Bushido-kai Kata Comparison Series
Analysis and Applications
Bassai-sho and Kanku-sho

The late Keinosuke ENOEDA (England) performs Shotokan Bassai-sho.

Seminar support materials from Shihan Tony Annesi, Takeshin Sogo Budo

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The late Keinosuke ENOEDA (England) performs Shotokan Kanku-sho.
**BASSAI-SHO & KANKU-SHO**

Additional Information compiled by Shihan Tony Annesi

**History & Name**
- -sho signifies the lesser of two (-dai signifies the greater of two)
- **Bassai** means Breaking Through a Fortress; **Kanku** means Viewing the Sky
- **Bassai** was originally the Okinawan Patsai; **Kanku** was originally the Okinawan Kushanku (or Koshokun)
- The author of both kata is most probably Yasutsune Itosu; therefore, both forms are considered Shorin in origin The specific form of both Bassai-sho and Kanku-sho may have been based on an separate versions of their –dai counterparts rather than being smaller versions of the prime forms.

**General BASSAI-SHO**
- There are at least 11 versions of the Bassai: Oyadomari, Tomari, Koryu & Matsumura among them. Bassai-Sho may be one of the other Bassai kata adopted by Shotokan and given the name Bassai-Sho.
- These Bassai Kata may be descended from Chinese forms known as Ba Ji Ch’uan. There are 2 forms: Ba Ji Da (Bassai-dai?) and Ba Ji Xiao (Bassai-sho?). Ba Ji Xiao is written exactly the same way as Bassai-Sho. This challenges the popular belief that all -sho kata were created by Itosu.
- Bassai-Sho has a unique emphasis on stick defenses and counters. This emphasis upon reacting to attacks from a stick is supposedly typical of an Itosu created kata, since all of the kata that he heavily influenced contain stick-countering techniques within them. Supposedly Itosu’s father used to tie him to a stake and poke at him with a stick to teach him fighting spirit. According to the legend, Itosu was very interested in techniques that would take a stick away from his father. The legend would neatly explain a lot about the origin of stick defense in kata, however, the whole legend is probably just a story with little basis in truth.
- The last two sword hand blocks at the end of Bassai-Dai are apparently new creations. The ending of Bassai-Sho is the original ending for our Bassai-Dai kata. This is evidenced by the Shito-Ryu version of Bassai-Dai that still ends with the motions from the concluding techniques of Bassai-Sho.
- Bassai-sho can be interpreted as a kata done with a bo or, conversely, as a kata for disarming an opponent with a bo.

**General KANKU-SHO**
- Yara Kushanku, Kushanku, Kushanku Sho, and Shiho Kushanku are the four Kanku kata.
- Possibly one of Itosu’s creations, Kanku-Sho contains many of his typical stick controlling actions and double punches (especially from a horse stance). This technique is interpreted by Dr. Schmeisser as an “Istanbul Twist” - a technique where
you grab your opponent by the head and twist his neck violently while flinging him to the side.
• The stepping punches that quickly withdraw into inside blocks may be taken from the opening sequence a number of Goju kata.
• For less experienced karate-ka, Kanku-Sho presents a true challenge. It is filled with sequences of jumping and ducking, spinning, and complex multiple technique combinations. Many of the throwing actions in Kanku-Dai are here, but on a smaller scale. The largest difference between Kanku-Dai and Kanku-Sho is the timing between the different applications. For example, in Kanku-Dai, there is heavy reliance upon multiple counters following a blocked attack. While this is one strategy, there are more effective ways of utilizing timing. In Kanku-Sho, there are many sequences where blocking, sweeping, throwing, and countering are all executed in a single movement. This is a strategy quite familiar to the advanced students’ repertoire. Kanku-Sho is a definite diversion from Kanku-Dai and other kata as far as timing of application is concerned.

Unfortunately for some, Kanku-Sho contains movements which older or less athletic karate-ka may find impossible to perform with skill. For example, there are two challenging jumps within the kata.
• Kanku-Sho is smaller than Kanku-Dai and it requires less time to perform. Also, many of the techniques in Kanku-Sho are on a smaller scale. Nevertheless, many karate-ka report that Kanku-Sho tires them more than Kanku-Dai, suggesting that it is more intensive to perform.

Commentary
• although there are interesting variations and overlaps between the –sho and –dai versions of each kata, there are also interesting comparisons between Kanku-sho and Bassai-sho.
• consider the following: use of high and medium manji-uke (swastika block); use of horse-stance double-punch; use of kake-uke (hook block); use of “wing” arms when going into hook blocks; use of bo/jo defense; and of arm bars.

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Shotokan version
Kanku-shō
(Viewing the Sky, minor form)

"theoretical" embusen >>>

actual embusen >>>

KANKU-SHŌ
NOTE:
These illustrated outlines of the kata KANKU-SHO & BASSAI-SHO come from KARATE-DO NO SHOSAI (The Details of Karate-do) Volume 5: Sandan by Shihan Tony Annesi (Available through BUSHIDO-KAI BUDOYA. This manual includes 8 other forms, suggested bunkai, as well as Takeshin Sandan sparring and kicking requirements.)

www.bushido-kai.net
Bassai-sho

(Breaking through a Fortress, Minor Form)

"theoretical" embusen >>>

actual embusen >>>

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BASSAI-SHÔ

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