



Kanku-Dai

Kanku-dai means to observe the universe or the sky (from the distinctive first movement). Dai denotes that this is the greater Kanku kata.

The kata was originally known as Kushanku, the name of a Chinese martial artist who came to Okinawa in the eighteenth century. This was Gichin Funakoshi's favorite kata and the one that he chose for the first public demonstration of karate outside Okinawa. Funakoshi felt that Kanku-dai contained all of the essential elements of Shotokan karate.

The major points are techniques which are at the same time fast and slow, powerful and soft, expanding and contracting and jumping and crouching. The kata should be performed as if completely surrounded by enemies. Conditioning is also a major point, because of the length of the kata. There are 65 movements, which should take about 90 seconds to perform.

Preparation

- attention stance
 - bow
 - state the name of the kata: "Kanku-Dai"
 - bring the heels and toes together and cup the right fist in the left hand in front of the chin (top of hands even with the chin) with the elbows pointing out to the sides of the body at a 45-degree angle
1. Bring the hands to the lower level, touching the thumbs and the index fingers together (both hands are open, fingers together, wrists straight, a triangle space in the middle). Continue to look straight ahead. Slowly bring the arms up, keeping the elbows locked, beginning to follow the space between the hands with the eyes as it reaches eye level. When the hands get to their maximum extension at the upper level, slowly bring them apart (when the elbows are bent 90-degrees and even with the shoulders the palms should be facing north) and in a circular manner, and finally bring them back to the lower level. As the hands are first brought apart, look straight ahead. As the hands come together at the lower level, the right hand is in a knife hand position and it is cupped into the centre of the left hand.
 2. Look over the left shoulder to the west. Step out with the left leg into back stance and execute an upper level back arm block with the left hand to the west.
 3. Look over the right shoulder to the east. Shift into back stance facing the east and execute an upper level back arm block with the right hand (to the east).
 4. Look over the left shoulder to the north. Bring the left leg up to a natural stance facing the north. Execute a middle level sweeping vertical knife hand block with



- the left hand (slowly), keeping the right fist on the right hip. Perform a middle level straight punch with the right hand. Shift the feet to the left into a narrow (no width) and shallow front stance. Execute a middle level reverse inside block with the right hand to the north. Execute a middle level straight punch with the left hand, returning to natural stance. Shift the feet to the left in a narrow and shallow front stance. Perform a middle level reverse inside block with the left hand to the north. This sequence is the same as that of Bassai Dai.
5. Look over your right shoulder in the south direction. Draw the back foot (left) towards the front foot (right) at a 30-45-degree angle (to the front), moving it so that the length of the back stance is cut in half. As soon as the back foot has reached the midpoint of the length of the back stance stop moving it and begin to draw the front foot to the back. As the front foot is moving towards the back foot, move the back foot so that its toes are pointing in the same direction as the front toes. Additionally, as the front foot is moving back, bring the hands to your left hip in the cup and saucer position, right hand on top. Finishing stance is attention stance.
 6. Continuing to look to the south, simultaneously execute an upper level side snap kick with the right leg and an upper level back fist with the right hand. Hand and foot move out to the target in synchronization. Snap the leg and arm back together as well. Look over your left shoulder behind you (north) and set for knife hand block with your left hand on top of the right. Step straight back with your right leg (towards the south direction) into back stance and execute a middle level knife hand block with the left hand.
 7. Continuing to look straight ahead (north), set for knife hand block with the right hand on top. Step forward with the right leg into back stance and perform a middle level knife and block with the right hand.
 8. Continuing to look straight ahead (north), set for knife hand block with the left hand on top. Step forward with the left leg into back stance and perform a middle level knife and block with the left hand.
 9. Continuing to look straight ahead (north), execute a middle level pressing block with the left hand and simultaneously step forward with the right leg into front stance and execute a spear hand strike to the middle level. Finishing position of the left hand is directly underneath the elbow of the extended right arm (left elbow pointing out to the side).
 10. Look over the left shoulder to the south. Step towards the south with the left leg into front stance. Set by bringing the left hand to the lower level in knife hand position and the right hand, also in knife hand position, to the upper level as if setting for an outside block. Execute an upper level outside-in knife hand strike with the right hand describing a circular motion and bring the left hand in an open handed rising block position to the upper level.
 11. Continue to look to the south. Execute an upper level front snap kick with the right leg. As you recover, look over the left shoulder to the north and step down with the right leg into back stance facing the north. As you assume the back



- stance, execute a simultaneous upper level inside block to the rear with the right hand and a lower level downward block to the front with the left hand.
12. Continue to look to the north. Step out with the left leg into front stance and execute a lower level spear hand strike with the right hand (palm up), bringing the left hand up beside the face (as in Heian Godan). Step back with the left leg into L-stance and execute a lower level downward block with the left hand (the block and step into L-stance are performed slowly).
 13. Continue to look to the north. Step out (forward) with the left leg into front stance and execute an upper level outside-in knife hand strike with the right hand, bringing the left hand into an open handed rising block position at the upper level.
 14. Continue to look to the north. Execute an upper level front snap kick with the right leg. As you recover, look over the left shoulder to the south and step down with the right leg into back stance facing the south. As you assume the back stance, execute a simultaneous upper level inside block with the right hand to the rear and a lower level downward block with the left hand to the front.
 15. Continue to look to the south. Step out with the left leg into front stance and execute a lower level spear hand strike with the right hand (palm up), bringing the left hand up beside the face (as in Heian Godan). Step back with the left leg into L-stance and execute a lower level downward block with the left hand (these last two actions are performed slowly).
 16. Look over the left shoulder to the east. Bring your left leg to your right and assume attention stance position. When assuming this stance, your right fist should be on your right hip and the left fist shoulder be in the hammer fist position resting on top of the right fist (cup and saucer position).
 17. Continuing to look to the east, execute an upper level side snap kick with the left leg. Simultaneously, execute an upper level back fist strike with the left hand. The back fist remains extended when the leg recoils. On the recovery stage of the side snap kick, step with the left leg into a narrow front stance (heels in line with each other) and execute a middle level elbow smash with the right elbow, bringing the extended left hand to the right elbow.
 18. Look over your right shoulder to the west. Bring your right leg back to your left and assume attention stance position. When assuming this stance, your left fist should be on your left hip and the right fist shoulder be in the hammer fist position resting on top of the left fist (cup and saucer position).
 19. Continuing to look to the west, execute an upper level side snap kick with the right leg. Simultaneously, execute an upper level back fist strike with the right hand. The back fist remains extended when the leg recoils. On the recovery stage of the side snap kick, step with the right leg into a narrow front stance (heels in line with each other) and execute a middle level elbow smash with the left elbow, bringing the extended right hand to the left elbow.
 20. Look over your left shoulder towards the east. Set with your left hand on top for knife hand block. Bring your left foot to your right foot and pivot in the direction



- that you are looking (east). Step out with your left foot into back stance and perform a middle level knife hand block with your left hand.
21. Look 45-degrees to front (southeast), set with your right hand on top for knife hand block. Step in the direction you are looking (i.e. at a 45-degree angle to the front, southeast) with your right leg into back stance and execute a middle level knife hand block with your right hand.
 22. Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the west direction). Set for knife hand block with your right hand on top. Step in the direction that you are looking (west, behind you) into back stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot clockwise in the direction that you are looking, and step out with your right leg. As you are stepping into the back stance, execute a middle level knife hand block with your right hand.
 23. Look 45-degrees to the front (southwest) and set with your left hand on top for knife hand block. Step in the direction that you are looking (i.e. at a 45-degree angle to the front, southwest) with your left leg into back stance and execute a middle level knife hand block with your left hand.
 24. Look over the left shoulder to the south. Step out with the left leg (to the south) into front stance and execute an upper level outside-in high knife hand strike with the right hand (bringing the left hand to an open handed rising block position at the upper level). As in previous movements such as this, first bring the left hand down to the lower level in knife hand position and the right hand, also in knife hand position, to the upper level as if setting for an outside block. Then perform the strike.
 25. Continue looking to the south. Execute an upper level front snap kick with the right leg. As you recover, step forward into crossed leg stance (left leg moving up behind the right) execute a middle level vertical back fist strike with the right hand (pulling the left hand to the hip). Set for the strike by extending the left hand to the middle level (in knife hand position with the palm facing down) and bringing the right hand (in a fist) to the upper level (the elbow should be pointing slightly forward at eye level).
 26. Continue looking to the south. Step back with the left leg into front stance and execute a middle level inside block with the right hand. Execute a middle level reverse punch with the left hand, followed by a middle level straight punch with the right hand.
 27. Look over the left shoulder to the north. Pivot on both feet counterclockwise 180-degrees so that you are facing the north. Simultaneously pick the right knee up to the chest and drive forward while straightening the left leg and delivering an upper level augmented uppercut punch with the right hand (left hand supporting the right, hand in a position similar to the first movement of Bassai Dai). Drop to the floor, hands forming a triangle with the right knee at the chest (on the ball of the foot) and the left leg (foot flat) extended straight back. Kiai on the augmented punch.



28. Look over the left shoulder to the south. Pushing off the right leg, pivot into a low back stance facing the south with the left leg forward. Execute a lower level knife hand block with the left hand.
29. Continuing to look to the south, step forward with the right leg into back stance and execute a middle level knife hand block with the right hand.
30. Look over the right shoulder to the west. Perform a 270-degree turn, stepping out into front stance with the left leg to the west. Execute a middle level inside block with the left hand. Execute a middle level reverse punch with the right hand.
31. Look over the right shoulder to the east. Step with the right leg into front stance facing the east. Execute a middle level reverse punch with the left hand and a middle level straight punch with the right hand.
32. Look over your right shoulder in the south direction. Draw the back foot (left) towards the front foot (right) moving it so that the length of the front stance is cut in half. As soon as the back foot has reached the midpoint of the length of the front stance stop moving it and begin to draw the front foot to the back. As the front foot is moving towards the back foot, move the back foot so that its toes are pointing in the same direction as the front toes. Additionally, as the front foot is moving back, bring the hands to your left hip in the cup and saucer position. Finishing stance is attention stance.
33. Continuing to look to the south, simultaneously execute an upper level side snap kick with the right leg and an upper level back fist with the right hand. Hand and foot move out to the target in synchronization. Snap both back together as well. Look over your left shoulder behind you (north) and set for knife hand block with your left hand on top of the right. Step straight back with your right leg (towards the south direction) into back stance and execute a middle level knife hand block with the left hand.
34. Continuing to look straight ahead (north), execute a middle level pressing block with the left hand, while simultaneously stepping forward with the right leg into front stance and execute a spear hand strike to the middle level. Finishing position of the left hand is directly underneath the elbow of the extended right arm (left elbow pointing out to the side).
35. Continue to look straight ahead, sharply bring the right hand up beside the right side of the head so that the elbow is bent 90-degrees with the fingers pointing straight up at the ceiling. As you do this, turn the wrist counterclockwise to the right as much as possible. Step forward with the left leg, rotating 270-degrees (to the north) and step out with the left leg into horse stance. Execute an upper level vertical back fist with the left hand (from over top), pulling the right hand to the hip.
36. Continue to look to the north. Slide forward (to the north), remaining in horse stance and execute a middle level bottom fist strike with the left hand.
37. Continue looking to the north, execute a middle level elbow smash with the right elbow to the left palm (in the north direction, arms finish parallel to the ground).



- Simultaneously look over the right shoulder to the south and bring the hands down to the left hip, setting as if performing a back fist strike with the left fist on the bottom (cup and saucer position). Execute a downward block with the right hand to the south at the lower level. Execute a middle level hook punch with the left hand.
38. Continue looking to the south. Pivot on the right leg clockwise 180-degrees bringing the left knee to the chest and the left hand at the upper level and the right hand at the lower level. As you stomp down into horse stance simultaneously execute a lower level scooping block with the left hand as you raise the right arm to the upper level. During the movement, both hands move as if drawing a large circle. As you pivot, look to the west.
 39. Continue looking to the west, execute a lower level punch with the right hand, finishing so that the wrists of the left and right hand are crossed (right hand on the inside). Look down to the lower level as you execute the punch.
 40. Continue looking to the west. Execute an upper level open handed X- block shifting both feet inward to a natural stance.
 41. Look over the right shoulder to the south. Pivot on the right foot 270-degrees (finishing facing the south), step back with the left leg into front stance.
 42. Continue looking to the south. Slowly bring both hands down to the middle level, forming a fist with both hands. Execute a double flying front snap kick, kicking first with the left foot at the middle level and secondly with the right foot at the upper level. Land, assuming a front stance with the right leg forward facing the south. As you land execute a middle level vertical back fist strike with the right hand. Kiai on the back fist strike.
 43. Pivot on the left foot, turning 180-degrees to the north. As you turn, bend the knees and execute a lower level scooping block with the right hand. Both hands should move as if describing a large circle. Assume natural stance.

- assume attention stance by bringing your right leg to your left
- bow
- step out with your right leg into natural stance