



SHOTOKAN RYU KASE HA INSTRUCTORS ACADEMY

SRKHI A Newsletter 2/04

Dear karateka,

I would like to start by saying that this Newsletter seems to be a very interesting one. Firstly includes a message from T. Kase shihan himself, to all Academy members, may be the first ever written message from the sensei to SRKH followers. Given the current situation of his health I find it very important. Secondly, under the Budo themes starts a series of articles on the Dojo and its elements and features. I believe or hope you will find the series very interesting. Last but not least you will find useful information on subjects of common interest.

Without any further comments, I let you proceed with your reading.

A message from T. Kase shihan

"To all my faithful students of Shotokan-Ryu Kase-Ha Academy

It has been 6 months that I have been ill and unable to give any seminars. I wish I could tell you that I am better and that I am ready to teach again soon. Unfortunately, that is not possible right now. I have let my illness gain on me and now must take time to recover slowly. I am going to devote this whole year to my recovery, but want you to know that, as always, I will never give up. I miss you all very much and it is hard for me to stay inactive.

During my absence, I wish you to show me patience and solidarity between you. I would like you go on practising karate as I have always taught you and not to become discouraged. Perseverance has always been the key of my teaching and I am asking each one of you to follow that rule. You have always shown fidelity and loyalty towards me. The time to prove it is now or never.

Finally, my daughter, Sachiko KASE, has created an association "*Amicale KASE*" in order to support me. Some of you have already come forward with support and I thank you and others who will be able to help me in the future.

Yours Faithfully,
Shihan Taiji KASE

Budo Themes: A dojo guide; general arrangements.

Every newcomer in a city looks for a city map or a city guide, which will allow him to move easily and understandably from one place to another. It will also inform him about important places monuments etc, their history and other useful information. The same applies when someone visits a museum, a big exhibition or other similar

places. Have you ever think of such a requirement for a dojo, a dojo guide per se? Does it sound reasonable?

It is beyond doubt that every budoka knows what the **dojo** is; however what it is not quite certain if he is aware of the exact meaning of the word. The cultural model of the dojo adopted today, by the most contemporary budo practitioners, is that of the gym. This sounds logical because, at the surface, budo practice represents a physical activity. However this is not but the surface of a very complicated matter. On a deeper level budo is mainly concerned with the spirit. **Dojo** literally means a “place to study the way,” or in a broader meaning a “place of searching for enlightenment”. A detailed study of the kanji used for dojo, indicates a link of a long philosophical heritage, as it comes from the Sanskrit term *bodhimandala*; *bodhi* means enlightenment and *mandala* is a graphic symbol of the universe, used as an object of focus in seeking the enlightenment state. Thus the place in which serious spiritual search takes place becomes the vehicle for *bodhi*. In other words a dojo is a special place for those seeking higher consciousness. Certainly it is a training hall; but thinking only in terms of the physical activity, is a limited understanding of the concept.

Having reached the point that a dojo is not simply a gym hall, the question comes; which are these special elements that provide the special atmosphere of a place where enlightenment is looked for? And how is this atmosphere created? There are certain environmental features which distinguish the traditional dojo from a training hall or studio; elements which collectively set the stage for the training of body and mind and send a clear message to practitioners about the pathway to be followed. These features will be attempted to be described herein. Though not all-inclusive, the features presented reflect a strong traditional scent in a facility dedicated to budo training and practice.

The first that attracts the attention as someone stands at the door of a traditional dojo is the **floor**, which comprises the training surface under foot. In the case of karate, kendo or iaido, the ideal surface is a hardwood floor. Special care must be taken in the construction of this floor, so it has the necessary springiness. Regular maintenance falls under the category of *soji*, keeping the training floor neat and clean. Traditionally this is done by towel-mopping the floor with water, after each strenuous workout. In this context, practice takes on a spiritual symbolic quality of cleansing the soul. In certain dojo it has become a tradition following the first training of the year, usually a tough one.

The hardwood floor is a very strong indicator of the seriousness of the dojo and of the commitment behind the training. Next to a wood surface, a tatami floor is also considered traditional for martial arts practice; however, tatami is more suitable for aikido and judo.

Concrete, tile, or carpet, by no means provide a proper training surface for a traditional dojo. Firstly they do not provide the springiness and support required and can result in injury to feet and ankles and should never be used. Modern technology provides special floors, as those used in many big training halls; however hardwood floor and tatami are connected with budo tradition.

Soon after someone joins a dojo, he will realize that it is arranged along the lines of a building aimed for spiritual exercises, thus it is arranged geometrically into a complex matrix.

When you enter the dojo, the entrance should ideally be directly opposite the **joza**, or the “upper seat”. Opposite is the **shimoza**, “lower seat”, where the dojo entrance is located. To the right is the **joseki**, the “upper side wall”; to the left is the **shimoseki**, “lower side wall”. The floor space itself, where the actual training is taking place, is referred as **embujo** or **taijo**. If a competition is held there, with appropriate lines marked out for contests, the area is known as **shiai**.

The **joza** is also called **kamiza**, “deity’s seat” or **shomen**, “the front”. It is immediately distinguished by a shrine or an alcove or a display of certain kind. In a very traditional dojo you may find a **shinden**, an elevated place against the kamiza wall, a place largely symbolic, reserved only for the founder of the **ryu** or an imperial family member.

The small shrine or alcove at the *joza*, contains a variety of objects of Shinto or Buddhist origins (a more detailed description of the kamiza will follow later). Also at the *joza*, the photograph of the headmaster or founder of the art practiced in that dojo, as well as the **hata** (banner) of the dojo, may be found. In Japan at some very old dojo, especially ones where the current headmaster of a ryu may train himself, carved wooden effigies of the ryu founder may be found sitting at the kamiza. In addition you may see, a **tokonoma** (recessed alcove), where a flower arrangement or **kakemono** (hanging calligraphic scroll) are displayed. In few words, arrangements are differing in various dojo, however the general idea is to show that **joza** and its associated **kamiza** must be considered as the spiritual centre of the room.

When you are standing facing the **joza**, to your back is the **shimoza**. This is the place where practitioners line up prior to and after training. The **shimoza** wall is the most appropriate place for the **nafuda kake**, a rack with wooden tags identifying the ranks of dojo members (although it may be found on either of the side walls). In a small dojo, the shimoza side may have pegs for hanging clothes and training gear (remember some old pictures from Funakoshi sensei early dojo in Japan, when his very first dojo in was only eight tatami).

Now face the **joza** and you will find, to your right the **joseki** (*seki* is another way of saying “seat” or “one’s place”) and to your left the **shimoseki**. Along either of these walls **dogu kake**, racks for weapons or other training devices, can be found. In a karate dojo **makiwara** (striking posts) are mounted here; or in kendo dojo an **uchikomi-ningyo**, a kind of armed and armored scarecrow that serves as striking dummy.

At this point the question comes to mind; “is all that architecture important to our practice? What purpose it serves?”. Of course this is not an easy answer but I will try to explain.

Traditionally, dojo architecture is closely associated with **reishiki** (etiquette). Every member of the dojo or visitor should bow towards the *kamiza*, upon entering or leaving the dojo, since it is considered as the spiritual centre of the dojo. The instructors of the dojo will seat themselves at the *joza* at the opening and closing of

practices. When practice begins, dojo members align themselves in order of seniority from *joseki* to *shimoseki*. In a traditional dojo, senior practitioners will stay nearer the *joseki*, when training; juniors train on the *shimoseki* side. To make it more complex **reishiki** also specifies details such as, which is the appropriate foot to begin with when approaching or leaving the kamiza and in which direction to turn first in moving around the training area. When stepping into the *taijo*, it must be done with the foot away from the *kamiza*, the *shimoashi*, while stepping away from the *kamiza*, the foot nearest the kamiza, *kamiashi*, should move first (of course the foot nearest or away from the kamiza will differ, from right to left, depending upon which side of the dojo one is standing).

OK then but still what purpose do these formalities serve? In the past, dojo architecture and the associated **reishiki** (etiquette) had at least three functions: Firstly, the placement of the sensei at the front, seniors on the right, and juniors on the left provided the teacher maximum protection from an intruder (remember that the main weapon of the **bugeisha** (warrior) was the sword, which was carried on the left side and used with the right hand leading); secondly, the arrangement shielded the teacher's instruction from unauthorized observers (remember instruction was provided only to selected and authorized members); third, it reflected certain Buddhist worship rituals. If you believe in tradition all these have some relevance even today.

(to be continued)

Amicale Kase

Concerning this subject, I just want to mention that *Amicale Kase* association has been created in order to coordinate and support T. Kase shihan activities; certain senior members of the Academy have been asked and accepted to promote this initiative. You will be provided with more specific details in due time.

Reports

At this moment there are no reports from seminar or other activities, however I am always waiting your inputs.

Recommended Courses

The Shotokan ryu Kase ha Spring Course will be held on 7th, 8th & 9th May 2004 in Hasselt Belgium, under the direction of Dirk Heene, 7 dan, assisted by Jim Martin, 6 dan, Pascal Lecourt, 5 dan & Mario Vanroy, 5 dan. More information at BKSA Honbu Dojo, 0032 11 727068, e-mail bksa.honbudojo@pandora.be . Dirk Fieret will organize seminars on Kobudo and Kobujutsu on 21/2, 27/3, 24/4, 29/5 and 27/6, in Terneuzen, the Netherlands. Also on 14-16 May at the same place a seminar on karate and Kobujutsu with Dirk Heene and Dirk and Gertjan Fieret will be held. More information Dirk Fieret 0031 115 696383 or 695072, e-mail dfieret@zeelandnet.nl . The Academy's Gashuku for 2004 will be definitely held on 5th and 6th June 2004, in Hasselt, Belgium. More information on Academy's Gashuku will follow.

Membership status:

Please be reminded once more that the process for the renewal of annual membership has entered in its final stage and will be completed on 29th February 2004. Many of you have not fulfilled your obligation and this should be done on time, if you still want to remain members of this family. For *the annual membership fee this*

is 60 Euro or 36 British pounds. Payments may be done, either by bank transfer to our account: Natwest Bank Ltd, Cheltenham Branch, 31 Promenade, Cheltenham, GL50 1LH, UK, Sort Code 60-05-16, Account number 16412087, Beneficiary Shotokan Ryu Kase Ha Instructors Academy (**attention, in this case you transfer only British pounds**), or by a bank cheque or international money order, made payable to Shotokan Ryu Kase Ha Instructors Academy and posted to our Treasurer, Alan Armstrong, 19 Jubilee Drive, Bredon, Tewkesbury, GL20 7QJ, England, preferably by registered mail (**attention, cheques could be either 36 British pounds or 60 euros, whichever is more convenient to members**). You must not forget to mention the name(s) and the year.

The process for the acceptance of new members has been finished. The following applications for new members approved by the Shihankai: Achilles Wilfried, Germany; Winkelmanns Jens, Germany; Paul Sammy, UK/Scotland; Dupuch Jerome, France/ Ireland; Johansson Andreas, Sweden; Lindqvist Jörgen, Sweden; Samedy Sivathana, Cambodia; Smith Dwane, Ireland. All of them have been informed accordingly.

Academy Dojo directory:

The Academy Dojo Directory, comprised by dojo where Shotokan ryu Kase ha is prepared according to information you have send me already. The first results will be given in May's 2004 Newsletter. The required information are, Dojo name, Dojocho (chief instructor, not necessarily a SRKHIA member), Dojo Sponsor (an Academy member who recommends this dojo, only in cases that Dojocho is not an Academy member), Country, City, Address, Point of Contact (POC), POC phone no, POC gsm, POC e- mail (optional).

Keep in mind that a more extended Dojo directory, to include dojo from all styles exists in our fellow member Frank Schubert's site www.kamikazeweb.com The exact address for the directory is <http://www.kamikazeweb.com/index.php?action=dojos&type=normal> You can search for a dojo depending on the country, state, city, postal code, style (ryu), following the line of (ryu ha) and / or name of the dojo instructor and you will obtain a dojo list with all interesting details.

All Newsletters may be found in Pascal Petrella's dojo site on SRKHIA www.shotokan-ryu-kase-ha.de (this is a new address, the old one being www.shotokan-ryu-kase-ha.karate-muellheim.de). The site includes also other useful Academy information.

The next Newsletter will be edited in the first week of March 2004. Stay strong, train hard and enjoy life.

Oss

Spiros G. Drossoulakis