

Six Kata Principles – Kata no Rokugensoku

1. **Ikita:** Kata must be alive and done with feeling and purpose and performed as a real fight. This is one of the most important elements to remember when training to master your Kata. It has to be alive means that it must be performed with more than just techniques in a series of movements. One of the biggest complaints I have when watching black belts perform kata is their inability to transcend into the Kata and allow it to live through them.
2. **Inen:** Kata must be performed with a real fighting spirit. This means that you must not hold anything back at any time. You must put all your effort into every application, stance and technique as if it were your only chance to survive a real combative situation. Your Kiai must be loud and rumbling. Most people Kiai today as a yell and have lost the ability to use their Hara, or spiritual center, to Kiai.
3. **Chikara no Kyojaku:** Kata should be done with changes in application of power. Technique can be strong or yielding, hard then soft. In the Aiki Te Ryu Kata we have both hard / linear movements as well as circular and soft techniques. When training your kata you must develop both the ability to perform hard, as well as soft techniques in your performance.
4. **Waza no Kankyu:** Kata should be done with variations in the timing of movement, sometimes fast, sometimes slow. When we first begin learning Kata we typically learn by the numbers. Most students often misread this and perform the kata as if by numbers when alone. Keeping the movements together when in a group training session is perfectly fine, but when you are performing your kata alone you must show the proper timing and execution in order for it to take real life. At most tournaments today you will witness students doing kata as if they were a robot. This is not the way...instead seek to allow the kata to come to life which is done through proper execution of the techniques.
5. **Kisoku no Donto:** Kata must be performed with correct and controlled rhythm of breathing. Karate-ka must know when to inhale and when exhale. This is one of hardest parts of training your Kata. Proper breathing is about more than just being able to have stamina. When you inhale in Karate it relaxes the muscles and when you exhale your techniques are hard as a rock.
6. **Kinto:** Balance. Proper balance must be maintained in the performance of Kata. Only through hundreds of hours of Kata repetition can one learn true balance. Even today I still struggle with balance in certain Kata that I train. Once you have learned how to lower your center in your stances proper balance will begin to train itself. It is important that you learn this secret or you will never develop true power in your techniques.