

八段錦 Hachi-Dan Nishiki – The 8 Pieces of Brocade (An Approach for Health and Fitness)

This ancient exercise routine was taught to me by the Zen and Karate Masters at the Obaku-San Manpuku-Ji temple near Kyoto between 1989 and 1991 whilst I was there. It is reported to have been created by a Chinese General called Yeuh Fei about 900 years ago. The same man is accredited with developing Hsing-I and Eagle Claw Kung Fu.



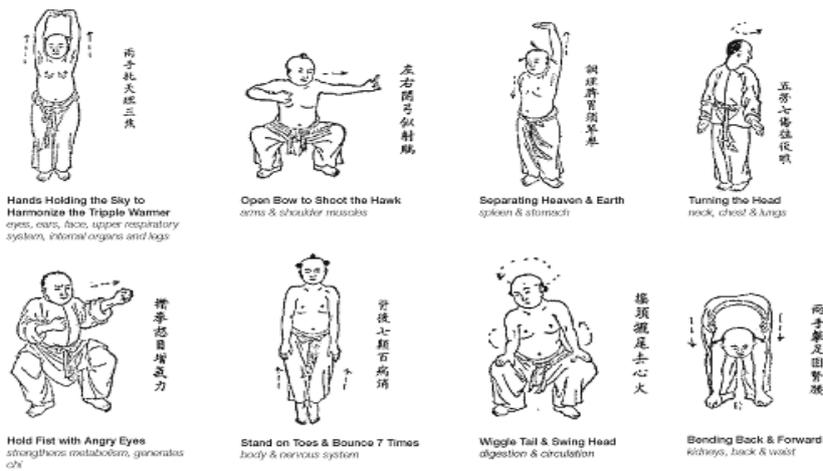
Over the centuries, practice of this routine has evolved into several different ways and the current 8 Pieces of Brocade is less than the original 12 Pieces. How you practice is less important than understanding the basic principles that go into developing the process. These include circulating the body's energy, especially through the softer side, although both hard and soft are important. This refers to the fact that the body has a harder side and a softer side to each part. Consider the leg. It is physically tougher on the outer side, whilst the inner thigh is softer and more vulnerable. The body itself is tougher on the back than the abdomen. The back of the neck is more able to resist a blow than the throat. So each part of the body can be loosely separated into harder or softer areas. When considering passing energy through the body, remember that this energy can not be seen, but it can be felt, like an electric current.

This routine is not too advanced, and is really aimed at smoothing circulation. To take training to a higher level, such as developing the infamous 'Iron-Fist', then alternative methods are required. The 8 Pieces of Brocade will, however, help to maintain health, reduce sickness, prolong life, help martial artists to understand the principles of power in striking and absorb blows more easily. Therefore, past Masters took this training further to develop the legendary 'Iron-Fist Kung Fu'.

It is said that good things come in threes. There are 12 energy channels around the body, 6 for the hands and 6 for the feet (three in each). There are the three 'energies' of heaven, earth and man. In Karate terms, we are told to develop body, mind and spirit. All these theories are fine, but before describing the forms, I need to highlight and reinforce some basic, yet important factors for this practice.

- Only when your mind is relaxed will the muscles relax and energy flow.
- Only when you can relax deeply into your body will your mind be able to lead the energy there.
- Your root must be wide as well as deep.
- If the mind stops, the energy stops there with it.
- Strong mind = strong energy but weak mind = weak energy.
- Keep the back straight throughout (unless told to do otherwise).
- Strong spirit is at the centre and root of success in a fight.
- Keep to a regular pattern of training to achieve best results.

The 8 Pieces of Brocade



Now we go into a brief description of each of the 8 forms. There are actually 10 presented here as it is typical to begin and end with some general warming-up and warming-down actions. Make sure you practice each one slowly and relax. The breathing method used is down to ability and experience. I shall indicate where to slowly inhale and exhale during each action.

用手 **Showai Sho**. This first exercise is essentially a warm-up. A brisk walk in the morning of at least half a mile followed by slow, whole body rotations will help to ensure the muscles and ligaments are sufficiently warmed-up. The feet rotate and the knees bend slightly too during these relaxed rotations.



第一段錦 雙手托天理三焦 **So Shu Taku Tenri San Sho**. This is the first in the Brocade set. Although the set is not begun with still meditation, calming the mind is important. Once warming-up is done, stand calmly for a while then start this form. It is a good one for releasing over all tension and working the internal organs.





Begin relaxed, feet shoulder width, raise the hands, interlock the fingers then turn the palms over and rise up onto the balls of the feet and stretch up breathing in. Make sure the movement and breathing are coincided, then at maximum stretch, make big circles as you lower the hands down to the original starting point, whilst breathing out. Repeating this say 10 times is good. More is better.

第二段錦 左右開弓似射雕 **Sayo Kai Kyu Ji Sha Cho**. The second piece is used to strengthen the waist and kidney areas. First, push down to make a strong root and centre. Remember, keep the back straight. In this action, imagine that you are drawing a bow and arrow, concentrating the mind on this.

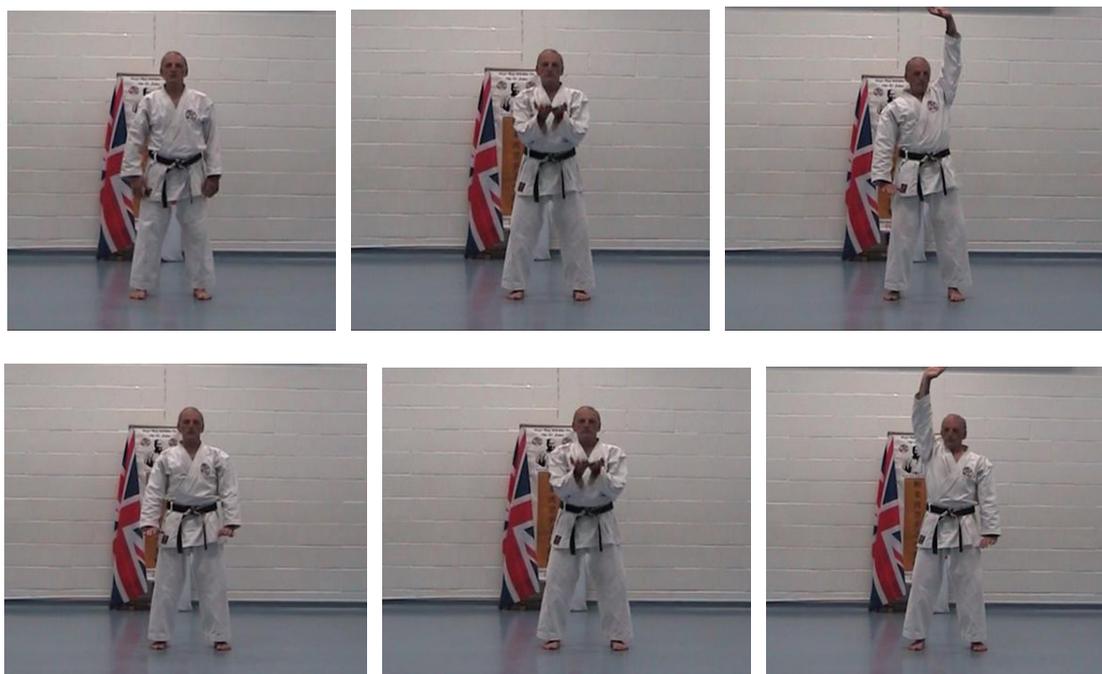


Move the right foot to the right and sink into a wide, straddle stance, raising the hands to the centre and breathing in. Separate the hands as you breathe out, with the index finger and thumb pointing out, look to one side and push away, pulling the other hand back to the side of the body. This is the part that resembles drawing a bow and arrow. Return the hands to the centre as you breathe in and once centred, straighten the legs to stand up, breathing out and pushing the hands, palm down in front of you.



Repeat this process in the other direction. Once both sides have been done, this is one complete piece. Try to repeat the whole piece a similar number of times to the first one. After the final repetition, move the right leg back to the starting place, shoulder width apart.

第三段錦 調理脾胃須單舉 Chori Hi-isu Tan Cho. This third piece gives tremendous stimulation to the spleen and stomach, working the muscles around the abdomen. The leg on the side of the raised arm can be stretched too with a slight backwards lean. Move both hands up to the front of the stomach, palms up. Then, breathing in, raise one up over the head, pressing the other down by the side. Feel some resistance in both hands, without tensing the muscles.



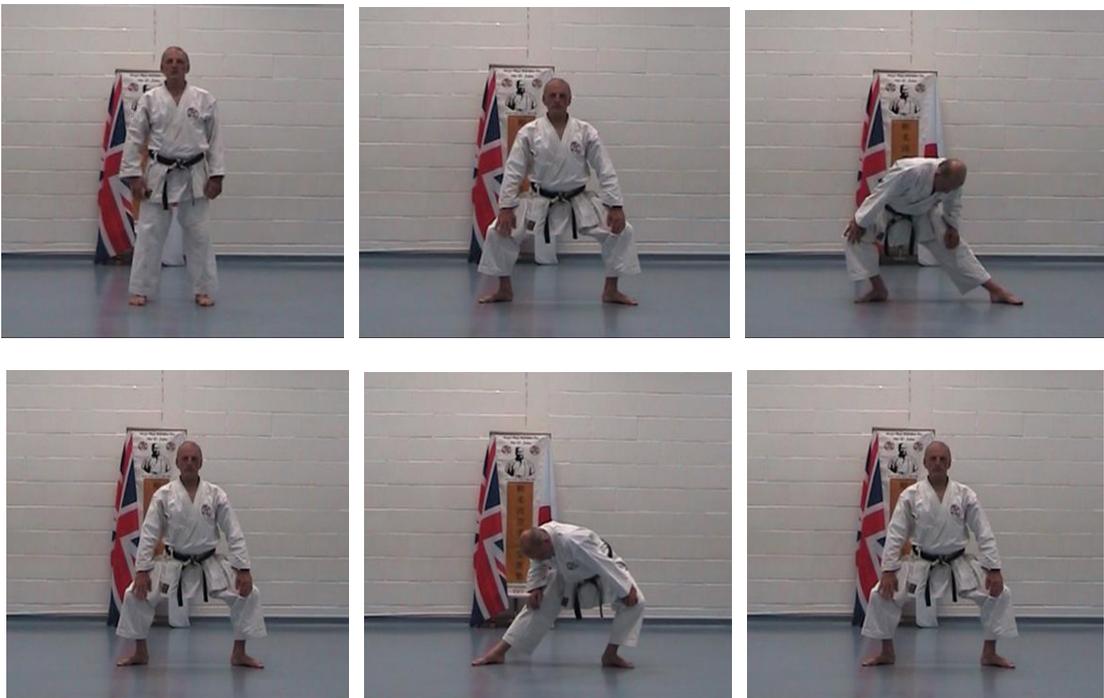
Follow the breathing carefully to the completion of the movement and then breathe out as the raised hand slowly compresses down to its starting point by your side. Perform both sides as one piece and perform about half the number done in pieces 1 & 2. I sometimes practice this one using the circular, mawashi uke action.

第四段錦 五勞七傷往后瞧 Go Ro Shichi Sho Oko Sho. The fourth piece is a simple one but good for balancing the emotions and a very important one to practice. Relax with both hands at your sides, palms facing down and fingers to the front. Lift the chest slightly so that the posture is upright. Keeping the shoulders square, turn the head to one side and breathe out. Try to look behind you, over your shoulder. Return the head to the centre, breathing in. Repeat in both directions equally and practice the same number of repetitions as in piece 3. The body and shoulders must remain facing forward. Use the mind to lead energy from the abdomen to the soles of the feet and back in each turn, developing a strong root to the ground.



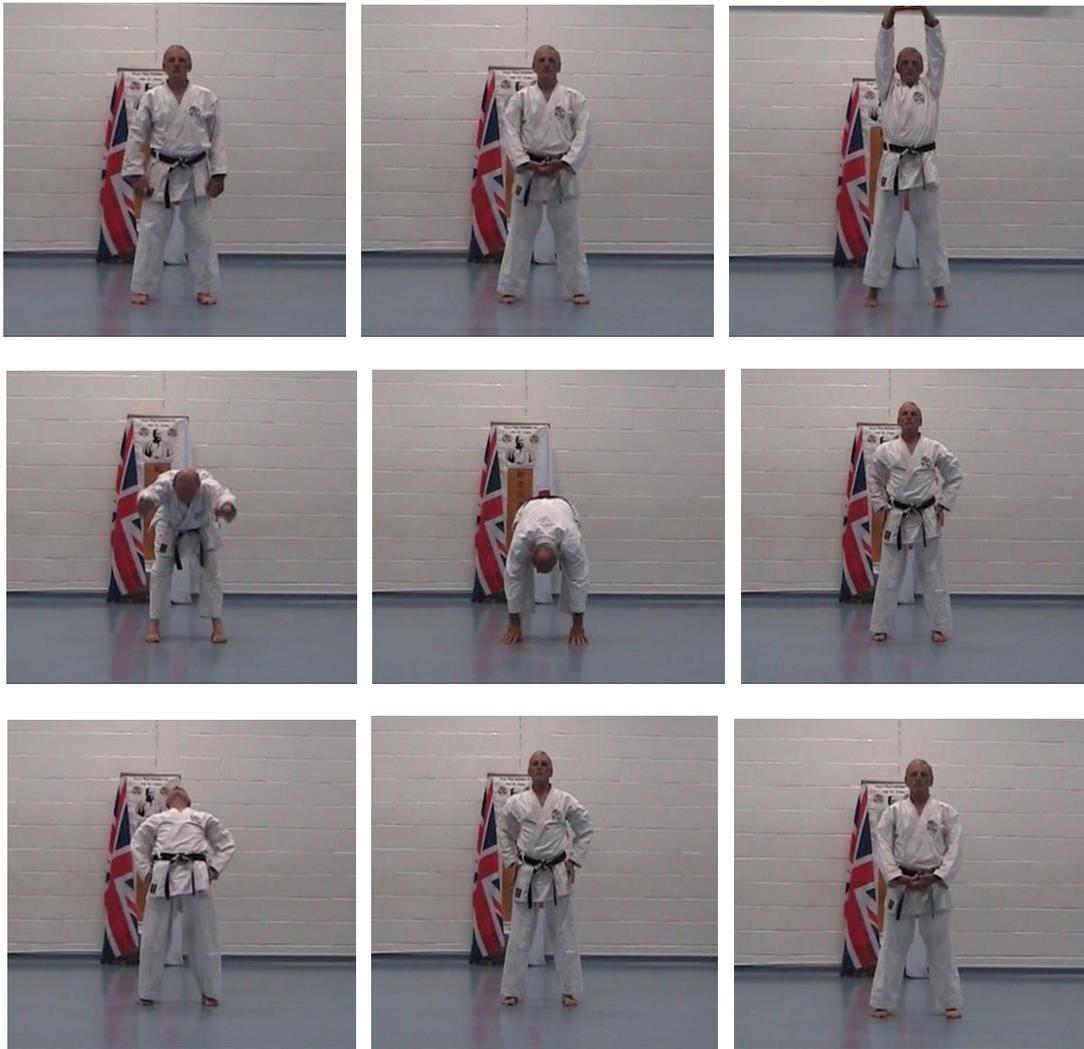


第五段錦 搖頭擺尾去心火 Yo To Haibi Kyo Shin Ka. The fifth piece involves moving the right leg once again to the straddle stance, breathing in and placing the fingers on top of the knees, thumbs on top of the thighs. Your mind should lead energy to the soles of your feet. Shift the weight to one leg and press down with the hand on the side of the straighter leg. Bring your head, spine and supporting foot into line. A slight lean forward is allowed in this one as we breathe out, aiming the breath towards the supporting foot.

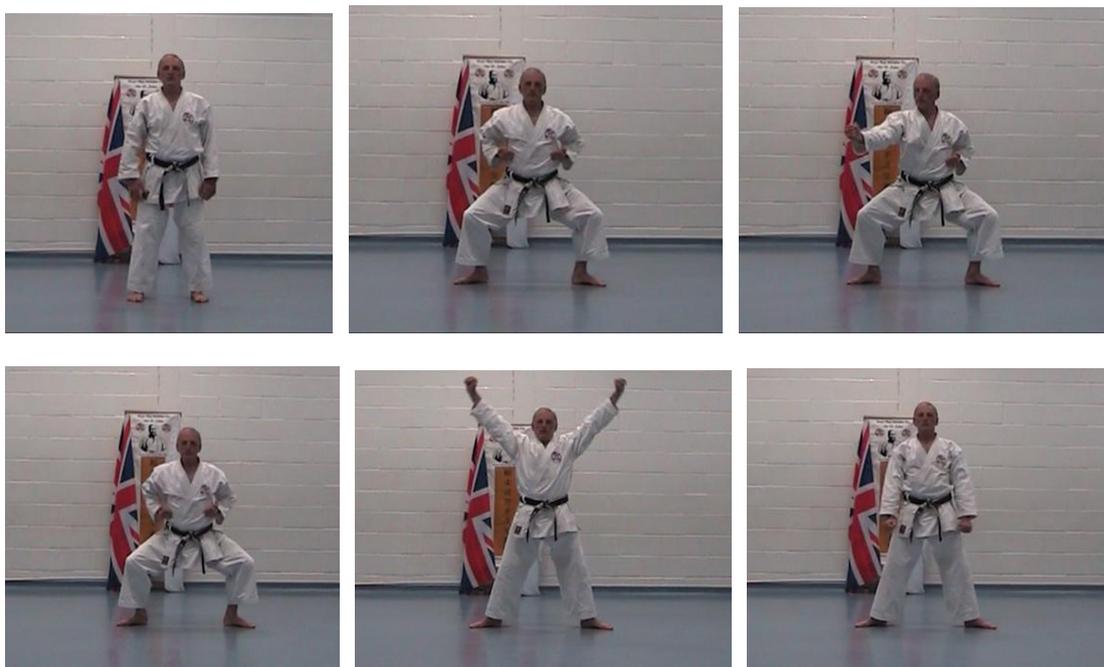


Hold this position for a few seconds before returning to a straddle stance again and breathing in. We then go into the same movement on the opposite side, breathing out for the bend and stretch, breathing in as you centre up again. This piece opens the chest and improves circulation in the legs. Make sure you don't drop the head but keep a line with the spine and back foot. If you press down heavily on the knee, you can also compress the lung on that side, opening the other one and working the lungs like bellows. Move the leg back to parallel stance at the end of this piece.

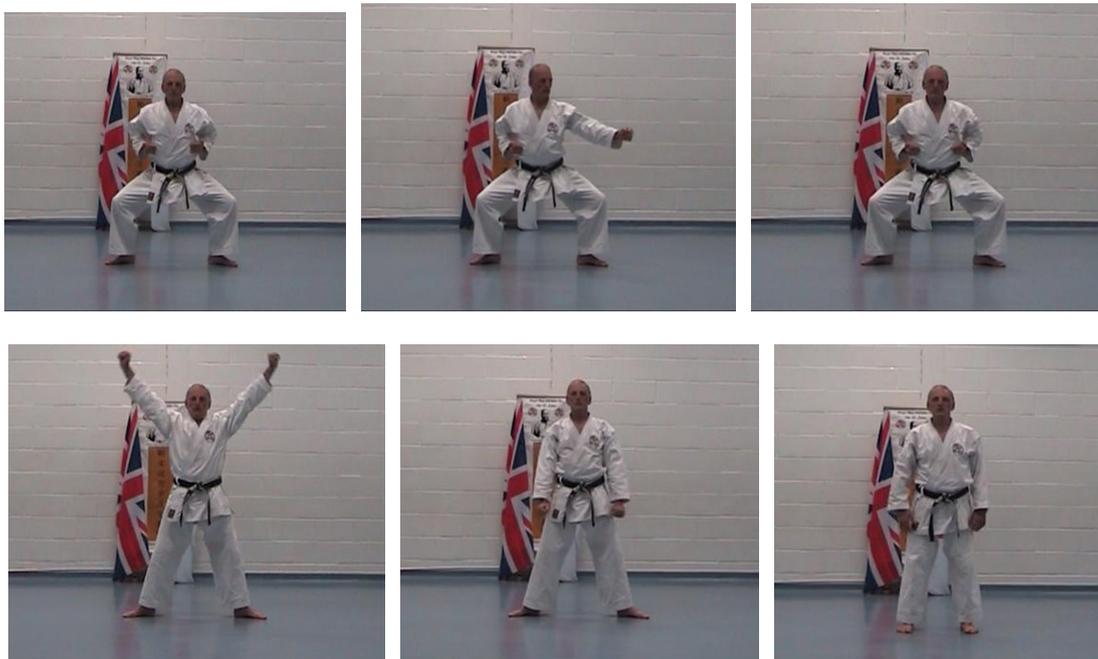
第六段錦 兩手攀足固腎腰 Ryo Shu Hansoku Ko Jin Yo. The sixth piece is a good one for the kidneys and waist. Bending stimulates the kidneys and stretching helps to send energy to the hands and feet. Press the palms beside your waist then breathing in, raise them up over the head. Keep the mind on the kidney area and stretch on tip-toe, reaching higher with both left then right hand, breathing out, then in again. Then, breathing out, bend forward, extending the arms down and grasp the toes/feet/ankles. Place the fingertips under the toes if possible. This will gently stress the whole body. After a few seconds, straighten up, breathing in, and place the hands on the back of the hips with the thumbs to the front. Gently lean back the head and push the hips forward, breathing out. Finally, straighten up again. Repeat the whole piece more than 5 times.



第七段錦 攢拳怒目增氣力 **San Ken Do Moku Zo Kiryoku**. The seventh piece is similar to the second but it is necessary to do this one as well as we have spent time awakening the body's energy fields. This form uses the mind to move energy from the body to the limbs in the way they are used for Martial Arts practice. Intense visualization is necessary as the fist is pushed out with each strike.



Move the right foot again into the wide, straddle stance, body straight and position the fists by the sides whilst breathing in. Push down into a lower stance and push one fist out at 45 degrees to the centre as you breathe out. Focus on an imaginary target and extend the energy to the fist whilst keeping a firmly rooted stance.



When the punch is finished, relax the hands and return them to the hips as you breathe in. I practice this one with open palm strike as well as with a punch, to remove the tension that a fist can create in the hands. Once the hands are back to the sides of the body and the breath in is complete, breathe out fully and straighten the legs, reaching high and taking the arms round in large circles, up over the head and down the sides, back to the starting position. This is then repeated using the strike on the other side. This is one whole repetition and can be practiced the same number of times as pieces 3, 4 and so on. Then return the feet to parallel stance again.

第八段錦 背后七颠百病消 **Haigo Shichi Ten Hyaku Byo Sho**. The eighth piece is used to smooth out the energy from top to toe. With the hands placed at the sides, breathe in and raise up onto the toes, stimulating the channels in the legs. Then breathe out and lower to a standing position. Hands can be placed in several positions.



I tend to use the same position as in piece 4, concentrating energy on the palms when lowering back down. Alternatively, the hands can be placed beside the hips, or palms rotating up and down at the solar plexus (similarly to the practice in Sanchin Kata). Repeat this piece the same number of times as the first.

十字手 **Shi-Tsu Sho**. The final movement, not one of the set of eight, is a warm-down exercise used to enhance blood flow through the limbs and must be performed gently and smoothly. Increasing the bend at the knees will also help the legs. Make large arm circles,

breathing steadily. Not too many repetitions are needed, although extra leg work such as low front and side kicks are good too.



Take a minute to relax afterwards. The number of repetitions practiced is up to you, but it is important that to benefit fully, you do not miss any out of the routine.

An example of the number of repetitions for an extensive workout routine using the 8 Pieces of Brocade is as follows but this can be varied according to time available. Fewer repetitions are acceptable if time is an issue but do not omit any of the actions.

Hachi-Dan Nishiki – guide on number of repetitions		
Warm-up	Showai Sho	A few, as necessary
1 st piece	So Shu Taku Tenri San Sho	24 times in total
2 nd piece	Sayo Kai Kyu Ji Sha Cho	12 times on each side
3 rd piece	Chori Hi-isu Tan Cho	12 times on each side
4 th piece	Go Ro Shichi Sho Oko Sho	12 times on each side
5 th piece	Yo To Haibi Kyo Shin Ka	12 times on each side
6 th piece	Ryo Shu Hansoku Ko Jin Yo	16 times through
7 th piece	San Ken Do Moku Zo Kiryoku	8 on each side
8 th piece	Haigo Shichi Ten Hyaku Byo Sho	24 times in total
Warm-down	Shi-Tsu Sho	A few, as necessary



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ブライアン ヒンチリフ

剛柔流空手道八段

無双直伝英真流居合術六段

剛柔流空手道宝英塾