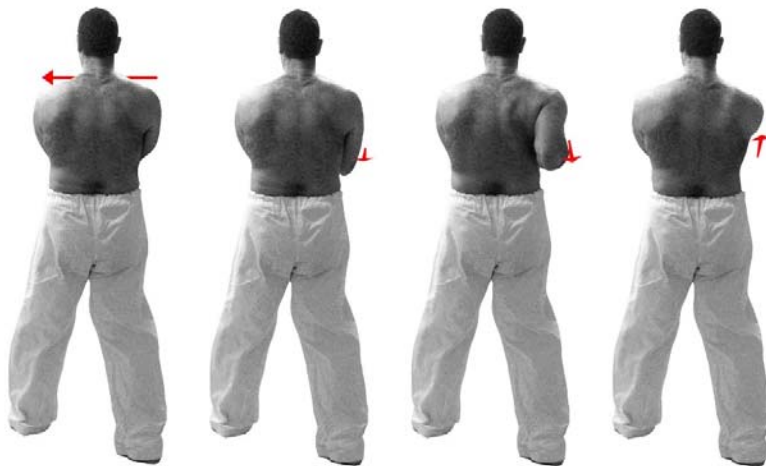
*Picture 12. The second strike and the step.*

- 15) We pull our left hand back, inhalation. Strike with the left hand – Third strike, exhalation. Sanchin step forward (Picture 13).



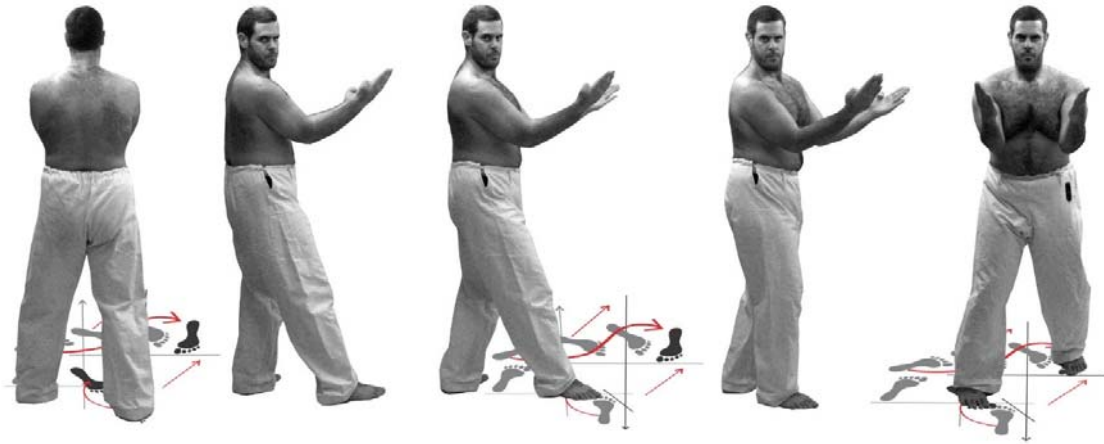
*Picture 13. The third strike and the step.*

- 16) We pull our right hand back, inhalation. Strike with the right hand – Fourth strike, exhalation (Picture 14).



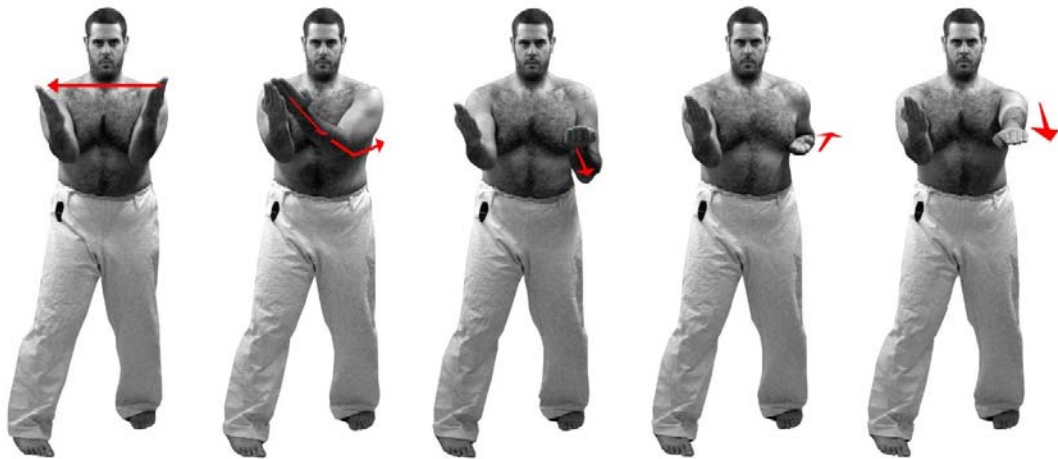
*Picture 14. The fourth and last strike.*

17) Mawate (about-turn), inhalation – If the Mawate is executed correctly, we should complete our turn in a right-side (Migi) Sanchin stance. We exhale after we have completed the move (Picture 15).



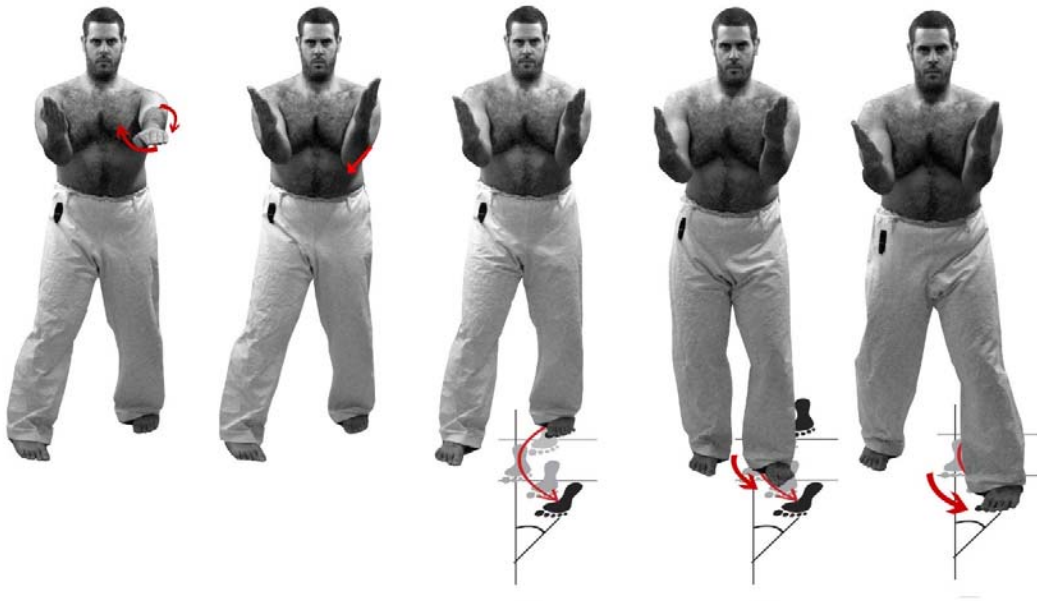
*Picture 15. The second turn-about Mawate.*

18) We pull our left hand back, inhalation. Strike with the left hand – First strike towards the new direction, exhalation (Picture 16).



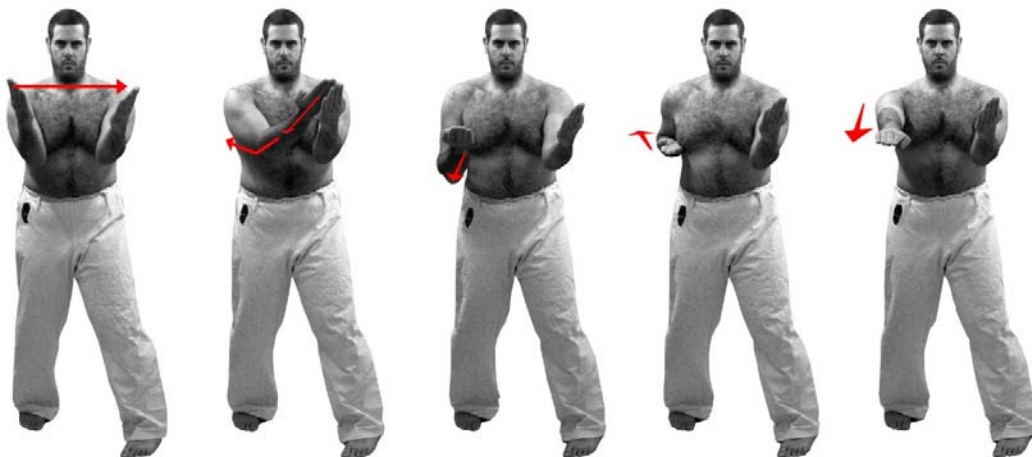
*Picture 16. The first Nukite strike towards the new direction.*

19) Hand returns to its initial position and we do a Sanchin step forward (Picture 17).



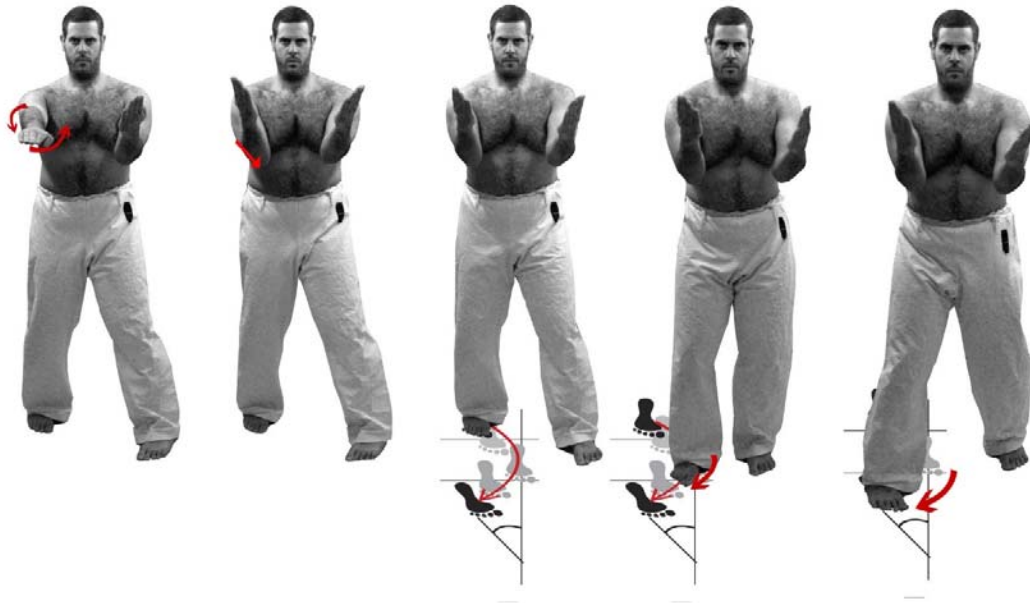
*Picture 17. The return of the hand in its initial Sanchin position and the step forward.*

20) We pull our right hand back, inhalation. Strike with the right hand – Second strike, exhalation (Picture 18).



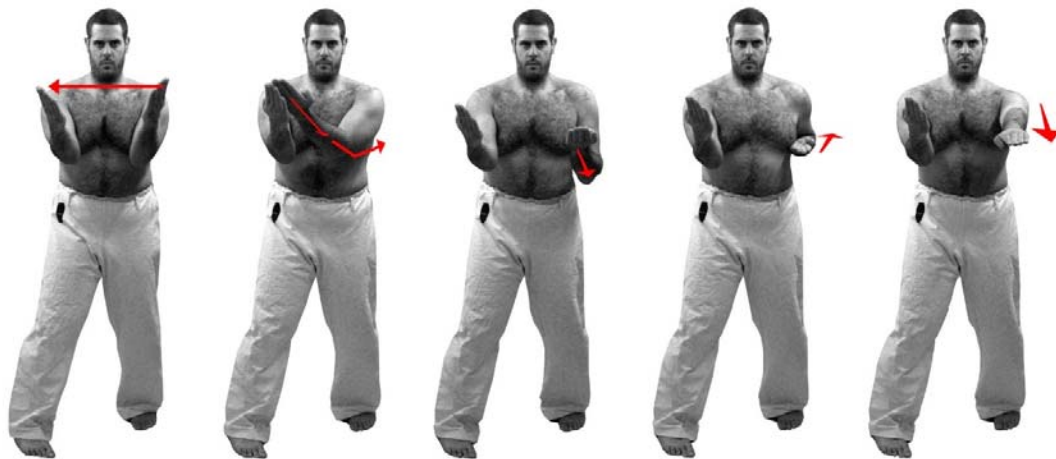
*Picture 18. The second Nukite strike.*

21) Hand returns to its initial position and we do a Sanchin step forward (Picture 19).



*Picture 19. The return of the hand in its initial Sanchin position and the step forward.*

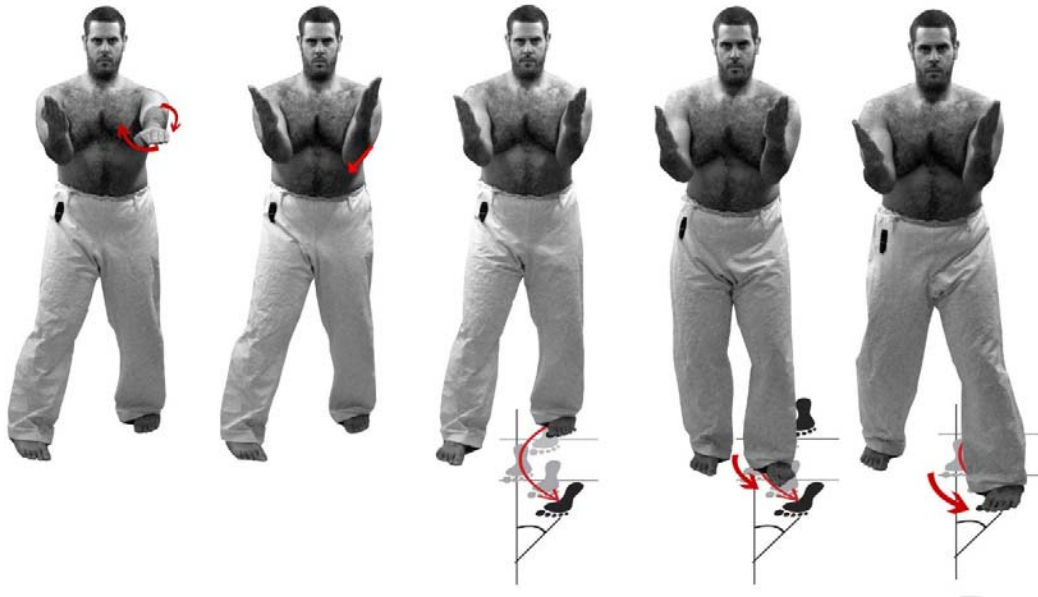
22) We pull our left hand back, inhalation. Strike with the left hand – Third strike, exhalation (Picture 20).



*Picture 20. The third Nukite strike.*

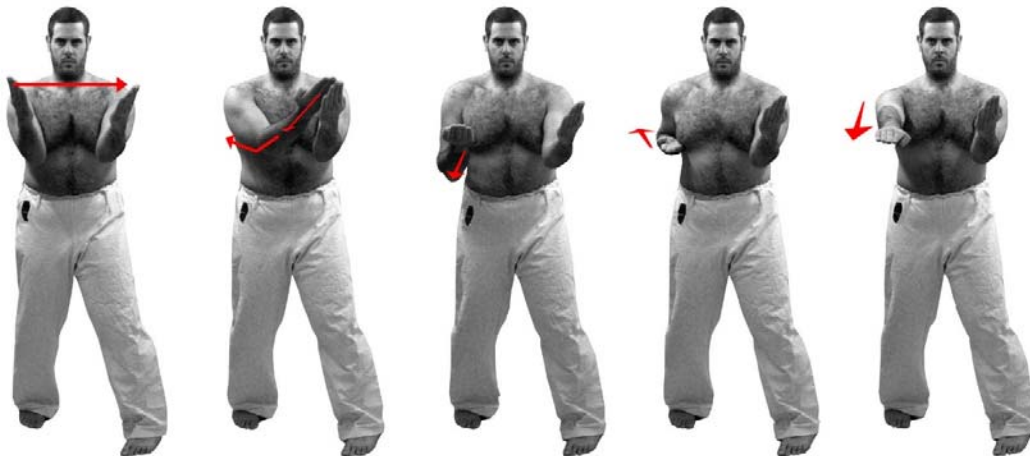


23) Hand returns to its initial position and we do a Sanchin step forward (Picture 21).



*Picture 21. The return of the hand in its initial Sanchin position and the step forward.*

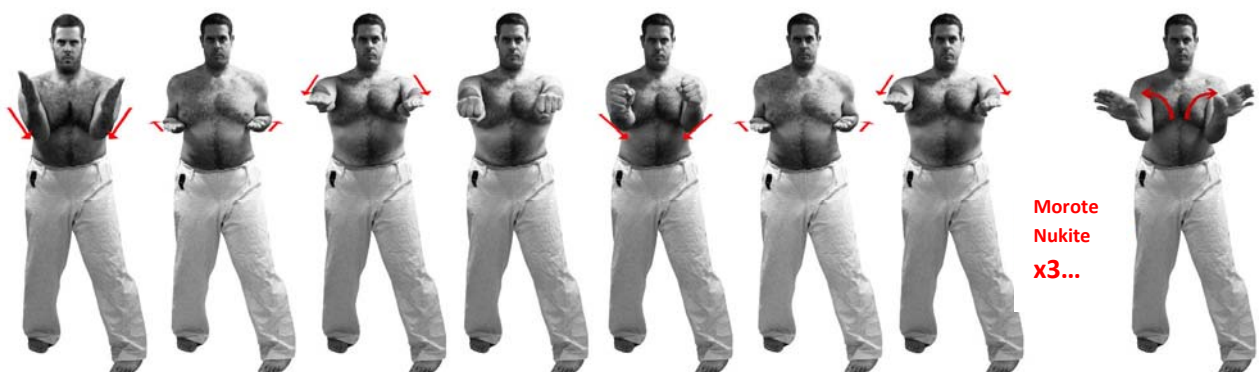
24) We pull our right hand back, inhalation. Strike with the right hand – Fourth strike, exhalation (Picture 22).



*Picture 22. The fourth and last Nukite strike.*

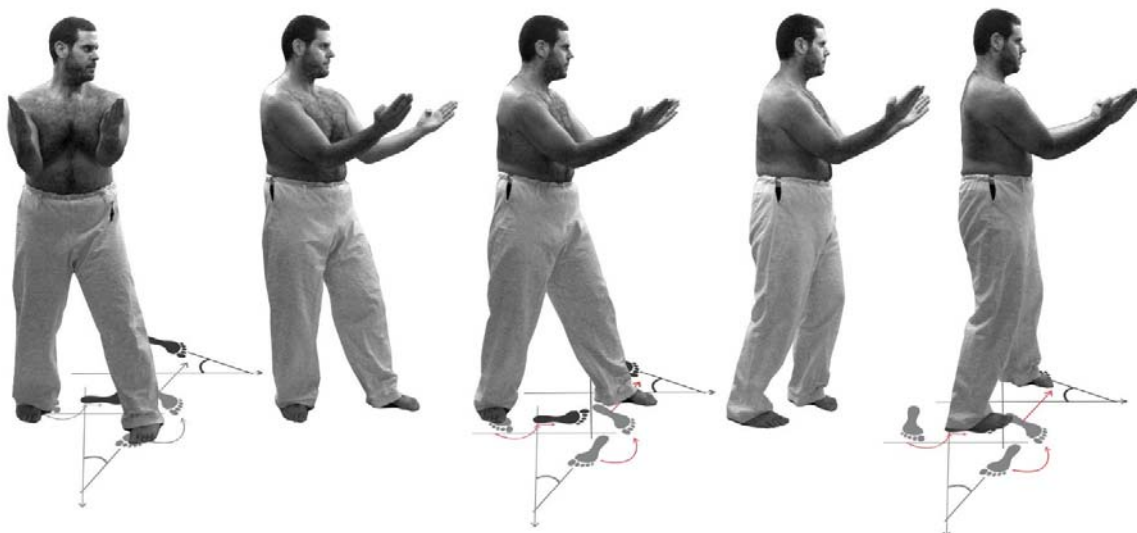


**Morote Nukite.** Three double Nukite strikes (with both hands). The first two strikes are followed by a grab and pulling back. To pull back we follow a direction opposite to the strike direction and we end up with both our palms open, at the height of our torso, facing the sky, preparing for the next strike. During the return of the hands our elbows are moving inwards as if they were returning to the initial Sanchin position. However, the motion does not stop. When the elbow crosses below the chest height it follows a straight trajectory backwards until the hands are completely pulled back and ready to strike forward again. While pulling our arms back we inhale. After each grab we exhale. After the third Morote Nukite we open our hands in Kamae position with the palms facing in front (fight position) and exhale (Picture 23).



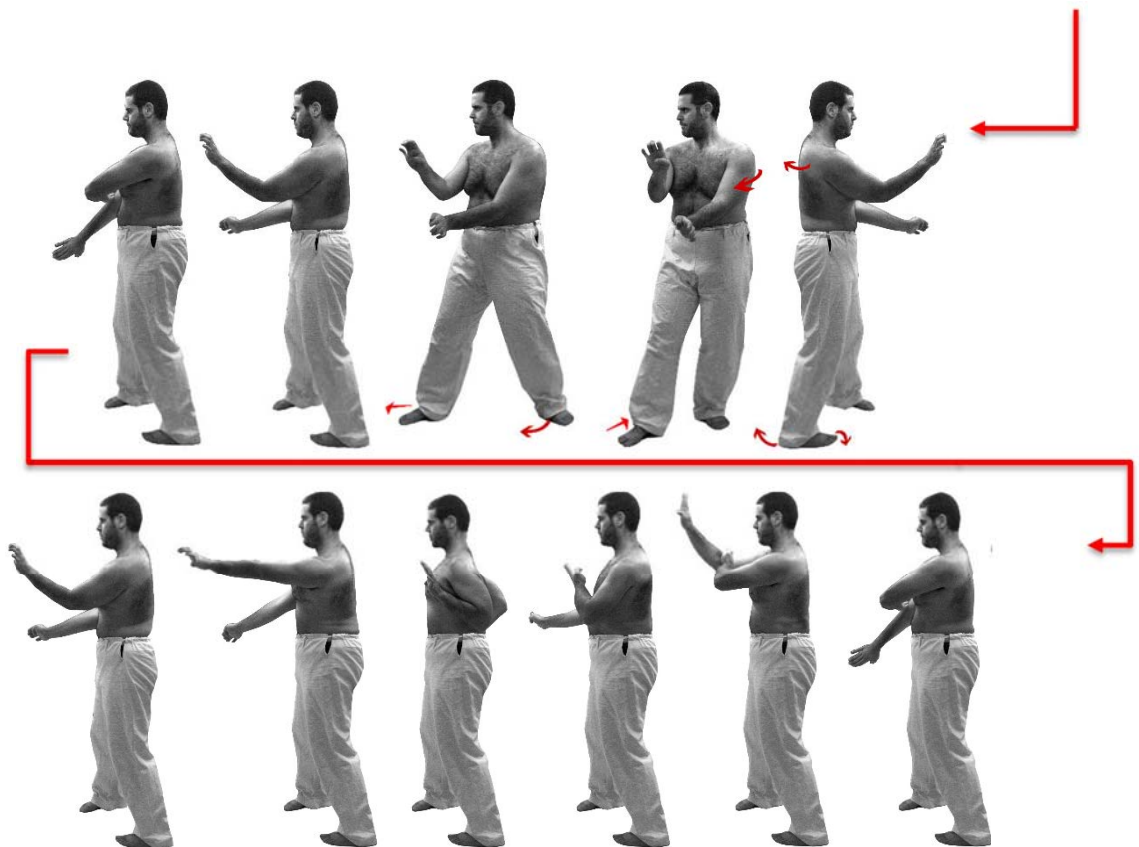
*Picture 23. The Morote (double) Nukite and the opening in Kamae position after the third Morote Nukite.*

25) We turn our eyes and head to the left, 90° turn to the left, inhalation, slide forward towards the new direction, and complete the move by “locking” our position in Sanchin stance, exhalation (Picture 24).



*Picture 24. The 90° turn and the sliding (to the left).*

26) Morote Boshiken (double Boshiken) starting with left hand (front-foot side). Inhalation while executing the Uke (receiving technique) part, exhalation after the double Boshiken strike – decompression. After the decompression we do not pull our arms back violently; we let our arms return naturally as the muscles relax and the elbows move inwards (Picture 25).



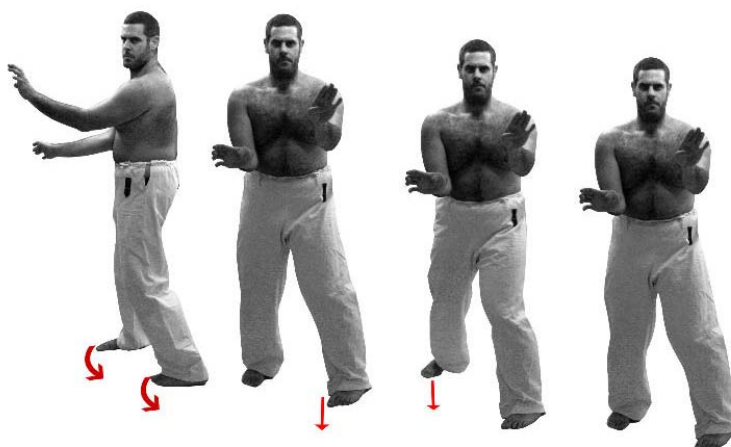
*Picture 25. The 180° turn, the sliding and the second Morote Boshiken.*

27) We turn our eyes and head point over the right shoulder checking the new direction, 180° turn – not a Mawate turn (see chapter “Turns”), slide towards the new direction and finalize by “locking” our Sanchin stance – hands are in Kamae position, Morote Boshiken with the right hand (front-foot side). Inhalation while executing the Uke (receiving technique) part, exhalation after the double Boshiken strike – Decompression. Hands in Kamae position (Picture 26, next page).



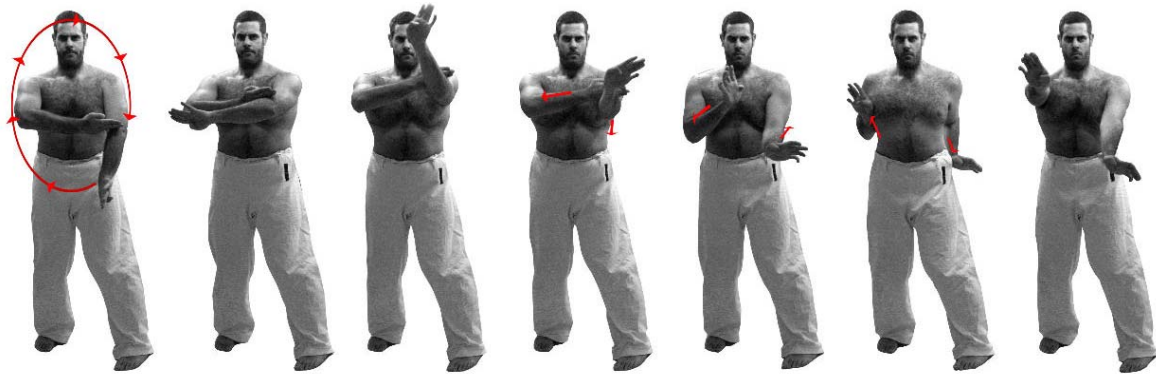
*Picture 26. The first Morote (double) Boshiken.*

28) Eyes and head point to the left, in place 90° turn to the left (we return towards the direction we started the Kata), slide and finalize by “locking” our final position in Sanchin stance (Picture 27).



*Picture 27. The last 90° turn, returning to the initial direction of the Kata.*

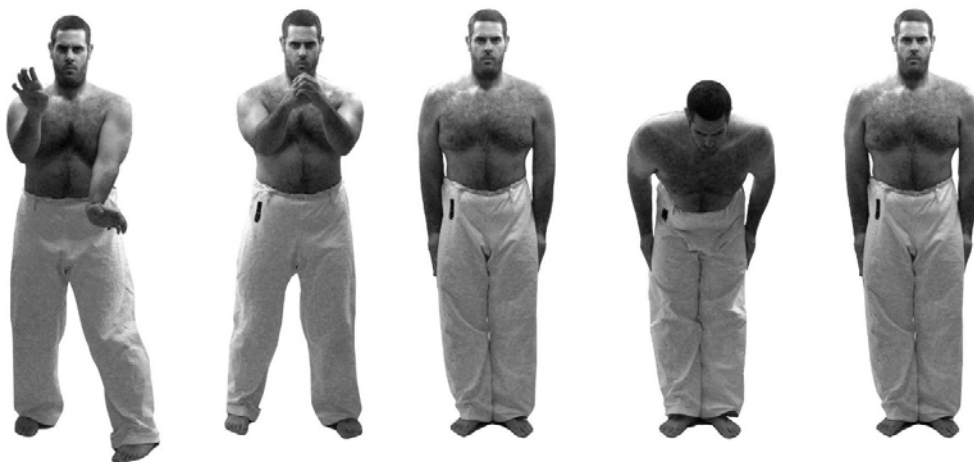
29) Morote Boshiken with the left hand (front-foot side). Inhalation while executing the Uke (receiving technique) part, exhalation after the double Boshiken strike – Decompression (Picture 28).



*Picture 28. The last Morote Boshiken.*

30) We move our front (left) foot backwards, on the same line with the right (rear) foot, keeping our chest wide open and our knees slightly bent. We are still in combative position.

31) We close our right fist and “embrace” it with our left hand placing our thumb around the right fist. The rest of the left-hand fingers cover firmly the right-hand fist – Closed Gate Position (Picture 29).



*Picture 29. The Closed Gate Position and the formal bow (Rei) – end of the Kata.*

32) We exhale 75-80% of the air we inhaled during step 1.

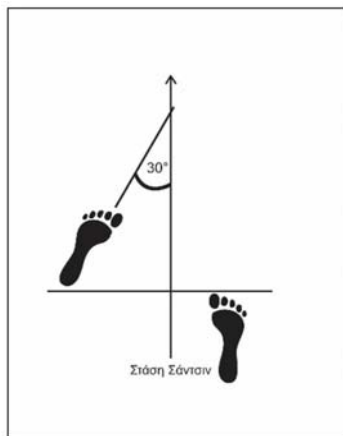
33) We bring our hands next to our body and move our left heel until it touches our right heel, with the feet creating an angle about 45 ° (Musubi Dachi). The distance between our feet should be around two fists (big toe-to-big toe). We straighten our knees.

34) Bow – “Rei” (Picture 29, previous page).

*Note 1: The exhalation has the meaning of decompression and we always exhale a small amount of air from the mouth. For the control of the exhalation we keep a small opening in our mouth putting some small pressure to our lips. The opening should equal the diameter of our small finger.*

*Over the next pages the techniques are presented in detail, one-by-one...*

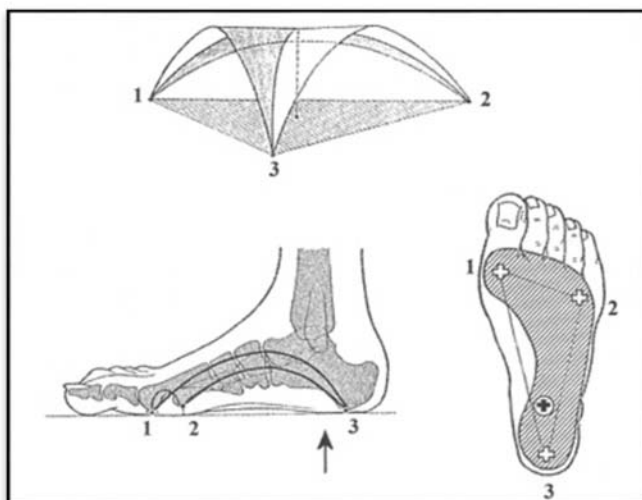
## Feet in Sanchin Stance (Sanchin Dachi)



Picture 30. The position of the feet in Sanchin Stance (Sanchin Dachi).

Sanchin Kata is the base of Uechi-Ryu Karate. All the techniques of our system are based on it. Uechi-Ryu is a “grounded” Karate style. The correct position of the feet during the execution of a Kata, and their correct contact with the ground from which we draw energy, is the first basic element. Every hand strike is a strike in which the whole body participates. The buildup of energy and power starts from our feet. It is the same way we handle a strike during the body conditioning. Having a good connection to the ground, we are able to channel part of the impact of the strike and we are able to remain still in our position.

### A few words about the anatomy of our foot...



Picture 31. The contact points of our sole with the ground and the “pyramid” that is created between the sole and the joint of our ankle.

The foot is the part of our body that is in touch with the ground. Basically we stand on a triangle. The triangle’s first edge is at the base of our big toe, the other at the base of our small toe and the third under our heel. If we connect these three edges with the upper side of our ankle joint we have a pyramid, and all this presents a very stable structure which is able to support our whole body.

*Note 1: An axis is created on each sole, starting from the heel and ending, through the arch of our foot to the base of our big toe. Putting pressure on the opposite directions on these two axes by pushing them contrariwise, we succeed this “rooting” to the ground. Following the opposite procedure we can succeed the right-side Sanchin stance (Migi Sanchin Dachi).*

*Note 2: We need to keep our weight balanced between our two feet, without putting more pressure on our front or rear foot.*

*Assuming that we want to take a left Sanchin stance (Hidari Sanchin Dachi)... A practical way to find the correct position of our feet, without making a bigger opening than we should is:*

- A) We stand upright with both feet stuck together to the forward direction.*
- B) Without losing the touch of our heels we create a 90° angle turning our right foot clockwise.*
- C) From this position, with our feet creating an “L”, we step on the big toe of our right foot and based on this, we pivot our heel outwards, until it is in forward direction (parallel to our left foot). Our rear foot’s big toe now is on the extension of the line behind our left foot’s heel.*
- D) We put pressure to the base of the front foot’s big toe (left foot) and in the inside part of our heel creating an axis. We rotate this axis around 30° clockwise (keep in mind that 0° is the direction of our movement). Following this step we manage to precede the outer part of our foot towards the direction of our move. In the same way, but opposite direction (counter-clockwise) we put the tension over the axis on our rear (right) foot.*
- E) We slightly bend our knees inwards, so that there is limited space between our thighs to avoid a kick to our groin. At the same time we take the appropriate angle to create a counterforce between our feet.*
- F) Our waist faces forward towards the direction of the movement and has a slight inclination to the front, relatively to the vertical axis of our body. All the muscles in our legs cooperate to build a strong and stable Sanchin stance (See Picture 32, next page).*





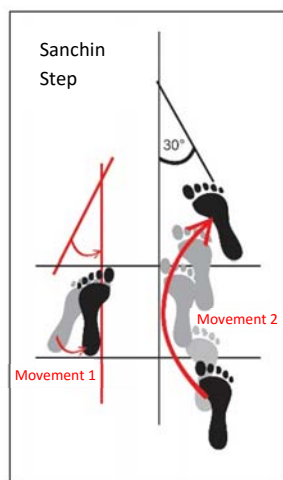
*Picture 32. Depiction of the procedure to find our feet positions in the Sanchin stance.*

## Sanchin Steps, the Sliding of the Feet and the Turns

The stance and the way of moving in Sanchin Kata is the base of moving in all the other Kata in Uechi-Ryu. As we evolve in Uechi-Ryu, we become familiar with more stances and sophisticated techniques. These new techniques aim to prepare the practitioner, technically, for the next Kata. However, we cannot comprehend them completely if we do not have solid Sanchin Kata foundations.

The correct way of stepping contributes in keeping the right height, the correct stance and place in the surrounding space, where we perform the Kata, every single second. The turns in Sanchin are an extension of the basic stepping. They are also related with our movement in the surrounding space and their correct execution is vital for our correct placement against our imaginary opponent, who can attack from various angles (90° and 180° in the case of Sanchin Kata). The turn of the head and the eyes precedes the change of direction, so that we have a clear viewpoint of the surroundings and of the attacker. The body follows the glimpse (surroundings checking) in a continuous movement (we try to keep the flow, making sure that we have a very clear overview of the techniques included in each combination).

In a previous chapter we analyzed the Sanchin stance (Sanchin Dachi). Assume that we are in a left Sanchin stance (hidari), with our feet grounded, and we want to make a step forward to end-up in Migi (the new front foot is our right foot). To execute the step:



*Picture 33. The movements of the feet during the Sanchin step.*

- 1) We relax the muscles in our knees and our waist. Keep in mind that Uechi-Ryu is a half-hard/half-soft style.
- 2) Pressing to the base of our left (front foot) big toe, we slightly turn our heel counter-clockwise, bringing our foot in a forward direction. We are preparing to move our rear (right) foot forward, while creating the appropriate space for the right foot to approach and overrun the left (front) foot.
- 3) The rear foot follows a semi-circular trajectory. The top of the semicircle is the point at which the two feet approach each-other and become parallel. The rear foot (right) passes the front one (left) completing the semicircular move. At the same time, the moving (right) foot turns almost 30° counter-clockwise and takes its new position as the new front foot.
- 4) Having executed the step, we complete our move by putting opposite pressure again on the axes of our feet, through our knees, so that the feet “screw” on to the ground and succeed a stable and solid Sanchin stance.

The pressure reaches our waist, which we keep almost vertical to the ground, with the lower part of our hips pushing inwards (Gamaku) to straighten our lowest spine disks.

**Moreover...**

- A) During the stepping process, we try to keep our waist and our upper body solid, facing forward towards the direction of the move.
- B) We always keep in mind that the center of our energy and power is the region placed 2-3 cm under our belly button. With this as a center we move towards each direction. We try to keep the air in the lower part of our lungs in order to create a safety space in the region around our belly (like a safety airbag for our vital organs).
- C) We keep our eyes and head at the same level/height, without moving up and down between the steps, or directional changes.
- D) We try to keep our weight equally shared among our legs, without putting more pressure to the front or rear foot.
- E) During each move we relax our muscles in order to have a better flow.
- F) We complete each move by “locking” our position in Sanchin Dachi with “Gamaku”. At the same time our upper body remains relaxed and the tension is put only during the initiation of a hand strike to make it quick and explosive.

## Sanchin Opening

The opening is basically the initiation of Sanchin Kata (Picture 34). Sanchin Kata is the cornerstone of Uechi-Ryu and requires several years of training to completely develop our perception about every aspect, and to comprehend it in depth. The secret lies in the fact that we never stop improving and developing our knowledge and our skills in the art of Karate.

The opening is vital to Sanchin and to all other kata. Our goal during the opening is to root ourselves on to the ground and, simultaneously, to fill our lungs with air our lungs, starting from the bottom up. Additionally, we focus our strength and our energy in the lower abdomen area, just below our navel. Filling the bottom of our lungs with air has two advantages:

- 1) We exercise to use a larger percentage of the lung. Our body on a daily basis tends to become "lazy", so we use mainly the upper part of each lung. Being able to utilize most of the lungs, we oxygenate our body better and we become less tired.
- 2) With the air that we accumulate at the bottom of our lungs, we manage to create a natural "air bag". Therefore, we create more space for the vital organs in the abdomen area, making it easier to cope with the blows that we receive during the training of Sanchin (Sanchin Shikatsu).

*Note: Sanchin is a Kata of breathing and body conditioning. The angles of the hands and the feet, as well as the body posture, are set in such a way that:*

- 1) *Train muscular groups, which cannot be trained with the physical body posture.*
- 2) *Help us in building a robust and strong stance and be in a position to receive strong blows to harden our whole body without collapsing and without running the risk of injuring our joints or other sensitive parts of the body.*

## To do the opening

1) From standing position and after the bowing (Rei), we start separating our feet, either simultaneously sliding the toes sideways, followed by the heels, until the distance between our feet is about the width of our shoulders (or slightly more) – or - we start separating our feet keeping our right foot stable and sliding our left foot to the left until the distance between the feet is, again, about the width of our shoulders.

*Note 1: It is suggested that novice students perform the opening with the first way since it is easier to keep the correct distance. In this way, we manage to eliminate the possibility of ending-up in a stance wider or narrower than required. Generally, both ways are acceptable.*

*Note 2: The distances may vary slightly among the practitioners, since a bigger practitioner, with a higher center of gravity, may need a slightly wider stance to achieve better stability.*

2) We slightly bend our knees and put pressure on our feet.

3) We keep our upper body straight, without humping and move our jaw slightly downwards to protect the sensitive area on the front of the neck.

4) We move our hands downwards with the palms touching our thighs, as if trying to slide in our pockets (without bending the elbows or lifting our arms). Simultaneously the whole trunk goes down as we slightly push our knees inwards with the pelvis preceding slightly forward. That way we create a “scoop” with our body, ready to receive as much air as possible in the lower compartments of our lungs. It is like as if we are trying to breathe with our whole body, while at the same time, we create as much space as possible for the vital organs that reside at the lower part of the thorax and are protected by it.

5) Hands pass in front of the thighs as we tighten our fists downwards. Simultaneously we slightly lift our chest, while we open it as much as we can to accommodate enough air at the upper part of the lungs. This movement culminates with a short exhalation as a decompression of the energy and tension (Kime) with both our fists closed tightly at the level of our pelvis. **We inhale through the nose – we exhale through the mouth.**

*Note 3: The breathing – air inflow begins with the downward movement (step “2”) and continues until the step “5”, when we complete the energy decompression.*

6) Having filled our body with air, we open our fists and we bring them in an open position (Nukite) to touch our waist at the belt level. The palms are in vertical position to the ground next to our body. We push our elbows inwards to open our thorax even wider. Our fingers are facing forward with our thumb being pulled back in order to stretch the hand and create a stiffer Nukite. Our trunk is straight and aligned with our neck and our jaw is slightly lowered with our eyes focused straight in front with a penetrating gaze.

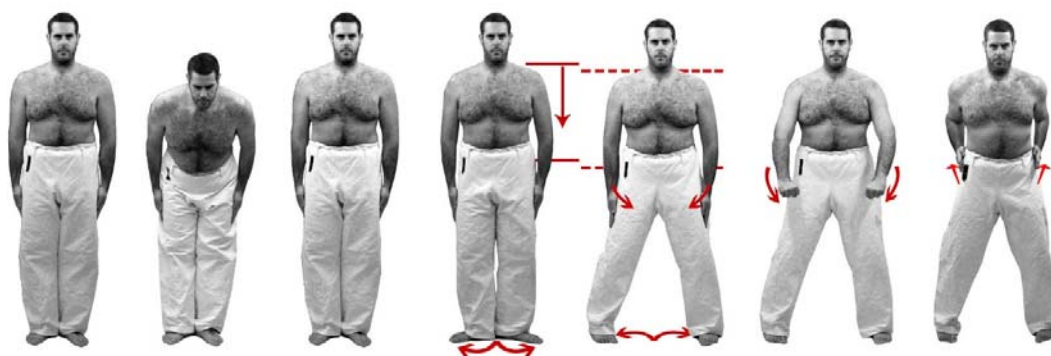
7) We do one step forward (Sanchin can start either with left/Hidari, or with the right/Migi foot) and we lock our Sanchin stance.

8) We strike with both our hands (Nukite) straight in front. Our palms are vertical to the ground and the striking surface is the tips of our fingers (mostly the index and the middle fingertips).

9) We close our fingers as if we were grabbing creating two tight fists, we pull our fists back (as if we were trying to bring the opponent closer) and when our elbows come as close as one fist (or 10 ~ 12cm) away from our trunk we pull the fists up, with the forearms in a semicircular motion. The fists cross and the forearms end up in vertical position, in a "V" shape with the elbows facing the ground. At the same time we try to keep our chest wide open while we lift our trunk slightly higher.

*Note 4: Theoretically, the blows described in the steps "8" and "9" target the opponent's groin. This is the center of power and energy. Hitting this target we manage to break our opponent's balance. Afterwards we grab and lift the opponent in order to destabilize him/her completely.*

10) We open the fingers keeping them aligned with the palm and the arm. In other words, we try to avoid bending the wrists. Our elbows are slightly inward (to protect our ribs) and one punch away from our trunk. The inner angle between the forearm and the arm is about 120°.



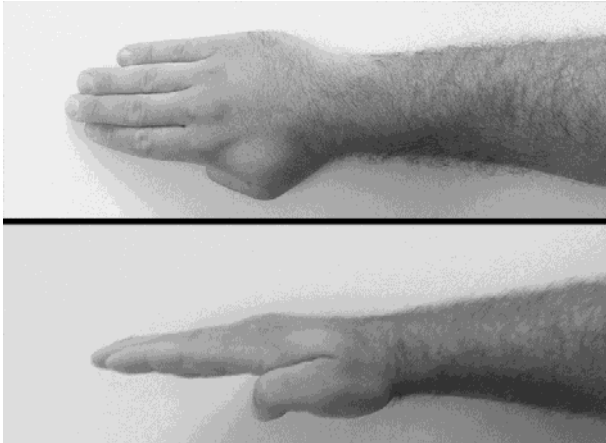
*Picture 34. The Sanchin opening.*

*We are ready to start our Sanchin Kata...*

## Hand Strikes

In Sanchin Kata we have two types of strikes, the **Nukite** and the **Boshiken**.

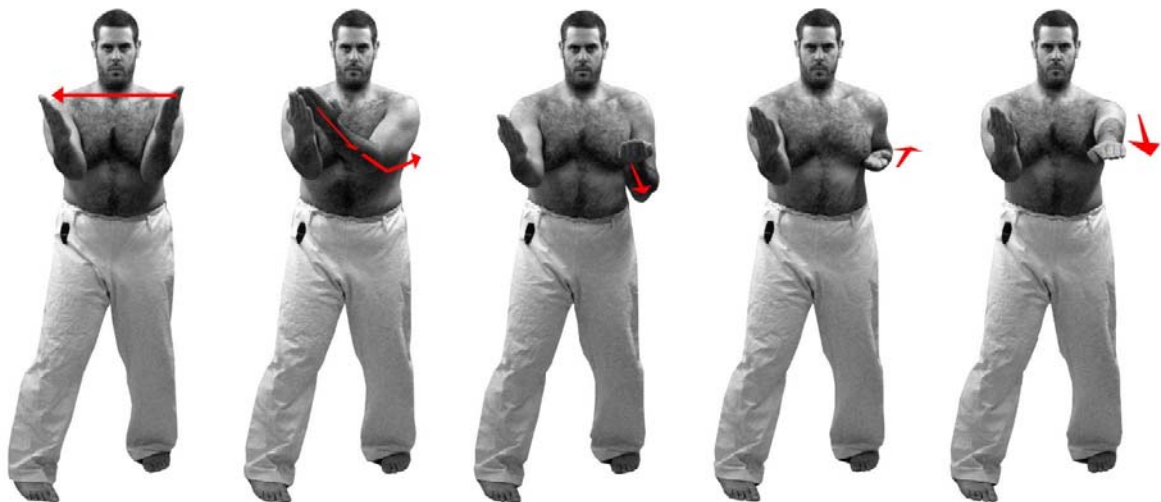
### Nukite



Picture 35. The palm and fingers in Nukite.

Nukite strike (Picture 35) in Sanchin Kata is always executed with the hand which is on the rear foot side. The palms are facing the sky, with a very slight inclination inwards. The fingers are aligned with the palms and the forearms. The elbows are facing the ground and come close with each other in order to protect our ribs. The distance between our elbows and our trunk is almost one fist (10 ~ 12 cm). Our two forearms with our hands and fingers extended create an open “V” (open because the elbows do not touch each other).

*Note: For a correct and effective execution of Nukite, it is important to keep our whole arm, wrist and fingers completely aligned at the fraction of the second, when the Nukite strike hits the target surface. An easy way to check if our forearm is on the same line with the palm (both vertically and horizontally) is to stick the lower part forearms and the palms together, starting from the fingertips to the elbows.*



Picture 36. The basic strike in Sanchin Kata, Nukite.



**Let's assume we want to execute a left Nukite...**

- 1) Our left hand approaches our right hand with the middle finger of the left hand over the middle finger of the right hand.
- 2) The hand moves diagonally, as the elbow bends moving backwards, the palm incrementally comes to a horizontal position facing the sky. During the whole movement our elbow faces the ground.
- 3) Our palm is in horizontal position next to our torso and to the height of our chest, with the elbow pushed inwards, and with our chest wide open – now we have reached our strike's starting position.

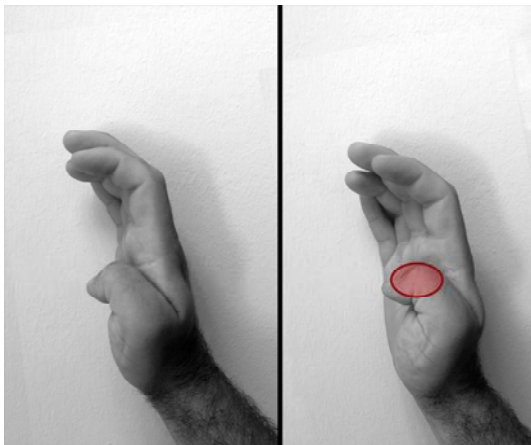
To execute the strike, we “charge” our blow with power that starts from the toes of our feet, passes through the thighs and the hips, escalates to the upper body and is expressed through our fingertips.

**The steps of the straight strike are the following:**

- 1) The movement starts with the palm facing the sky. The elbow faces the ground.
- 2) The elbow moves forward and when it gets out of the area set by our trunk the palm with the fingers straight in front starts to rotate in an accelerating manner following a spiral movement, half of a full rotation. Our right hand rotates counter-clockwise and our left hand rotates clockwise. Mutually, the speed is gradually increasing until the moment of the impact, when the strike climaxes and is discharged. To deliver an effective blow we need an explosive, accelerating and unbiased movement, like an arrow which arms and leaves a bow. The perpetual application of strength during a strike has a negative impact on its effectiveness, making the strike less effective.
- 3) We complete the blow with the palm facing the ground. Our whole body participates in the strike. We just let it evolve “naturally”. Our scapula supports the blow; therefore, we need to keep it in vertical position to the ground, so that the blow has maximum power. The strike requires explosiveness and control as well. It is instant, targeted, and is executed with maximum power and tension.
- 4) After the climax of the strike we relax all the muscles in our arm, leaving the elbows and the palms to bend slightly downwards, with the fingers always straight, and the arm follows an opposite to the strike direction. The forearm and the hand return to their initial Sanchin position.

*Note: Often, the practitioners have the tendency to twist their trunk pushing their left shoulder forward in left strikes, or the right shoulder in right strikes. Mutually, they tend to pull the shoulder back when they pull their hand backwards to initiate the Nukite strike, thinking that they will gain more acceleration and power during the strike. We keep in mind that our trunk and waist always face forward towards the direction of the movement.*

## Boshiken



*Picture 37. The hand, thumb position and strike surface in Boshiken.*

Boshiken is a strike representing “the hand of the dragon holding the ball”. It is a dangerous, open-hand technique. In Sanchin Kata we strike with double Boshiken (Morote Boshiken). One hand targets at the level of collar bone and the other hits the trunk lower, under the thorax, where the liver and spleen are located. Our thumb is bent inwards on the palm. The external side of thumb’s joint is the strike surface.

**Let’s assume that we are in a position with our left foot in front (Hidari Asi Kamae). The technique is executed as:**

### Hands positions

- 1) The left hand (front foot side) is diagonally extended straight in front of our body, our elbow is one punch away from our trunk (10 ~ 12 cm). Our palm is turned facing to the left, the fingers extended in Nukite position and the fingertips are facing the ground over our left foot.
- 2) Our right hand is bent almost 90° with our palm facing the sky and our fingers extended in Nukite position. Our right elbow is in front of our body, also one punch away from it, and does not protrude outside our trunk. The little finger of our right hand is laying on our left forearm’s upper end, where the elbow joint is.

### The movement until we pull our hands back – before the strike

To pull our hands back in a position ready to strike, the left (front foot side) hand is making an oval movement. This movement has a defensive functionality and starts with the left palm facing to the left. The hand is moving counter-clockwise starting from the level of our pelvis and moving upwards in a circular trajectory with the palm leading the whole motion. The top of the oval-shaped motion is slightly over our eye level. As the hand is approaching the top of the circle, the palm starts to face forward. As soon as the palm crosses our eye level it starts moving downwards. Overall, the oval trajectory in which our hand moves must have a forward inclination, in order to secure a bigger area between our self and the opponent. This movement of our left hand, during its first 2/3 is similar to the circular defensive technique of “Wa Uke/ Mawashi Uke”. However, our left hand is not stopping at the place where it would end its movement in Wa Uke, but continues to move down, pulling our elbow backwards until it comes next to our belt level (last 1/3 of the movement). In this final point, our left hand is in Boshiken position (ready to strike Boshiken) with our palm and fingers turned counter-clockwise to the left. – “The hand that starts from the lower point, ends to the lower point”

Our right hand follows the motion of the left hand, in a supportive manner, without hampering the left hand's movement. When the left hand starts moving downwards (during the last 1/3 of the oval-shaped movement), our right hand starts to move downwards with our palm turning until it is completely pulled back with the palm and fingers in a vertical position, next to our right breast, facing the opponent, ready for a Boshiken strike. – “The hand that starts from the higher point, ends to the higher point”.

### **The double strike “Morote Boshiken” and the completion of the technique**

At this point we have pulled both our hands back and we are ready to strike. Our front hand (the front foot side) is next to our belt with the fingers turned to the left side and our rear hand is next to our breast with the fingers turned upwards. We execute the double strike straight in front with maximum explosiveness. The upper hand is targeting the opponent's collar bone and the lower hand targets the area under the chest (the liver or the spleen). Both hands will reach their ultimate extension following an accelerated path, moving from the inside of our body to the outside. During this movement our elbows are close to our body. We try to complete the blow with maximum explosion. After the strike is completed we let our muscles relax in order to let our elbows bend inwards to protect our ribs.



*Picture 38. The Morote (double) Boshiken strike.*

*Note 1: In Uechi-Ryu, Boshiken is one of the open-hand techniques. Boshiken strike, apart from the spots that it is targeting in Sanchin Kata, can be applied in various other parts of the opponent's trunk, neck and head. Furthermore, we can take advantage of the position of the fingers, in order to grab the opponent after the strike. Boshiken is a highly dangerous strike and requires special attention when we practice on real partner.*

*Note 2: All the defensive (Uke) and offensive (Tsuki, Nukite) are executed in an accelerating manner. The speed of each technique reaches its highest levels during the last 1/3 of each movement, following the Golden Ratio principles.*

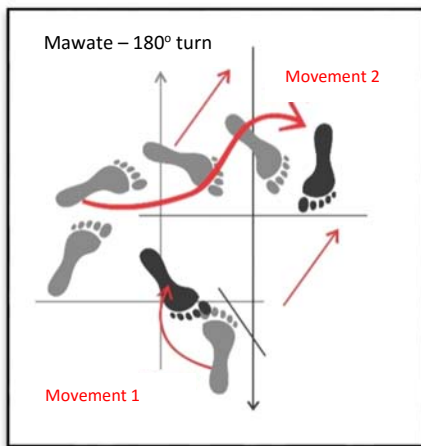
## Turns

*Note: The turns are described as if executed during a Sanchin Kata that starts with **right (Migi) foot**. In case you execute a Sanchin starting with the left foot all the movements are executed opposite.*

### 180° Turn (Mawate)

Based on the order that turns are executed we firstly do an 180° turn (Mawate). We do this turn to face an opponent coming from behind following the next steps (with left foot forward – Hidari Ashi):

- a) We turn our head over our right shoulder (on the rear foot side) and we check the space behind us with the corner of our eye.



*Picture 39. The movement of the feet during the 180° turn (Mawate).*

- b) Simultaneously, we slightly lift our right heel and we pivot our foot clockwise for almost 120°, based on the base of the big toe. We always turn as much as our body flexibility will permit. We, at all means, try to avoid straining or hurting our body with extreme twisting and pressure on our leg or foot joints. We turn our upper body incrementally following the turning of the foot. We step on our right foot, which will now be our new front foot, after the completion of the turn. The whole movement is driven by our waist and our trunk is turning uniformly, without twisting.

- c) Our left foot moves on a semicircular trajectory from inside to outside. The top of the semicircle is the point when the two feet come their closest distance.

- d) Simultaneously, while the left foot starts to move away again, going backwards, we also complete our 180° turn (Mawate).

*Note 1: Following the opposite procedure we execute the Mawate on the right stance (Migi Asi).*

*Note 2: With the completion of the 180° turn we have to “lock” our stance again in Sanchin (Sanchin Dachi) with our weight evenly distributed on both our legs. Our trunk and our pelvis face forward to the line of movement and the head remains at the same height on the horizontal axis, without going up and down during the turn.*

**The reason the 180° turn (Mawate) in Uechi-Ryu is executed this way is because**

*1) We get off the line of attack of the opponent who comes from behind with the pivot we do on our rear leg, which is our new front leg after the turn. Therefore, we succeed to move the main mass of our upper body to the right or left (depending which foot we have behind).*

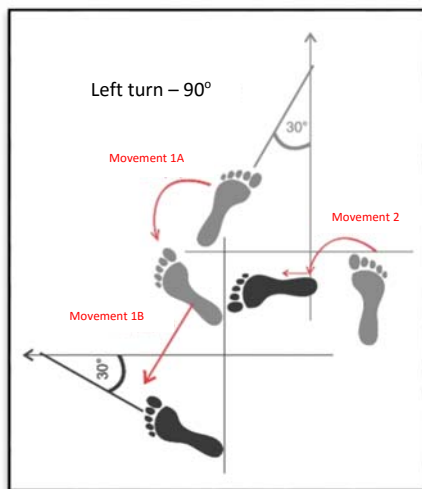
*2) Just because our rear leg becomes the new front leg after the turn, our back, which is always over the rear leg (in the vertical axis) will move over the new rear leg, earning us almost half a meter distance – space between us and the attacker.*

*(See Picture 40)*



*Picture 40. The 180° turn (Mawate).*

## Simple Forward and Backward Sliding (Yori Asi – Tsuki Asi)



Picture 41. The movement of the feet during the first change of direction.

To move forward and backward, apart from stepping, we can also slide. Forward sliding is called “Yori Asi” and backward sliding is called “Tsuki Asi”.

### To do a forward sliding:

- We slightly lift the front foot toes so that we don't run the risk of getting our foot stuck to the ground and we put pressure on our rear foot.
- We slightly lift our front foot from the ground while we move our body forward with power coming from our rear foot.
- Our rear foot follows the whole movement. The result is to end up in Sanchin stance when the slide is complete without any differentiation in the distance or position of our feet.

### To do a backward sliding:

- We slightly lift our rear foot heel and put pressure on our front foot.
- We push our whole body backwards with power coming from our front foot.
- Our front foot follows the whole movement. The result is to end up in Sanchin stance when the slide is complete, without any differentiation in the distance, or position of our feet.

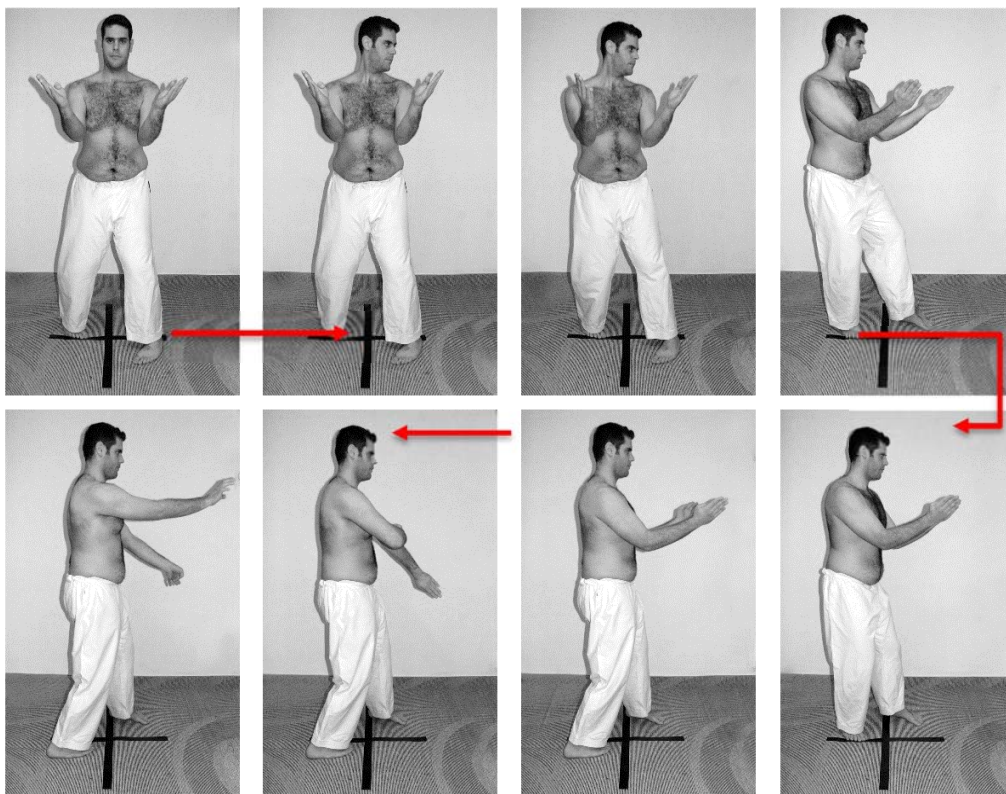
*Note: The movement of sliding is executed by keeping the foot that is lifted very close to the ground. We need to maintain a good connection with the ground (which is the source of our energy) and not make jumps, even light ones, while we move forward or backward. Figuratively speaking, we could say that the optimal distance between our sole and the ground, while sliding, should be no bigger than the thickness of a rice paper sheet. This principle stands for all the movements of the feet in Sanchin and all the other Kata in Uechi-Ryu.*

### First 90° Turn Towards the Left Boshiken\*

In Sanchin Kata, based on the techniques sequence, the first turn is executed to the side of our front foot after the Morote Boshiken. Let's assume that we are in left stance (Hidari Sanchin Dachi), ready to start our turns. To change direction moving 90° to the left:

- We turn our head to the left and with the corner of our eye we check the area.
- We slightly lift the toes of the front foot (left foot) so that there is no danger of having our foot stuck to the ground and with our balance on the rear (right) foot we pivot on the base of our big toe, turning our heel almost 30° counter-clockwise.
- Simultaneously, we slide our front (left) foot backwards, closer to our rear (right) foot, turn our waist and trunk 90° to the left and slide our left foot forward. Our whole body moves forward and the rear foot follows the whole time until we complete our movement to the new direction in Sanchin stance.

*\* More information about Boshiken is given at the "Hand Strikes" section.*



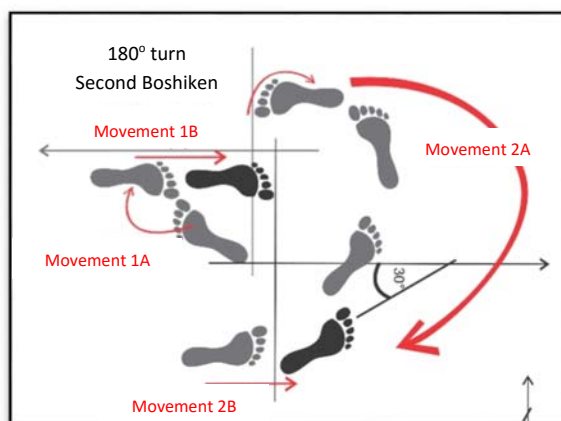
*Picture 42. The first change of direction and moving to the left side.*



## Second 180° Turn to the Right (change of direction)

To execute the second Boshiken to the right, relatively to the initial axis of movement during the start and the end of the Kata, we do an 180° turn, which is different from the Mawate turn which was presented in a previous section.

**The procedure of the turn is as follows:**

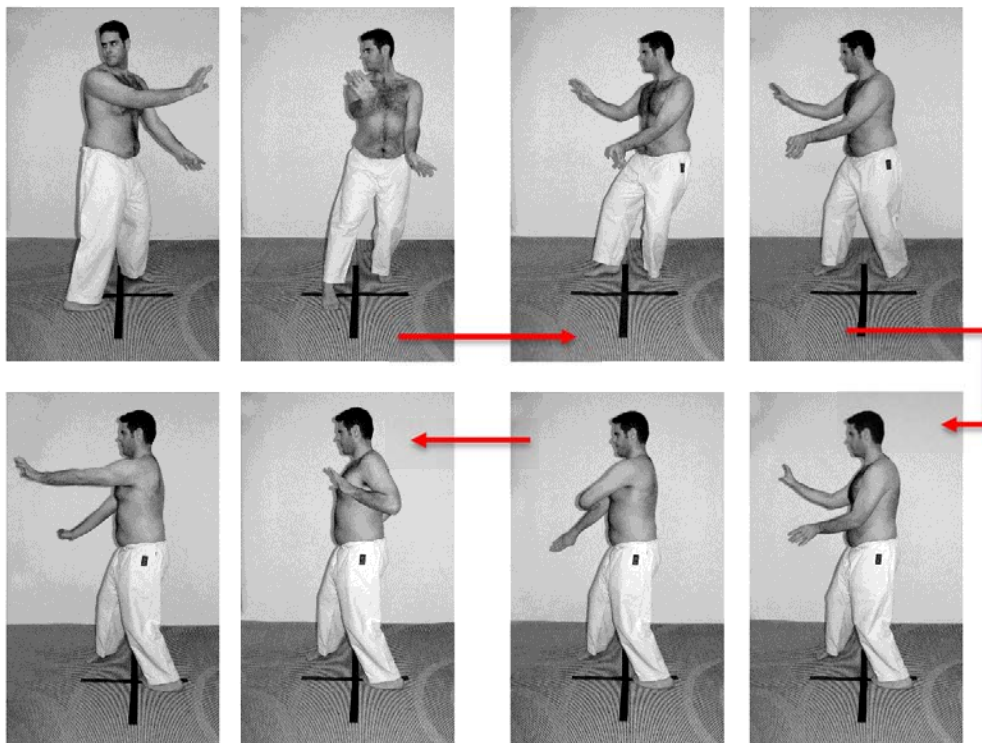


*Picture 43. The movements of the feet during the left, 180°, turn.*

- a) We turn our head over the right shoulder and with the corner of our eye we check the area behind us (exactly like we do in Mawate).
- b) Simultaneously, we slightly lift our front (left) foot toes (to avoid getting our foot stuck during the movement) and with our weight on the base of the big toe we pivot our heel clockwise (almost 90°).
- c) We bring our rear (right) foot close to the front by turning our heel inwards. The toes of the foot (which now is our new front foot) face forward with a 30° angle towards

the axis of our new direction. At the same time our whole leg moves in a semi-circular trajectory clockwise.

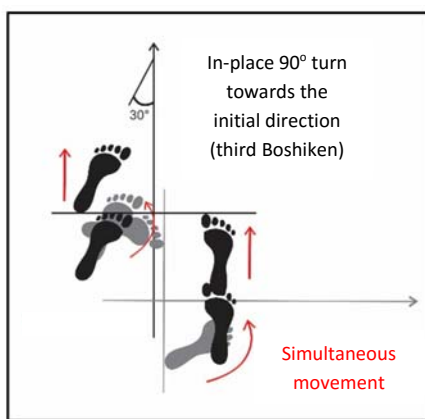
- d) During the whole movement our left foot continues to rotate until the toes face forward towards the new direction.
- e) If all the above mentioned steps are executed correctly:
  - 1. Our trunk and our pelvis have turned 180°.
  - 2. Our right foot is now our new front foot and is turned 30° inwards towards the line of movement.
  - 3. Our rear (left) foot faces straight forward.
  - 4. Our weight is slightly more on our rear (left) foot – but not so much to make the whole stance look like a cat stance (Neko Ashi).
- f) We slide forward starting with our front (right) foot (Yori Ashi) getting power from our rear (left) leg. We complete our movement, with our weight evenly distributed between our two feet.



Picture 44. The second turn (180°) and the execution of the double (Morote) Boshiken.

### Third 90° Turn and the Final Boshiken (returning to the initial direction)

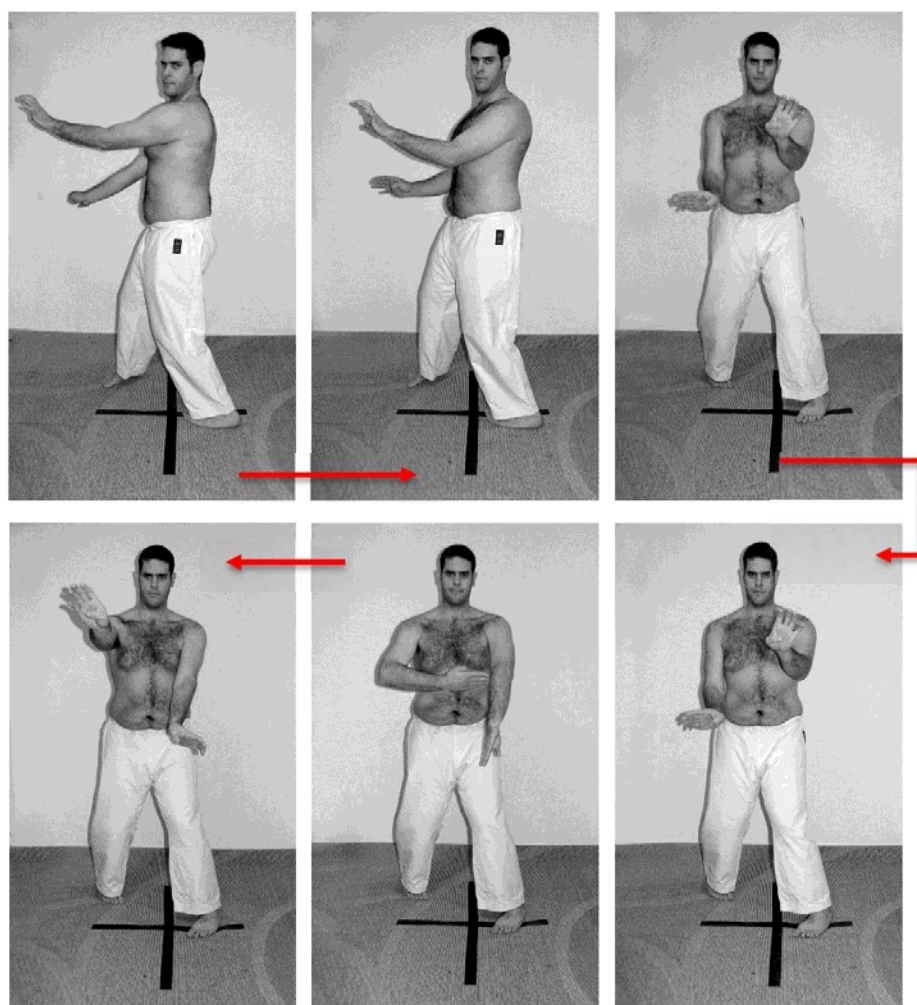
The last Boshiken is executed forward. We return to the initial direction of the Kata.



Picture 45. The movements of the feet during the last, in-place, 90° turn towards the initial direction of the Kata and the forward sliding.

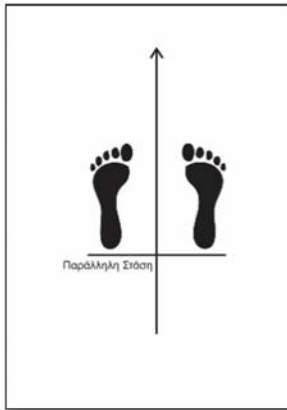
#### To return to the front:

- We turn our head to the left and with the corner of our eye we check the area.
- We slightly lift the toes of rear (left) foot so that there is no danger to have our foot stuck to the ground; and, with our weight on the base of the big toe we pivot our heel counter-clockwise so that our foot faces the new direction of movement.
- Simultaneously, we turn our front (right) foot with exactly the same way and we make an in-place 90° turn, returning to the initial direction as in the start of the Kata.
- We slide forward (Yori Ashi) starting with the left foot and we end-up in Sanchin stance.

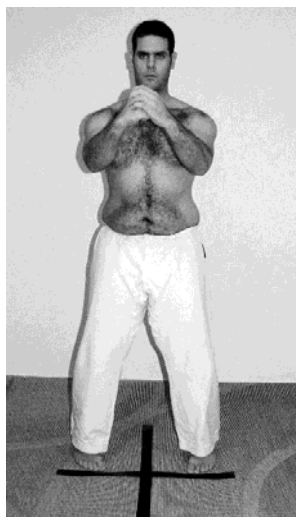


*Picture 46. The last 90° turn, returning to the starting axis of movement.  
Execution of the last Morote (double) Boshiken.*

## Closed Gate Stance



*Picture 47. The position of the feet during the Kata completion.*



*Picture 48. The "Closed Gate" stance.*

We completed our Sanchin. We have executed the last Morote Boshiken, and we have returned to the starting direction of the Kata. We bring our feet in parallel position.

We cover our right punch with our left hand. The left thumb is either nested in the circle created with our right thumb and index finger; in other words, on the upper side of our right punch. Alternatively, we can place our left thumb over the right thumb to completely embrace our right punch. Our both hands are at the level of our chin.

Our forearms create a 120° angle with our arms. Our elbows are placed inwards to protect our thorax and ribs (as in Sanchin stance). Our hands are totally aligned with our forearms without bending our wrists.

Our knees are slightly bent and our pelvis slightly heading forward. This position of our pelvis allows us to pull even the bottom disks, in order to achieve a totally straight spine. Our chin is turned slightly downwards, protecting our neck.

With our tongue stuck on our uraniscus, we put power on all our body muscles and do a big exhalation, letting the air in the lower compartments of our lungs to come out (this is the air we inhaled at the beginning of the Kata and we kept it during the whole execution time). We don't let the whole air to come out, but only 75 ~ 80% (the battle is not finished before the last bow – "Rei").

*The time we need to understand Sanchin Kata in depth is inversely proportional to the time needed for its practical consequences to appear on our body. The self-defense and body conditioning techniques effect is obvious on the practitioner relatively soon, making him/her capable of defending himself. However, the discovery of the art requires time and countless repetitions of each technique. Good luck on your journey in the world of Martial Arts...*

A.T.

## Thanks:

*At this point I would like to warmly thank Katherine Loukopoulos Sensei for her corrections, her advice and her suggestions, which contributed greatly to the improvement and refinement of this manuscript. Furthermore, I would like to publicly thank her for her overall mentoring and her influence all these years that I have the pleasure to know her and train under her supervision.*

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