

# Practical Kata Applications

Rakesh-Patel.com

**KATA  
COMBAT**



## Bassai Dai / Passai

# Rakesh Patel

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## Introduction

The market today contains many, good texts on Kata Bunkai in which Kata techniques are applied to defend against Karate attacks. In these texts the technical form of the Kata is well preserved throughout the applications e.g. in stances and posture. This approach is valid in developing the exponents understanding of how the Kata can be performed, but the role in relation to combative situations is usually ignored.

This eBook focuses on the physical aspects of Self-Protection from a realistic perspective and provides an explanation of how Karate Kata techniques are applied beyond standalone Kata performance.

The purpose of this eBook is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the basic Kata applications for **Bassai Dai/Passai** in the context of Self-Defence.

The coverage is concerned purely with the physical elements based on the premise that good Self-Protection through avoidance and awareness is a valid precursor to the Kata's physical interpretations.

The scenarios deal with both in-fight tactics and pre-emptive attacking where the aim in both cases is to inflict no more damage to the opponent than needed to gain an effective means of escape.

The interpretations are my own and are based on my understanding developed during training with my peers, seniors and other likeminded martial artists.

Instructions on the Karate techniques for performance as an individual Kata is out of the scope of this eBook, although a demonstration of each Kata technique is included in full colour photographs.

## Readership

This eBook is written specifically for the benefit of both martial artists and non-martial artists. In particular, those who acknowledge or have an interest in the pragmatic aspects of the traditional arts.

Those familiar with the Bassai Dai/Passai forms will find this a valuable learning resource to aid and/or change existing training.

My approach facilitates Kata training from both form based competence and functional combative perspectives. See Chapter 2 – Explicit Themes.

## Terminology

For simplicity, “text book” Shotokan Karate Technique names are used to reference specific Kata movements. These may not reflect the actual purpose or function of the applied technique. For example the term “*Uchi Ude Uke*”, usually means Inside Forearm Block, but it can be used as a forearm smash to jaw/neck when describing its specific function.

All the scenarios in the interpretation chapters include two combatants, the exponent and the opponent. For convenience the exponent’s behaviour, actions etc. are described in the first person singular. The adversary is referred to as “the opponent”, where actions are described in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular.

# Chapter 1

## Kata Principles and Guidelines

It is my belief that Kata when originally created, were intended to capture the 'highlights' of an effective combative fighting system. The distillate of this system survived over the generations as it served as a memory aid for the practitioner to communicate to his incumbent generation. As a result of the balance needed between reliance on memory and the need to maintain the principles of Kata, an optimal number of movements exist. This has led to subjectivity in the interpretation of Kata but fortunately to the learned practitioner, Kata has not degraded to just a pattern of techniques.

A consequence of the subjectivity is that there exists no single correct application of the Kata movements we practice today. However incorrect ones can be classed as those that are in-effective. The subjectivity also provides the advantage of innovation. My aim is to formulate an effective form of Karate geared towards Self-Protection.

My initial step has been to analyse the sequences of techniques within the Kata Bassai Dai/ Passai. Then I evolve a rationale to adapt and modify a particular sequence for ultimate use in Self-Protection. This is tested and practiced in non-compliant training drills.

I list below the attributes of Kata that I have used in my analysis, with a brief explanation of their meaning:

### **1. Order**

The order in which Kata techniques are performed does not necessarily reflect the order in which the progress is applied to the principles contained within. Take the case of the opening movement in Bassai Dai/Passai. It can be treated as a standalone technique that has a combative function. But it may also be used as a secondary option to the exponent should it be needed whilst applying techniques from other sections of the Kata. The same applies to the techniques in the last section of the Kata, these are not necessarily more advanced in principle because they appear late on in the Kata.

By treating the Kata in this way, it allows me to derive maximal benefit from the principles captured in the Kata itself. A Kata as a form is a demonstrational set of combative highlights that is bound by structure and shape. Usually Kata form a pattern for ease of memory and reuse, therefore the techniques within these will be ordered as such.

## **2. Stance**

Stances are usually differentiated by how the body weight is distributed between the two feet. If a Kata technique is executed in Zenkutsu Dachi (front stance) it is applied with more weight placed on the front foot than on the rear, usually driving forward. Stances however, should not be thought of as fixed structures with a rigid shape. This is reserved for the Kata as a form to capture the stance connotations. Given the chaotic nature of combat, stances should be seen as fluid like and as a facility to ensure an effective technique is applied from the ground up. There are instances and opportunities to preserve the shape of a stance whilst using it as an effective tool in overpowering the opponent. In such cases, we simply are exploiting an advantage that is captured in the Kata as a form.

## **3. Angles**

Specifying an angle at which a particular Kata technique is executed makes sense if applied in terms of a referencing direction. For example, if a Kata technique is executed at  $45^\circ$ , then it must be  $45^\circ$  relative to a baseline. Usually this is the reference direction in the previous technique. Changes in direction in Kata technique are important and usually indicate that a technique is applied at an angle to the opponent.

## **4. Rhythm, Timing and Grouping**

When certain Kata techniques are grouped and given a rhythm and timing, the Kata as a whole becomes more than just a set of consecutive movements performed in various directions. However, this rhythm and timing is not an invariant record of how the movements are then applied in combat. For example, when three techniques are grouped together in the standalone form, this does not necessarily mean that they always belong together in that combative form.

## **5. Symmetry and Repetition**

A sequence of identical techniques performed consecutively (usually in twos and threes) are common in Kata. For the purpose of this text, any repetition is acknowledged and is interpreted as showing that the techniques can be applied using both the left and right sides of the body. However, for those sets of combinations that are repeated on both side of the centre line, two differing applications may be given to demonstrate alternatives and emphasis.

## **6. Preparatory/Intermediate Movements**

The preparatory and intermediate positions of the Kata technique when performed in an individual form are to facilitate correct technique and are usually performed as a passive movement i.e. during the "in" breath. When applying the technique in combat, the intermediate movement has a combative purpose and can be just as offensive as the remainder portion of the technique.

## **7. Consistency**

Whilst performing the Kata as an individual form, the practitioner must strive to standardise all like techniques. For example all Oi Zuki (step punch) are performed in a similar way throughout the Kata. However the application of Oi Zuki may differ depending on various factors: the scenario, the target, the position etc. Variation of emphasis in the application is a good way of ensuring that maximum benefit is gained from the Kata.

## **8. Redundancy**

No technique within the Kata is redundant, and within every technique, no component parts are redundant. Every technique has a combative function, to either finish the opponent or enable a finishing technique to be applied. It is often the case that a technique will be used to create, maintain and exploit a combative advantage over the opponent. For example, when performing Gyaku Zuki (reverse punch), the *hikite* (pulling hand) is used to control the opponent so that the actual punch can be effectively executed. So it does not matter where the rear hand actually finishes because its main function is to pull, or control, the opponent so they can be effectively struck. Or to grab the area behind the target such as the rear of the opponent's neck.

## **9. Integration**

Kata techniques are best utilised when integrated into core fighting motions. Our approach must be to ensure that every Kata technique has a situational purpose and to derive optimal use from Kata training, that these kata techniques be extracted and practiced in Bunkai training drills. The Kata techniques that we integrate into our existing offensive fighting motions must be motions that make up our main offensive artillery, like punching and striking. Common gross fighting techniques consist of fore fist type punches, open hand and clubbing like strikes. These form the primary level attacks in our arsenal. Although these specific techniques are all found within Kata it is important to note that they are not always explicitly emphasised as their applicability and suitability is assumed elsewhere is the Kata.



## Chapter 2

### Explicit Themes

Every Kata has a duality of theme, one for performing the Kata as a standalone form, Kata Competence, and the other for applying the techniques, Kata Combat. For further reading on this approach, I refer you my article:

#### ***Kata Combat Article – Duality of Theme***

which is included in Appendix 1.

**Kata Competence** is concerned purely with the practice of solo Kata where the emphasis is on correct form and all the elements that constitute Kata excellence. This has the following elements:

- Stance formation and transitioning
- Technique: speed, power, sharpness & formation
- Breathing
- Balance
- Rhythm and Timing
- Martial Spirit

Although this approach contrasts that of Kata Combat, it serves as a precursor to understanding the principles upon which the kata techniques and movements are based.

**Kata Combat** is concerned with the effective application of the techniques and principles found within the mainstream Karate Kata, also known as Bunkai. I actively study the many Karate Kata and forms found within the traditional martial arts. By studying the techniques and applications, combative principles are discovered and used to test the movements within core fighting motions in live drills.

# Kata Competence Theme

## Bassai Dai/Passai



With respect to the Kata Competence Theme of Bassai Dai/Passai, its standalone form contains big, bold techniques in the basic core stances: *front*, *back* and *straddle*, as well as centred upright stances: *natural*, *attention* and *cross*. Forearm blocks feature multiple times throughout and will therefore incorporate the corresponding hip twist and body shift movements. Specifically, the opening section features three pairs of inside/outside blocks executed on both sides of the body. In the middle, double forearm blocks and strikes feature. The end section features inside forearm blocks at lower level height. The technique *Shuto Uke* (Knife Hand Block) also features numerous times through the entire kata. It is executed in groups whilst stepping forwards, backwards and to oblique angles.

Typically, Bassai Dai is included on a brown belt level Karate syllabus where it involves a wide range of technically challenging movements to warrant this rank.

Bassai Dai features as one of the 'Big Four' Shotokan Karate Kata alongside Kanku Dai, Jion and Enpi. It is on the list of compulsory Kata at mainstream tournaments, as it tests how well the competitors can perform diverse and bold techniques within the realms of competitive Kata.

# Kata Combat Theme

## Bassai Dai/Passai



In the context of The Kata Combat Theme, Bassai Dai/Passai presents the opportunity to explore the combative principles that apply to tactile, grip like altercations.

Moves involving seizure by my opponent of my clothes and limbs to gain control and offensive advantage are explored in detail. Bassai Dai/Passai encapsulates moves to counteract these with follow up options relevant to the chaos within free form combat.

For example, the two handed pull to one hip (*hikite*) features numerous times in various versions, and as a theme, is prevalent throughout the entire Kata. This movement can be used to deal with a chest/lapel/shoulder grab and effectively addresses further threat attacks through explicit choices recorded in the Kata. These choices exist because, in a fight, things are not guaranteed to go to plan. The Kata will not provide every possible answer but anticipates certain instinctive responses from the opponent.

In Chapter 4, I explain in detail how a common standing lapel grab, as well as further variations and advancements of the grab, are dealt with in a layered progressive manner.

Shuto Uke (Knife Hand Block) features not only several times but also in various stepping and grouping protocols. It is this common theme that is explored as a set of skills to isolate in a Kata Combat Training Drill in Chapter 5.

Soto Uke (Outside Block) and Uchi Uke (Inside Block) feature prominently in the first section of the kata and places a high degree of importance on being able to control my opponents grip on me through effective forearm motions. These motions are explored in detail in Sequence 4 and tested in a Kata Combat Training drill in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Bassai Dai/Passai**

#### **Kata Competence**

Below you will see the photograph sequences of the entire Bassai Dai Kata as I currently practice it. The point at this stage is to display the structure of the Kata as a template. The combative principles are explained and applied in the next chapter.

For the purpose of this eBook, I consider two practiced versions of the Kata. My analysis primarily concerns the Shotokan version of Bassai Dai but also other versions of Passai and the relationships between the two are considered.

In the descriptive chapter, noteworthy differences between versions of the Kata will be captured using separate photographs.











## Chapter 4

### Bassai Dai/Passai Kata Combat

In the previous chapter I described the combative theme of gripping that Bassai Dai/Passai Kata encompasses. In this chapter I explain the principles within the kata used to respond to the act of being seized by the lapel. It addresses the single arm lapel seize, through stiff arming, to double handed clinches.

An important point to note when applying techniques in response to being seized and gripped is that we consider that after our initial movement, both cases where the grip is still attached and also where it has become detached, leaving me disengaged from my opponent. During the chaos of combat, either case is likely and therefore the reliance on any single outcome as a pre-requisite should be avoided.

This chapter is broken down into subsections; each subsection provides combative application that comprises a **sequence** of techniques from the Kata.

## Sequence 1

I've started the Kata Combat chapter with the sequence of straight punches executed from the standing position with both hands on one hip. I will refer to this position as **Hikite**. This sequence starts at move 10 and finishes at move 14 as shown in the red coloured bordered photograph sequence on page 13.

However the Kata continues to move 17 to practice and record the same techniques on the other side of the body.

Sequence 1 addresses a single arm lapel grab by my opponent as a set up for further attack. Their single arm grip serves as a way of controlling me as well as a reference point for subsequent strikes with their rear hand.

Prolonged covering and attempted blocking of those strikes proves to be futile, so I need to act fast and weaken their grip. This will disrupt their control and the connection to me required for effective striking. This will also set me up for the all-important barrage of attacks to my opponent.



My first action is to cover and protect my head area as I prepare my hands; clasping them together. My rear hand, palm up, cupping my front hand which is palm down. I apply the two handed *hikite* movement by striking down hard and fast onto my opponent's upper forearm whilst remaining in my natural stance. This is the simplest way to apply this technique, hence it is explored first.

Clasping my hands together allows me to use the hand of my non striking arm to pull my striking arm down and onto my opponents arm tending towards my hip. This disrupts their balance as their head and body drops down and towards me. The degree of movement depends on how well anchored a grip my opponent applies on me.



Immediately, I release the clasped grip and again with my lead arm, I strike up and out to my opponents neck/jaw area. No one specific strike is needed, so long as it makes contact with my forearm, bottom fist, edge of my hand etc. The different versions of the Kata all contain various options. Above are two such options; closed fist forearm smash (left) and an open hand strike (middle). The reverse angle is show on the right.

Whilst doing this strike, I seek to gain control of my opponents lead arm (it may still be seizing my lapel) or it will have become detached. This control allows me to execute multiple strikes with my lead arm until alternative action is necessary.

The Kata follows this lead arm strike with two techniques executed with the rear arm; *Choku Zuki* (Straight Punch) then *Uchi Ude Uke* (Inside Forearm Block). Kata records choices, these two techniques are utilised as a when required and not a prescriptive list of techniques acted out in their entirety to a set order. It therefore makes sense to continue striking with the rear arm *Choku Zuki* (Straight Punch) until the *Uchi Ude Uke* (Inside Block) is required.

The scenario that would require execution of the *Uchi Ude Uke* (Inside Block) is when whilst striking with *Choku Zuki* (Straight Punch), my opponent's seizing hand is still attached and hampering my rear shoulder as the source of the strike. By moving across the centre line, the preparatory movement of the *Uchi Ude Uke* (Inside Block) acts a cover as I traverse. It also serves as an attempt of disengaging my opponent's grip.

Once offline, I execute the *Uchi Ude Uke* (Inside Block) as a forearm/backhand strike in a vertical plane to my opponent's jaw/neck area. This overhead nature of the movement prepares me for the next *Choku Zuki* (Straight Punch) with my rear hand as an all in one rolling motion.



To further address the need to dispatch my opponent and create an escape route, I utilise movement number one of the Kata. The key to a successful escape in this scenario is to create a safe distance between me and my opponent, preferably through them backing off. The *Morote Uchi Uke* (Augmented Inside Forearm Block) is executed with forward drive and serves as a way of pushing my opponent away from me, clearing their limbs in the process. The knee lift (also used in two other points in the Kata) is not necessarily a knee strike, but an explicit way of ensuring maximal forward drive. Such is the need to ensure forward drive; the *Morote Uchi Uke* is finished in *Kosa Dachi* (Cross Stance). My front foot moves forward and lands so far in front of me that, in order to maintain forward momentum, my back foot also has to catapult forward and finish directly underneath my hips, adding to the effectiveness of the technique.



## Sequence 2

In this next sequence, I consider an alternative outcome to that of **Sequence 1** after having executed the *Hikite* as a forearm smash to my opponents lead arm that grips my lapel.

Consider the below four outcomes:

1.



**Opponent closes distance with lapel grip still attached (Sequence 1).**

2.



**Opponent reels back with lapel grip detached.**

3.



**Opponent drops to prone position with lapel grip still attached.**

4.



**Opponent pushes forward whilst gripping my lapel.**

## Sequence 2.1

The next sequence to consider is the set of *Hikite* followed by *Yama Zuki* (U Punch). This is used to deal with the below scenario:

- Opponent reels back with lapel grip detached.



After having executed the *hikite*, my opponent's grip is immediately detached from me and they are able to extend the distance between us and as result the follow up forearm smash to the jaw/neck area proves suboptimal. At this point, it is important that I exploit this advantage and land a further strike.

*Yama Zuki* (U Punch) is performed with two arms; the lower most arm follows the path of a lower level *Uchi Ude Ude* (Inside Forearm Block) whilst the upper most arm is a driving high level punch.



The lower level inside block is used to regain a connection with my now reeling back opponent. By seizing their detached lead arm at the wrist, I turn them slightly so that a route to their jaw/neck area is cleared for the incoming overhand punch. My arm that pulls my opponent across the centre line opens up a target and is an important pre-cursor to executing the impending punch.

The knee lift (also used in two other points in the Kata) is not necessarily a knee strike, but an explicit way of ensuring maximal forward drive. In this particular case, lifting my front knee slightly facilitates a definite grounding of that leg as I drive forward and execute the looping overhand punch at the same time. With such over powering forward drive and momentum whilst attacking with a core strike, means that further strikes can be executed where necessary and effective escape can be sought.



## Sequence 2.2

The next sequence to consider is the pair of *Sukui Uke* (Scooping Block). The scooping block is to deal with the below scenario:

- Opponent drops to prone position with lapel grip still attached.



After having executed the *hikite*, my opponent's grip on me is still attached, which facilitates a well placed forearm strike to their jaw. With the grip on me still in place, my opponent drops to the floor into a kneeling position. Again, although I've created an advantageous situation, it is vital that I exploit this advantage and land further attacks. I run the risk of my opponent using their grip on me to mount further attack. Hooking their free arm around my legs coupled with forward drive from the floor, the situation could rapidly degenerate to a ground fighting affair – a situation to be avoided.

*Sukui Uke* (Scooping Block) is essentially a low level inside forearm block executed whilst moving off the centre line into *Zenkutsu Dachi* (Front Stance) whilst keeping my hips at a low level. As my front arm performs the scooping, my rear hand is located in the usual rear hip position.

Once my opponent is grounded, I immediately move off the centre line, so that their grip is weakened, in doing so, I use my rear hand to locate their gripping hand, and with my other arm, I smash my inner forearm into the crook of their elbow, bending their arm and ensuring that they move along an oblique angle with me. This will probably detach their grip from me and allow me to locate and anchor their hand as I oppose the forearm smash in a scooping motion in the opposite direction. This will turn my opponent and their rear shoulder away from me and clears a route to their head/neck area for subsequent strikes where necessary. The locking and controlling of my opponent's arm from such an upper handed position facilitates a relatively easy escape route.





## Sequence 2.3

The last sequence in this section to consider is the *Haishu Uke* (Back Hand Block) in *Kiba Dachi* (Straddle Stance) followed by *Mikazuki Geri* (Crescent Kick) and *Mawashi Empi Uchi* (Roundhouse Elbow Strike) also in *Kiba Dachi*. Other versions of Passai replace the *Haishu Uke* with *Tettsui Uchi* (Hammer Fist Strike).

The initial *Haishu Uke/Tettsui Uchi* is executed from the *hikite* position and is used to deal with the below scenario:

- Opponent pushes forward whilst gripping my lapel.



Again, from the lapel grab, my opponent pushes forward and straightens their arm in an attempt to gain greater control. In the process of applying the *hikite* I feel the pressure on my gripped shoulder, and choose to yield and turn my body fully sideways as I step back into *Kiba Dachi* (Straddle Stance). The *Hikite* is still applied as intended, just whilst stepping back.



The Passai Kata versions of the Kata preserve the actual *Hikite* position with the hands whilst the Shotokan Bassai Dai version captures the function of *Hikite* as the overlapping of the arms across the chest.

Both versions perform the same function, but vary slightly in their appearance. The Bassai Dai version captures the sideways nature of the technique when applied as the overlapping arms will be used to trap and control my opponent's arm whilst on the move. The important point is that the follow up attack with my upper most arm is thrown out towards the target unhampered. The Shotokan Kata version uses an open back hand strike; Passai versions use the bottom fist strike consistently throughout the Kata.



From here my priority is to maneuver into a better relative position to my opponent, the sideways nature of the strike leaves me with my back on my opponents open side, vulnerable to attacks with their rear arm. Whilst withdrawing my lead leg, I detach and clear my opponent's lead arm and pull it across their centre line, throwing their rear shoulder away from me.



Once my lead leg is grounded, I harness this motion and kick out with my rear leg the *Mikazuki Geri* (Crescent Kick) to my opponent's lead knee, kicking it out from underneath them. To aid the kick, my lead arm seizes my opponent acting as a secure connection to them. Upon grounding my kick, I have stepped in towards my now kneeling opponent finishing with my chest behind their shoulders. As I land, I shoot my lead arm forward and across the front of my opponents head/neck area, acting as a point of reference for my rear arm *Mawashi Empi Uchi* (Roundhouse Elbow Strike).

This leaves me in a an advantageous position as the *Kiba Dachi* (Straddle Stance) that the elbow strike is executed from leaves me behind my now lowered opponent, with my chest along their back. This advantage can be exploited since the route to disengage and escape is relatively easily sought.



## Sequence 3

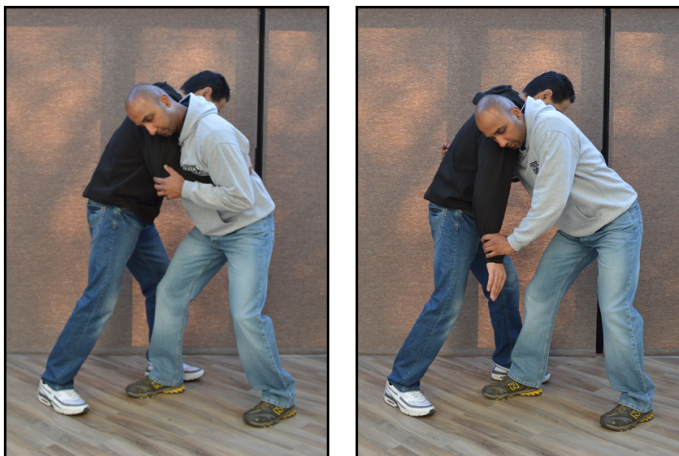


This particular sequence addresses the left and right side *Gedan Barai/Zuki* (Lower Block/Punch) in *Kiba Dachi* (Straddle Stance).

The straddle stance nature of the motions works well when on my feet and grappling, and in particular where there is a need to keep my hips back and away from my opponent.

The technique is performed on a left-right-left protocol whilst still in stance. I'm taking this as an indication of two key combative points:

1. Acknowledge that the technique can be applied on both sides of the body
2. To show that the transition from one side to the other is an effective manoeuvre in itself.



From a clinch my arms are busy controlling my opponent's weight as they drive towards me in an attempt to overpower me. This situation can quickly degrade to an on the ground scenario which is to be avoided. One way to stem being overpowered is to remove some of the close in connection that my opponent has to me with their arms. I choose to attack their lead arm as it gives them the greatest control of me.

Keeping a firm base with my stance, I slide my thumb between the crook of their elbow and my side. I now shoot my hips backwards and down whilst I violently 'strip' away their arm downwards and away from me.

This gives me a chance to make my offensive attack as the deadlock between us is broken. With my other arm, I withdraw it towards me and out of their grip, harnessing the momentum of the movement. I reach up and over their head and apply a choke like grip to their neck. As I feed my arm along their neck, I push the arm that I'm gripping into the grip of my choking hand pinning it across their neck area. My now freed arm is used to punch out and down to their groin as I lock my hips and stance using the ground to aid the strike.



The above sequence shown from the other side



The transition from one punch to the other can be used as a follow on option in itself. Once I've executed the left side punch, I immediately use it to secure my opponent's free arm by reaching through and along their throat and grabbing their upper arm. Their other arm is still pinned into position using the crook of my elbow. I've now tied up both of their arms so that I can freely punch down into their groin with my right arm.



This entire sequence will at best avoid the situation going to the ground, but will allow me to create an advantage in that I'm striking from such a close range. My priority at this point is to maintain and capitalize on that opportunity and disengage to escape. If further strikes are required in the process then this positioning presents me with a god chance to execute them. The common options that are available here allow me to ground my opponent as I place both hands on the back of their hand, keeping my hips and legs well back. Then driving their head down hard between their feet allows me to strike with any limb and escape.

## Sequence 4

This next sequence includes the set of *Soto Ude Uke* (Outside Forearm Block) and *Uchi Ude Uke* (Inside Forearm Block) at the start of the Kata - from movement 2 to movement 8 on page 13. This set of blocks are broken down into three pairs, with a *Sukui Uke* (Scooping Block) linking the second and third pairs.

For the purpose of the analysis, I will explore each pair in turn and will consider the following attributes:

- Whether the block is an "Inside" or "Outside" block
- Whether the block is executed on the "Standard" side - where the blocking arm matches the lead leg, or the "Reverse" side - where the front arm and lead are on opposing sides.



Inside Block on the **standard** side.



Inside Block on the **reverse** side.



## Sequence 4.1

Consider the first pair:

- Inside Forearm Block (Standard) & Inside Forearm Block (Reverse)

For clarity, Shotokan inside blocks are the ones that start across the front of my body and finish outwards away from the rear pulling hand. Other Passai practicing styles may reference this block as outside block. However, I will reference the Shotokan terminology in my descriptions. Nevertheless, the inside blocks are both executed from the *Hikite* position and, in the solo form, finish in *Zenkutsu Dachi* (Front Stance).

The nature of these blocks executed in a front stance captures and explicitly recognises the need to ensure that a good solid downward forearm strike – the *hikite*, is applied before striking back up again. This can be gained from taking either leg back when using the same lead arm in both cases.



Taking the same scenario as in Sequence 1, where my lapel is being seized, I choose to take control of my opponent's gripping hand with my nearest (rear) hand. Firstly, this ensures that I have a secure grip on it so that it remains attached acting as an anchor from which their body moves when I apply the impending downward forearm smash.

Secondly, should my opponent voluntarily choose to release their grip to aid their attack/control, I can adjust and move accordingly, as I feel their hand move through the tactile connection I've made.

Accompanying this controlling movement, with my lead arm, I raise it up in front of me for protection, should I need to cover or clear any follow up attacks from my opponent.

Immediately I start to shift my body weight down and backwards as I use my rear leg (in this case it's the one on the same side as my rear hand) to step back, taking their anchored hand with me and creating a greater distance away from their rear shoulder. Upon grounding my rear leg, keeping upright, I use my lead arm to forearm smash downwards onto their now straightened lead arm – aiming to contact just below their elbow joint. This will drop my opponent's lead shoulder and head forwards and down towards my lead arm. Immediately, I oppose the downward smash and whilst pivoting around my elbow, I use the blade of my inner (thumb side) forearm to strike up and around to their

neck area. This proves very effective as I have anchored their lead hand with my rear hand, tethering them as I strike.



A point to note about these two stepping inside blocks executed whilst stepping back (with either leg) into front stance, is that these are particularly useful and become necessary when the grip from the opponent has degraded into a position of physical dominance. Where the opponent's grip is strong enough that their arm bends and straightens causing my balance to be broken and caught in an ebb and flow motion. I would choose to step back at the time when it is most advantageous for me given that I may not have the mechanical advantage prior to execution. This will be further explored in *Chapter 5 – Bunkai Training Drills*.

The Kata immediately follows this inside forearm block with another one on the reverse side. Within the Kata is the acknowledgment that in the chaos of being gripped and controlled, I may choose to step my body weight back using either leg. The same end result is achieved, however, with taking the reverse (to the lead arm) leg backwards, the opponent's lead arm is pulled back through a purposeful twisting of the torso. The lead arm still smashes up and out onto my opponent's jaw/neck as the main strike.



## Sequence 4.2

Considering the next pair of blocks in the Kata, sees the introduction of an outside block. Shotokan outside blocks start from outside the flanks of the body and swing across the centre line finishing on the side of the rear pulling hand.

- Outside Forearm Block (Reverse) & Inside Forearm Block (Standard)

Here the blocks are captured as a pair. The second block I seek to use as in Sequence 6.1 - forearm smash downwards, then upwards again. The first block is included in support of the second in that it allows me to gain the correct positioning from which to strike.



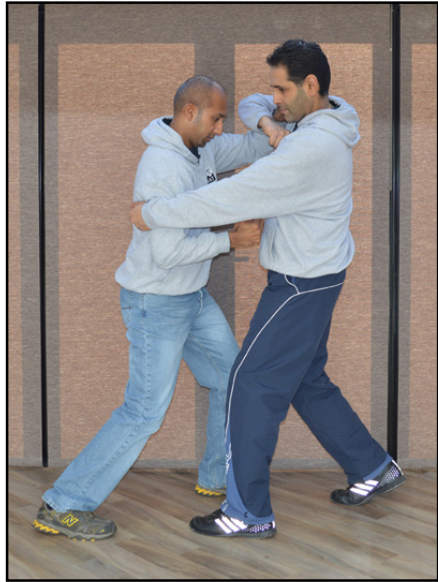
The scenario here is that my opponent has seized the rear of my shoulder area from a now closer clinch type range. Their leading arm is fed under my upper arm as they secure a grip in an attempt to gain control of me.

I use the Outside Forearm Block (Reverse) to maneuver into a better position so that I can secure their leading hand such that it attaches above my upper arm – allowing me the control.

My footwork is important in this motion as I need to move away and around towards their closed side and away from their rear arm. I move my foot that is closest to the direction of travel out and away from them. In doing so, my rear arm swings across the centre line so that my elbow clears their outstretched arm. Once here, I drive my elbow down and back across so that my hand is able to secure a grip on theirs after having traveled under their arm.

From here, I execute the Inside Forearm Block (Standard) as in Sequence 6.1 above. My sideways positioning relative to my opponent allows me to strike the rear their neck area and facilitates a good escape route away.

During my initial grip/disengage (Outside Forearm Block – Reverse) my pulling *hikite* hand is used to control my opponent or protect me from being struck or gripped with their other arm.



## Sequence 4.3

The last sequence in this section of the Kata includes three blocks, the first of which is executed at an angle to the preceding technique. This is followed up by a pair of blocks in the same direction.

- Scooping Block (Standard) & Outside Forearm Block (Standard) & Inside Forearm Block (Reverse)

The scooping block is applied as a next layer of choice to further aid in the disengaging of my opponents grip and gain a combative advantage. Executed at an angle, allows me to gain the mechanical advantage over my opponent, a key to gaining control of their limb.

The grip pictured below left represents a snapshot taken during the altercation and once the grip is set, my opponent looks to strike out with their rear arm.

I scoop my opponents lead arm in the crook of my elbow, and thrust it across and upwards as I skirt my back leg around and away from their free rear arm.

My rear arm that is securing a grip on their seizing hand is immediately released and used to strike out to my opponent's head serving as the first all-important attack. Also, it allows me to keep my opponent at a safe distance to avoid being grappled at close range. After the strike, my scooping arm now thrusts upwards and hooks up and outside as a chamber position for the next Outside Forearm Block (Standard) as a strike. This strike is performed as I drive in with the leg on the same side as the striking arm. My rear arm seizes my opponent's head/shoulder as I advance.





The last Inside Forearm Block (Reverse) is again a follow up option should it be required. Once the previous Outside Forearm Block (Standard) has been applied, I will be close to my opponent, and ideally not so close that all-out grappling is probable. However, if the range does degenerate to such, it is important that I take further control of my opponent to enable primary strikes and/or effective escape. I now can use the Inside Forearm Block (Reverse) to reach around the back of their head and secure a grip on their face/ear and pull back around driving my elbow down hard into their body whilst turning their head. This gives me valuable time to shift my body to the favourable side of my opponent.



Note again, that once sufficient distance from my opponent has been attained such that core strikes can be executed, then these should be my primary option. The Kata is presenting choices as secondary motions to enable those primary strikes to be applied.

Therefore not every technique as set out in the Kata should be taken consecutively as a matter of course.

## Sequence 5

Consider now the case where after the initial grab by my opponent and I use *Hikite* to control their lead arm and strike out, that my opponent covers up and obstructs a clear route to their head / neck area.

Here I explore the various *Shuto Uke* (Knife Hand Block) in the Kata as a way of dealing with this common instinctive opponent response. Bassai Dai/Passai features several separate instances of Knife Hand Block.

Due to the complementary motions that each arm takes, and the high speed and fluidity at which it can be executed, *Shuto Uke* (Knife Hand Block) is one of the most effective motions to apply for clearing and controlling limbs. All to facilitate a clear route to the opponent's neck jaw area for striking with the lead forearm.



## Sequence 5.1

Consider the two pairs of *Shuto Uke* (Knife Hand Block) that are executed in the north-south direction. The Kata contains them in pairs in one direction (north) then a few moves later in the opposite direction (south). This is an explicit way of acknowledging that I may need to apply these blocks head on facing my opponent, on both sides of body and to preserve symmetry.

For the sake of clarity, I'll describe two versions of how the Knife Hand Block can be applied, and will reference them in subsequent explanations.

Although the two versions differ, they are both forearm smashes across the jaw/neck line. Where they differ is in their preparation, and how the rear arm controls my opponent.



## Shuto Uke - Version 1

The preparatory phase of the block is to clear my opponents lead arm as it's obstructing a clear striking path to their head. In this version, I choose to swat my opponent's arm across them and towards their rear shoulder, throwing it back slightly. I control their lead arm by pinning it across their front. I simultaneously cover my own face area as I chamber my rear arm in preparation for the forearm strike. The strike occurs whilst in *Kokutsu Dachi* (Back Stance). Although this stance by definition means that more of my weight is distributed on my rear leg, I'm still able to generate enough forward drive for an effective strike. In fact, Knife Hand Block in Back Stance is favoured over Front Stance because of the fact that I'm able to drive my front foot forward (and between my opponent's legs) and away from me whilst still maintaining an effective range from which to strike. If executed in Front Stance, I run the risk of my torso being over committed such that agility is hampered.



## Shuto Uke - Version 2

The second version of Knife Hand Block clears my opponent's lead arm in the other direction to that in Version 1. I swat my opponent's arm from the centre across them and towards their lead shoulder, opening a path to their head. I choose to my lead hand for this movement as I seek to clear limbs with the palm side of my hand moving from outside my centre line to across it. Once I've made my initial sweep of their arm, I immediately shoot my rear arm under my lead hand and out straight so that it jams their arm preventing it from swinging back into the centre again. I ensure my rear foot is directly under my hips and with a bent leg ready to drive my front foot forward between their legs and under their hips. Once their arm is cleared, I continue to shoot my rear arm forward and arc it around and down so that I can pin it along my ribs with my inner arm. At this point I squeeze my rear elbow to my body, making a secure connection with my opponent, and pull them close to me whist throwing out my forearm to strike them at their neck/jaw. The forward drive of my front leg allows me to turn sideways augmenting the simultaneous movement of my arms.



Note, that once Knife Hand Block has been executed effectively, the end result will facilitate further primary or secondary strikes. The ability to adapt and transition into finishing strikes and/or escape must be always sought.

## Sequence 5.2

In the next section, the Kata motions featured in Bassai Dai and Passai differ significantly, but are recording the same combative principles. For completeness, I will address each kata separately.

After the first pair of Knife Hand Blocks, the next pair of movements is different in each version of the kata.

- **Bassai Dai:** Knife Hand Block forwards then Knife Hand Block backwards
- **Passai:** Knife Hand Block forwards then Circular Block backwards

### Bassai Dai

Knife Hand Block forwards then Knife Hand Block backwards:

The first of the Knife Hand Blocks is executed as in Version 1 above. The kata addresses the stepping back with another Knife Hand Block as a way of dealing with further instinctive opponent based responses. From the Knife Hand Block position, my rear arm is controlling the lead arm of my opponent. Their response is to with their free rear arm, to push me away on my outer side. I immediately use my lead striking arm to cover and catch their arm and trap it against my side along my ribs whilst stepping back and pulling them onto another Knife Hand Block as a strike as in Version 2.



The next movements in Bassai Dai are essentially a set up for the Yoko Geri Kekomi (Side Thrust Kick) followed by the kick itself. The kata now records another opponent based instinctive response but from the Version 2 Knife Hand Block.

My opponent uses their free rear hand to reach under my lead arm and seize my throat. My striking arm is used to sweep (with the palm of my hand) their seizing hand off of my throat and at the same time securing their arm as I move onto their outer side. With my rear arm, I release the grip on them and shoot it along the side of their head and grip them behind their neck and securing it again. The secure hold is augmented by snaking my hand around their neck with downward pressure, whilst simultaneously pushing my rear hand across my opponent's centre line. This pins my opponent whilst I'm grounded having stepped further forward with my lead leg into Front Stance when gripping their neck.



The Side Thrust Kick is then wound up and executed to my opponents, now vulnerable leg structure. Aiming at the knee joint at an oblique angle with the downward thrusting force of this kick will collapse their knee, facilitating an effective escape.



## Passai

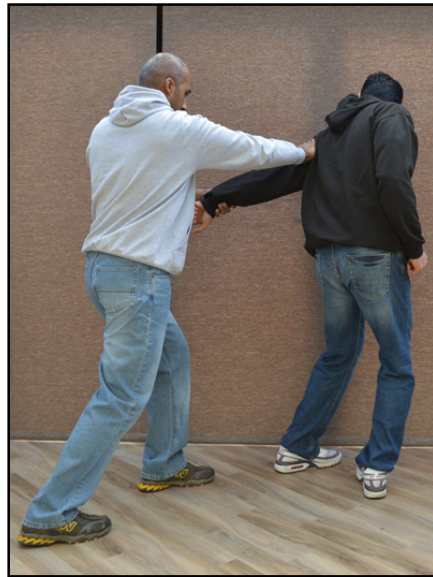
Knife Hand Block forwards then Circular Block backwards:

The first of the Knife Hand Blocks is executed as in Version 1 above. However, the next movement is a stepping back into *Mawashi Uke* (Circular Block). In Bassai Dai, this stepping backwards motion was used to deal with an incoming strike/push, and then from there the next movement (set up for the side kick) was used to deal with a throat grab. In Passai, the stepping back into Circular Block deals with the throat grab and forms the set up for the kick itself.

From the Knife Hand Block Version 1 position, my rear arm is pinning my opponent's lead arm across their centre line. Here my opponent responds instinctively and uses their free rear hand to reach under my lead arm and seize my throat. My striking arm is used to sweep (with the palm of my hand) their gripping hand off of my throat and at the same time securing their arm as I move off onto their outer side. I follow up with my other hand to sweep the arm in the same direction, in a circular motion. This is performed whilst stepping backwards and into *Neko Ashi Dachi* (Cat Stance). Being shorter than Back stance, means I create further distance between me and my opponent whilst still being in striking range. Once their arm is swept off my throat and across the centre line, I immediately push my right hip forward as I twist and grab their arm with both hands to set up for the Side Thrust Kick.







In both above cases (Bassai Dai and Passai), the motions within the Kata acknowledges the need to address instinctive opponent based responses from core positions where limbs are being controlled. I move from a position of disadvantage to advantage, by either the Bassai Dai version (stepping back Knife Hand Block) or Passai version (Stepping back Circular Block).

## Sequence 5.3

The next technique in this sequence is the first Knife Hand Block of a trio performed at the very end of the kata. It is executed at a 45° angle to the usual north-south line. There are differences in the way these are performed in Bassai Dai and Passai, but again, the conveyed combative principles are aligned.

With this three motion sequence, the first one is used as in the version 1 instance of Knife Hand Block – the clearing limbs obstructing the path to the target before striking. The second is dealing with another opponent based instinctive response. The third, like the first, applies a Knife Hand Block again, as a way of dealing with that response.

The inclusion of the Knife Hand Blocks being performed at 45° explicitly acknowledges that I can and should execute them at that angle relative to my opponent. The nature of the angle means that for both Knife Hand Block versions, a better mechanical and combative advantage is gained over my opponent.

In Version 1 as I swat my opponent's offending arm, I move off line and towards their outer side. This gives me a straight path along the same line to drive my front foot in towards my opponent, coupled with the forearm strike.

For completeness, the same applies to Version 2, once I have made my initial sweep of their arm; I immediately shoot my rear arm under my lead hand and out straight so that it jams their arm. In doing this I ensure my rear foot moves out at 45° towards my opponent's lead shoulder. Then this sets the straight line direction for my front foot to drive forward between their legs and under their hips, simultaneously applying the strike. The moving back out at angle when trapping my opponent's lead arm ensures that their rear free arm is thrown backwards preventing it from easily reaching me.

Having executed the Version 1 Knife Hand Block at 45°, my opponent swings their free rear hand at my head. I use the palm of rear hand to cover their strike, and thrust my other arm up high to catch and trap their arm. In doing so, I drive in towards my opponent (at 90° to the last Knife Hand Block) closing down the distance between us. This motion is essentially the second Knife Hand Block. Once in this position, I stay on this new oblique angle on a straight line and step up with my rear leg so that my foot is under my hips, prepare my lead hand across my neck, my rear arm traps my opponent's lead arm along my side as I then drive in with the forearm strike.

Essentially, I am executing only two Knife Hand Block's at movements one and three. The second motion, which is recorded as a Knife Hand Block in itself (Bassai Dai) and a Knife Hand Block preparation (Passai) is purely an explicit way of recording the need to transition from one Knife Hand Block to another on the other side whilst dealing with an opponent instinctive response.



## Sequence 6

The next sequence consists of the stepping back into a double *Age Uke* (Upper Block) followed by *Hiza Geri* (Knee Kick), double *Tettsui Uchi* (Hammer Fist Strike) and *Oi Zuki* (Step Punch).

My need to step back and raise my arm arises because my opponent had closed the distance between us and is attempting to seize me by the lapels.

I immediately withdraw to avoid a rapid closure of distance between me and my opponent, whilst driving both my arms up and between their arms so that my hands make contact with their forehead, also keeping any potential head butting under control and away from my head/face area.

I now splay both my elbows up and outwards to disengage their grip and maintain an advantage. I use my placement of hands on their forehead as an anchor from which to weaken their grip.



The tense and frantic nature of this kind of close in altercation means it's important that I execute strikes as soon as possible and gain the advantage. I drive forward and strike both hammer fists to either side of their throat.

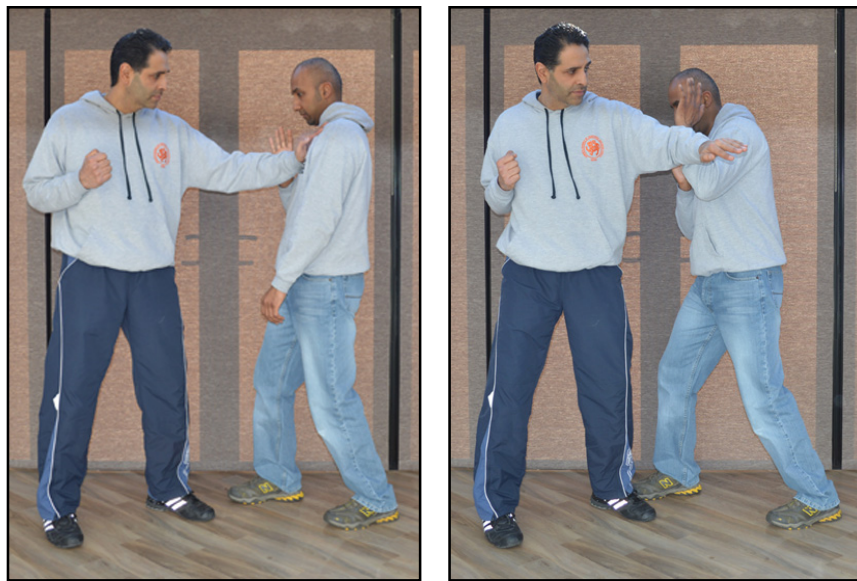


This gives me the opportunity to execute further strikes in the form of a stepping punch. Our close in fighting range means I may well have to strike with the inside of my elbow joint as I extend my punching arm straight out and passed their head area. This gives me the all important time and positioning required to execute primary strikes at arms length.

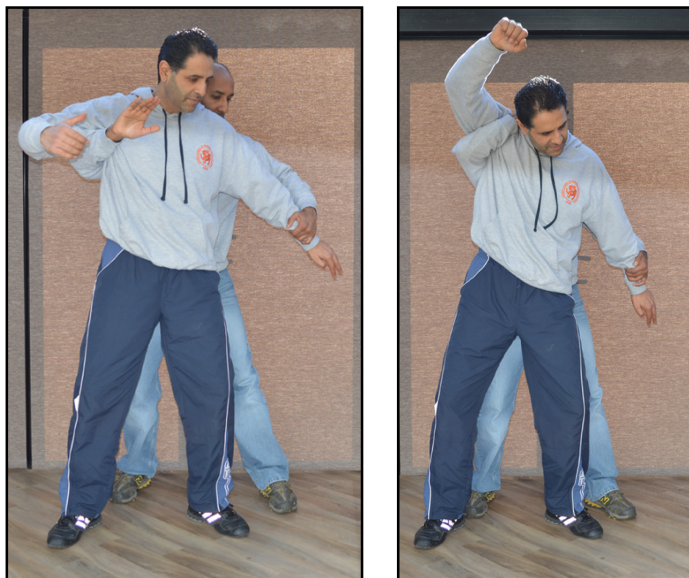
The knee lift, which is also used in two other points in the Kata, is not necessarily a knee strike, but an explicit way of ensuring maximal forward drive.

## Sequence 7

This sequence deals with a scenario where my opponent's lapel grab is preceded by a push to the chest. Through good awareness and focus, a hard shove to the chest is detectable early enough that its effects can be lessened. Here I swat my opponent's lead arm on the elbow side just as it makes contact with my chest. As I commit to this motion, I move off the centre line and away from their rear arm. This allows me to move onto their blind side and execute the *Manji Uke* (angular block) as the main technique to apply.



As I swat their lead arm, I immediately raise my other arm alongside such that it pins their arm and provides with me with a reference path around their side. As I step around to their side, I immediately locate their lead arm with mine and pull it down and away from me, aiding my stepping motion. This allows me to use my free arm to feed it under theirs and locate the back of their head, so that their shoulder is unstable. As soon as their rear hands rises to locate mine, I seize their wrist giving me better control. The back stance allows me to keep directly behind my opponent hampering their ability to turn into me. Also, keeping my weight on back foot helps me to keep their seized rear arm up high away from their centre – a position of strength for them.





This position is purely one of transition, I need to execute a finishing motion. If I was to dwell here, I could be over powered very quickly and face having to grapple my way to a primary strike.

The next motion in this sequence is the *Fumikomi Geri* (Stamping Kick)/*Gedan Barai* (Lower Block) in *Kiba Dachi* (Straddle Stance)

I make use of the fact that I have my rear arm high and behind me, as it acts as a chambered position from which to execute the next motion. Acting like a lever, my rear arm executes the *Gedan Barai*, and coupled with the *Fumikomi Geri*, as a take down. The key to the successful grounding of my opponent is to utilise the correct footwork. The *Fumikomi Geri* is used as a stamping kick to the floor whilst turning. I use my lower arm as a lever to turn my opponent causing their balance to break, at this point, my upper most arm also rotates in the same direction and drives down as they topple.





It's important that once my opponent is grounded, that I remain upright with my shoulders directly above my hips so that I can retreat and make my escape.



## Sequence 8

In this sequence, the *Fumikomi Geri* (Stamping Kick) / *Gedan Barai* (Lower Block) in *Kiba Dachi* (Straddle Stance) can also be used as a follow up for my grounded opponent in **Sequence 2.2**. This particular sequence looked at the execution of the pair of *Sukui Uke* (Scooping Block).



In this case I take the opportunity to drive in and down onto my opponent. As I gain control of them via their gripping arm, I execute a downward forearm smash to their jaw area.

Immediately I turn my body such that my opponent's gripping arm is trapped against my body. This ensures that they turn away from me and towards the ground at their front.

In doing the turn, I prepare my free hand as I step through across their front and smash my forearm down onto their jaw area again.



## Chapter 5

### Kata Combat Bunkai Training Drills

I stated in the first two chapters that in order to fully derive benefit from Bunkai practice, our training needs to be fit for purpose. We must pressure test our Bunkai motions through live drills with non-compliant opponents. Whatever skill or combative principle is being trained, we must acknowledge that the motions will become chaotic and messy. As a result we may well find the act of overpowering the opponent will become frustrating and more dangerous in the process. Therefore sensible safety measures must be incorporated into any live drill of this kind without detracting from the combative intention.

For further reading on training drills in general, I refer you my articles:

- ***Kata Combat Article – Bunkai Training Drills Part 1***
- ***Kata Combat Article – Bunkai Training Drills Part 2***

Both articles are included in the appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

Below are **three** progressive Kata Combat Training Drills that can be used as part of Bassai Dai/Passai Kata practice.

Each drill begins with a starting position or scenario from which to work from. The purpose of the drill is to then execute the most appropriate sequence from the above sequences. The drills are grouped into like sections that make for effective execution.

Each drill is layered so that once the primary sequence is executed, the secondary sequence can be utilised depending on the outcome of the primary sequence. This gives the drills their live, flowing and chaotic nature and as a result will test both the exponent and opponent physically and mentally.

It's important to keep in mind that my aim is to use the sequences and motions from the kata to derive a position of combative advantage. I should always seek to exploit this derived position and employ primary striking motions to end the threat and facilitate an escape.

# Kata Combat Training Drill 1

## Appease the seize

This is a two person drill, but of course can be extended to involve multiple opponents.

We both start in facing each other, and from a static position, my opponent secures a single arm grab to my lapel. I execute the *hikite* and forearm strike as a pair of opposing movements as in **Sequence 1** the purpose it gain confidence and combative competence in disengaging and striking back before escaping.

The second stage is for my opponent to apply the grip again but from a freely moving position. To recreate the chaotic nature of a physical altercation we both move around and I swat away any weak attempts at grabbing, forcing my opponent to add pressure to secure the hold. I continue to strike out until I create an opportunity to execute the *hikite* and forearm strike as a pair of opposing movements. Now I may well have to deal with the options as addressed above in **Sequences 1 & 2**. Once I've disengaged and backed off to escape, we immediately close the distance between us and start the process again adding variety and intensity as we go.

In the third stage, we introduce the need for me deal with instinctive reactions as given by my opponent. These reactions are in response to my striking out. Here I look to isolate the skills required in the execution of *Shuto Uke* (Knife Hand Block) as detailed in **Sequence 5**. The aim is to deal with the initial grip effectively through striking as captured in the kata. The grip is either disengaged or made sufficiently weak such that I can then execute primary strikes to allow my escape.

In the fourth and final stage of the drill, we explore clinch scenarios. If through drilling the above third stage scenarios the fight moves results in a close in clinch, then I immediately move onto the anti-grappling type motions as captured in **Sequences 3, 4 & 6**.

## Kata Combat Training Drill 2

### Integration and the *Shuto Uke*

As I progress through the previous drill, it will mean that I execute primary strikes in support of the motions as laid out in the kata itself. This is what I refer to as integration. It is these primary strikes that I focus on in this next drill.

My opponent and I run through the previous drill above. Once their initial grip is detached and I strike, my opponent covers with their lead arm as an act of self-preservation. I then drill my ability to clear their arm that is obstructing my strikes from reaching the target effectively and execute the *Shuto Uke* as another strike as detailed in **Shuto Uke Version 1 & Version 2** in **Sequence 5**.

From this point, my opponent freely presents the responses as covered in **Sequence 5.2** and beyond.

- Push away
- Grab throat
- Pushes away then grab throat
- Swinging rear arm strike

In order for the drill to test the diversity of the *Shuto Uke*, the above opponent reactions are drilled in any order. My opponent uses my primary strike as the trigger to cover and tests my ability to apply the *Shuto Uke*, which in turn prompts another opponent reaction.

This process of primary striking then dealing with opponent's instinctive reactions using the principles from the Bassai Dai/Passai to then facilitate my escape; is the essence of kata bunkai training.

## Kata Combat Training Drill 3

### Padded Value

Leading on from the above two training drills, I now add in my primary strikes as my opponent feeds that focus mitts as a target. To keep the drill both simple and practical I choose a primary strike to execute like a straight rear hand punch for instance. My training partner feeds just the one focus mitt as my target, their other pad free hand acts as the hand they grab me with.

The drill starts with me executing a barrage of the above primary strikes, at full power whilst my opponent moves around keeping the target mobile. After a few strikes, they attempt to grab my lapel in order secure a hold. I keep mobile and continue to strike and evade until I maneuver in a suitable to position so that I can execute the *hikite* and forearm strike as a pair of opposing movements as in **Sequence 1**.

I'm now at the point where we can flow onto the either or both of the previous two drills.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the above chapters show how the Kata Bassai Dai/Passai, through the analysis of the techniques and principles therein provide realistic applications to combat. The need to adapt techniques during combat is addressed within the Kata.

Understanding the above principles upon which the techniques contained in the Kata Bassai Dai/Passai are based, is the first step in deriving benefit from practicing Kata.

Considering a theme that characterise the Kata, can provide a guide on how to utilise the techniques within. The theme explored in the eBook is just one instance of how a set of principles can be applied to combat. Choosing alternative themes will ultimately highlight other complimentary principles – there is no one set of ‘correct’ applications for the Kata. We as the exponent use the Kata as a packaged set of techniques to explore their implications to combat, and as an exercise, makes for great pragmatic training.

To facilitate progression within our practice, it’s important to drill the above techniques within training scenario such that they have to be exercised under increasing pressure. Live drills like the ones covered in Chapter 5 can be used to test the exponent with minimal compliance from the opponent. To make the drills fluid and adaptive, choose to mix and link techniques from any section of the Kata, and not be limited by the order in which they are practiced and grouped. The first set of movements in the Kata is not necessarily the first to consider when applying progressive layers to training drills.

Whichever theme you select, stick with it and explore which skills and principles are being exuded. Devise training drills that pressure test how well your combative execution supports the principles. This evolving process is what makes our training combat focused and enjoyable, and coupled with solo Kata Competence practice, ensures we derive the most from our Kata.

The material herein serves as guide to the training on Bassai Dai/Passai I conduct in my own Kata Combat classes and at external clubs and organisations in seminars.

To book your own seminar, please contact me at [Rakesh@Rakesh-Patel.com](mailto:Rakesh@Rakesh-Patel.com) for further details.

To see information of events, news, free articles and more downloads, visit my website [www.Rakesh-Patel.com](http://www.Rakesh-Patel.com)

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For more information on KSTSK, please visit the website [www.kstsk.co.uk](http://www.kstsk.co.uk)

# Appendix 1

## Kata Combat Article – Duality of Theme



Every Kata can be viewed from two perspectives: Kata for effective combat and Kata for competence.

Kata Combat is primarily concerned with the effective application of the techniques and principles found within the Karate Kata. Studying the techniques and applications and combat principles, effectiveness is tested in live drills. Kata competence is concerned purely with the practice of solo kata where emphasis is placed on demonstrating correct form along with all the elements that constitute Kata excellence.

In some ways this approach contrasts that of Kata Combat, but serves as a precursor to fully understanding the principles upon which the kata techniques and motions are based.

Every Kata has a duality of theme: one for performing the Kata as a standalone form (Kata Competence), and the other for applying the techniques to combat (Kata Combat). This duality of theme can be seen in all kata but tend to be more prominent in what are commonly classed as the intermediate and advanced Kata, this is due to the diversity of the techniques contained in them.

In some cases a collection of Kata share the same overall theme and are linked by the theme itself. The Heian/Pinan Kata series are all separate Kata in their own right and each require different levels of competence when performing them correctly. When grouped as a series of Kata, they show logical effective combative progression.

At inception, Anko Itosu formulated the Pinan/Heian series to serve as a summary of an entire fighting system.

Shotokan Karate kata are referenced by their more modern Japanese names rather than their former Okinawan/Chinese sourced names. It is known that Gichin Funakoshi recognised both the combative and competence aspects of Kata. When he relabeled many of the Kata with Japanese names, he chose them based on the solo performance characteristics embodied in the kata. For example, the Kata Chinto, which was named in honour of the martial artist "Chinto" was renamed to Gankaku. In this context "Gankaku" means "Crane on a Rock" because of the Katas' prominent inclusion of techniques executed from a crane like stance (as shown above).

Furthermore when Funakoshi renamed the Pinan series to Heian, he also switched the order in which Pinan Shodan and Pinan Nidan were taught and performed. Pinan Shodan became Heian Nidan, and Pinan Nidan became Heian Shodan.

The decision was based on the competence theme as clearly Pinan Shodan is the more technically difficult of the two kata to execute in solo practice. The Heian Kata were utilised in a Karate School based curriculum and exposed to new populations, unfamiliar to Karate. This facilitated a more manageable learning curve for new students. It's important to acknowledge that the original order of the Pinan Kata was based purely on their combative function. Pinan Shodan and Pinan Nidan, as a pair introduce and build upon respectively, the combative striking fundamentals of Karate.

In the Shotokan style, the Kata Jion and Jiin are very closely linked by both competence and combat themes. As a specific example, consider Jion in its own right. Regarding the competence, Jion as a standalone form contains big, bold techniques in the basic core stances: front, back and straddle. The format is similar to that of the Heian/Pinan Kata with the prominent use of North-East-South-West directions (North to South directional techniques use 4 steps) and are almost symmetric. This may explain why it is a compulsory (*shitei*) Kata at WKF Kata competitions. It tests how well the competitors can form basic techniques within the realms of competitive Kata.



In terms of the combative theme, Jion presents explicit choices in the application of the various techniques. For example in the sequence of the three Age Uke (upper block) combinations leading up to the first Kiai, the first two in the sequence are performed with a Gyaku Zuki (reverse punch) as a follow up and the last precedes an Oi Zuki (stepping punch).

This shows that the creator is aware of the choice between punching on the spot or moving with forward drive as the opponent reels back during the physical fight. These choices exist because, in a fight, things are not guaranteed to go to plan. The Kata will not provide every possible answer but assumes a certain instinctive response from the opponent.

Considering Jiin as a Kata that can be grouped with Jion, it too inherits the same duality of theme that its elder Jion exhibits. Jiin, however from a competence perspective is shorter and contains very similar core movements albeit with slight differences in grouping, angles and transitions. From a combat perspective, some of the combinations grouped in Jion are either expanded (more choice) or abbreviated (assumed learning). Jiin essentially builds on the already established choices presented in Jion and also assumes the creator has the prior benefit of the principles that Jion records without overstating them.

Combination expansion in Jiin can be seen in its use of Kakiwake Uke (Wedge Block). The kata Jiin includes the same sequence as in Jion, with the addition of another Kosa Uke (Cross Block). Combination abbreviation can be seen at the start of Jiin where two single Manji Uke (Angular blocks) are performed consecutively without any following up techniques. In Jion, Manji Uke (Angular Block) is present in two separate places and in both cases, precedes a separate follow up.

A thorough exploration of the relationship between Jion and Jiin is covered in my article *Kata Combat – A Kata Evolution*.

Having expanded on the notion of a duality of theme, the question arises, how do we ascertain the Katas' themes to suit us?

Firstly, like the Kata Bunkai itself, the themes are not fixed as they are subjective.

In order to decipher for ourselves we should follow a simple process where key points are considered in the analysis of the Kata movements, from both a competence and combative perspective. Kata elements like stances, angles, rhythm, timing and grouping, symmetry and repetition, preparatory and intermediate movements, consistency and redundancy are some of the key factors that influence theme from both competence and combat perspectives.

Given that kata are ways to record the true combative principles in Karate history, why is it important to consider themes its two perspectives?

There are several reasons, but the main one is the analysis and appreciation of technique.

Since there is little or no hard evidence of what the original true combative applications that Kata record, it is necessary to look to the Kata movements themselves and analyse them according to the guidelines stated above. We should be looking to apply the Kata bunkai in a way that is based on foundation and rules. Motions found in Kata are a collection of techniques that can be compartmentalised into their respective silos. A similar approach can be used when applying the techniques and motions to combat. We acknowledge that blocks will not be used for blocking and kicks will not reach much higher than knee height, but essentially we are forming a complimentary foundation and set of rules upon which the bunkai is based.

Having a baseline understanding of how the Kata techniques are supposed to be executed and an appreciation of the different shapes that we make with our bodies, helps when applying the kata to combat. Very few kata techniques are applied as they are executed in solo form. Some applications far removed from the emphasis of the Kata technique that only the overall shape determines the link between them. The relentless execution of literally thousands of differentiated blocks, punch, kicks and strikes practiced in Kata, prepares us for learning to apply them to combat.

Take your favourite kata and ask yourself, why it is your favourite. The answer will probably be based on one of the two themes. For example you may like Tekki (Niahanchi) for its lack of stepping and pivoting, and for having to generate adequate power from the ground up using stance - well that's definitely a theme, especially as the kata is performed in a straight line. How does that relate to the combative emphasis that Tekki exudes? It's certainly not necessarily performed in a straight line. What about the static stances that restricts full body movement – what can we deduce from this? Maybe, this is the creators way of appreciating and capturing the fact that we must execute the same technique multiple times until the target is either not available (and requiring alternative action) or the opponent ceases to be a danger. Striking multiple times using the same technique requires effective body management and requires an overall oscillating body movement. This is a luxury that we cannot rely on in the chaos of a fight.

The intention of this article is not to list the duality of themes of every kata, but rather to introduce the kata theme as a concept. I hope this serves as food for thought and you incorporate theme analysis into your kata training and study.

Rakesh Patel

## Appendix 2

### Kata Combat Article – Bunkai Training Drills Part 1

I state in 'Practical Applications for the Kata Jion' that Kata were originally intended to capture the 'highlights' of an effective combative system. The distillate of this system survived over generations as it had an inherent aid memoir that enabled the practitioner to communicate it to his incumbent generation. As a result of the balance needed between reliance on memory and the need to maintain the principles of Kata, an optimal and not limitless number of movements exist.

We expect Kata therefore to contain everything we need to effectively train for combat, but not necessarily laid out in an order that is immediately usable. We should however, acknowledge that the Kata exist as a suite of techniques bound by a strong theme of principles, and that to effectively use these techniques, we need to extract their highlights and entrench them in the kata.

This article attempts to prescribe some training drills that inherit benefit from the Kata. For example I'll walk you through a simple Bunkai training drill that is based on some key Kata Combat concepts. These concepts are explicitly identified in this article.

These techniques are best utilised when integrated into core fighting motions. Our approach should be that every Kata technique has a situational purpose and to derive optimal use from Kata training, that these kata techniques be extracted and practiced in Bunkai training drills. All Kata do, however have characteristics that form a common theme. It is important that we maximise the benefit of the training drill through exercising these theme characteristics within the training drill or drills.

The Kata techniques that we integrate into our existing offensive fighting motions should be motions that make up our main offensive artillery, like punching and striking. Common gross fighting techniques consist of fore fist type punches, open hand and club like strikes. These form the *primary* level attacks in our arsenal. Although these specific techniques are all found within Kata it's important to note that they are not always explicitly emphasised as their applicability and suitability is assumed elsewhere in the Kata.

We should acknowledge that in order to approach Kata Combat training seriously, we should be practicing our self-defence skills (physical) within our self-protection (non-physical) skills in the form of pre-emptive and in-fight strikes. We should choose to drill a small number of core strikes a large number of times to ensure quality and reliability in our offensive artillery. We should also be practicing offensive repetition of our core fighting techniques with forward drive to instill the mindset that our opponent can, and will remain a danger to us until sufficient pressure is applied to enable an escape. It is at this stage that our *secondary* level motions are utilised. Usually our secondary level motions are dictated by and are made in response to the outcomes of our primary strikes and are therefore executed out of necessity rather than choice.

With this in mind, I take my left cross (Reverse Punch) as the primary attacking technique. I then consider my opponent's various instinctive responses; in this drill I use three. In each case, my primary attack is succeeded by a series of secondary motions supporting my need to maintain and exploit combative advantage.

For the purpose of the drill, I suppose in each case, my opponent reacts to my initial strike by covering his head area with the arm positioned to best protect him from further follow up strikes. At this point that I will use a secondary technique (Downward Block) to clear this arm which is preventing me from striking successfully, to then expose the target again for the next primary level strike.



It must be stressed at this point that the above sequence should be executed with full commitment and confidence in the primary attack. Self doubting the effectiveness and outcome of the strikes can cloud the ability to then deal with the next stages of the fight. It is therefore important to progressively build on this drill to ensure that we are applying the Kata motions effectively. For this purpose, I have split the drill into stages.

For Stage 1, the drill can be practiced using focus pads enabling the techniques to be applied with maximum power and aggression whilst still having a training partner as the opponent. The initial strike is executed against the pad, my opponent then simulates the 'cover' by firmly placing his other hand flat against the pad. I then 'strip' this hand away in a downward block as directed in the Kata, creating another path through to the target for the next primary level strike.



This exercise is repeated several times to fully appreciate the idea of the opponent covering the target. However, I do not treat this simply as a memory and coordination exercise, executing one punch, one cover, then one further strike in that monotone order. I always intend to repeatedly strike the pad, until I need to take alternative action. When the target is covered, I react and strip my opponent's arm away, making way for another strike. My opponent may choose to only cover the target after I have struck it twice, thus varying the general rhythm of the techniques.

During this exercise, it may be that I hit the covering hand of my opponent, which is okay as long as I then take the alternative action and strip away his hand and not just continue hitting a null target.

To facilitate progression, my opponent starts to employ his own dynamic footwork and move around a bit. This forces me to engage my own footwork to ensure that my strike is executed from the optimal distance from my opponent.

It is here that I find the use of technique angles in Kata drills necessary. In the motion that strips my opponent's arm, I take the opportunity to pivot around slightly in the direction of his blind side – away from his free hand. This body shifting has three main benefits. Firstly it creates a more optimal path to the target as, from my opponent's perspective, the source of the follow up strike has changed. Secondly, the body shifting forces me to lift my rear leg slightly, and thus my weight, and then, as the rear leg is grounded again, my body weight is dropped as I perform the stripping motion. I have a better chance of clearing a path to my opponent's target area, especially as his arm is not likely to be held up in a weak defensive position. Another advantage is that in stripping my opponent's arm down, I also cause them to lose his balance augmenting the advantage that I have created thus far. Furthermore, the sudden dropping of my weight facilitates a good base from which to launch the second primary level attack.

For Stage 2, I then address three further possible instinctive reactions from my opponent.

- A. Opponent covers again and reels back
- B. Opponent drives forward in attack
- C. Opponent drops to floor in a kneeling position

At this stage, I progress onto executing my secondary motions.

In case A where my opponent covers again and reels back, I step forward and use Shuto Uke (Knife Hand Block) as my initial secondary level strike. In case B, I retreat and utilise Gedan Barai (Downward Block) again but as a control and restraint movement to enable further strikes. Case C allows me to use Hiza Geri (Knee Kick) to create a good opportunity to escape.

Now Consider case A in more detail.



As my opponent retreats, his seized arm is brought up again to cover his head. I keep the connection between us by extending my seizing arm and step towards him, using the same arm to execute Shuto Uke (Knife Hand Block) to strike to the side of his neck/jaw. As I advance, I use my free rear hand to slap his seized hand from my grasp, clearing a path again for the secondary strike. It is important to note that the range at which I strike is closer than previously, as now my forearm is making contact with my opponent. Being this close it is imperative that I maintain control over my opponent's cleared arm as at this range, the fight is liable to degrade to a grappling affair. Pinning his arm across his torso hinders his ability to secure a close grip. This positioning also renders it difficult for my opponent to execute a troubling strike with his rear hand.

For simplicity, no further strikes are shown in this particular drill, but it must be acknowledged that a reasonable escape opportunity must be created through further exploitation of the advantage gained so far.



In case B above where my opponent drives towards me, I harness his momentum and retreat again, whilst keeping the connection between us. I pull and twist his seized arm towards my rear hip - in the standard *hikite* motion. In order to ensure that I maintain the required distance from my opponent and to avoid grappling, I allow the arm that I have seized to act as an indicator of my opponent's motion. I should feel the distance between us rapidly diminish and this triggers me to retreat. *Gedan Barai* (Downward Block) is employed with my free hand as a lock and to control his seized arm. Pivoting around in an arc on his blind side protects me from being overpowered by his initiated advance.

Again, for simplicity, no further strikes are shown in this particular drill, but it must be acknowledged that a reasonable escape opportunity must be created through further exploitation of the advantage I've gained so far.



Case C above is the most optimal outcome for me as it presents me with the greatest advantage over my opponent to escape. My opponent, being in the kneeling position whilst I stand over them, has only a limited ability to redress the imbalance. However it is vital that I still execute a secondary strike. By using my seizing hand, I can release the grip and instead secure it firmly on the back my opponent's head. Pushing firmly downwards limits my opponent's ability to stand back up, and provides a reference point for my secondary level strike - the knee kick. As in all kicks, it is vital that I remain in control of my body during the kick and do not become light on my support leg. I therefore keep the kick at a sensible height i.e. at waist level. My weight is driven into the kick and my kicking leg is grounded straight after contact.

Again, for simplicity, no further strikes are shown in this particular drill, but it must be acknowledged that a reasonable escape opportunity must be created through further exploitation of the advantage gained so far.

Stage 3 of the drill is to perform it with total variability. My opponent dictates when to 'cover' after my initial strike, and when they do move again, they choose which of the three instinctive responses to emulate. The key to this stage of the drill is for my opponent to be unpredictable and not to give away which of the three cases to present me. This can be achieved by not only varying the actual case, but also to vary the gap between finishing the strikes and reverting to the 'start' again.

My opponent can test the practicality of my stripping of their arm by varying the strength at which it is kept in place; and can test that my bodyweight shifting is kept strong and does not impede my follow up strike.

Although the focus pad is used so that the initial strike can be fired with full impact, there is value in executing a controlled version of the above scenarios without the use of a focus pad. It allows to me to see and feel my initial strike landing (or not as the case may be) on the desired target.

An important note regarding Bunkai training drills is that they should be focussed and that they apply sound combat principles extracted from Kata. The premise is that the combative skill is acquired through executing the drill. The drills must also be kept simple and be scalable. Simplicity allows us to focus on the key principles and scalability allows us to extend these concepts in appreciation of just how chaotic combat is. Taking a stepwise approach to the drill and applying progression ensures that we are better equipped to deal with the chaos of combat. The ultimate manner in which to run a drill is where it best emulates reality whilst being bound by adequate control and safety. The drills have to be run live in order to satisfy these criteria and thus reap the associated benefits.

It is also important to establish what your own offensive primary striking motions and techniques are. Through hard training in these motions, a solid foundation from which to build is laid, and forms the basis of drills. The main focus of this drill was to integrate Kata motions as secondary level techniques into these already established primary level motions. In each of the three instinctive response cases, my chosen secondary level attacks are taken from kata, are not fixed, are consistently applied and are fit for purpose.

I hope this article serves a good starting point to incorporate, or better utilise, the techniques found in Kata into your Bunkai training drills. I encourage you to devise drills based around sequences and techniques found in kata, and integrate these as supporting techniques to your primary striking motions.

That concludes the first article in the **Kata Combat – Bunkai Training Drills** series. Further articles in this series will be available to download on [www.Rakesh-Patel.com](http://www.Rakesh-Patel.com) and will be communicated in the Newsletters.

Rakesh Patel



## Appendix 3

### Kata Combat Article – Bunkai Training Drills Part 2



I state in "Bunkai Training Drills Part 1" that in order for training drills to be effective, they should be focussed and apply the sound combat principles extracted from Kata. The drills must be kept simple and be scalable - simplicity allows us to focus on the key principles and scalability allows us to extend these concepts in appreciation of just how chaotic combat is. Taking a stepwise approach to the drill and applying progression ensures that we are better equipped to deal with the chaos of combat.

This article builds upon the methods described in Part 1. The drills outlined below are simple and based on some key Kata Combat concepts. These concepts are explicitly identified in this article.

We have established that when all out striking, it's our primary strikes that are first chosen, as it's their gross dynamics that makes them primary. However in the chaos of combat, it's absolutely vital we have a backup set of secondary motions in our arsenal. Simply placing all reliance on what we feel most comfortable with is both naive and dangerous.

We as martial artists must have the self-awareness to recognise when a switch from primary to secondary and vice versa is required. Executing trained primary techniques should be our first choice, but we must be able to adapt and employ the secondary when required. If having switched to secondary striking, we must then seek opportunities to revert back to primary striking as soon as is possible whilst maintaining an offensive mindset.

One could argue that this recognition is inherent within us, and one would naturally revert back to primary striking, as by definition that is the nature of a primary strike. However, it's our training that will dictate to what extent this prevails under the stresses of combat.

Let us address how we can train and test the ability to seamlessly employ primary and secondary strikes as part of our offensive attacks within the realms of self-protection and defence. To recap: In Part 1, I lead through an example where my straight left (Reverse Punch) was used as my primary strike. My opponent upon being struck, covered the impacted area, forcing me to 'strip' their arm away (Downward Block) so that I could continue the primary strike onslaught.

Preserving this simplicity, let us apply some scale to this drill and add an additional layer of variability – but variability in that we explore further the instinctive reactions from my opponent as a theme. To ensure that the Kata motions are applied effectively, it's important to progressively build on this drill. I've therefore divided the drill into stages.

The **first stage** addresses the increased scale. Essentially, I perform the drill as set out in Part 1 and then add on my own follow up strikes and actions from each of the 3 intermediate techniques:

1. Shuto Uke (Knife Hand Block)
2. Gedan Barai (Downward Block)
3. Hiza Geri (Knee Kick)

The **second stage** adds a further level of variability and pressure is added as my opponent now reacts instinctively to my follow up strikes. Here I seek to either continue the attack, or transition to primary strikes before making my escape.

The **third stage** puts the previous stages together and forms a drill that encompasses all the principles outlined so far. The drill tests application of those principles under increased pressure. The notion of switching between primary and secondary strikes whilst maintaining the forward combative drive and advantage is the theme marbled throughout the drill. The third stage is where all the previous elements of the drill are put together and run as a whole.

### **First Stage**

Leading on from Part 1, I explore the follow up strikes applicable from the three finishing positions. As an example, it must be stressed that the Knife Hand Block is purely a position of transition from secondary to ultimately primary strikes. The Knife Hand Block is a vital secondary technique as it ensures that the attacking onslaught is maintained. Therefore I have various choices as to how to transition to other effective (and ultimately primary) strikes. A key element is to choose and practice techniques that are effective under pressure. The most efficient way to ensure that I emerge the victor from the physical combat is to end it as soon as possible, and this means firing effective primary techniques. Any advantage that the secondary technique provides is not just maintained with further secondary strikes but exploited through further primary strikes. It's therefore critical to practice whilst under pressure, the ability to transform secondary strikes into primary strikes as quickly and effectively as possible.

The three secondary techniques presented in Part 1 are executed reactively to my opponent's instinctive actions (these are reactions to my primary left cross). I explore each one of these secondary techniques and record below the follow up technique(s) that they facilitate:

**1.1 Secondary Technique:** Shuto Uke (Knife Hand Block)  
**Follow up Technique(s):** Elbow Strike & Rear Hand Hook



The nature of this application of the Knife Hand Block means that I'm controlling one of my opponent's arms with one of mine whilst slamming my forearm into their neck with forward drive. This does mean however that they will have one 'free' arm with which to strike out. My priority is to strike quickly, effectively and in such a way that renders my opponent unable to strike back.

Knife Hand Block allows me to grasp my opponent's arm with my controlling rear hand whilst seamlessly striking their neck/jaw with the elbow of my front arm. What makes this elbow strike seamless is the starting position; it's effectively executed from the finishing position of the actual Knife Hand Block forearm smash, making for an efficient transition of techniques.

The elbow strike is a secondary strike. Due to its quick and effective execution from my lead arm, it has two main attributes in my favour:

- It distracts my opponent from using their free arm in attack or defence
- Sets up my rear hand primary shot



In executing the elbow strike, bearing the above two key points in mind, implies that I move off at a slight angle away from my opponent's free arm – this shift, both moves me away from their free arm as well as facilitating the following primary strike. The move off at an angle also allows me to strike optimally as in shifting my body weight through footwork, facilitates a true strike form the floor upwards as my rear foot is grounded.

In shifting off to angle I replace my rear controlling hand of my opponent's arm, with my lead hand – rather like an abbreviated "Arm Drag" found in grappling/wrestling disciplines. This also aids in avoiding further action from my opponent's rear arm by turning their body, and thus their rear shoulder, away from me.

The close proximity of this combative range gives me the opportunity to offload multiple rear hand Hook Punches. Striking in this manner and from this position is a skill that is isolated in class training sessions frequently.

**1.2 Secondary Technique:** Gedan Barai (Downward Block)  
**Follow Up Technique(s):** Bottom Fist Strike & Stepping Punch



It's fair to state that there are many applications of the Downward Block, even within the way it is outlined in Part 1 (as a controlling technique, and not a strike). With this in mind, I'll focus on using this type of application to facilitate an effective primary strike.

Analysing this application of Downward Block reveals that, even when applied correctly, at best it will only really control my opponent briefly as no debilitating strike is executed. So an effective follow up is vital. With this controlling technique, I run the risk of my opponent recovering, significantly reducing any advantage I have and in the worst case, gaining the upper hand.

In this case, both my arms are 'tied up' in controlling just the one arm of my opponent. The advantage this brings is that I have the superior mechanical and combative position – I'm almost upright with my hips underneath my shoulders, my opponent is doubled over with hyper extensive pressure applied at their elbow joint. However, as stated above, my advantage is easily reversed if not exploited.

In order to capitalise on this advantage, timing and speed is the key. Under pressure, I should execute multiple distracting strikes to their arm in quick succession to first maintain my advantage before stepping in with a primary strike to a different target.



The quick secondary technique that I practice in this situation is the Bottom Fist Strike (or a downward forearm smash). To effectively execute this I first ensure I apply maximum downward pressure in the Downward Block controlling technique (to gain the advantage), then in the first instance, suddenly changing the emphasis of my lead arm from a pushing motion to one of a sharp dropping motion to their elbow joint (or just above) to maintain the advantage. During this strike, my rear hand is used to not only aid my strike but also to control my opponent's body as a whole, through pinning in at my side (*hikite* position). In each of the follow up consecutive strikes, my body weight gradually migrates backwards through footwork maintaining my rear controlling hand at my side. With this position, I'm more likely to move my opponent with me as they are more closely connected to my centre of gravity. This backward migration allows me use my body weight in driving my opponent down towards the ground and prevents them from regaining their standing position. Having maintained this advantage, I now exploit this and move in from a retreating direction to a forward and downward primary strike. I step in with a lunge punch - by pulling my lead leg back slightly to facilitate this.

Before I alleviate any downward pressure through stepping back slightly, I switch my lead hand from striking to pushing down at their shoulder setting up my primary strike.

Attention is now taken away from their arm as the lunge punch is aimed at the head/neck area, avoiding the upper section of their head.

**1.3 Secondary Technique:** Hiza Geri (Knee Kick)  
**Follow Up Technique(s):** Forearm Smash & Escape



As described in Part 1, executing the Knee Kick is by far the most favourable of the three outcomes after having already executed my primary strike. Executing the Knee Kick implies that my opponent is in a significantly disadvantageous position, kneeling or prone.

With this in mind, it's important to isolate this scenario in practice and experience effective striking to a point where a successful escape can be made relatively easily. In this particular situation, I practice executing a good solid primary strike followed by a push or pull of my opponent to a fully grounded position before escaping.

The primary strike open to me here is an angular (downward) Forearm Smash to my opponent's jaw/neck area. I have the advantage of not being in direct contact with them, our limbs are not being seized, or 'tied up' performing control like functions.

Note that my vastly greater advantage can be diminished through careless footwork in executing the Knee Kick. Despite my opponent being in a kneeling position, the Knee Kick must still be effective through accuracy and the correct positioning of my feet. Whilst I actually perform the Knee Kick, I'm vulnerable whilst standing on one supporting leg. A well timed push from my opponent could degrade the fight to ground based grappling – a crisis point in any physical combat.

I make use of the fact that my kicking leg returns to the floor and execute a primary strike as my leg, and hence my weight is grounded. This will inevitably mean we are at very close quarters and within grappling range. Opting for a follow up Forearm Strike has two main attributes in my favour:

- It creates the required distance to ensure the primary strike is effective
- The extra distance created aids the escape (pull/push to floor)



Directly after the punch I execute on grounding my kicking foot, I choose to create the required distance for the Forearm Smash through a combination of footwork and the controlling of my opponent's head with my lead hand. As I step my front (just grounded) foot away from my opponent, I slap my hand onto the back of their head/neck. This slapping motion not only acts a controlling technique as I position my feet, but also provides a reference point for the actual Forearm Smash with my rear arm.

## Second Stage

For the purpose of the drill, and in particular the training application that the drill is designed to test and enable, I address the ability to transition to primary striking and then escape.

This principle explores the close quarter fighting range that the above principles and techniques create. Self-Defence based combat at best will, unless finished within the first few seconds degrade to less than arm's length range. Trading strikes at this range will probably not be sustained and grappling is inevitable.

The three scenarios detailed in Part 1 allow us to practice the combative principles found in Kata and when extended to this article (Part 2), they lend themselves to practice and address close quarter combat and the potential degradation to grappling range.

Consider again the first two cases as above with respect to close quarter combat. I'll look specifically at how I can transition to a position of further advantage and strike whilst allowing a successful escape.

### 2.1 Secondary Technique: Shuto Uke (Knife Hand Block) Follow up Technique(s): Elbow Strike & Rear Hand Hook



In this particular case, my opponent is fully upright since their original reaction to my primary strike was to reel back with their hands up at head level. My follow up consists of Knife Hand Block that enables a lead hand Elbow strike followed by rear hand Hook Punches.

Since I have control over my opponents lead arm whilst striking with my rear arm using Hook Punches, my objective should be to continue with these strikes whilst preparing to escape. My best chance whilst striking is to continue to move towards their blind side and escape through pushing them away from me. Pushing hard, fast and forcefully will enable me to gain sufficient distance from which to retreat. My arms are out stretched in front of me keeping my opponent away from me.

### 2.2 Secondary Technique: Gedan Barai (Downward Block) Follow Up Technique(s): Bottom Fist Strike & Stepping Punch



In this case, my stepping punching means I'm quite close to my opponent as I punch down from my position above. Unless my strikes render my opponent defenseless, I remain vulnerable to being grappled in their attempt to cover the strikes and fight back. Here my advantageous position when striking can be diminished to one of extreme danger in an instant. It is important that I therefore continue to strike hard and in rapid succession leaving little or no room for my opponent to reverse the advantage. I then transition my strikes from their head area to their arm in and around the elbow joint as I migrate my hips and legs away from them as I continue with the rapid onslaught. Once I'm able to detach from them, I retreat to escape, again holding my arms out in front of me as protection and cover.

### 2.3 Secondary Technique: Hiza Geri (Knee Kick)

### **Follow Up Technique(s):** Forearm Smash & Escape



Once I have executed my forearm arm strike down onto my now prone opponent, escape is imminent. Escape is facilitated by seizing their head with both hands and stepping away from them as I pull, or towards them as I push them to the ground at arm's length. The pulling or pushing motion is sought based on my opponent's relative position to the floor. If pulling, ideally I want to pull them such that they are falling backwards towards the ground, and if pushing, so that they are falling forwards face first. This will narrow down the chances of my opponent bringing me down with them to the ground – a situation to be avoided.

### **Third Stage**

Executing the drill as prescribed in the former stages will ensure that optimal benefit is derived from its application.

In Part 1 I advised to isolate each of the three cases in turn and build up to practicing them in any order as dictated by the training partner (opponent).

This article (Part 2) extends that protocol to continue with the attacks to the point of escape.

The next stage is to run through the drill from the beginning. In this case, I start by readying myself, and the initial full impact striking of the pad. My opponent then covers the target, I strip their lead arm away and down, so I can continue my primary onslaught. They then choose one of the three responses (as in Part 1), I then react and execute my secondary motion and technique, immediately after which comes my follow up techniques. Then finally I test my ability to exploit my advantage and ultimately escape.

Once the drill has concluded with a successful escape, we restart the drill again without rest. The stress of physical exertion increases the pressure for the next time, reflecting real combat conditions.

## Concluding Notes

To recap, Kata Bunkai drills should be focussed and apply sound combat principles extracted from Kata. Combative skill is acquired through executing the drills. The drills must be kept simple and be scalable. Simplicity allows us to focus on the key principles and scalability allows us to extend these concepts in appreciation of just how chaotic combat is. Taking a stepwise approach to drills and applying progression ensures that we are better equipped to deal with the chaos of combat.

It is also important to establish what your own offensive primary striking motions and techniques are. Through hard training in these motions, a solid foundation from which to build is laid, and forms the basis of drills. The main focus of this article is to integrate Kata motions as secondary level techniques into these already established primary level motions. In each of the three instinctive response cases, my chosen secondary level attacks are taken from kata, are not fixed, are consistently applied and are fit for purpose.

I hope this article serves as a catalyst to extend the drills already employed as part of your Bunkai training drills. I encourage you to devise drills based around sequences and techniques found in kata, and integrate these as supporting techniques to your primary striking motions.

This concludes the second article in the **Kata Combat – Bunkai Training Drills** series. Part 3 further explores skill isolation and the need to create, maintain and exploit the advantage over your opponent from a pre-emptive strike all the way through to a successful escape.

More downloads are available on [www.Rakesh-Patel.com](http://www.Rakesh-Patel.com)

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