



**KATA COMBAT**

# **PRACTICAL KATA APPLICATIONS**

## **Jion**

**By Rakesh Patel**

## Preface

This eBook was originally written specifically for the inspection of Iain Abernethy, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan and formed part submission for my 5<sup>th</sup> Dan Karate grading with the British Combat Association in 2008.

*I first saw Kesh's exploration of Jion kata as part of his preparations for his British Combat Association grading. I was very impressed! It's not just the pragmatic applications of the motions that impressed me, but that way in which Kesh saw those integrating and supporting one another in the chaotic world of live conflict. This is REAL bunkai. Not a simple collection of "tricks", but a pragmatic and thorough explanation that shows how Jion is a coherent combative system. Kesh is fast establishing himself as one of the leaders in the field of kata bunkai and I'm delighted he has made this document widely available. It's great!*

*Iain Abernethy 6th Dan BCA, Author of Bunkai-Jutsu*

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the basic Kata applications for **Jion** in the context of Self-Protection (Bunkai). 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 like minded martial artists. Instructions on the Shotokan techniques for performance as an individual Kata is out of the scope of this document.

## 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 Jion 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*”, 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.

## **Kata Bunkai – Perspective**

The market 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 still preserved throughout the applications e.g. in the stances and posture. Although this approach is valid in developing the exponents understanding of how the Kata can be performed, it has little or no use in a realistic combative situation.

This document 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 alone.

# 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 ineffective. 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 Jion. 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 Jion. 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.

Treating the Kata in this way limits us somewhat in deriving maximal benefit of 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°, then it must be 45° 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 in 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 (see appendix):

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

**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 stepping
- 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 – Jion

In the context of The Kata 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 Kata with the prominent use of North-East-South-West directions (North to South directional techniques use 4 steps) and is almost symmetric. This may explain why it is a compulsory Kata in mainstream Kata competitions, as it tests how well the competitors can form basic techniques within the realms of competitive Kata.

Jion features as one of the 'Big Four' Shotokan Karate Kata alongside Kanku Dai, Bassai Dai 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 competitive Kata.

## Kata Combat Theme – Jion

Regarding the Kata Combat theme, Jion presents explicit **choices** in the application of the various techniques. For example consider 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.

## Chapter 3

### Jion Kata Combat

In the previous chapter I described the combative theme of choices that Jion captures. In this chapter I explain the principles within the kata used to respond to various scenarios at varying ranges.

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

## Jion – Sequence 1



The opening “Yoi” salutation is used to control the opponent’s head in a close clinch at grappling range. From this clinch, my first movement is Kosa Uke (cross block). Although the clinch has secured the opponent, both my hands are ‘busy’ in maintaining the hold and no finishing technique is being applied. The Kata does not include any knee strikes from this position, but follow up strikes are relevant to this scenario. The key is to take control of the opponent in the clinch before a follow up can be executed. Obvious choices afforded here include strikes with my head, feet and knees. However in addition to these core techniques, the Kata presents a way of controlling one of the opponent’s arms whilst controlling his head with the other.

The correct preparation of the Kosa Uke (cross block) is by far the most important factor is ensuring the actual technique is executed effectively. The opponent is further controlled by gripping the back of his head or neck and is pulled down hard towards my chest. Once in control my grip is changed so that the opponent’s leading arm is seized as I reach around and grab his face/nose. This forms the preparation for the Uchi Uke (inside block) portion of Kosa Uke (cross block). To aid this movement, I smash my forearm down onto the back of his neck. The seized arm is pushed away from me as I crank his head around to face away from me. Front stance is used to allow my weight to stay forward. Stepping back creates the necessary distance to twist the opponent’s head around fully, whilst using his arm as a lever. The opponent’s usual response is to turn his neck as it is cranked, and I can drag him to the ground allowing my escape.



Kosa Uke (cross block) incorporates two distinct component blocks, both executed simultaneously. In the application, the Uchi Uke (inside block) component is used as the dominant controlling technique and the Gedan Barai (downward block) as a secondary aid. The roles can be reversed and the Gedan Barai (downward block) action be used to execute a strike generating an advantage with the Uchi Uke (inside block) motion.

## Jion – Sequence 2

The next Section of movements is Kakiwake Uke (wedge block), Mae Geri (front kick) followed by Sanbon Zuki (triple punch). This combination is executed at 45° to the front, first to the left, then to the right.



Kakiwake Uke (wedge block) is used to pre-emptively control the opponent's body to enable a rush forward. I seize his shoulders or lapel area to enable my first strike. My body is turned at a slight angle as I execute the front kick. In this case my knee is used as the distance is thereby closed rapidly.

I resort to the natural action of holding my arms up high when rushing forward as I protect myself. This position also allows me to clear my opponent's arms if they obstruct the path to his head. The knee strike is used in conjunction with my arms. This allows my kick to be delivered from a stable base. It is vital that I return to having both feet grounded following the kick, so I aim to strike through the opponent's body and slam my foot to the floor whilst driving forward. To aid this, I seize my opponent's neck in a 'slap and wrap' fashion on landing and this forms the first punch with my leading arm. My leading arm sets a reference point for the second strike with the rear hand (second punch) to the jaw.



After the impact, my arm is retracted again like a piston (third consecutive alternating arm movement). This final arm movement is more than a retraction of the punching arm. I pull it back at the same time as I push my front arm that is acting as a reference point, away from me to maintain the punching range. My retracted arm is both ready to strike again if necessary and also acts a sensible cover of my head area.



## Jion – Sequence 3

The Age Uke (Upper block) Gyaku/Oi Zuki (Reverse/Step Punch) sequence relates to the scenario where I use being grabbed by my opponent to my advantage. The Kata presents explicit choices for how the above punches are executed.



Effective space management has broken down and my opponent has seized my chest/shoulder area so that a strike can be executed with his rear hand. In reaction, I seize the opponent's grabbing arm with my rear hand and secure it in position. The pressure I apply to his hand further allows me to keep a hold of it should he decide to move it, for escape or for another grip.

I immediately step back into front stance utilising my body weight to smash down onto the top of my opponent's upper forearm using the blade of my own forearm. The resultant effect on the opponent allows me to execute Age Uke (upper block) as a strike. His body drops forward, preventing him from attacking and exposes his jaw area. The Age Uke (upper block) is executed as an upward smash and takes the reverse path of my initial forearm drop. To ensure overall effectiveness, the success of the second strike to the head relies on how well the first strike is applied as the first strike acts as a preparatory set up.



If I only use my front arm with little or no body weight behind it, it is unlikely to render the opponent incapable of delivering effective strikes. The hard and fast shifting of my weight backwards and downwards (even though into a front stance), gives me the mechanical advantage over my opponent required so that they bend at the knees with no ground from which to strike. From this position, I drive my body weight forwards as I thrust my front forearm upwards, smashing through his neck/jaw area.



The explicit choices introduced earlier relate to the follow up strikes available after the upward forearm smash (Age Uke). Immediately after striking, I take the opportunity to seize the rear of my opponent's neck, setting a reference point for an on the spot strike with the rear hand (gyaku zuki). A follow up punch can be executed whilst stepping towards the opponent, e.g. as he reels back or, through the sheer forward drive and aggression on my part.

## **Jion – Sequence 3 continued**

The first two Age Uke (upper block) combinations in the sequence precedes a Gyaku Zuki (reverse punch), one on each side of the body. The third Age Uke (upper block) combination in the sequence, replaces the Gyaku Zuki (reverse punch) with an Oi Zuki (step punch) on one side of the body. The Kata need not include the Age Uke (upper block) and Oi Zuki (step punch) combination on both sides of the body since the Oi Zuki (step punch) is a sequel to the Gyaku Zuki (reverse punch) and therefore implies its application to both sides of the body.

## Jion – Sequence 4

At this point, the Kata introduces combinations of techniques performed from different stances. This is important as it is the transition from one stance to the other that ensures the effectiveness of the techniques. This principle is prevalent in the middle Section of the Kata. The middle Section consists of two mirrored pairs of Manji Uke (angular block) combinations. In the first pair, Manji Uke (angular block) in Kokutsu Dachi (black stance) is followed by Kage Zuki (hook punch) in Kiba Dachi (straddle stance) and in the second pair, Manji Uke (angular block) is followed up by Jodan Morote Uchi Uke (upper level assisted inside block) in Heisoku Dachi (attention stance).



This is the next example of how the Kata Jion covers “what if” scenarios through the effective use of choices. In each of the pairs, alternative secondary techniques are applied based on the level of effectiveness of the initial Manji Uke (angular block).

The Manji Uke (angular block) is used as a control of the opponent’s head and given that they will react instinctively, implies that his response is narrowed down to one or two possibilities.

In the first case, Manji Uke (angular block) has been applied in a way such that the opponent has turned his head away from the direction in which his front arm is being pulled. This is an advantageous position for me as it allows a choke to be applied as a follow up finisher.



## Jion – Sequence 4 continued 1

Manji Uke (angular block) controls my opponent's head through my lower most arm securing a grip on his wrist whilst pulling down and away from his head. Simultaneously, my higher arm is used to crank his head away from my other arm. I execute this in Kokutsu Dachi (back stance) as the extra weight on my back foot aids in



securing my higher arm position and takes my opponent's weight from being centered, to off balance. This dual action can only be sustained for a short period as his instinctive response is to grasp my higher arm and peel it away from his face. The advantage that I have gained is maintained by my transitioning to a centered position applying a choke with my higher arm. I release his wrist with my lowest arm and use it to assist my higher arm. Transitioning to straddle stance, allows me to place my chest flush with my opponent's back and sink the blade of my choking arm under his chin, obstructing the air flow through his windpipe. My body positioning and placement of the choking arm are the two most

important success factors in applying an effective choke. In the picture, I have taken up the final stance with my legs almost straight. This is a transition position to allow me to attain correct preparation before applying the choke. In application, my body weight is dropped back by flexing my knees so that my opponent's balance is broken and his downward weight adds to the upward pressure I apply in the choke.

## Jion – Sequence 4 continued 2

Consider now the case where in reaction to Manji Uke (angular block), my opponent instinctively turns away from my upper arm in an attempt to oppose my emphasis, as pictured below. Here I cannot apply a choke effectively. However, this situation does present me with



the opportunity to apply a different technique, a face bar. To gain this position, my upper forearm makes contact with his cheekbone area and my other arm is used to secure the hold and apply further pressure. This is the application of Jodan Morote Uchi Uke (upper level assisted inside block) performed in Heisoku Dachi (attention stance). I apply this whilst standing tall. My body weight is dropped by flexing my knees breaking my opponent's balance. His body weight, through downward pressure, augments the effectiveness of the upward pressure I apply in the face bar. The face bar, although extremely painful, is not a finishing technique in itself, but does provide me with a mechanical advantage in the application of the last technique in the sequence. Ryowan Gedan Barai (double downward block) is executed directly after the Jodan Morote Uchi Uke (upper level assisted inside block). To apply this, I seize his head or shoulder area and pull him

off balance completely so that an escape can be made. The Kata Jion presents the completed technique in Heisoku Dachi (attention stance), so pictured below is the transition movement that forces my opponent onto the spike of my front knee before it is moved alongside my rear foot for escape.



Note that my lower arm that controls his wrist is used to secure the face bar. The same arm is swung in a hooking motion so that the crook of my elbow can be grasped by my other hand, as if applying a strangulation technique. This preparatory movement appears in the Kata as a strong fast movement in preparation for the Jodan Morote Uchi Uke (upper level assisted inside block).

In summary, the above Sequence highlights that Kata Jion which includes two mirrored sets of Manji Uke (angular block) combinations allows opportunities for different follow up techniques to be applied based on the instinctive reactions of my opponent when Manji Uke (angular block) is applied as a controlling technique.

## Jion – Sequence 5

As with Sequence 4, this Sequence describes further choices that Kata Jion presents. This time, the principle opening up the choices differs from that previously covered. Previously the premise for these choices lay within the instinctive behaviour of my opponent in response to my seeking a combative advantage (Manji Uke). In this Sequence, the presented choices show how I can respond should my first technique not be applied effectively. Many factors contribute to the success of a technique, and it is assumed that the resultant effect is insufficient for escape/gaining an advantage, and a recovery is required. The use of this in the Kata Jion highlights with sufficient scope why choices occur in combat.

Of relevance here are the two sets of three identical techniques that succeed each separate Gedan Barai (downward block) present in the Kata. In the first instance, Gedan Barai (downward block) precedes three Taisho Uchi (palm heel strike) in Kiba Dachi (straddle stance). In the second instance, Gedan Barai precedes three Hiza Geri (knee kick), Otoshi Uke (falling block) combinations. Performed also is Kiba Dachi (straddle stance). In each case, the Gedan Barai (downward block) is executed in Zenkutsu Dachi (front stance).

The primary technique is Gedan Barai (downward block) and is sought to be applied as a way of creating and maintaining an advantage so that an effective follow up strike can be executed. The advantage is gained mechanically avoiding my strength relative to my opponent's strength becoming a limiting factor for success. In one version of the combinations, it is assumed that the Gedan Barai (downward block) has worked as intended and the finishing technique is applied. The other version of the combination includes an alternative but effective follow up to which was given in the first version. However I purposely disengage from applying Gedan Barai (downward block) at the point where I realise that it isn't working to my advantage.

## Jion – Sequence 5 continued 1



Gedan Barai (downward block) is applied from an initial clash of arms during the altercation. My first priority is to grab his wrist with the clashing arm and drive my other forearm up and onto the back of his arm above his elbow joint. I do this whilst stepping around, to his blind side with my back foot, simultaneously pulling his seized arm to my rear hip. My forearm makes a downward arc whilst I twist my pulling hand so that his elbow faces upwards. Applied correctly, my opponent will find it difficult to defend against this technique because of the continually changing angle of pressure I place on his arm. Ideally he will end up doubled over so that I can apply the finishing strike. However, if at the point of my moving his arms into position I feel that the mechanical advantage is not sufficient for effective control, I can disengage from the technique. Suddenly opposing the direction of my initial movement, and thus moving in a direction that they apply pressure, I step towards my opponent into Kiba Dachi (straddle stance) and deliver the Taisho Uchi (palm heel strike) as a slap to the jaw. As I begin to disengage from the downward motion, I use my lead arm to trap his against my body and release my grip on his wrist to deliver the strike.



Consider the optimal case where Gedan Barai (downward block) is effectively applied and my opponent is doubled over, I secure him in position using my nearest hand and use the Hiza Geri (knee kick) to his face and Otoshi Uke (falling block) as the finishing strikes. The Otoshi Uke (falling block) is executed with the blade of my forearm to the back of his neck. This may also force his head downwards onto the grounded knee used in the kick.





## **Jion – Sequence 5 continued 2**

In summary, this Sequence included the same principles as outlined in the previous Sequence in that the Kata takes two identical controlling techniques (downward block) and gives two different follow up finishes based on the outcome of the controlling technique.

In Sequence 4, the Manji Uke (angular block) is the control and the two alternative follow ups differ based on how the Manji Uke (angular block) is applied. In this Sequence, however, the alternative follow ups vary based on the initial Gedan Barai (downward block) control simply working or not. In this case, a new advantage is gained after Gedan Barai (downward block) is aborted.

## Jion – Sequence 6

The next Sequence of the Kata is a four technique combination performed along the centre line of the embusen (Kata format) with no repetition. However, within the combination, explicit choices are presented.

The technique in the combination is Hiza Geri (knee kick) with both hands chambered on my hips, which precedes a Gedan Juji Uke (lower cross arm block) in Kosa Dachii (reverse cat stance/cross stance). From here Kosa Dachii is transformed into Zenkutsu Dachii (front stance) by stepping back and executing a Ryowan Gedan Barai (downward block). Next I step forward into Zenkutsu Dachii (front stance) again and execute Ryowan Uchi Uke (inside block). As a standalone Kata, the first three techniques in the combination are grouped together and are performed in quick succession. After a brief pause, the fourth technique is performed. When applied, both the step backwards into the double Gedan Barai and the step forwards into double Uchi Uke are executed from the Gedan Juji Uke in Kosa Dachii. The fact that the Kata does not repeat the Gedan Juji Uke is irrelevant, as this would be overstating the point and not in conformance with the concept of how Kata records combative principles.

My interpretation of this part of the Kata, again revolves around the notion that my opponent will make instinctive responses when under pressure of my attack, the attack being Hiza Geri (knee kick) and Gedan Juji Uke (lower cross hand block).



Hiza Geri (knee kick) is executed at close quarters with my opponent. I'm using both my hands to seize his lower or upper arms as I sink the knee into his groin area. This works particularly well when hand striking range rapidly degenerates to knee and elbow range and the momentum of his body shift can be utilised (by pulling of him) to aid the knee kick. Techniques executed at this range will usually regress into grappling range as both bodies clash. Here the Kata Jion explicitly shows us that an advantageous position can still be achieved. By dropping my weight forward and down, similar to a tackle used in Rugby Football, I can take control of my opponent by clasping my hands together (one hand seizing the wrist of my other arm) behind his back and under his arms – the Juji Uke (lower cross arm block). My grounding is secured by using Kosa Dachii (reverse cat stance/cross stance) as this not only provides stability but also allows me to easily move my

body weight in either a forward or backward direction.

## Jion – Sequence 6 continued 1

It is from this position that the Kata Jion presents me with two choices.



When driving forward to achieve this controlling position, it is usual for my opponent to oppose my momentum and tries to force me backwards. I turn this to my advantage by using his force to aid in pulling him onto the spike of my front stance. The double Gedan Barai (downward block) motion is used in seizing my opponent's arms directly from the Juji Uke (lower cross arm block) position.



## Jion – Sequence 6 continued 2

Conversely, if when the Juji Uke (lower cross arm block) is applied with forward drive and aggression, I find myself receiving minimal resistance from my opponent. Then I continue to capitalise on this advantage by continuing the drive forward and performing the Ryowan Uchi Uke (double inside block). This takes the form of another controlling technique at grappling range. However this position does allow me to trap my opponent's head under one of my arms and apply a neck crank, forcing his chin hard onto his chest (see reverse angle pictured below). The control is achieved by hooking my arms underneath his upper arms so that the bend in my elbows are pinning his arms from returning to a position of control. The front stance helps in executing the forward drive required to secure and maintain the position. Again, although this position is not a finisher, effective strikes are enabled through my advantage. Prime candidates in this situation are knee kicks with the rear leg as originally intended in the preceding attack.





## Jion – Sequence 7

From a Kata performance perspective this Sequence leads on from the last in that the techniques are executed by stepping forward again after the last Ryowan Uchi Uke (double inside block). The technique itself is Jodan Juji Uke (upper cross arm block) followed by three arm techniques, where no stepping or stance change is made. In each of the three cases, both my arms are moving to new positions and are executed in a front stance (for simplicity, it is assumed the left is the rear arm and the right is the front arm):

- Age Uke (upper block) with the rear arm and Tate Ura Zuki (vertical close punch) with the front arm.
- Gyaku Zuki (reverse punch) with the rear arm and Nagashi Uke (sweeping block) with the front arm.
- Tate Ura Zuki (vertical close punch) with front arm and supported with the rear hand.

Again, Jion here presents me with explicit choices in that each of the above three technique positions is executed from the initial Jodan Juji Uke (upper cross arm block). Keeping in mind that Kata records and demonstrates combative principles through a series of techniques, it goes against the grain to assume that each of the above techniques is executed as a series of consecutive, chaotic attacks. Another important factor is the fact that each of the three techniques requires differing emphasis and together implies that they are to be executed as separate attacks and not in succession.

The Jodan Juji Uke (upper cross arm block) is used as a starting point from which to execute any of the above three techniques and specifically deals with its use from within a clinch. The clinch in this case differs from that of Sequence 1 in that this clinch is not close enough to reach grappling range. Rather, being at striking range allows hand techniques to be executed at arms length. A common scenario that occurs at this range of fighting is depicted by my opponent seizing my collar or clothing in an attempt to pin me at this range (stiff arming as it's sometimes known). An advantage is gained by either breaking this range (in which case another technique is still required) or delivering effective strikes at the current range. Among the three techniques above, these success factors are addressed explicitly and separately.

The initial Jodan Juji Uke (upper cross arm block) is used in the clinch as reciprocal control to manage the distance between myself and my opponent. My front hand is used to seize my opponent's clothing or neck and the wrist of my other hand is placed firmly against my front forearm forming an "X" shape. Keeping my arms in this position allows me to use my front arm as a control and reference point for my rear hand to strike (as pictured) and aid in the control where necessary.



## Jion – Sequence 7 continued 1

The first of the three aforementioned techniques is executed in the case where I break the stalemate between my opponent and myself, and manage to seize his right arm and peel it away from me and upwards allowing a follow up Ura Zuki (upper cut) strike with my front hand. Both my arm movements in this combination are executed as all out explosive movements. Ura Zuki (upper cut) cannot be effectively executed whilst both my opponent's arms obstruct the path to his chin. My initial movement is to rip off his right hand from my body - away and upwards. This will only really be achieved if the move is executed like a strike itself, rather than resorting to brute strength. The element of surprise through my explosiveness and aggression contributes massively to breaking the deadlock. As shown below from both oblique angles.



Note that the initial arms length fighting range is broken during the initial seizing of his arm so that the follow up strike is executed at a closer range. This is the range the technique requires for effectiveness.

The second combination of the three, encompasses the same principle of having to engineer a suitable position through a primary technique so that I can deliver the secondary finishing strike. The arms that are used for primary and secondary techniques are reversed. In order to set up a Gyaku Zuki (reverse punch) my front arm is used to sweep my opponent's left arm away from me. My resultant sweeping arm position not only allows me to deliver the left strike effectively (pictured as a palm heel strike) but also acts as a valuable cover of the side of my head and body should he try and grab/strike again.



Note that this particular combination engineers a position where my follow up strike is delivered from arms length. The primary technique allows me to exploit that range and leaves me in a good position to deliver further strikes if necessary or to disengage altogether for an escape.

## Jion – Sequence 7 continued 2

The third and final technique in this section uses a different way to break the range stalemate and close it rapidly again with a primary arm movement allowing a secondary strike. The primary arm movement is a hard flat downward motion using my rear arm. The blade of my forearm is used to smash both my opponent's arms just below each elbow joint. Executed with the appropriate emphasis and power, not only will it break down the arms length range, but in doing so will throw my opponent's shoulders and head forward towards me, exposing his chin which is then the target for my front arm follow up Ura Zuki (upper cut).



Note the closeness of the range at which my finishing strike is executed. Since my opponent's arms are trapped under my rear arm, after the strike is delivered my striking arm can be used to seize the back of his head or neck allowing me to execute further strikes. I can also ground him however, by pushing hard downwards with both my arms.

In this and the previous Sequence, the Kata Jion provides a means of applying different attacking techniques from a single referencing technique. However, the Kata is not over engineered as to repeat that referencing technique before every alternative. The Kata includes the referencing technique once and follows onto the various alternatives as consecutive techniques that naturally flow.

## Jion – Sequence 8

This Sequence focuses on the third set of paired techniques executed at right angles to the main North – South direction in the Kata embusen (as in the Manji Uke combinations). Here the two techniques are Uchi Uke (inside block) followed by Oi Zuki (step punch). As with the Manji Uke (angular block) combinations in Sequence 4, it was important to execute techniques at the angle in which they appear in the Kata. In order to gain a functional advantage, the Manji Uke (angular block) was executed by turning almost behind my opponent. In the Kata Jion, the Uchi Uke (inside block) is best delivered when I am at an angle to my opponent. The Kata repeats the same two techniques on the other side of the centre line showing not only that it can be applied to both sides of the body, but also showing the wide scope of the technique's function and principles. In the case of Uchi Uke (inside block) Oi Zuki (step punch), many effective bunkai can be interpreted. However, in keeping with the ethos and character that the Kata Jion exudes, I'll show two different applications, using similar principles captured in the rest of the Kata.



The first Uchi Uke (inside block) combination is executed using the same principles as the Age Uke (upper block), Oi Zuki (step punch) as detailed in Sequence 3 in that the preparation of the block is used as a set up for the actual finishing technique. In response to my opponent seizing my lapel, my rear hand secures his grabbing hand. The preparatory forearm smash is used to unbalance my opponent and bring his chin down and forward exposing his neck area where I smash him again with the same forearm across and onto the neck keeping my elbow pointing downwards and my fist upwards. The same arm is easily moved to grab the back of his head and set a reference point for my driving rear hand step punch to the jaw.



This is not to be seen as merely repeating a previous interpretation and just changing the actual block. It is important to note that the Uchi Uke (inside block) combination appears in the Kata to highlight that there are other ways and choices on how to apply the same principle and that they need not be complicated.

The Kata shows these Uchi Uke (inside block) combinations late on in the Kata as a follow up to the Age Uke (upper block) combination to show the progression in the underlying principles. This can be seen by the fact that the Uchi Uke (inside block) is followed up by only a Oi Zuki (step punch) and does not explicitly show it paired with a Gyaku Zuki (reverse punch) since that point about choices has been covered previously in the Age Uke (upper block) combination.



## Jion – Sequence 8 continued



The second Uchi Uke (inside block) combination is executed using principles similar to that of the Kosa Uke (cross block) detailed in Sequence 1. In that Sequence, the Uchi Uke (inside block) component of the Kosa Uke (cross block) was used as the striking technique and the Gedan Barai (downward block) portion used as a control/aid.

In this Sequence, Uchi Uke (inside block) is executed in a similar way except that the controlling arm is the one that is usually chambered with the hand on the rear hip. I've seized my opponent's arm and secured it around my side pulling as I approach with the other arm around the back of his head, grabbing his nose/face. To execute the actual Uchi Uke (inside block) I drive the elbow of my preparatory arm down hard onto his neck area whilst cranking his head around so my hand finishes at a higher point than my elbow. The forward stepping motion of this Uchi Uke (inside block) enables this. All the time I keep a securing hold of his seized arm. I aim to not only unbalance him but also to ensure that he is not able to use his "free" hand to strike. The resultant Uchi Uke (inside block) arm is ideally placed to set a reference point for the follow up Oi Zuki (step punch) as seen previously.



Note that this Uchi Uke (inside block) combination is an alternative version of the Uchi Uke (inside block) shown at the start of the Kata. In that Sequence, the Uchi Uke (inside block) was shown as a component movement within a technique where the primary focus was escape. In this Sequence, the Uchi Uke (inside block) was used solely so that a follow up finishing strike can be applied. That finishing strike was a basic step punch that forms the basis of Karate as an effective combat system.

## Jion – Sequence 9

In this final Sequence, I address the final set of mirrored techniques, executed at right angles to the main centre line in the Kata embusen (as previously seen). However, only one technique is executed in each direction. Yumi Zuki (lateral punch) is executed at a relatively slowed pace under dynamic tension.

Slow techniques appear in Kata for reasons relevant to combat. They serve as a reminder that when applied, the extra resistance received from the opponent will mean that the technique will be invariably executed at a slower pace than the usual fast strikes. Slow techniques are not soft and weak techniques. The techniques still require power and aggression as with any combative attack. For example, many throws and locks are commonly executed as slow techniques in Kata but require speed, aggression and a degree of strength to execute them effectively.

The Yumi Zuki (lateral punch) is executed at 90° to its previous technique signifying that I apply it at 90° to my opponent. The Kata repeats the same technique on the other side of the Kata showing not only that it can be applied to both sides of the body, but also highlights the wide functional scope of the technique.

Note that with Yumi Zuki (lateral punch), the rear pulling hand (*hikite*) is prescriptively held at shoulder height. This is important since most punches and techniques are performed with the pulling hand chambered on the rear hip, and when we apply these techniques we loosely define the function of that hand as a way of controlling the opponent in order to deliver the strike. Usually our hand will not reach our hip in application but it in most cases, will be tending towards the hip. In other cases it is quite likely that our rear hand will stay at shoulder height. With this in mind, when applying Yumi Zuki (lateral punch) the rear hand must always tend towards the shoulder area, otherwise why would it appear that way in the Kata? We will see in the following two applications of Yumi Zuki (lateral punch) that it is the positioning of the rear hand on the shoulder that forms the key to ensuring that it is applied effectively.

## Jion – Sequence 9 continued

In the first case, I've managed to seize my opponent's leading wrist with my rear hand so that I can step around to his blind side, away from his striking range. As I do so, turning sideways, I shoot my leading arm under his and secure a tight hold of the back of his neck.



My intension is to apply a lock at his head and shoulder, using my seizing arm as the lever. As soon as his neck has been secured I apply the lock by pushing his head away from me. The lock is applied by straightening my leading arm, and applying downward pressure on his head.



I try to obtain as much distance between us as I straighten my arm and at the same time keep his seized wrist high and level with his shoulder. Lowering his wrist has a detrimental mechanical effect on the lock. I gain the distance as I step back away from my opponent with my rear elbow up high as an Archer draws back his arrow in an abbreviated Kiba Dachii (straddle stance). Once the lock is applied I can use a full length Kiba Dachii (straddle stance) as the way of delivering a knee strike to his front leg.

In the second application of Yumi Zuki (lateral punch) I use a similar approach, in that his lead wrist is seized with my rear hand. This time I shoot my leading arm above his and drive my forearm under his chin forcing his head backwards. His seized arm is barred against my chest, since my body is positioned sideways on to him. Again to ensure effectiveness I keep his seized wrist up high, level with his shoulder.



Kiba Dachii (straddle stance) adds to the effectiveness of this technique, serving as a trip wire as I lever his head backwards and force him over my leading leg, all the time applying the arm bar across my chest.

In summary, the above locks are applied with a steady but progressive force and require me to lock the position of my body in order to generate required force. These are not explosive movements, as they will be met by a similar resistance from the opponent. Only if a mechanical advantage is sought over my opponent, can the lock be expected to work effectively. This advantage is maintained by securing his seized wrist at shoulder height.

# Chapter 4

## Kata Combat Bunkai Training Drills

I stated in the first two chapters that in order to fully derive benefit from the 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 to my article:

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

which is included as an appendix.

Below are **three** multi layered and progressive Kata Combat Training Drills that can be used as part of Jion 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.

Practicing all three drills ensures that all 9 sequences (and their sub sequences) are covered to encompass a broad range of scenarios, ranges and skills.



## Kata Combat Training Drill 1



Starting from a clinch, my primary objective is to execute Sequence 1. Given that my opponent is now less than compliant, I may or may not reach the end point of that sequence where I manage to escape their grip and execute the cross block. If I do then it makes sense to move straight onto Sequence 2, where I kick out at the knee of my turned opponent and finish with head punches.

If however I cannot gain a significant grappling advantage to finish Sequence 1, I can opt to move to Sequence 2 earlier as I change my grip to seize their shoulders, push my hips back and execute the knee kick as described previously.



Another secondary option after the end of Sequence 1 is to move straight onto Sequence 4 where I then take a better grip in response to my opponent pushing back towards me. I take up the Manji Uke (Angular Block) position and then either (as outlined in Sequence 4) execute the choke or face bar depending on the response that my opponent presents me with.



## Kata Combat Training Drill 2



The starting position here is where my opponent has seized me by my lapel.



I choose to drill Sequence 3 where the end position results in me driving forward (with either leg) and striking out with punches.

It is here that my opponent can add another layer to the drill by then seizing my leading arm that I'm using as a reference point for primary punches. I then flow onto Sequence 7 and deal with being gripped.

In the above case, Sequence 3 is starting response to the initial grab. For the next case, I can choose to execute Sequence 8 instead and conclude with Sequence 7 as a response to the pressure that my opponent applies.

Extending the drill even further, my opponent assumes the initial grip and stays mobile and uses it to strike out with their rear hand. A particular case to explore is when my opponent straightens their lead arm so that it is locked and keeps me at bay. This prevents me from smashing my forearm down onto theirs with any significant impact. I now exploit the locked out nature of their arm and execute Sequence 9.



It's especially important that I exploit this finishing position of advantage and employ primary striking motions to end the threat and allow escape.

## Kata Combat Training Drill 3



Sequence 5 is executed from an initial clash of arms during the altercation.

The sequence starts with my attempt at gaining control of my opponent's leading arm to execute the downward block with sufficient mechanical advantage that they are rendered bent over and unable to strike.

Sequence 5 in itself deals with if the case where the downward block motion needs to be aborted due to insufficient control and naturally flows onto a strike to maintain the combative advantage.



Should the downward block be successful, the follow up knee and forearm smash can be applied. Here my opponent adds realism and counters, and makes an attempt to drive forward from the floor at my hips. The various choices and cases explored within Sequence 6 are now used.



It's especially important that I exploit this finishing position of advantage and employ primary striking motions to end the threat and allow escape.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the above Sequences show how the Kata Jion, 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 Jion are based, is the first step in deriving benefit from practicing Kata.

In terms of progression, the next step is to practice the above techniques within a training scenario to enable the techniques to be exercised under increasing pressure. Live drills can be used to test the exponent with minimal compliance from the opponent.

The material herein serves as guide to the seminars on Jion I conduct in my own Kata Combat classes and at various 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 open seminars, news, free articles and more downloads, please visit [www.Rakesh-Patel.com](http://www.Rakesh-Patel.com)

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# 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 is 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.

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