



Pinan 1

and applications



Introduction to the Pinan Kata

Pinan is the name given to a series of five kata from the Shorin School of Okinawa Te, later popularized by Gichin Funakoshi and known in Shotokan as Heian. They incorporate a wide variety of stances and techniques designed to introduce and drill the basic combinations of hard style karate.

The Pinan kata are a series of five empty hand forms created by Itosu Anko in Okinawa in the late 1800's. One of the stories surrounding the history of the Pinan kata claims that Itosu learned a kata called "Chiang Nan" from a Chinese man living in Okinawa. The form became known as "Channan", an Okinawan/Japanese approximation of the Chinese pronunciation. It would seem that Itosu also borrowed from older kata such as Kusanku (Kanku Dai), and from these longer, original forms, Itosu created five separate, shorter forms that he called Pinan, Chinese for "safe from harm." All five Pinan kata are loosely based on an I-shaped embsen or floor pattern characteristic to most of Itosu's kata.

The Pinan kata were introduced into the school systems on Okinawa in the early 1900s, and were subsequently adopted by many teachers and schools.

About this time, Gichen Funakoshi changed the order of the forms, believing Pinan Nidan to be the easier, more beginner-friendly kata. Therefore, Pinan Nidan became Pinan Shodan, and vice-versa. In the 1920's, when he introduced them to Japan, Funakoshi renamed the kata Heian, which translates as "peaceful mind."

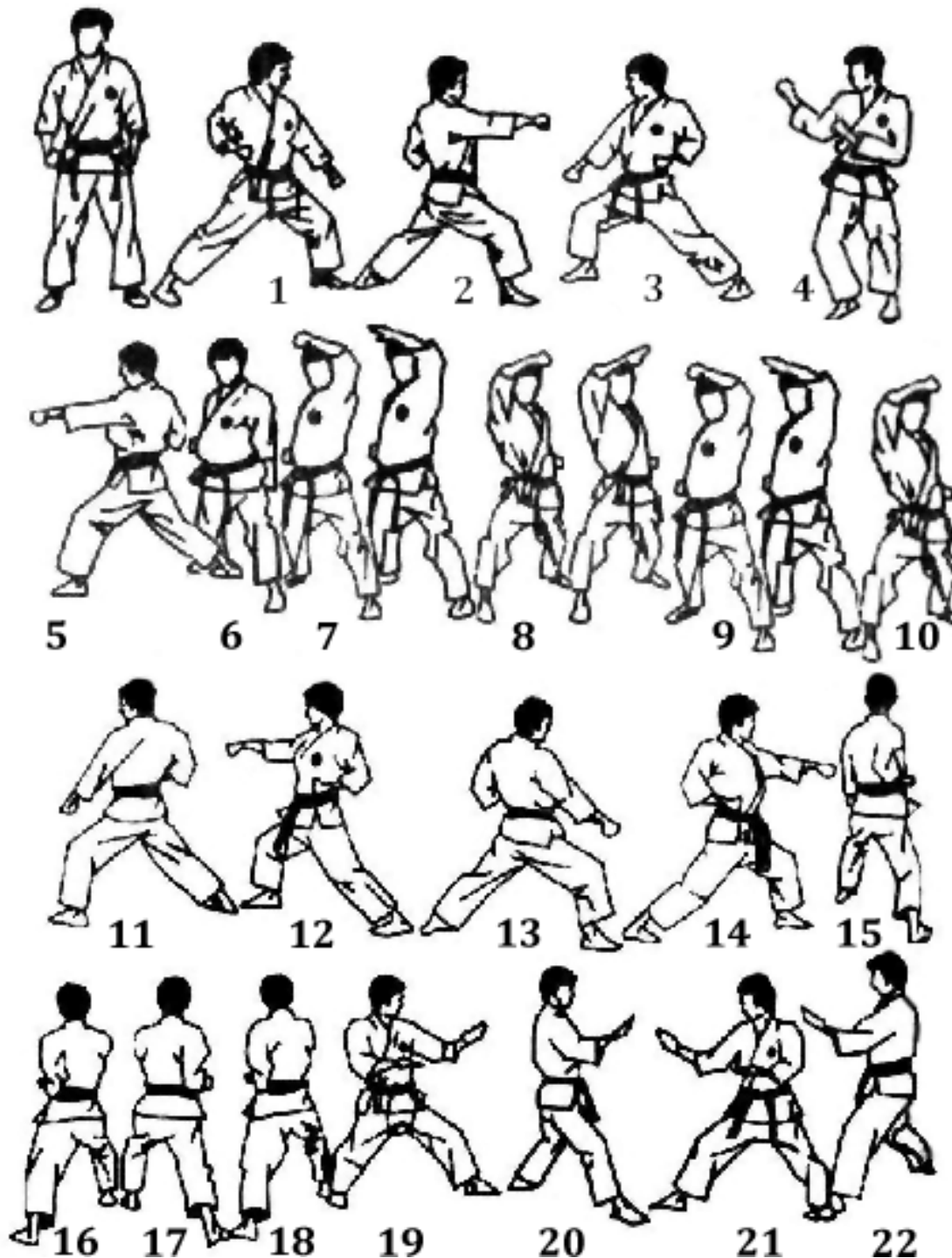
"Having mastered these five forms, one can be confident that he is able to defend himself competently in most situations. The meaning of the name is to be taken in this context."

(Karate-Do Kyohan, Gichen Funakoshi, p.35)

There is an uncanny correspondence between the five Pinan forms and Myamoto Musashi's Book of Five Rings, which is divided into five chapters, each represented by one of the five elements; earth, water, fire, air, and void. It is in this context that we will examine each of the Pinan forms individually.

Pinan 1

Pinan 1 can be considered the “Earth” kata. It is a basic but very strong form. Like solid bedrock, it provides a sure foundation for the other Pinan kata to be built upon. It also consists of many lower blocks. Finally, the feet of the practitioner never break contact with the floor, emphasizing being strong and rooted in your stance.



Pinan 1

Stance

- Natural stance (north)
Attention stance
Natural stance
1. Turn 90° left, LFS (west)
 2. Advance RFS
 3. Turn 180° right, RFS (east)
 4. Move back into RCS
 5. Advance RFS
 6. Advance LFS
 7. Turn 90° left, LFS (north)
 8. Advance RFS
 9. Advance LFS
 10. Advance RFS
 11. Turn 270° left, LFS (east)
 12. Advance RFS
 13. Turn 180° right, RFS (west)
 14. Advance LFS
 15. Turn 90° left, LFS (south)
 16. Advance RFS
 17. Advance LFS
 18. Advance RFS
 19. Turn 270° left, LBS (west)
 20. Step 45° right, RBS (northwest)
 21. Turn 135° right, RBS (east)
 22. Step 45° left, LBS (northeast)
- Natural stance (north)
Attention stance
Natural stance

平安

Action

Bow

- Left lower block
Right lunge punch
Right lower block
Right reinforced vertical backfist strike
Pull left fist to left hip
Left lunge punch
Left lower block, left rising block
Open left hand, right rising block
Open right hand, left rising block
Open left hand, right rising block **KIAI!**
Left lower block
Right lunge punch
Right lower block
Left lunge punch
Left lower block
Right lunge punch
Left lunge punch
Right lunge punch **KIAI!**
Left knifehand block
Right knifehand block
Right knifehand block
Left knifehand block

Bow

Abbreviations of Stances

RS	Rectangular stance
LBS	Left back stance
RBS	Right back stance
LCS	Left cat stance
RCS	Right cat stance
LDS	Left diagonal stance
RDS	Right diagonal stance
LFS	Left forward stance
RFS	Right forward stance
LSS	Left side stance
RSS	Right side stance

Applications

Generalized Defense

The concept of “lower block” is less than 100 years old. The technique was certainly practiced before that time, but it was not seen as a block. It was, and remains, a wide sweeping motion that allows you to intercept and neutralize a wide variety of incoming attacks. Herein lay the concept of *generalized defense*. If you don’t have to respond to a specific attack with a specific block, you can cut down your reaction time significantly by using a single technique to counter a variety of common attacks. For example, a lower block starts off much like an outer block, which can intercept head level attacks and then sweep the attacking limb downwards, possibly trapping it against the opponent’s body while clearing the upper line for a speedy counterattack. The same blocking motion can be used to intercept a kick, preferably above the knee of the kicking leg. When blocking to the inside (the live side), the lower block movement can be used to block the opponent’s knee with your elbow while simultaneously counterattacking with the fist of the blocking arm to the opponent’s groin. The lower block also makes an excellent defense against a variety of grabbing attacks. Against a single or even a double wrist grab, powerfully slam your lower block into the opponent’s wrist or forearm as you sharply withdraw the grabbed arm in a hikite (reaction hand) motion. Against a choke, you can attack the opponent’s elbows from either the inside or out with either the outer block or lower block, each actually part of a single motion. In this regard, one need only become a master of the lower block to be able to adequately defend oneself. This may be an exaggeration, but the efficiency of being able to apply a single motion against a variety of common attacks initiated with either left or right, hand or foot, as well as grabs, gives the defender an advantage. The defense plan has been formulated before the attack has even begun, with each possible outcome practiced and followed up by a speedy and effective counterattack.

Hikite (Reaction Hand)

The reaction hand plays an important role in hitting hard. The concept of *hikite* is related to *double blocking principle* and to the concept of *basing* (see next section). If you simply punch an unsupported opponent, much of the power can be lost in horizontal motion away from the technique as his body moves with the punch, dissipating the force of your strike. However, if you grab the opponent first and hold him, you are effectively basing him, keeping him from moving and therefore allowing more force to be applied to the target. If you pull the opponent into you sharply as you retract the grabbing arm to the chambered position on your ribs, you begin adding to the force of your punch.

To look at it another way, if you punch an unbased opponent with 100 theoretical units of energy and he moves as you hit him, he may absorb only 50 units of your total energy in the impact of your strike (even less if he purposely rolls with the punch). However, if you hold him still as you hit him, all 100 units can be

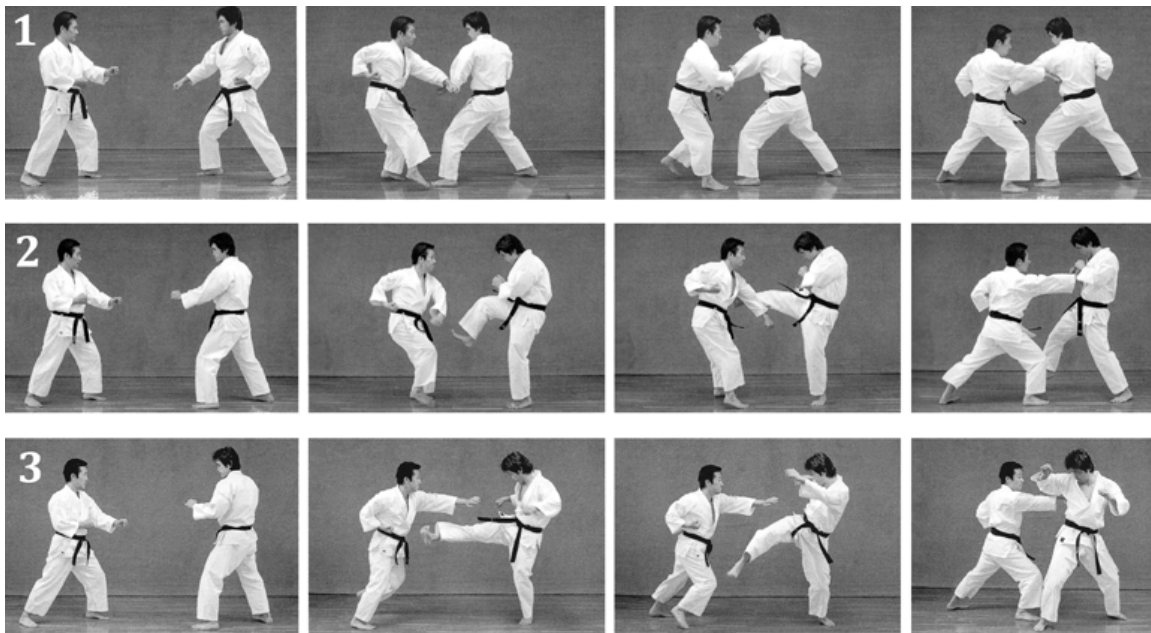
transferred, and if you can get him moving toward you by pulling him in with your reaction hand, you might be able to increase the force to 150 units.

It is extremely difficult to grab an opponent's attacking limb directly. However, the double blocking principle provides us with the perfect vehicle for achieving a solid grab on the opponent's arm (or leg) in order to apply a strong hikite. When you look at even the basic kata in this light, they become effective fighting forms; blocking with the chamber arm, leading into a counterattack and grab with the "blocking" hand, then pulling the opponent into a devastating counterattack, finishing him in "one blow" before recycling him into the next opponent or group of opponents.

Hikite can serve other purposes as well. O Sensei Dong Ngo taught that a straight pullback of your grabbing arm is only a two-dimensional application of hikite. If you grab and *twist* the opponent as you withdraw your hand into the typical palm up position at the ribs, you can apply kuzushi as well, breaking the opponent's balance as you counterattack.

Opening Series (moves 1 and 2)

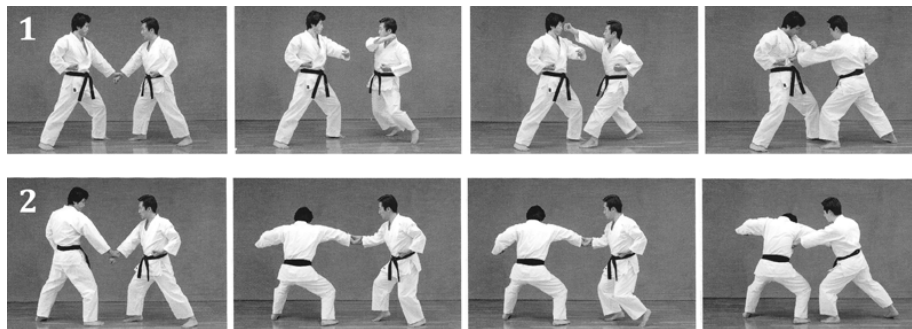
Switch Step: Begin from a left fighting stance. Use the lower block (move 1) to block a punch (series 1 below), a front kick (series 2). Use the switch step motion to add power to your counter punch. In the case of an arcing attack such as a roundhouse kick, use the skip step to evade the kick, using the blocking motion as a counter-weight to keep your energy moving forward and assist you in a speedy counterattack (series 3).



Lower Block/Vertical Backfist Series (moves 3 to 6)

Grab Escape: The opponent grasps your right wrist with his left hand; move back into a right cat stance as you snap your hand sharply through the gap between the attacker's forefinger and thumb. Use the same motion to immediately backfist the face. Grasp the opponent's gi as you step forward into a left forward stance and counter attack with a left punch (series 1 below). Use the turn to recycle the opponent, using him as a shield, projectile, or throwing him to the ground.

If the attacker grasps with his right hand, circle under the opponent's wrist and regrab. Switch step with a lunge punch to finish (series 2 below). Use the turn to recycle the opponent or throw the opponent to the ground.



Double Blocking Principle

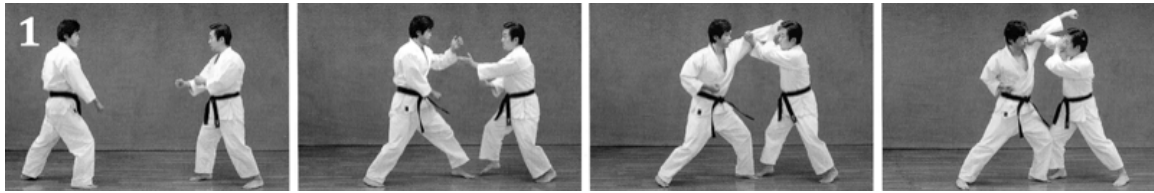
Different than a double block, the double blocking principle is a method of applying the basic blocks that dramatically increases the efficiency of your technique by incorporating your reaction arm actively into the technique.

The chamber motion acts as the initial intercepting block or parry, with the actual "block" acting as a clearing motion or even a counterattack. Let's take the rising block as an example. The rising block as traditionally taught (2D) is difficult to apply against a strong, fast attack. The outer block is both faster and stronger. Now imagine the chambered position for the rising block. Your reaction arm crosses your body like an outer block. Blocking with the outer block is fast and strong, but it has the disadvantage of crossing the centerline of your body, leaving you susceptible to being trapped. Therefore, the rising block motion quickly clears the attacking arm after the initial block with the reaction hand, and can even go on to strike the opponent all in the same motion. If your initial outer block led into a grab, the following rising block could hyperextend, or even break, the elbow joint. Blocking with the reaction arm also allows you a good opportunity to grab the attacking limb in order to apply hikite and add devastating power to the next, and perhaps final technique.

Double blocking is twice as fast as trying to block an attack with a two dimensional rising block alone (which also provides no counterattacking motion). The double blocking principle can be easily applied to hard and soft versions of the lower, middle, rising, and knife hand blocks.

Rising Block Series (moves 7 to 11)

The opponent attacks with a high punch. Double block, parrying the punch with your reaction hand. If you blocked to the inside, use the “blocking” hand to attack the opponent’s neck or face with an upward forearm strike (series 1 below).



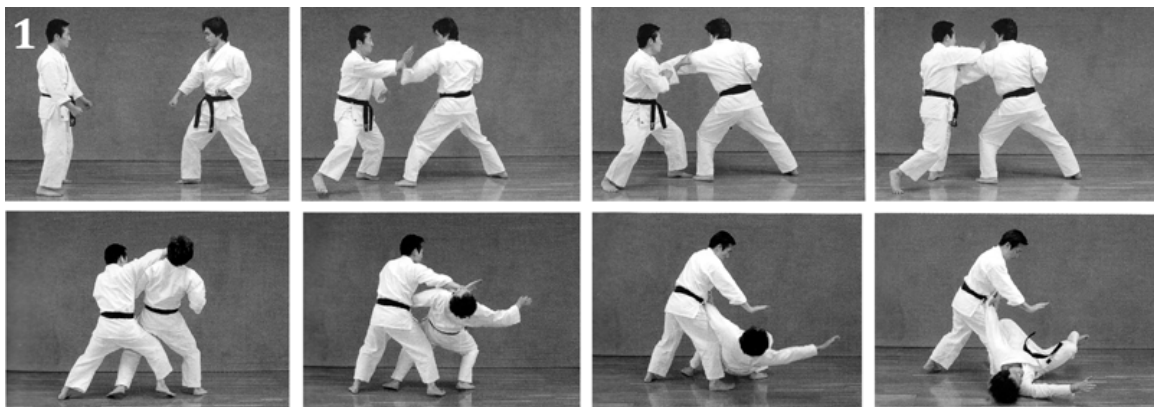
If you block to the dead side, use your parry to catch the opponent’s hand and use the rising block motion to hyperextend or break the opponent’s punching arm.

Lower Block Series (moves 11 to 18)

Apply the switch step principle explained in the opening series. You can also refer to the applications provided for Taikyoku.

Knifehand Block Series (moves 19 to 22)

Use the double blocking principle to block an incoming punch. If you block to the dead side, use the knifehand to grasp the opponent’s upper arm. Then step behind the opponent’s lead leg and use the second knifehand as a takedown (series 1 below).



If you block to the live side, grasp the opponent’s forearm with your knifehand. Maintain your grasp as you step through and use the second knifehand to attack the opponent’s neck. Hook behind his head and, using his arm as a lever, turn to recycle the opponent, using him as a shield, projectile, or throwing him to the ground.