



SHOTOKAN RYU KASE HA INSTRUCTORS ACADEMY

SRKHI A Newsletter 12/05

Dear karateka,

The last Newsletter of this year is reaching you with many news and information concerning our organization. As you will go through it I would like to draw your attention on two points, the acceptance of new members and the renewal of membership for current members. All necessary information will be found inside the Newsletter; however I am referring to that for a single reason. I would like to ask to keep the timelines for the above procedures. It will help our functioning and will demonstrate seriousness and responsibility, both of them essential characteristic of real budoka.

Commemoration Ceremony for Kase sensei in Paris,

by Dimitrijevic Velibor sensei, 6th dan and Shihankai member

A commemorative ceremony marking one year since Kase Taiji sensei passed away was held on Thursday 24th of November, in his home in Paris.

Besides his wife Chieko and daughter Sachiko members of the Academy's Shihankai were present, as well as Shirai sensei, representatives of the French Federation and some of his closest students.

The ceremony was held by a budist priest, and according to the budist tradition he announced that **Jitokuin Kuyo Bussen Chido Koji** is the sensei's new budhist name.

The whole atmosphere was emotional but very dignified.

Though sad, this occasion was an opportunity to express loyalty to the Academy's idea and the strong determination to follow and to honor Kase sensei's heritage.



Photo: Honorary President of Kase Ha Shotokan Ryu Instructors Academy Mrs. Chieko Kase with the members of Shihankai, at sensei's Commemorative ceremony.

Coaching and Training Principles

by Fedyk Michaylo 6dan, Shihankai member

Hello Once Again,

This is the last article covering the 3rd chapter, Periodization Training Programme, and refers to Training Schedules, based on what has been explained so far.

3.7: Training Schedule

3.7.1: Macrocycle Weeks 1 - 6

- **Monday** - Endurance a.m. & Flexibility.
- **Tuesday** - Strength a.m. - Skill p.m.
- **Wednesday** - Endurance a.m. & Flexibility - Rest ½ day.
- **Thursday** - Rest ½ day - Strength p.m.
- **Friday** - Endurance a.m. - Skill p.m.
- **Saturday** - Strength a.m. & Flexibility.
- **Sunday** - Rest day.

3.7.2: Week 3 - Session Examples

Warm up:

- **1st Pulse raiser** brisk walking and jogging 5 minutes.
- **Mobility / Co-ordination** i.e. Rotations arms, hips, stance switching left to right at same time swing arms up / down / across / outward. Some of these arm swings may also be applied during the walk / jog. 5 minutes.
- **2nd Pulse raiser** 10 sit-ups / 10 press-ups / 10 thrust squats repeat the exercises x 9, x 8, x7, x6 x5 approximately 3 - 4 minutes.
- **Static stretching** - focus the exercises mainly on lower limbs as a good preparation for the circuits or running activity. 5 minutes.
- **Final Pulse raiser** - Karate specific i.e. ½ squat and front kick x 20. 1 minute.

Strength Circuit:

- **Press-ups** wide arm x 10.
- **Sit -ups** 45% bent leg position x 10.
- **Bench step-ups** - alternating leg step x 20.

- **Arm dips** - from bench position palms facing in x10.
- **Half sit ups** - legs 45° - keep shoulders of floor x 10.
- **Squats** - legs to 90° angle x 10.
- **Arm pull-ups** - from Danish beam X 10.
- **Back Hyperextensions** X 10.
- **Thrust Squats** X 10.

Complete the circuit x 3 with a rest interval of two minutes between each circuit and no rest intervals between each exercise.

Endurance:

- 20 minute run - unmeasured distance at 70% MHR.
- 3 x 1 minute speed interval runs - every five minutes increase TRH to 85 -90% of MHR.
- Maintain pace at 70% MHR between interval speed ups.
- On completion of run jog for 5 to 7 minutes to a recovery rate of 45 - 50% of MHR.

Flexibility:

The Static and active stretching exercises should be completed in a warm environment immediately after the endurance session.

- Make sure that adequate body heat is maintained throughout the stretching routine.
- 20 - 30 minutes should be spent stretching all major joints and associated muscle groups, especially the lower back and lower limbs.
- Static exercises as displayed in the general routine displayed in (Appendix 11)
- Active Stretching applied using sport specific skills:
 1. Maegeri (front kick) extend leg slowly out to fully extended position and hold in position for six seconds, slowly return and repeat x 3 left and right legs.
 2. Yoko Ke-Komi geri (side - kick) as above.
 3. Mawashigeri (roundhouse kick) as above.

(The height of leg extension is not important at this stage, as adaptation to the exercise takes place the kicks should be extended to full ROM).

Cool Down:

- A gentle recovery down to normal R.P.R.
- A reversal of the warm up procedure may be applied at a lower intensity.
- Steady walk round gymnasium or track to finish.
- Hot shower and rest.

If any reader has a particular question related to any articles published to-date please contact me or forward your query to the editor of the newsletter and I will do my best to give an informative answer.

From the next issue

Chapter 4.1 General Basic Conditioning

This phase of training is a crossover from the preparation and general conditioning phase through to the specific basic phase of training employed in the pre season competition period.

Budo Themes:

A collection of the Budo Themes articles from 2005 Newsletters is attached

Membership Information:

As we approach the end of the year the time has come for the renewal of annual memberships, as well as the acceptance of new members has started.

*The annual membership fee this is **60 Euro or 36 British pounds**.* Payments may be done, either by bank transfer to our accounts or by a bank cheque.

If you choose bank transfer, here are the details of our accounts:

STERLING ACCOUNT TRANSFER ONLY STERLING (GB POUNDS) TO THIS ACCOUNT

Bank: Natwest Bank Ltd. Cheltenham Branch, 31 Promenade, GL50 1LK

Account Name: Shotokan Ryu Kase Ha Instructor Academy

Account No: 16412087

Sort Code: 60-05-06

IBAN No: GB33NWBK60051616412087

SWIFT CODE: NWB KGB 2L

EURO ACCOUNT TRANSFER ONLY EURO TO THIS ACCOUNT

Bank: Natwest Bank Ltd. Cheltenham Branch, 31 Promenade, GL50 1LK

Account Name: Shotokan Ryu Kase Ha Instructor Academy

Account No: 550/00/08791120

Sort Code: 60-05-16

IBAN No: GB69NWBK 60720308791120

SWIFT CODE: NWB KGB 2L

If you choose a bank cheque or international money order, made them payable to Shotokan Ryu Kase Ha Instructors Academy and post them 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**).

In any case you must not forget to mention the name(s) and the year. Renewal of membership should be completed by 28th February 2005.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that if you have not paid your membership for 2005, thus being in Dormant status, you should pay the 2005 membership as well.

New applications for membership should reach SRKHIA Secretariat, namely me, by 31st December 2005. They will be consequently forwarded to Shihankai for approval, by 31st January so new members will have the appropriate time to fulfil their financial obligations before 1st March 2006.

Please keep in mind that delays to the fulfilment of the above obligations, which in turn create frictions, cannot justify the dedication and commitment to a common course we all have voluntarily accepted.

SRKHIA News

Reports

Kase ha Shotokan ryu Karatedo in Spain, by Schubert Frank, 4 dan

I would like to inform all KSKA-members about an activity that we have started here in Spain, a Basic Training Course on Kase Ha Shotokan Ryu Karate Do.

This training course aims to the introduction of the basic principles of Kase Ha

Shotokan Ryu Karate Do. The course is directed to Advanced Shotokan students and instructors with minimum level of brown belt, regardless of association.

The training course is organized in 3 intense seminars throughout one year, namely on Saturday, 5 Nov 2005, 25 Feb 2006 and 27 May 2006. Each seminar consists of 4-½ hours practice and 1-½ hours theory, sharing of opinions and discussion. We stay the full day together including lunch time.

Curriculum:

Module 1 (5 Nov 2005):

Hanmi-dachi (Posture principles) - O-waza, with the example of Zuki-waza: Speed & Kime - Fudo-dachi (Correct development from Kiba-dachi, Comparison to Zenkutsu-dachi) Shuto-uchi / Haito-uchi: Correct execution of individual techniques Basic series of Uke-waza with closed fist (8 blocks) Special breathing to use the energy from the Hara Correct movements with Kae-ashi (Hanmi-dachi and Fudo-dachi, front and back)

Module 2 (25 Feb 2006):

Centering and ground connection (Posture and breathing principles) - From O-waza to Ko-waza with the example of Zuki-waza / San-dan zuki - >From Hanmi-dachi to Fudo-dachi (Correct development to the front and backwards) - Uke-waza with open hands: Correct techniques - Basic series of Uke-waza, with open hand blocks - Special breathing to use the energy from the Hara and the ground Correct moving with Tsugi-ashi Ten-no-kata (if enough time)

Module 3 (28 May 2006):

Using of pressure to the ground for your techniques (Energetic and postural principles) - From O-waza to Ko-waza, with the example of Uke-waza, defenses with closed fist - Timing of the defenses - Go-no-sen: Sei-te (closed fist and open hand techniques) - Ten-no-kata, Ten-no-kata-ura, Projection of energy through the contact

part of our arms/hands into the target - Correct moving with Yori-ashi (Suri-ashi) - Combinations of Kae-ashi, tsugi-ashi and yori-ashi

Module 1 has been a great success with 24 karateka (22 black belts and 2 brown belts) from all over Spain participating (Cadiz, Albacete, Gandia, Alzira, Valencia, Madrid, Barcelona). After finishing the seminar each participant personally found a list of exercises and principles that he will practice by his own, in his home dojo, in the time between module 1 and module 2.

The seminar has been conducted by Lorenzo Marti, Martin Fernandez and Frank Schubert.

Future Basic Training Courses II and III are scheduled. Continuous updates can be found at www.kamikazeweb.com

Recommended Courses:

Do you want to stay informed about courses in different countries by any or a particular instructor? Visit www.kamikazeweb.com and then follow the links for events. Our colleague Frank Schubert has a quite updated data base. In any case you may want to pay attention to the following information.

Thompson Steve, 5 dan and Wilkins Dave, 5 dan, will conduct a training seminar on Saturday 3 December 2005, from 1130 to 1430 at the Thornes Park Stadium Sports Centre in Wakefield England. For more information please contact Steve Thompson stevethompson@ukf.net

Kase ha Shotokan ryu Karatedo Israel will conduct its annual Winter Seminar in Nahariya, Israel, from 22 – 24 December 2005, directed by Farkash Arie sensei, 6th dan. Main theme of the course will be "gyaku uraken" and Kata Bunkai. Already people from Germany, France and Australia have registered their participation. If you also want to join this course, please contact Farkash Arie sensei arie@sskai.com

Lecourt Pascal, 5 dan and Shihankai member, will teach on 14 and 5 January 2006 in Luxemburg, in a course organized by the Shotokan EC Luxemburg Karate Club. If you are interested and want more information please contact Alan MORGAN (+352) 4301-32569 alan.morgan@cec.eu.int Carlos RAMALHO (+352) 4301-33178 carlos.ramalho@cec.eu.int John KIRBY (+352) 4301-35714 john.kirby@cec.eu.int or look in the events section in www.kamikazeweb.com

Dimitrijevic Velibor sensei, 6 dan and Shihankai member, will teach in on 27, 28 and 29 January 2006 in Gandia, Valencia, Spain, in a course organized by Frank Schubert. For more information contact Frank Schubert, e-mail: info@kamikazeweb.com

The Sei Sen Karate Club Arlon organizes the XVIth International Karate training in Arlon Belgium, on 18 and 19 March 2006. Instructors are Dirk Heene, 7 dan and Shihankai member, Francois Van Binst, 6 dan and Pascal Petrella, 5 dan and Shihankai member. For information contact Lallemand André, 70, rue de Toernich, 6700 Arlon, tel/fax/ 0032 63 22.34.68, e- mail : andre.lallemand@skynet.be

Dimitrijevic Velibor sensei, 6 dan and Shihankai member, will organize and direct the annual Athens Karate do Camp 2006, from 7 – 11 June 2006, in the Sport Camp Loutraki, a seaside city 70 km from Athens. Everybody who wants to follow the spirit of Kase sensei and study the secrets and a genuine approach to Kase ha Shotokan ryu is invited in this five days Camp. For more information you may contact Dimitrijevic sensei, vebodo@gmail.com

Are you interested in kobujutsu? Dick Fieret, 5 dan, organizes a series of kobujutsu trainings on 5/11, 26/11 2005 and on 21/1, 18/2, 25/3, 22/4, 20/5, 24/6. In addition Budo club Fieret organizes its annual Budostage in Terneuzen, the Netherlands, on 10 and 11 December 2005 with guest instructors Dirk Heene, 7 dan and Julian Mead, 6 dan. Are you interested? Contact Enquiries to: Dick & Gertjan Fieret, e-mail: dfieret@zeelandnet.nl, tel: 0031 -115-696383 of 695072.

If you want to train with Dirk Heene sensei, at Honbu Dojo Limburg, throughout the year, you are welcome to stay in the dojo (sleeping bag is necessary). Price per day: 7 euro including: 2x training a day; use of showers, sanitary, kitchen. Buffet-restaurant is 5 minutes away.

Last but not least. Do you want information on courses that you organize or teach to reach Academy members? Please inform me timely so I can put them in this Newsletter. I see information on many courses related to the Academy in various sites on the Internet and it's a pity that this information never reached our Newsletter.

Recommended Internet sites

www.bksa.be the site of Belgian Karate Shotokan Academy, leaded by Dirk Heene; www.vebodo.com the site of Velibor Dimitrijevic, 6 dan and Shihankai member; www.shotokan-ryu-kase-ha.de Pascal Petrella's dojo site on SRKHIA. The site includes many useful Academy information, including SRKHIA Newsletters; www.the-esa.info of the English Shotokan Academy; www.shotokanryukaseha.com Martin Fernandez's site, includes a lot of information on Kase sensei and SRKHIA as well; www.kamikazeweb.com Frank Schubert's site, with many items for on line shopping and information on courses with various instructors. Every member should have them on his Favorites list. www.telematique.org/karate Shotokan E.C. Luxemburg Karate Club; www.sei-sen.be Sei Sen Karate Club in Arlon, Belgium headed by Andre Lalemand 4 dan ;

Does your organization, your club, or you, have a site with relevant information you want to share with other members? Send me the information and it will be put in the Newsletter, so all members will be informed.

Quotation of the month

"You must be careful not to be like those who do not practice properly but they become instructors / teachers, because their words sounds like those of the teachers.

From the old times these people were called "kuchi bushi", which is a low level term and is written with the characters (kanji) kuchi -which means mouth- and bushi -which means warrior-. Even today these "warriors of the mouth" are plenty like the sand on the beach."

Funakoshi Gichin, father of Shotokan Karate

The next Newsletter will be edited in the first week in January 2006.

Merry Christmas (even too early) and a Happy New Year

Stay strong, train hard and enjoy life.

Oss

Spiros G. Drossoulakis

Budo Themes 2005

Sanchin kata, three conflicts and three Jewels

Introduction

In the effort to develop ki, there are certain exercises, most of them found in Taoist practices and Chinese systems like Tai chi, Bagua etc. To all these the common factor is breathing, since deep abdominal breathing plays an important role in developing ki. In this context kata Sanchin, which is found in Goju ryu, Shito ryu as well to almost every Okinawien system, Isshin ryu, Uechi ryu etc, comprises a very good practice, may be the closest one to our curriculum.

Origin of Sanchin kata

To the best of our knowledge Sanchin kata originated in southern China, where versions of the kata are still being performed. Sanchin is also mentioned in the Bubishi, that meaning it is at least 150 - 200 years old. Many southern Chinese styles have adopted versions of Sanchin as their basic kata, but it is most often associated with the ancient southern White Crane (Jap. Hakutsuru) styles. Its purpose was as a basic energy, speed and power builder that supported the rest of the system. The Sanchin of southern Crane was performed with speed, penetrating power, and with a unique fast breathing pattern. The one normally practiced today in Goju-ryu utilizes slow ibuki breathing and it is not the same that Kanryo Higaonna brought back to Okinawa after his stay in Fuchou, China. Following his death Chojun Miyagi revised the kata in significant ways so that it more closely exemplified the "go" (hard) aspect of his Goju-ryu karate. Whereas the old master's kata was fast, explosive, and contained 180 degree turns, Miyagi's version is slow, with overall body tension, deep powerful abdominal breathing and with forward and backward movement only. Okinawan masters always claimed that 'Sanchin is everything, the basis for the whole art.

Sanchin, the "Three Conflicts"

Sanchin translates as "Three Conflicts," "Three Battles," or "Three Gods", referring to mind, body, and spirit. It's primary martial function is to develop the cutting mind, the body of armour and the explosive power. To develop Sanchin, the three conflicts, Mind, Body and Breath, must first be recognised, then harmonised and finally refined.

The *Mind*; it is the discipline of concentration that clears the countless random thoughts that constantly distract us. The *cutting mind* is the calm clear mind that perceives and acts without the incessant chatter of the internal dialogue. It is the starting point of Zen; the uncluttered mind that allows direct experience and reaction at an instinctive level. Dealing with the enemy enables his movements to be immediately understood, so as to cut them down without hesitation at precisely the right moment. Therefore when studying Sanchin we refrain from internal verbalising and concentrate on experiencing the feelings instead. This is the state of mushin.

The *Body*; constant repetition combined with self awareness corrects poor body alignment and brings control over body mechanics. It restores body's natural balance and posture. Natural strength is developed in favour of excessive tension or relaxation. The *body of armour* is commonly referred to as an 'Iron Shirt', and is the effect whereby the body is able to absorb and withstand blows. This is done by developing and utilising the muscles, bones and tendon throughout the whole body to absorb and dissipate the force, like a giant shock absorber.

The *Breath*; abdominal breathing replaces limited thoracic contraction and expansion. This enables the tension in the upper body to be released from the chest and is pushed down into lower abdomen (hara). The *explosive power* is generated by using the whole body and then channelling and directing it into the opponent. In the initial stages a single shock wave is produced. In the higher levels this manifests as a series of continuous waves or vibrations. The source of this power is the hara or lower abdomen combined with contractions of the diaphragm (ie breathing).

With Sanchin we bring these three together to create a state of enlightenment. In this process, the "three conflicts" must be recognized, harmonized and refined. Each conflict is a dull unpolished stone, Sanchin grinds each one until three jewels emerge. Concentrate without distraction on natural movement and posture, combined with coordinated abdominal breathing. This may take years of diligent practice but with patience and perseverance will bring great rewards, such as the Cutting mind, the Iron shirt and Explosive penetrating Ki. **Sequence of movements** All movements are conducted in an isometric fashion with the emphasis given in strong ibuki breathing.

1. Take musubi dachi stance with hands open and crossed in front, left over right.
2. Step forward in right Sanchin dachi in a morote chudan Uchi Uke. Draw back left fist, punch Gyaku Zuki Chudan and return to the first Kamae.
3. Step forward in left Sanchin in a morote chudan Uchi Uke. Draw back right fist, punch Gyaku Zuki Chudan and return to the first Kamae.
4. Step forward in right Sanchin in a morote chudan Uchi Uke. Draw back the left fist, punch Gyaku Zuki Chudan and return to Kamae.
5. Starting with right hand punch, alternatively right – left, 4 static Choku Zuki, every time returning to the first kamae.
6. On the final punch open both hands, extend elbows forward, then pull both hands in hikite position and strike Gedan Nukite (both hands). Arms slightly rounded at the elbows. Shoulders down. Repeat three more times. Close hands while bring them back in hikite.
7. Step back with right foot in Sanchin dachi – execute Mawashi Uke and follow with double, jodan and chudan, teisho uke.
8. Step back with left foot in Sanchin dachi - execute Mawashi Uke and follow with double, jodan and chudan, teisho uke.
9. Step right foot back into Musubi Dachi, take initial stance with crossed hands.
10. Return to yoi position.

It is important to note that Goju and other Okinawan styles practitioners use Sanchin dachi during their performance, however if we, as Shotokan practitioners, want to practice this kata, for the benefits it gives, we may use Han Zenkutsu dachi, without affecting the essence of Sanchin practice.

Key points of Sanchin kata

- Strong abdominal ibuki breathing
- Learn how to drop your weight on to your stance
- Good stances and balance
- Relaxation and tension at the correct points
- Remember to keep shoulders down.
- Practice testing your partner
- DO NOT STRAIN

Why to practice Sanchin?

Sanchin kata can guide and instruct practitioners on many levels. Even its name, "three battles" or "conflicts", gives an indication that the kata functions at multiple levels. The three elements in conflict are the body, mind, and breath (do not forget that in Japan and China, breath is synonymous with spirit, ki, or energy). Although these elements are considered separately, they are inextricably interwoven in karate practice. Only when these three elements are in harmony we are able to reach our potential in both technique and character. As in the rest of nature, the balance of these three elements is impermanent, however Sanchin kata provides a way of even temporarily uniting them, therefore the karateka's focus and power will be developed.

The Body Sanchin is an isotonic exercise which helps to strengthen, condition, and toughen the physical body, through the application of tension and abdominal breathing. Every muscle below the neck needs to be tensed for the entire duration of the kata. In addition torques the arm and leg bones, so increasing bone mass. It is a fundamental exercise in developing *Mushimi* – the heavy, sticky hand technique.

The isotonic tension of the body automatically slows down the action of the techniques. This provides also an opportunity to observe and learn the correct way to perform certain hand techniques.

Sanchin helps the realization of centering the body in the hara; by placing our crossed hands in front of the hara during Yoi; by moving into Sanchin Dachi with the arms in Morote chudan Uchi Uke, we are taking a kamae which focuses on the hara. When projected downwards, the angle of the forearms converge over the hara. When projected upwards, the angle of the legs also converge over the hara.

Performing Sanchin two or three times during a training session will provide maximum benefit and will not adversely affect healthy people. However, if the

kata is performed incorrectly or excessively it may harm the body. It is important not to overly tense the neck muscles, since this can constrict the vessels to and from the brain.

The Mind The mind is also centered in the hara by focusing attention on the rising and falling motion of the abdomen while breathing. The mind is the director of everything, that meaning that it should maintain focus over the entire body throughout the performance of the kata. This is perhaps the most difficult and yet the most beneficial aspect of the practice. Knowing that the mind can only focus on one thing at a time and that Sanchin demands total focus over the whole body (in order to ensure that the muscles below the neck remain fully tensed; that all the hand techniques are executed correctly; that abdominal breathing is being maintained along with the correct breathing pattern), we understand why Sanchin has such a value .

The Breath Breath is synonymous with spirit. It is centered in the hara by using deep abdominal breathing. Hara is considered to be the origin and storehouse of martial power, ki. Abdominal breathing is also essential in developing and storing Ki in the body and is an essential part of *haragei* (hara development). In addition, most people breathe high up, in the thorax, meaning that the chest muscles are the primary ones used to bring air in and out of the lungs. Abdominal breathing is very important, because it increases lung capacity, promotes greater oxygen exchange and flushes stale air out the lungs more efficiently than thoracic breathing. More than that, emotions can be controlled by adopting appropriate breathing patterns; even a deep sigh or one long out breath may have a calming effect. Forceful breathing is a way to project a martial spirit.

Breath is also related with "ki." By coordinating abdominal breathing, explosive exhalation, and correctly applied muscle contraction, you can produce, for an instant, phenomenal power. Chinese traditional medicine says that ki is universal, a fundamental necessity for life. A fundamental tenet of Chinese traditional medicine is that, in addition to universal ki, we are all born with our own personal store of essential ki. While wrong lifestyle reduces essential ki, and once it is gone, person dies, our ki reservoir is increasing by eating nourishing foods and doing certain exercises. The old masters discovered two methods of supplementing their essential store of ki. These are the internal method, called *Naikan*, and the external method, called *Gaikan*. The external generation of ki (Gaikan) is said to be achieved through the exact muscle tension exercises required in Sanchin kata. Through constant tensing of the muscles, universal ki is said to be drawn into the muscles.

Acupuncture theory tells us that every finger and toe is directly linked through meridians to internal organs such as the heart, small intestines, bladder, kidneys, gall bladder, liver, lungs, large intestine, stomach, and the spleen. At the completion of sanchin practice, the locally generated ki enters the meridians and are circulated to nourish these internal organs. Sanchin is a heishi (closed fist) kata. This means that the ki generated during the

performance of the form is not emitted outside the body, but is kept within to nourish it.

ORIGIN OF THE DAN GRADING SYSTEM,

Every martial arts practitioner is fully aware of the dan ranking system and the required qualifications of each rank in his system. However it is questionable how many are aware of the origin of this system and how it has been developed.

It is rather surprising to listen that organized budo training in Japan dates centuries back in time (the Nen Ryu dates from the 1300s, Kashima Shin ryu, Kashima Shinto Ryu and Katori Shinto Ryu are not much younger), while the dan grading system (used throughout gendai –modern- budo) dates only since the end of the 1800s. Prior to the dan grading system, all budo ryuha used a system of scrolls and licenses. Specifically, when a student was recognized as having learned a specific portion of the curriculum, he or she was awarded a scroll called "Okuiri Sho", or "Entry To Inner Teachings Scroll" which detailed what had been learned. When they had achieved a degree of mastery over more advanced curriculum, they were awarded "Sho Mokuroku" or "Beginning Registry List" which was listing all of the kata learned (do not forget that in traditional budo, kata was the exclusive method of teaching. That was also the initial teaching method of G. Funakoshi sensei when he started teaching in Japan). This, in certain cases, was considered as the first teaching license, allowing the recipients to teach students of their own up to a certain level. The next scroll was the "Go Mokuroku" or "Later Registry", listing the further sections of the curriculum learned, and was often considered as allowing recipients to teach students more of the curriculum. The last scroll awarded was the "Menkyo" or "License" which was awarded when the student began learning the most secret part of of the ryu (remember at that time certain part of the curriculum was reserved for a restricted only part of students). At this point he was considered ready to teach the whole of the non-secret curriculum. When he had learned that last part, he was awarded Menkyo Kaiden, as having mastery of the entire curriculum of the Ryu, as well as the right to award all of the scrolls of the system. Normally in each ryu only one Menkyo Kaiden was awarded at a time, thus ensuring continuity of the ryu.

The founder of Judo, Kano Jigoro, an experienced martial artist, had received teaching licenses in two classical jujutsu ryuha, Tenjin Shin'yo Ryu and Kito Ryu. He founded his Kodokan Judo as a means of preserving the value he saw in these classical systems, but also as a means of physical education, which would develop both sound minds and bodies. Many of the combative kata of Kodokan Judo are taken directly from the classical systems Kano had mastered. His teaching system however was intended to develop student's physical and mental capabilities and included specialized stretching and exercise practices, combined with lectures in order to develop student's moral and social characteristics. He wanted to train the whole of the student, body, mind and spirit, rather than simply training fighters. Being also an educator in the new public school system of Japan, he wanted his Kodokan Judo to be

used as a form of physical education in the national school curriculum. Being successful in getting Ministry of Education approval, he began training jujutsu teachers, from other ryuha, in his Kodokan system. As the ranks of Kodokan Judo instructors increased quickly, Kano encountered a couple of problems.

Traditionally, bugei ryuha were small organizations and the head of the system could easily know the name of everyone who practiced in. As Kodokan Judo expanded to a national organization, this traditional method of the teacher knowing the student personally and awarding scrolls and licenses based on his personal level of familiarity became impossible. In addition, the traditional training gear of hakama and uwagi was not suitable for the Kodokan's style of training, which balanced three aspects of training; technique practice, kata practice, and freestyle matches. It is worthy to note that, randori matches were something new as a training method. Kodokan Judo, in its early days, had often been challenged to public matches. Usually, based on its strengths, it won these matches, but when lost, Kano worked hard to discover and correct the weaknesses the losses revealed. In order to better prepare for the challenge matches, freestyle randori training between students was essential. But the traditional uwagi and hakama were not well suited to this sort of training, so Kano and the Kodokan developed the today judogi, which of course required a new belt to keep it shut. This is the origin of the belt worn with judogi, which is different in style from any other used by then.

Kano grappled with the rigors training in his new system, but he also grappled with the problem of how to identify and license his students, whose numbers were constantly increasing, thus making the old Menkyo system ineffective. He found that a new system of licencing students was required, so he created the dan ranking system. He borrowed the "dan" system from the classical game of Go (dan means nothing more than step). In classical Go, there were three dan grades. Kano initially used three dan grades, which were roughly equivalent to the Sho Mokuroku, Go Mokuroku and Menkyo of classical bugei ryuha. "Shodan" or "beginning step", the student had achieved the first level of mastery and recognized as being able to teach, "Nidan", the student would have been a high level student, and "Sandan", the student been considered to have full mastery of the system. Having instructor level students wearing a black obi was a simple way to distinguish them from the mass of students, as Kodokan Judo was growing extremely rapidly as part of the national school curriculum in Japan.

Kodokan Judo continued to expand and from a small local style in Tokyo became very rapidly a system of training practiced throughout Japan. It was also found useful for training military and police personnel. With this rapid spreading throughout Japan, Kano had to deal with organizational and human problems that no koryu bugei system had ever dreamed of. Over time, the necessity to increase the number of ranks in order to show finer and finer divisions between the level of student and instructors became obvious. So the dan ranks were expanded from 3 to 5, and finally to 10, although today there are practically only 9 (The Kodokan has decided it will no longer award the 10th dan). 8th dan came to symbolize complete mastery of the system,

roughly equivalent to menkyo kaiden of the classical systems, which still does today. To achieve 8th dan in Kodokan Judo requires decades of study, and at each rank you are tested on your knowledge of the fundamental kata. The test for 8th dan includes the last of the kata that are taught, the Kodokan Goshinjutsu.

The dan system turned out to be incredibly popular in the rigidly hierarchical society of pre WWII Japan. With just a couple of words everyone can determine their relative position in a group. When kendo was formulated and established as portion of the national education curriculum alongside Kodokan Judo, a dan ranking system was created for it as well. Most gendai budo arts, to include karate as well followed the same system. By the time the Dai Nihon Butokukai was established as the national body overseeing all Japanese martial arts, the dan system was firmly established in the national psyche of Japan, and was widely used as a ranking system in large budo organizations of all sorts. This continued after the World War 2 and the disbanding of the Butokukai.

Funakoshi Gichin introduced the dan ranking system in his art. Until his death diplomas were presented with his signature, while he was present during exams. Funakoshi himself had not awarded a rank higher than 5th Dan, Godan. In 1961 the Japan Karate Association, JKA, decided to expand its rank according to Judo and Kendo organizations, so Nakayama sensei was awarded 8th dan (Nakayama later was awarded 9th dan, the higher actual rank which is awarded to its Chief Instructor only – today Sugiura M. sensei-). Shotokai and Shotokan Karate of America (Oshima T. organization) maintain 5th dan as their highest rank. As time was passing every martial arts organization worldwide adopted that system which continues up to now.

(I would like to thank my friend Peter Boylan, of Mugendo Budogu and a vivid martial arts practitioner, who has been the source for most of the above information)

What is Shugyo

In Japanese budo, as well as in any activity, there are six words when someone refers to the intensity of training: *keiko*, *renshu*, *shunren*, *tanren*, *kufu*, and *shugyo*. Although the first four can be translated respectively as, practice, training, discipline, and forging, there are no English words for an adequate translation of the last two. “*Shugyo*”, which may literally translated as “*austere training*”, is the highest physical and deepest spiritual training possible.

The Japanese term “*shugyo*”, generally translated as “austere training,” seems to have been originated with the training of the Samurai during the “*Pax Tokugawa*,” an unprecedented period of internal peace from the mid-1600 through the mid-1800. Its purpose is to “forge the spirit,” remaking a practitioner’s character through hard physical and mental training. As the heirs of the feudal samurai, modern *budo-ka* have incorporated *shugyo* into their

training regime. This applies to all budo arts, karate, judo, aikido, kendo, iaido, kyudo etc.

Shugyo may include various forms of practice, kihon waza, kata, free practice (kumite, randori or jigeiko), however what is common is the austerity of training. Kihon waza or kata practice include big numbers of repetition and free practice (kumite, randori, jigeiko) may include long hours against different or even multiple opponents. It will also include mental training, meditation and other forms of similar practice. From the diary of an aikido club we read: "...For us, austere training was 20 minutes of shiko (sumo leg strengthening exercise) on a hardwood floor; it was ukemi (falling practice) on a hardwood floor; it was ritsuzen (a Japanese form of standing meditation)..."

Refining the self in shugyo is like forging a sword. Fire, water, and iron are folded upon each other, pounded by the hammer over and over again, to create the cutting edge. In a similar way the natural form of the body will be developed, the structures of mind will emerge from the Unconscious and a person will move beyond his physical and mental limits. Without shugyo, all realizations are passing highs. If a person trains to attain enlightenment as an end, frustration and despair is inevitable for the Way is endless. But if you accept life as shugyo and continually refine breath, posture, and awareness through practice, then one day you will clearly realize that "Training is enlightenment, and enlightenment is training."

Shugyo is **experiential**. It is impossible to describe (like Lao Tsu's *Tao* -"the Way," which is the same character as the *-do* in karate do, Kendo, etc- in his *Tao Te Ching*), although we do try to, and is extremely difficult to begin to explain it to anyone who has not experienced it. During the Edo period (1603-1868) in Japan, as the various *bujutsu* (martial arts) were evolving into *koryu budo* (classical martial ways), *shugyo* became a developmental stage for the *bushi* (samurai), replacing the rigors of life-and-death combat with those of hard training and mental discipline. Today *shugyo* is a quaint anachronism to some, while still an absolute necessity to others. However, in order to "pierce the veil" into the essence of *budo*, it becomes an essential "rite of passage."

Approaching Budo practice,

What is karate or budo practice in general meaning for you? Is it done for its physical benefits or as just leisure time? Is it a part of your daily life? Do you live budo daily? The answers to these questions, put to various martial arts practitioners, will bring different answers, as it is natural with every human activity.

Almost every martial arts practitioner claims that he is approaching his practice seriously, even if he trains one or two times per week or he easily skips training for a coffee or drink with friends. This is also human and understandable. Serious and devoted practice, I am afraid, are not for the many, is a privilege of the few. And requires three equally important steps.

1. Ketsui o suru – Take a decision.

The first step in the budo journey is taking the decision to follow this journey. You have to decide if this practice has a certain priority in your life or is something to fill some empty hours in your life. Budo training is not a simple physical activity, it is indeed a lifestyle, which will distinct you from other people. Your whole approach to life will be from another point of view, as after certain time your attitude and personality will change. Obviously this decision will not be taken before you come in grasp with your budo art, but if never taken, development cannot come. This decision is the first step to a life time journey.

2. Kihon o manabu – Emphasize the basic techniques.

Certainly a commodity in traditional martial arts practice which, like gold, never loses value. Many practitioners are tempted to complicate and spectaculars techniques and they want to train in them. However without deep knowledge of the basic techniques there is not a proper foundation to build upon. Many argue that basic techniques are ideal techniques, performed under ideal circumstances. However their practice will allow the practitioner to develop maximum power, kime, speed, balance, efficiency. And then he will be able to adjust their use under not ideal circumstances. It is wrong to consider that basics are only for beginners. Emphasis and practice of basic techniques should be a lifelong custom. Every great master, with no exception, had a passion to improve his “basics”

3. Shugyo no jinjo – Progress in training

When practice seriously you will go through different stages of development. During this development different physical and mental levels will be reached. This development will not be a serial or an accelerating one, rather in many cases you will find your self holding back or slowing down, while in other cases progress will be faster. It is important to be understood that progress in budo goes upward but in a spiral way, so expectations of quick results is not the case. Only serious and devoted practice will make the garden to flourish. The understanding that this is a part of your practice process will make you not to be discouraged, but it will rather strengthen your will to keep practicing; the only way to reach higher physical and mental levels.

As Kase sensei used to say: “Keep practicing”.

Seiza,

One of the first things that a karate practitioner, as well as a practitioner in other budo, is introduced is sitting in seiza. Training starts with karateka lined up, sitting in seiza in order to perform the opening ceremony for the training practice. A similar procedure is followed at the end of the training. But what is seiza? And how it has been introduced to our practice procedures?

Seiza is the most commonly used sitting posture in Japanese way of life. Budoka, practitioners of traditional Japanese martial arts, will move into this posture at the beginning and end of their practice. It is also used in other traditional arts, when creating an elaborate flower arrangement in Ikebana, when performing Chanoyu, the art of tea, in performing with the traditional fue, flute, shakuhachi, vertical bamboo flute, koto, stringed harp, as well as when

chanting Noh drama music, the chorus all sit in seiza. It is apparent that seiza has a particular position in Japanese life. But how it has come to be like that?

Seiza was and is a posture used in formal occasions in traditional Japanese culture. When performing something significant in an official capacity, the Japanese of old used seiza as a form of social propriety and etiquette. It comes from Ogasawara Ryu School of etiquette and has influenced all aspects of life. It was firstly introduced to the martial arts through kenjutsu schools of swordsmanship. As those were practiced by samurai warrior, who were obliged to follow strict rules of etiquette, these rules introduced in their practice, since they should be able to act and perform from this position. Since every ryu included various ways of fighting, armed and unarmed, the seiza posture introduced in the full spectrum of traditional budo.

In various picture scrolls, from medieval Japan, samurai and nobility are depicted sitting indoors cross-legged, however during the Edo Period (1600-1868), seiza evolved to become the pre-eminent formal sitting posture on tatami mats.

A few words for the Ogasawara-ryu school for etiquette. It was the pre-eminent school of etiquette among the samurai class of the Edo period and continues its tradition up to this day. From the book by Ogasawara Kiyonobu, *Nihon No Reiho*, we may have some understanding of the meaning and method of seiza. Kiyonobu notes how many people complain that seiza makes their feet "go to sleep" (*shibireru*), but he says that it is from lack of proper exercise, weak leg muscles, and poor circulation, and not necessarily due to the contortions of sitting in seiza.

.....If practiced properly, one should be able to do seiza for several minutes to an hour or so a day with no discomfort. Proper seiza, Kiyonobu says, helps to naturally align your body and spinal column, and leads to an alert mind and body (1):

. . .Even if you sit in seiza only to eat your meal, that's fine. . . By doing so, you will create a peaceful feeling and your body posture will become properly aligned. (2)

Seiza, in Japanese, is written with two kanji characters. The first character pronounced *sei*- means "proper, right, true". The second character *-za* means "sitting posture". For the Japanese aesthetic, sitting in seiza on tatami mats indoors is the most efficient, beautiful, and "proper" posture when engaged in a formal activity.

Sitting in seiza, although similar, is not standardized among different martial arts disciplines and schools, ryu. Karate practitioners go in seiza from a *shizen tai* posture; bent both knees while spreading them apart (some step back with left foot first), keeping the back straight and hands with open palms on the thighs. Put first left knee on the floor and then right knee. At this moment you are in a transitory position, named *kiza*, with the shins folded under the body, body erect, back straight, hands on the thighs heels side by

side feet in vertical position and toes flat. Without stopping in this position, put the instep of the feet flat on the floor, with the big toes side by side (some school put the right toe over the left toe).

In order to rise from seiza, first come into kiza position, always as a transitory phase and put right foot beside left knee, before continuing to rise and assume a standing posture. Going to or standing up from seiza should be in a calm and elegant way, without any awkward or jerky movements. You should sit in seiza like the morning dew sits on leaves and flowers, and rise as the smoke in a lack of wind.

As it was said there are slight variations, among the various martial arts ryu as well as in other arts, geido, in how to take seiza position; how to sit or how to rise. Everyone has to follow the particularities of his school. Particular attention should be given if you try to sit in seiza wearing hakama. If you don't do it properly you end up in a messy situation. Martial artists, bugeisha, use a slight movement with the right hand to spread hakama folds between knees, hakama sabaki, while many times left foot steps back at kneeling.

It should be understood that seiza although a calm posture allows quick movement in every direction, whether it be to serve the needs of a lord, to make a bowl of tea, to quickly rise up and draw out one's sword or to perform defence in an attack. Koryu schools emphasized this practice as well as aikido does. In old karate books, like "Karatedo Kyohan" by Funakoshi Gichin, you may find such training exercises. Ogasawara Kiyonobu describes seiza as a posture of "potential movement within stillness", opposed to the Buddhist sitting posture of full lotus or half-lotus - "stillness within stillness"-, used purely and simply for meditation. (3). As that seiza was the perfect posture for the active samurai and his today retainers.

In conclusion, seiza is a formal sitting posture, stemming from medieval Japan, used not only in Japanese budo but in every other Japanese tradition, ryu. It is well-defined with codified ways of stepping in and out of it, although different classical traditions have slight variations. You must always follow what your school or ryu dictates.

Anyway next time you move into seiza, you should do it with a better understanding of your action.

Footnotes:

(1) Page 33, Ogasawara Kiyonobu, **Nihon No Reiho**, Kodansha, Tokyo, Japan, 1976.

(2) Ibid, page 34.

(3) Ibid,Page 86.

**UNMOVING WISDOM, by Taisen Deshimaru,
excerpted from his book "The Zen Way to the Martial Arts"**

The master's mind is never still. It never dwells on any one thing or person. It lets all go by . . . Nor does the body dwell.

The essence of his self, of the self, is [fudo chi](#), unmoving wisdom. Intuition, wisdom, physical action, are always one. That is the secret of zazen, and of the martial arts. Just as the martial arts are not sports, zazen is not some kind of massage or spiritual culture.

In the beginning, the martial arts were a way to kill people. The Japanese sword or *tachi* is a long sword; but *tachi* also means "cut." In the word [kendo ken](#), like *tachi*, means "sword" and also "cut," so that kendo means "the way that cuts." [Swordfighting](#) goes back to prehistoric times in Japan, of course, but the actual school of kendo began in 1346; it was founded by a samurai named Noda, followed, in 1348, by Shinkage.

At first the [samurai](#) wanted to obtain special powers: striking, remarkable, magical abilities. They wanted to go through fire without being burned or be able to have a boulder fall on them without being crushed. So they trained their minds deliberately to obtain supernatural abilities and powers, and they were anything but disinterested.

Later, they came under the influence of [Zen](#). Miyamoto Musashi, for instance, who was Japan's greatest kendo master, also became a sage. He said, "One must respect God and Buddha, but not be dependent upon them."

At that point, the way that taught how to cut one's enemies in two became the way that taught how to cut one's own mind. A way of decision, resolution, determination. That was true Japanese kendo, true *Budo*. Strength and victory flow from decisiveness. One moves beyond the level at which most people stop, one transcends the conflict, transforms it into a spiritual progress. There was nothing sportlike about training in those days; the samurai had a higher vision of life.

[Zen](#) and the martial arts have nothing to do with keeping fit or improving health, either. People in the West always want to use things; but the spirit of Zen cannot be squeezed into so narrow a system. And Zen is not some sort of spiritual massage, although the *kyosaku* can very effectively massage mind or body. Zazen is not meant to make you feel relaxed and happy, any more than the martial arts are a game or sport. Their significance is deeper and more essential, it is that of life.

Of death as well, since the two cannot be dissociated.

True kendo and true Zen must be beyond relativity. In other words, one must stop choosing, stop preferring one side or the other side in a relative scheme of things. Instead, make one decision.

Human beings are not like lions and tigers, so the way of [Budo](#) must not be like them either. The tiger and lion are strong, and their instinct and desire make them want to win. It never occurs to them to abandon their ego. But human beings can go beyond the ego and death. In *Budo*, they must become even stronger than the lion or the tiger, and discard the animal instinct that clings to the human spirit