|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| http://www.theshotokanway.com/widgets/spacer.gif | **'Bassai Dai' Kata Notes**  **Introduction to Bassai Dai**  Bassai Dai literally means "*to extract and block off*"  but this is taken to mean "*to storm (penatrate) a fortress”s*.  Bassai dai is one of the variations of the Passai Kata that is practiced in Shotokan Karate, normally starting at 3rd Kyu. Shotokan houses two Bassai Kata, Dai and Sho. Dai means greater while Sho means lesser or minor.  Bassai Sho is taught at the advanced level after mastery of Bassai dai.  Bassai Dai is characterized by repeated changes in blocking to simulate the feeling of shifting from a situation of disadvantage to a position of advantage.  Bassai Dai is often mistranslated, The first part of the name (*batsu*) means to extract or remove, not to penetrate.  The name to Penetrate a fortress seems to be more clearly descriptive of the attitude a student should have when practicing the Kata so for my money it is an adequate translation, if not correct 100%.  Bassai Dai is one of the more popular Shotokan Katas and also seen as being very important for students to learn. Many organizations require this Kata to be done for Shodan examinations.  Along with Empi, Jion and Kanku Dai, Bassai Dai was thought to have been used to create the Heian series, which is used to introduce Karate to new students.   **History of the Bassai Dai**  Passai is a kata that is practiced in many different Karate styles. The Kata has a large number of variations among these styles as well.  Variations such as Bassai Dai, Bassai Sho, Passai Dai, Passai Sho, Passai, Kyan Passai, Ishimine Passai, Tawada Passai, Ichingana Passai, Shimpaku Passai, Ishiro Passai, Teruya Passa, Anzato Passai, And Oshiro Passai., and many other versions all attached to specific instructors.  The origins of the Kata are obscure, however there are a few accepted ideas on the origins of this Kata. One researcher, Akio Kinjo, believes that the name of this Kata in Chinese means *'leopard-lion'*, and was pronounced as *'baosh*i' in Manderine, '*Baasai*' in the Fushou dialect and '*pausa*i' in Quan Shous dialect *(kinjo 1999*).  Kinjo, a respected researcher, believes that the movements of the kata also resemble the leopard boxing of china.  The Leopard style uses a lot of blocking and striking while standing in a cross leg stance, for instance. He also points out that the Lion boxing style is well represented, as it holds a great deal of openhanded techniques while using a stomping action.  Among the chinese origin theorist, some also say that this style represents the Wuxing Quan style of Kung fu, or the five element fist style, and others suggest that much like other mainstream kata, Passai was part of the Crane boxing that heavily influenced Okinawan Karate. This may seem to be a very logical conclusion as most of the Katas come from the Fukuen Crane style and are forms or adaptations of forms from this style. However the Fujian white crane style influenced many chinese styles as well as many Okinawan instructors.  It is however accepted that the Kata came back with Sokon Matsumrua and instructors of his generation. Matsumrua brought his style of Passai back from China while Oyadomari Kokan of Tomari Te style had his style taught to him by a Chinese living in the Tomari villiage at the time *(possibly Anan*).  Matsurumra’s version was picked up in China when he studied with Ason and Iwah of Fuchou in China.  Matsumura’s style of Passai was light and flowing with fast attacks and counters, but little power. It was circular and light.  Oyadomairs version was more "*okinawan-ized*".  It was slightly more linear and had more of an emphasis on muscle power over light speed and more direct force over whipping techniques.  To complicate matters, Itosu Anko was a student of Matsumura, and it would follow logic that the Passai he would learn and pass on would be Matsumura’s version, but he did not. Instead, Itosu followed the Okinawan tradition of learning from other masters when their instructor sends them. Itosu picked up the Passai version he used from Oyadomari.  Itosu further altered this Kata to even more linear and more in line with his new ideas on Karate. Itosu also took the versions he learned from both masters and created his Passai Sho with some more specific ideas of his own.  There does exist a more relevant bridge between the Matsumura version and the Oyadomari version, it is called Ishimine Passai.  This version was passed on by a contemporary and friend of Itosus, Bushi Ishimine (*1835-1889*).  Ishimine was a fellow student of Matsumuras as well.  The only relevance to the two men both training under Oyamadori and Matsumura is that it suggests a fairly unorthodox exchange between the two masters and illustrates a common misconception about training in Okinawa at the time.... most instructors had multiple masters that they trained under.  Most people felt that Itosu must have learned this Kata from his master Matsumura, but some further speculation as to it being Oyadomari was put forth.  One source suggested that the fist salutation beginning of the kata was evidence that this Kata, the influence on Itosu at the least, came through the Tomari city, therefore Oyadomari.  Other Katas that came out of this area also had this fist salute and influenced Itosu when creating his syllabus to teach, those like Jion, Jutte, Jiin and Empi.  This gesture is common in China as well, but seen as being fairly specific to the Tomari villiage when it comes to Okinawan Kata.  After Itosu refined his version of the Kata and set out to teach Funakoshi Sensei this Kata he further refined it to match up the other Kata that he was teaching the young soon to be school teacher.  Funakoshi brought this Kata with him when he travelled to Japan to begin spreading Karate to the masses on the mainland.  Funakoshi and his son also put their stamp on the lineage of JKA's Bassai Dai.  Elongating the stances and putting more emphasis on the use of power, Funakoshi Sensei created a uniquely Shotokan Kata and also adopted it as one of the "*big four Kata*" for his Shotokan Style.  From Funakoshi Senseis JKA style Karate other styles of Karate and martial arts took on this important Kata.  Many of the Traditional Tae Kwon Do clubs that still practice the original, pre-sport style of Tae Kwon Do also incorporate this Kata from their roots, before splitting away.   **End notes**  To this day Bassai Dai remains one of the big four Katas of Shotokan and also a milestone for most students. Learning this Kata means that the student has passed from learning the basic Katas and has moved on to learning the intermediate Katas of the style. The practice of Bassai Dai is both daunting and rewarding and interestingly I have made note that this is the time that most students tend to leave the Dojo.  Perhaps Bassai Dai represents the first bump in the road for most students as they progress into truly understanding Karate and its many difficult but wonderful techniques. |