

# Traditional Taikyoku Kata

## **TAIKYOKU SHODAN**

The word *Taikyoku* is often translated as "first cause." *Shodan* means "first step." Created by Gichin Funakoshi, Taikyoku Shodan is the simplest of all Shotokan style kata. It contains only one type of block, one type of punch, and one main stance. Therefore, it is no surprise that the kata was created for the primary purpose of teaching elementary school students. Counting the last three created by Henri Plee, there are six Taikyoku kata. However, many Shotokan groups do not practice Taikyoku Shodan or any of the other Taikyoku kata at this time. These groups usually teach Heian Shodan as the first kata.

With the exception of the natural stances at the beginning and end of the kata, all of the techniques are performed while in front stance. Understanding how to assume and move from a front stance is therefore the essential message of Taikyoku Shodan. In addition to moving forward, there are several instances where the student is challenged to perform 90-degree, 180-degree, and 270-degree turns while moving from one front stance to another. Turning is often one of the more confusing aspects of the kata for new students and it should be diligently practiced given that turns appear in all future kata. Furthermore, while moving in all directions in front stance, the student is also introduced to the two most common forms of hip movement in Shotokan karate, hip rotation and counter rotation. Given that there is only one basic attack (lunge punch) and one basic block (downward block) in the kata, students will be able to focus most of their attention on proper use of the hips while moving in the various directions required by the kata.

### **Kata Sequence**

attention stance

bow

clearly state the name of the kata: "Taikyoku Shodan"

step out with your right leg into natural stance

Look to the left. Set for downward block by bringing your left hand on top as you drop your hips. Step to your left (west) with your left leg into front stance and perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (west) with your right leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the east direction). Set for downward block with your right hand on top. Step in the direction that you are looking (east, behind you) into front stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot 180-degrees in the direction that you are looking, and step out with your right leg. As you are stepping into the front stance, execute a downward block with your right hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (east) with your left leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your left hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your left shoulder to the north direction. Set for downward block with your left hand and step out into front stance with your left leg. Ensure that you bring your left leg back to the right leg, pivot 90-degrees in the direction that you are looking (north) and then step out. As you are stepping into front stance perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (north) with your right leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for middle punch (keep the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (north) with your left leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your left hand. At the completion of the lunge punch, continue to step forward (north) smoothly into front stance with your right leg. Execute another lunge punch, this time with your right hand. Kiai on the second lunge punch. You should finish each of the punches with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder towards the east. Set with your left hand on top for downward block. Bring your left foot to your right foot and pivot 270-degrees in the direction that you are looking (east). Step out with your left foot into front stance and perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (east) with your right leg into

front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the west direction). Set for downward block with your right hand on top. Step in the direction that you are looking (west, behind you) into front stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot 180-degrees in the direction that you are looking, and step out with your right leg. As you are stepping into the front stance, execute a downward block with your right hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (west) with your left leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your left hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your left shoulder to the south direction. Set for downward block with your left hand on top and step out into front stance with your left leg. Ensure that you bring your left leg back to the right leg, pivot 90-degrees in the direction that you are looking (south) and then step out. As you are stepping into front stance perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (south) with your right leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for middle punch (keep the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (south) with your left leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your left hand. At the completion of the lunge punch, continue to step forward (south) smoothly into front stance with your right leg. Execute another lunge punch, this time with your right hand. Kiai on the second lunge punch. You should finish each of the punches with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder towards the west. Set with your left hand on top for downward block. Bring your left foot to your right foot and pivot 270-degrees in the direction that you are looking (west). Step out with your left foot into front stance and perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (west) with your right leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position)

Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the east direction). Set for downward block with your right hand on top. Step in the direction that you are looking (east, behind you) into front stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot 180-degrees in the direction that you are looking, and step out with your right leg. As you are stepping into the front stance, execute a downward block with your right hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (east) with your left leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your left hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your left shoulder in the north direction. Set with your left hand on top as if performing a downward block and moving your left leg back, step into natural stance facing the north direction.

assume attention stance by bringing your right leg to your left

bow

step out with your right leg into natural stance

## **TAIKYOKU NIDAN**

Taikyoku Nidan is practiced in very few Shotokan karate clubs. There is a good reason for this, however, since this kata is almost exactly the same as Taikyoku Shodan. The only difference is that all of the lunge punches are directed to the upper level rather than the middle level. If you know Taikyoku Shodan and can remember the previous sentence, I extend to you my hardy congratulations: you just learned a new kata!

### **Kata Sequence**

attention stance

bow

clearly state the name of the kata: "Taikyoku Nidan"

step out with your right leg into natural stance

Look to the left. Set for downward block by bringing your left hand on top as you drop your hips. Step to your left (west) with your left leg into front stance and perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for an upper level punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (west) with your right leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the east direction). Set for downward block with your right hand on top. Step in the direction that you are looking (east, behind you) into front stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot 180-degrees in the direction that you are looking, and step out with your right leg. As you are stepping into the front stance, execute a downward block with your right hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for an upper level punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (east) with your left leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your left hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your left shoulder to the north direction. Set for downward block with your left hand and step out into front stance with your left leg. Ensure that you bring your left leg back to the right leg, pivot 90-degrees in the direction that you are looking (north) and then step out. As you are stepping into front stance perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for an upper level punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (north) with your right leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for upper punch (keep the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (north) with your left leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your left hand. At the completion of the lunge punch, continue to step forward (north) smoothly into front stance with your right leg. Execute another lunge punch, this time with your right hand. Kiai on the second lunge punch. You should finish each of the punches with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder towards the east. Set with your left hand on top for downward block. Bring your left foot to your right foot and pivot 270-degrees in the direction that you are looking (east). Step out with your left foot into front stance and perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for an upper level punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (east) with your right leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the west direction). Set for downward block with your right hand on top. Step in the direction that you are looking (west, behind you) into front stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot 180-degrees in the direction that you are looking, and step out with your right leg. As you are stepping into the front stance, execute a downward block with your right hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for an upper level punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (west) with your left leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your left hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your left shoulder to the south direction. Set for downward block with your left hand on top and step out into front stance with your left leg. Ensure that you bring your left leg back to the right leg, pivot 90-degrees in the direction that you are looking (south) and then step out. As you are stepping into front stance perform a downward

block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for an upper level punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (south) with your right leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for an upper level punch (keep the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (south) with your left leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your left hand. At the completion of the lunge punch, continue to step forward (south) smoothly into front stance with your right leg. Execute another lunge punch, this time with your right hand. Kiai on the second lunge punch. You should finish each of the punches with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder towards the west. Set with your left hand on top for downward block. Bring your left foot to your right foot and pivot 270-degrees in the direction that you are looking (west). Step out with your left foot into front stance and perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for an upper level punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (west) with your right leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position)

Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the east direction). Set for downward block with your right hand on top. Step in the direction that you are looking (east, behind you) into front stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot 180-degrees in the direction that you are looking, and step out with your right leg. As you are stepping into the front stance, execute a downward block with your right hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for upper punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (east) with your left leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your left hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your left shoulder in the north direction. Set with your left hand on top as if performing a downward block and moving your left leg back, step into natural stance facing the north direction.

assume attention stance by bringing your right leg to your left

bow

step out with your right leg into natural stance

## **TAIKYOKU SANDAN**

Taikyoku Sandan is the third kata in the Taikyoku series. It follows exactly the same floor pattern as the previous Taikyoku kata. However, it is slightly more complicated than those kata since it requires the performance of several back stances and inside blocks in addition to the front stance, downward blocks, and lunge punches. Practice of this kata is extremely rare in most clubs.

### **Kata Sequence**

attention stance

bow

clearly state the name of the kata: "Taikyoku Sandan"

step out with your right leg into natural stance

Look to the left. Set for inside block by bringing your left arm underneath the right as you drop your hips. Step to your left (west) with your left leg into back stance and perform a middle level inside block with your left hand.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (west) with your right leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the east direction). Set for inside block with your right arm underneath the left. Step in the direction that you are looking (east, behind you) into back stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot 180-degrees 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 inside block with your right hand.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (east) with your left leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your left hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your left shoulder to the north direction. Set for downward block with your left hand and step out into front stance with your left leg. Ensure that you bring your left leg back to the right leg, pivot 90-degrees in the direction that you are looking (north) and then step out. As you are stepping into front stance perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for an upper level punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (north) with your right leg into front

stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Continuing to look straight ahead, step straight ahead (north) with your left leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your left hand. At the completion of the lunge punch, continue to step forward (north) smoothly into front stance with your right leg. Execute another high lunge punch, this time with your right hand. Kiai on the second lunge punch. You should finish each of the punches with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder towards the east. Set with your left arm underneath the right for inside block. Bring your left foot to your right foot and pivot 270-degrees in the direction that you are looking (east). Step out with your left foot into back stance and perform a middle level inside block with your left hand.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (east) with your right leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the west direction). Set for inside block with your right arm on the bottom. Step in the direction that you are looking (west, behind you) into back stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot 180-degrees 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 inside block with your right hand.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (west) with your left leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your left hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your left shoulder to the south direction. Set for downward block with your left hand on top and step out into front stance with your left leg. Ensure that you bring your left leg back to the right leg, pivot 90-degrees in the direction that you are looking (south) and then step out. As you are stepping into front stance perform a downward block with your left hand. You should finish the block with your hips in the half front facing position.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for high punch (place the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (south) with your right leg into front stance

and execute an upper level lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for high punch (keep the lead hand at the chin level). Step straight ahead (south) with your left leg into front stance and execute an upper level lunge punch with your left hand. At the completion of the lunge punch, continue to step forward (south) smoothly into front stance with your right leg. Execute another high lunge punch, this time with your right hand. Kiai on the second lunge punch. You should finish each of the punches with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your right shoulder towards the west. Set with your left arm underneath the right for inside block. Bring your left foot to your right foot and pivot 270-degrees in the direction that you are looking (west). Step out with your left foot into back stance and perform a middle level inside block with your left hand.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your left hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (west) with your right leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your right hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position)

Look over your right shoulder behind you (in the east direction). Set for inside block with your right arm on the bottom. Step in the direction that you are looking (east, behind you) into front stance by bringing your right leg to your left, pivot 180-degrees 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 inside block with your right hand.

Continuing to look straight ahead, set with your right hand for middle punch (place the lead hand at the solar plexus level). Step straight ahead (east) with your left leg into front stance and execute a middle lunge punch with your left hand. You should finish the punch with your hips square to the front (in the full front facing position).

Look over your left shoulder in the north direction. Set with your left hand on top as if performing a downward block and moving your left leg back, step into natural stance facing the north direction.

assume attention stance by bringing your right leg to your left

bow

step out with your right leg into natural stance