

SMAA JOURNAL



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

2025 SMAA DUES

This is a reminder that SMAA membership fees were due on January 1, 2025. Your prompt attention to this matter is appreciated. Payments can be easily and securely made at www.smaa-hq.com.

We appreciate our members paying dues promptly. It makes life easier for the SMAA staff of volunteers, and it is representative of the type of self-discipline we are cultivating through the study of traditional Japanese martial arts.

DONATIONS & TAX DEDUCTIONS

The SMAA is a federally tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation. As such, your donations to our association are tax deductible. Send your donations, in the form of a check or money order (made out to SMAA), to our headquarters in Michigan. We'll send you a letter back acknowledging your contribution, which you can then use for tax purposes. We hope you'll support the SMAA in our goal to preserve and promote traditional budo and koryu bujutsu.

E-MAIL

Please make sure we have your correct e-mail address. Without this address, we can't e-mail you the *SMAA Journal*.

Do you have a new e-mail address? Have you sent it to hedavey@aol.com? If not, we also won't be

OBJECTIVES OF THE SMAA

1. To promote and aid in the growth of Japan's traditional arts and ways.
2. To assist the public in achieving spiritual growth and physical development through budo/bujutsu.
3. To further friendship and understanding between Asian and Western martial artists.
4. To establish goodwill and harmony among martial artists of various systems.
5. To offer Western martial artists access to legitimate budo/bujutsu organizations and teachers in Japan.
6. To give practitioners of authentic budo/bujutsu recognition for their years of devotion to these arts.

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修道館武道会

able to send you SMAA publications, so please be sure to let us know if your e-mail address changes.

SMAA PATCHES

The SMAA HQ is selling official SMAA patches for your gi. They're great looking patches that embody the spirit and honor instilled in members of our group. They won't fade or bleed when you bleach them, and yet we've been able to keep the cost down. Each patch is basically a 3 ½ inch circle featuring our logo below:



Our patches were produced using state of the art digitizing and ultra-modern technology to create an accurate and attractive embroidered emblem. They feature tight stitches, sharp detail, clean lettering, and top quality craftsmanship. There's no jagged stitching, but we've still got plenty of stitches so that the background doesn't show through.

The patch should be worn on the left side of your gi jacket near your heart. SMAA policy mandates only one patch per uniform to maintain the sense of dignity associated with traditional budo.

These new patches are a great way to show your respect and enthusiasm for our group; we hope all of our members will order at least one. *And the best part is the patches are only \$5.00 (US) each!* (E-mail shudokan@smaa-hq.com about special shipping for international orders.)

To order, go to the "Payments" section of www.smaa-hq.com or send a check or money order made out to "SMAA" to:

SMAA HQ
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FACEBOOK PAGE



Have you been to the SMAA Facebook page? If not, you're missing out on the latest SMAA news, features, videos, photos, and information. It's easy and safe to join Facebook, and all you need to do is click the "Like" button to become a follower of our Facebook page. This is the fastest way to get SMAA news and updates, and we hope you'll drop by <http://www.facebook.com/ShudokanMartialArtsAssociation> and check it out. Once you're on Facebook, we hope you'll share our page with your friends and help us promote the SMAA.

SMAA ONLINE PAYMENTS

Did you know you can pay for your annual dues at our website using PayPal or a major credit card? You can, and you can also pay for gi patches and promotions in the same way. This is a much faster, and in some ways more secure, means of sending money to our headquarters. We hope more of our members will make use of this feature. Just drop by <http://smaa-hq.com/payments.php> for more information.

SMAA YOUTUBE CHANNEL

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Shudokan Martial Arts Association

Want to see some great videos of SMAA teachers, officials, and members? Now you can by visiting our YouTube channel. We're Shudokan1994, because 1994 is the year the SMAA was founded.

To see video of SMAA teachers and members, go to:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg5Nika6Ge0&list=PLS11_XCH8RkI868tRKZ0fdJFSeFGyNZ0o

To see video of the amazing experts that trained leading SMAA officials and teachers, go to:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcE7zBhv9Hs&list=PLS11_XCH8RkIV8liNZoXI93WI79BLE1NZ

NEW SMAA ONLINE LIBRARY

We're always trying to offer more benefits to go along with your SMAA membership. So, be sure to drop by www.smaa-hq.com and check out the new SMAA Online Library. We're in the process of gradually adding back issues of the *SMAA Journal* to our website.

HYPERLINKS

Since we live in the age of the Internet, we're trying to make the *SMAA Journal* more interactive. Look for words in blue and underlined. These are hyperlinks.

Click on them, and you'll connect to websites that can give you information about topics mentioned in this and future issues. Have fun surfing the web! Just remember to come back and finish reading the rest of this issue.

OTSUKA SOKE NEWS

Otsuka Yasuyuki Sensei is the current soke, or "headmaster," of Meifu Shinkage Ryu. He's also a member of the elite SMAA Board of Advisors.

In May of this year, he led his annual spring training camp in Japan. The three-day event took place at the Dozen Ryokan Kyudo Field in Chiba, and it was attended by students from Japan, Australia, and



Otsuka Soke throwing shuriken

other countries. It was successful, with everyone having fun and learning new aspects of Meifu Shinkage Ryu. Testing also took place for higher ranks.

Meifu Shinkage Ryu is a classical Japanese martial art that focuses on specialized weapon techniques connected to the heritage of the samurai. These techniques represent the careful, disciplined approach to combat that samurai developed and refined across generations. Many of the methods practiced in Meifu Shinkage Ryu were once considered esoteric—closely guarded within traditional martial schools and taught only to trusted, advanced students. A well-known example of such a school is Katori Shinto Ryu, one of Japan's oldest and most respected martial lineages.

The choice to keep these skills hidden wasn't just about protecting their strategic value—it also served to prevent misuse by outsiders or those deemed unfit. Through careful transmission from teacher to student, these once-secret techniques have

*Bo-shuriken*

endured, retaining their authenticity and spirit. Under the leadership of Otsuka Soke, Meifu Shinkage Ryu carries this tradition forward, preserving the precision, discipline, and respect that have always defined these martial teachings.

The classical Japanese martial tradition of Meifu Shinkage Ryu (明府真影流) focuses its curriculum on the expert use of two primary weapons: the bo-shuriken (棒手裏剣) and the fundo kusari (分銅鎖). The core skill set of Meifu Shinkage Ryu centers on the straight throwing spike, or bo-shuriken. The official Meifu Shinkage Ryu throwing spikes, designed by the school's late founder, Someya Chikatoshi Sensei, are constructed from square bar steel. These weapons are typically 14 to 15 centimeters long and six to seven millimeters wide.

The development of the Meifu Shinkage Ryu system stems from the initial studies of Katori Shinto Ryu by the founder, Someya Sensei. Someya Sensei, who always held a particular interest in shuriken use, began focusing on bo-shuriken skills after his early Katori Shinto Ryu training. His dedication extended beyond practice; Someya Sensei was a noted shuriken researcher who investigated various techniques and blade types from other shuriken schools.

His primary research question centered on how to achieve stable, long-distance flight. Through careful experimentation—constructing shuriken of different lengths and recording their flight stability and distance—he empirically determined that the length of the weapon directly affected a steady flight. This research led him to identify the precise, effective lengths and widths that define the bo-shuriken used in Meifu Shinkage Ryu today.

Additionally, advanced practitioners learn the use of small, hand-held blades known as shoken (小剣), which are classified within the specialized category of hidden weapons known as kakushi-buki (隠し武器).

The fundo kusari (分銅鎖) is the second major weapon taught in Meifu Shinkage Ryu. This weapon is more commonly known in other martial traditions as the manriki gusari (often translated as “power of 10,000”). The standard fundo kusai used in Meifu Shinkage Ryu is a steel chain with one weight and one ring, measuring between 72 and 76 centimeters long and weighing between 180 to 200 grams. The skills trained are derived from techniques found in the Japanese martial art Masaki Ryu.

Someya Sensei valued training with the fundo kusari as much as with the bo-shuriken, developing a comprehensive curriculum that includes 27 kata,

*Fundo kusari*

one long-form, and three secret techniques. The required material is divided by rank: shodan requires 11 kata, nidan requires 10 kata, and sandan requires an additional 7 kata. Advanced students also learn a set of kata that combine the use of both the bo-shuriken and the fundo kusari.

ABOUT SEIZA

By H. E. Davey

Seiza (正座), meaning “proper sitting,” is a formal seated posture that holds deep historical, cultural, and martial significance in Japan. Its roots trace back to Japan’s medieval period, when sitting in seiza became a symbol of discipline, humility, and etiquette. In the context of Japanese martial arts—especially classical schools known as koryu bujutsu (古流武術) and modern budo (武道)—seiza is more than just a way of sitting; it’s a vehicle for transmitting values and shaping both the body and the spirit.

ORIGINS

Although some believe seiza evolved during the Muromachi period (1336–1573), when tatami mat culture became widespread among the samurai class and aristocracy, recent research suggests that the posture we now call seiza may not be as ancient as once believed. While forms of kneeling and sitting with the legs folded have existed in Japan since the Heian period (794–1185), the specific posture of resting fully on one’s heels with the tops of the feet flat on the floor likely developed much later. Earlier in Japanese history, other seated postures were more common. Men often sat cross-legged in agura (胡座), while wariza (割座), a kneeling position with the feet splayed outward, was also widely used. It was only with the gradual spread of tatami mat culture—from the late Muromachi period (1336–1573) through the Edo period (1603–1868)—that seiza began to take on the formalized shape we recognize today.

For both safety and legal compliance, practitioners utilize specialized training versions: a safety fundo kusari made of a plastic chain and a soft weight is used for novices. Foam versions are used for partner training, and rubber versions are used for kata practice. Members transition to the metal version only after achieving proficiency and where permitted by law.

Historical and cultural studies, such as those by Tazaki Yusei, show that seiza was initially one among several ways of sitting indoors and that its association with etiquette and proper conduct emerged slowly. By the Edo period, as tatami-covered rooms became the standard for samurai and townspeople alike, seiza became the norm for formal occasions, ceremonies, and instruction in manners. It symbolized humility and composure—virtues prized by both the warrior and the cultured classes.

In this sense, seiza represents not a single invention of one era but a gradual evolution in how the Japanese body adapted to changing social and architectural environments. Its rise parallels the refinement of etiquette and the emphasis on controlled bodily expression that defined Edo-period culture. Sitting in seiza came to signal respect not only toward superiors or guests, but also toward the physical space itself—a gesture of presence and awareness that would later find deep expression in traditional cultural arts and martial disciplines.

SEIZA IN JAPANESE CULTURE AND BUDO

Traditionally, seiza plays an important role in traditional Japanese settings such as tea ceremony (茶道), flower arranging (華道), and calligraphy (書道). It represents a kind of mental and physical stillness—an external expression of inward discipline. In daily life, although modern Japanese



*Wayne Muromoto Sensei,
SMAA Senior Advisor, bowing from seiza*

people often sit in chairs, seiza is still seen during formal visits and religious rituals. The discomfort or difficulty often experienced when sitting in seiza for long periods isn't regarded as a flaw of the posture, but rather as part of its function: to instill patience, self-control, and grace under pressure. You learn to sit quietly, endure minor pain, and focus without fidgeting—qualities that are highly valued in Japanese society. And, of course, with time and practice it becomes possible for many people to sit comfortably in seiza.

In koryu bujutsu, which encompasses the martial traditions of the samurai, seiza is integrated into the practice of kata (形)—formal pre-arranged techniques—and rituals such as reiho (礼法), or bowing etiquette. Reiho, a.k.a reigi, the system of formal etiquette used in martial arts, is deeply tied to seiza. Bowing from seiza is a deliberate act, not simply a ritual. It signals to others that you've quieted the mind and assumed a posture of humility. It reminds the practitioner of their role in the dojo (道場), of their duty to the art, their teacher, their fellow students, and to themselves. When students bow in seiza before beginning training, they're not only greeting their partners but reaffirming their inner commitment to sincerity and effort.

As for kata, some entire kata are executed from a seated position in seiza, particularly in schools that include iaijutsu (居合術), tantojutsu (短刀術), or other close-quarter methods. In these traditions, sitting in seiza isn't just a matter of form; it reflects the realities of an earlier era, where drawing a weapon or defending yourself from a seated position was necessary in sudden confrontations during formal meetings or inside residences. The precision and calmness required to perform martial techniques from seiza make it a test of technical skill and psychological control.

Modern budo disciplines, such as kendo (剣道), aikido (合気道), and iaido (居合道), continue to emphasize seiza, especially at the beginning and end of practice sessions. The opening bow and the mutual bow between partners are often performed from seiza. This reinforces the values of respect and seriousness toward training. Even when not used in active techniques, the act of sitting and standing from seiza is practiced to promote balance, posture, and smooth body movement.

SEIZA'S BENEFITS

For Western students, learning to sit in seiza may initially seem uncomfortable or unnecessary, especially in cultures where chairs are the norm. However, to neglect this posture is to bypass a vital part of traditional martial arts education. Seiza teaches control over the body and mind. It reveals tension, encourages correct spinal alignment, and demands a calm awareness of our physical state.

There's also a therapeutic aspect to seiza when practiced correctly. It aligns the spine naturally, encourages abdominal breathing, and builds awareness of attitude. It's not a slouched or passive pose. The physical benefits of seiza include strengthening the lower back, stretching the quadriceps and ankles, and promoting better posture.

Seiza also requires constant micro-adjustments and attention. The hips must stay down and settled, the spine must extend upward, and the shoulders must remain relaxed. The eyes are often kept softly focused ahead—not darting, but not blank either. This alert calmness is a physical expression of heijoshin (平常心), the composed and balanced mind that martial arts aim to cultivate. Psychologically, it conditions students to endure minor discomfort without complaint, to remain still without distraction, and to approach training with sincerity. Seiza also acts as a bridge to understanding the deeper etiquette and cultural environment from which Japanese martial systems emerged. It's not merely a position, but an attitude—one that reflects a broader mindset of readiness and respect.

One of the most overlooked aspects of seiza is the transition into and out of it. In koryu dojo, this transition isn't casual. Beginners often collapse into seiza or struggle when rising, using their hands or shifting their weight awkwardly. By contrast, senior practitioners move with minimal disturbance. The hips lower straight down, the back remains vertical, and the hands move in sync with the knees. Rising is performed in one motion, usually without touching the floor. These transitions aren't just formalities—they're extensions of martial control. In some traditional sword arts, the ability to move from standing to kneeling and back again without breaking focus or spatial awareness is as important as executing a cut. It reflects control over your center of balance, timing, and relationship with space—essential qualities in combat.

SEIZA IN THE MODERN WORLD

In preserving the traditions of koryu bujutsu and modern budo, seiza remains indispensable. To sit in seiza is to place ourselves—physically and mentally—within the current of Japanese martial tradition. It's a practice that connects modern students to centuries of discipline and the samurai spirit.



The author teaching zagi, "sitting techniques"

In a world that often moves too fast, seiza is an invitation to slow down and come back to the present. In that stillness, something changes. The breathing deepens. The senses sharpen. The line between ritual and reality begins to blur. What once felt like mere posture becomes a container for self-awareness.

To sit in seiza is to step into a very old current. It's to associate ourselves with generations of practitioners who wanted not just to win in battle, but to master themselves. And the posture of seiza becomes a reminder that stillness isn't the absence of action, but the source from which right action arises.

About the Author: H. E. Davey, along with Stephen Fabian Sensei, is one of two Directors of the SMAA Jujutsu Division. He's a founding member of the SMAA, and the author of *The Japanese Way of the Artist*, which explores the technical principles, philosophy, and aesthetics behind various traditional Japanese arts, including budo. Information about his books can be found at www.MichiPublishing.com.

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