

SMAA JOURNAL



Shudokan Martial Arts Association • PO Box 6022, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022
<http://smaa-hq.com/> • shudokan@smaa-hq.com • 1-734-645-6441

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2026 SMAA DUES

This is a reminder that SMAA membership fees are due on January 1, 2026. 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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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
PO Box 6022
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022
USA

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

In October of this year, Otsuka Yasuyuki Soke led his annual autumn training camp in Japan. Otsuka Soke is the current headmaster of Meifu Shinkage Ryu and one of several members of the SMAA Board of Advisors living in Japan.

This year's camp had participants from Japan, Hong Kong, Finland, Australia, Estonia, and Canada in attendance. Training took place at a kyudo archery



Students throwing bo shuriken at the fall camp

facility, where students were able to practice throwing bo shuriken and using the fundo kusari, a chain weapon. A bo shuriken ("stick shuriken") is a throwing weapon consisting of a straight sharpened metal spike, usually four-sided but sometimes



Otsuka Soke throwing bo shuriken

round or octagonal in section. Students also tested for various ranks in Meifu Shinkage Ryu.

Meifu Shinkage Ryu is a traditional Japanese martial art using rarely taught small, feudal period weapons. It was founded by Someya Chikatoshi Soke, and Otsuka Soke is one of the highest-ranking teachers of traditional budo in Japan today.

MARTIN SENSEI NEWS

Paul Martin Sensei, a Japan-based member of the SMAA Board of Advisors, has a new monthly lecture series available on the Japanese sword. You can check it out here:

www.budojapan.com/paul-martin/

The series will be delving into the beauty of blade shapes and hamon blade patterns, the processes of

tatara smelting, forging, and polishing, as well as the artistry of mountings, the postwar export issues, firearm and sword laws, and the realities faced by modern swordsmiths. Plus, it will reexamine the present and future of the Japanese sword as a living cultural heritage.

Martin Sensei is from England and resides in Tokyo. A former curator at the British Museum, he's currently a Trustee of the Foundation for Japanese Sword Culture for the Purpose of Public Interest as well as a recognized specialist for the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport. In 2006, he became the first non-Japanese to win the sword appraisal competition at the Japanese sword museum. He went on to win a second time in 2018.

He's appeared in many documentaries all around the world, translated several major sword books and exhibition catalogs and is quoted by the Osafune Sword Museum as being, "One of the foremost non-Japanese specialists on Nihon-to." A former three-time English karate-do champion, Martin Sensei practices martial arts in Japan and holds high ranks in both kendo and iaido.

And in November, he tested in Japan for sixth dan in iaido. He passed this examination administered by representatives of the All-Japan Kendo Federation. The All-Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF), founded in the 1950's as Japan's national governing body for kendo, iaido, and jodo, oversees the standardized system known as Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei iaido, or Seitei iaido. It's a set of 12 kata created between 1969 and 2000 by senior experts from major classical schools to provide a unified, exam-based curriculum.

Under this federation, iaido practitioners test within the same kyu, dan, and shogo structure used in kendo and jodo: dan ranks run from shodan to hachidan, with shogo teaching titles—renshi, kyoshi, and hanshi—awarded at higher levels after the required years of experience. The federation's official time-in-grade standards, used in Japan and



Martin Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor

internationally, require a minimum of five years after promotion to fifth dan before someone can test for sixth dan, and eighth dan is restricted to senior practitioners under strict national examinations. Because the AJKF no longer issues ninth and 10th dan, rokudan is an even higher rank than it might seem, and testing is rigorous in the present system of eight dan.

In fact, the AJKF is known for having some of the toughest standards in budo, with iaido, kendo, and jodo hachidan exams often passing fewer than one percent of candidates and sometimes none at all. Even the rokudan and shichidan tests are judged with great strictness. Examiners look not only at technique but also at composure, dignity, clear intention, depth of spirit, and correct expression of kata.

Many students and teachers from outside Japan remark that high-level testing within the AJKF is far more demanding than what they experience in most overseas federations. And numerous highly experienced practitioners attempt rokudan multiple times before succeeding.

Congratulations to Martin Sensei!

SMAA TIME-IN-GRADE REQUIREMENTS

We receive occasional questions about how long it takes to move from one rank to another in the SMAA. These are logical inquiries, and a time table of minimum times between ranks can be found here:

<https://www.smaa-hq.com/ranking>

Members should consult our time-in-grade requirements before applying for promotion. Along similar lines, SMAA certified teachers should always check the minimum time between promotions before they test their students for ranks within our group.

There's also a difference between holding a dan rank and having obtained actual SMAA teaching certification, which has its own time criteria and requirements. Logically, we can only endorse instruction provided by people we've examined and certified as teachers.

Sometimes in Japanese budo you hear the saying, "Rank follows the person; the person doesn't follow the rank." It means that the real goal in budo is personal growth and better technical ability. As that's achieved, it's noticed by teachers and seniors. Then promotion to higher ranks follows naturally.

This is in contrast with the mistaken belief that the goal is to obtain higher ranks, and that accompanying certificates will somehow lead to self-mastery and greater skill. That's incorrect, and being promoted too quickly can actually cause you to lose the respect of knowledgeable members of the worldwide traditional budo community. Promoting your students too quickly can cause the same problem for teachers.

Both send the wrong message. The emphasis is on the wrong thing, and obtaining certificates is never the goal of authentic budo. It's a byproduct of moving in the right direction in terms of personal development in life and proficiency in the dojo.

THE EVASION TECHNIQUES OF MASTER KIYAN CHOTOKU

By Herbert Wong

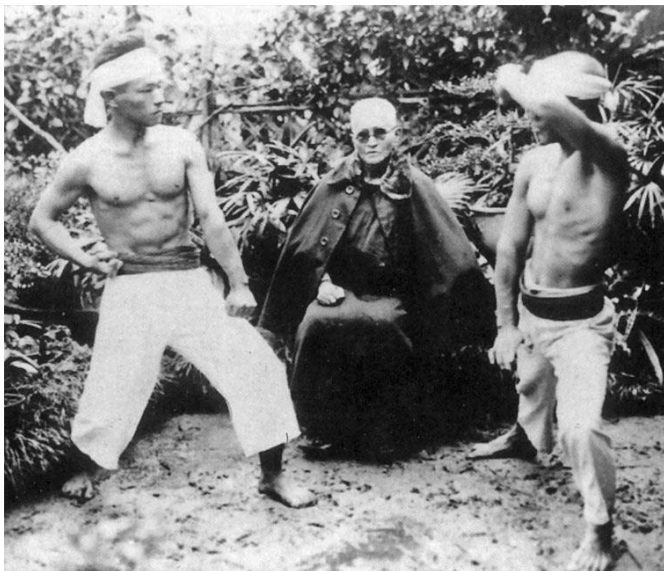
Editor's Note

Kiyan Chotoku Sensei (1870–1945) was a prominent Okinawan karate-do master of the Shuri-te tradition

and a student of Matsumura Sokon Sensei and Itosu Anko Sensei, two of the most influential figures in the development of modern karate-do. Known for his sharp, precise technique and exceptional evasive

footwork, Kiyan (Kyan) Sensei specialized in agility, timing, and positioning rather than brute strength, making his approach especially effective for smaller practitioners. He taught at commercial schools and later at the Okinawa Prefectural Agricultural School, where he helped introduce karate-do to a wider public and trained several major figures, who would shape Shorin Ryu in the twentieth century. Despite his modest personality and relatively small stature, he earned a reputation as one of the most skilled karateka of his generation, and his teachings remain central to modern Shorin Ryu lineages.

Master Kiyan Chotoku was well known for his evasion techniques in karate-do. In fact, one of his first principles in fighting was to evade any oncoming attack before taking any additional action. In this way, one is better able to evaluate the nature of the conflict and the seriousness of the attack. Like many martial art teachers of his time, Master Kiyan Chotoku believed strongly in the principle of using physical force only as a last resort (and only the minimal force necessary to gain control of a situation). Master Kiyan modeled some of his techniques after the "fighting cock" and was very famous for his ability to evade his opponents and step away from offensive attacks.



Kiyan Sensei (seated)

KEY PRINCIPLES IN MASTER KIYAN'S EVASION TECHNIQUES

The following principles are emphasized in Master Kiyan's understanding and use of his evasion techniques:

1. Move in one or more of the eight directions. Find balance and calm through evading an attack by precisely timing one's stepping in one or more of the eight directions. Master Kiyan emphasized stepping using a natural walking stance or stepping into a traditional "cat stance" (neko ashi dachi). In all cases, the stepping is to move oneself into a position of greater advantage or, at minimum, a position of equal advantage.
2. Move lightly, in-balance, with one's whole body as a single unit. Master Kiyan emphasized stepping lightly (without stepping noises or jumping sounds) while keeping the entire body compactly whole and in balance as one unit. One should not see arms and legs flailing or other body parts not moving as quickly as the feet, etc. While it is perfectly acceptable to have the body bent (or an arm or leg extended), the entire body moves as a well-centered and grounded "mass" around a well-controlled center of gravity.
3. Align oneself to the opponent's centerline. At all times, one needs to be moving so as to be aligned with the opponent's centerline. In this way, one is able to maintain one's position of advantage for defense in this alignment, since the relative position of the opponent's centerline to oneself provides the shortest distance or fastest access between oneself and the opponent.
4. Use one's hands and feet to channel the opponent's forces. In Master Kiyan's evasion techniques, the hands and feet are used to

“channel” or to keep the attacking forces going in the same direction as the opponent had intended. Application of this principle allows the evasion technique to make the opponent’s attack “more predictable” (that is, one can see the vector of the attacking force by keeping it going in the same direction).

5. Maintain eye contact with your opponent at all time. Master Kiyan emphasized the importance of directing one’s attention to and maintaining awareness of the opponent at all times. By maintaining eye contact with one’s opponent, one is better able to fully see the source and nature of the attack. (Incidentally, by maintaining contact with one’s eyes, Master Kiyan did not mean that one needs to be staring intensely at the eyes of the opponent.)
6. Force your opponent to take more steps than yourself. Correct evasion techniques allow one to be more efficient than the opponent. For example, by stepping so that one is behind the opponent, one would be making the opponent take more steps to recover before the next attack can begin.
7. Sustain one’s awareness of all of the eight directions. While continuously aware of one’s opponent, one must be equally cognizant of the terrain, structures, and features within the eight directions. Such awareness allows one to know the “degrees of freedom” available in movements, as well as the obstacles in the way. It would be most unfortunate to successfully evade an opponent’s attack by stepping out of the way but accidentally falling down a 500-foot cliff.
8. Stay engaged with your opponent as long as you have control. Master Kiyan emphasized staying engaged (and in contact) with one’s



Kiyan Chotoku Sensei

opponent as long as one feels control in that engagement. By staying in contact, one is better able to understand the opponent’s attacking forces as well as techniques used.

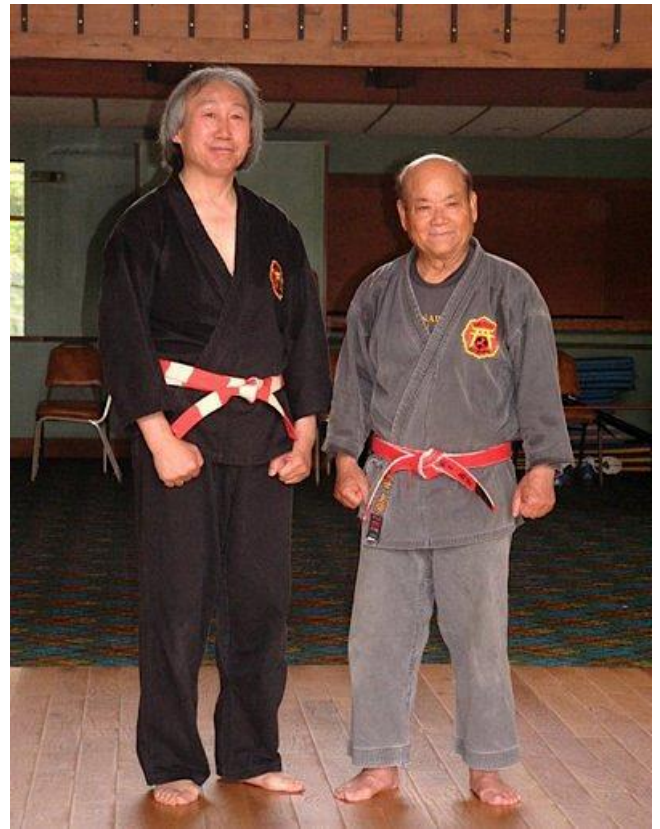
9. Disengage from your opponent for strategic purposes. Master Kiyan distinguished the difference between (a) evading an attack by stepping and (b) disengaging from an opponent. In disengagement, one moves so as to be as far away as possible from the opponent. In evasion, one stays in close proximity to and in contact with the opponent. Disengagement allows one to “take distance” to fully assess the opponent and the offensive attack(s) encountered.

METHODS TO PRACTICE MASTER KIYAN’S EVASION TECHNIQUES

In order to fully put into practice the evasion principles and techniques noted above, the

following are some examples of karate-do training exercises and drills used to learn Master Kiyan's evasion techniques:

1. Stepping in the Eight Directions—This is a drill in which one learns to step quickly and precisely into one or more of the eight directions. The stepping can be accomplished using a variety of stances.
2. Evasion Against One, Single High/Middle/Low Attack—This exercise is similar to doing ippon kumite ("single attack and defense") except that the practice is to evade by stepping in one or more of the eight directions. Moreover, the instructor provides verbal directions on timing and on the application of the other evasion principles noted above.
3. Evasive Movements Against Continuous High/Middle/Low Attacks—Similar to the single attack exercise above, the continuous attacks allow the student to practice continuous engagement, control, and evasion within a prearranged exercise for learning the evasion principles.
4. Evasion Against One, Single High/Middle/Low Weapon Attack—Confidence, sensitivity, and awareness are broadened in the student through the practice of the evasion techniques and principles against weapons like the bo ("six-foot staff"), sword, etc.
5. Evasive Movements Against Continuous High/Middle/Low Weapon Attacks—Exercises take the student through evasion techniques when confronted with continuous attacks of weapons like the bo, sword, etc.
6. Evasion Using Disengagement Stepping in the Eight Directions—The student practices



The author (left) and his teacher Shimabukuro Sensei

the "disengagement stepping exercise" in the eight directions (with and without an opponent).

Master Kiyan Chotoku believed that the martial artist must, at all times, be a gentle person with compassion and respect for people. In this regard, he always taught the importance of evading an attack without any immediate counter-offense. By evading the first attack, Master Kiyan believed that it might be possible to defuse and to reconcile a conflicting situation before resorting to physical force. In Master Kiyan's teaching of his Shorin Ryu karate-do, evasion techniques, principles, and training methods were of great importance for his students.

About the Author: The late Herbert Z. Wong Sensei studied Shorin Ryu karate-do for many years under Shimabukuro Eizo Sensei, Hanshi/tenth dan, and

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PO Box 6022
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022

Phone:
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E-Mail:
shudokan@smaa-hq.com

Wong Sensei was an eighth dan and Shihan in the SMAA Karate-do Division. He was also a Senior Advisor for the SMAA.

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