



SHOTOKAN RYU KASE HA INSTRUCTORS ACADEMY

SRKHI A Newsletter 3/04

Dear karateka,

As we enter springtime, our body is awakening from the winter embracement, our feelings are getting higher, our being is blooming like spring flowers; more importantly but less observed our circle of life is continuing. In this context another one Newsletter is reaching you with information which I hope you will find interesting. However before let you read the Newsletter, I would like to point out two points. Firstly the renewal of memberships should have been over by now, but for some reasons it is not. Please read the appropriate part for information and necessary actions by some of you. Second, I would like once more to ask you to contribute the Newsletter with news, seminar reports, upcoming seminars information, opinions and ideas on budo etc. It is very important that as many as possible all members are contributing to this Newsletter. Why? Simply because it is our Newsletter.

Budo Themes: A dojo guide; Elements of a Traditional Dojo

As we have become aware of the general arrangement in a dojo, certain elements which are found in a dojo will be further examined and discussed.

The Kamidana

It is a small shelf, on which items of significance to the dojo are placed, situated at the *joza*. In Japan, the **kamidana**, has Shinto overtones and found also in every house. In other countries, the absence of Shinto beliefs does not necessarily require the omission of the *kamidana*, however it is a delicate matter; it may serve as a reminder of the deep meanings behind the pursuit of the Way - Do. A dojo carries forward a certain tradition (*ryu* or *ha*) and the kamidana contains objects and/or symbols pertinent to this particular tradition.

When members bow to the *joza*, at the beginning and the end of *keiko* (training), they are displaying respect to the heritage of their art. It is possible that westerners may have difficulties with the idea of bowing, especially to objects or inanimate things. However, to follow a traditional Way requires an attitude of openmindedness. Bowing to the *joza* and its associated *kamidana*, is not a sign of religious significance or submission; it is a reminder of an obligation voluntarily being taken over.

Alternatively, instead of the *kamidana* you find pictures of ryu founder or its current head master, to whom practitioners bow in respect of their contribution to the art.

The Hata

The **hata** is the banner of the style or association represented at the dojo. Or simply the banner of that particular dojo. The idea should be that a clear identification with one's art, style, association, or country. If you get the message that you've entered a

United Nations waiting room, you have probably entered a wrong place for budo practice. It should be found hanging at the *joza*, below or aside the *kamidana*.

The Dojo Kun

The **Dojo kun** comprises the motto or slogan of the dojo and its members. It may found hanging in a *kakemono* form, at a prominent place in the *joza*, usually above or aside the *kamidana*. It is composed by a list of precepts or principles, of which every member should be aware and follow (remember the well known dojo kun of the JKA, found at the *joza* of its Honbu dojo in Tokyo). Another examples of the dojo kun may be "Vigor and Honor" or "Endeavor, Patience, Courtesy" or "mind, technique, body-one set" or other set by the founder of the *ryu* or its chief instructor or the Dojocho (Dojo Chief instructor), representing a reminder for the practitioner, of the etiquette required when one trains in any form of budo .

The Nafuda kake

Usually in the *shimoza*, one finds **nafuda kake**, a display of wooden name plates, which indicate member's rank and dojo status. It is not uncommon to have separate *kyu* and *dan* *nafuda* boards. This method of member tracking serves as a source of motivation and creates as well a strong sense of bond among members.

Nafuda are usually constructed out of light wood such as fir or pine. They may remain natural without any form of stain or finish. A special brush is used to write names on the *nafuda*, adding authenticity and beauty to them. In many cases on the back side of the *nafuda* plates, information concerning training and promotion of the respective member are recorded. This allows for quick review of members training history. *Nafuda* plates can be re-used, when a student drops out, simply by sanding the wooden name plate, however *dan* holders *nafuda*, should be generally kept since attainment of black belt is of permanent status.

It takes time and attention to maintain the *nafuda* display. But this effort is an investment in creating an air of traditional seriousness and purpose. A dojo is nothing more but its members.

Other Less-Tangible Features

Inside the dojo, someone can see and touch (?) the *floor*, the *hata*, the *kamidana*, the *dojo kun*, the *nafuda kake*. But are all these the only elements you find in a dojo? Certainly there is something more, which cannot be touched, but be felt; the theme of **sabi** and **wabi**.

Japanese artists use the word **sabi** to describe a situation when an artless unschooled dignity is merged with a certain uncultured antiqueness or the chimera of this age-old attribute. In a literal sense, *sabi* is "solitariness" or even "lonesomeness". *Sabi* embraces solitariness, it is an acceptance of it, a relaxed and peaceful satisfaction in heavy solitary. **Wabi**, actually implies "poverty". Its implied meaning is not negative despite what an English rendering might suggest. *Wabi* hints at the elementary serenity of a gentle springtime rain tapping the roof of a rustic lodge. It transforms intellectual entanglement as well as all forms of self regard and affectation, to unearth the unadorned truth of nature, which underlies the variety of relative phenomenon. Since nature is asymmetric, spasmodic, even "imperfect", *wabi* is the purity of natural imperfection.

Are you still there? If the above explanation seems too complicated, the late Donn Draeger, in an excerpt from his book "The Martial Arts and Ways of Japan (Vol. II)" describes them in a simpler but not least way:

"The dojo is austere, a humble place of natural and quiet dignity. It may be a specially constructed, spacious hall or simply a small but suitable indoor area. Always cleanliness and order predominate. Inasmuch as the dojo links the spiritual and physical elements of classical budo, the basis of its construction must not conflict with that relationship. Sabi and wabi-naturalness, simplicity, rusticity (but not without an element of design) are its keynote."

To capture this feeling requires attention to detail. The dojo must exude a scent of nature, in respect to its design and construction. Wood paneling is preferred over concrete block or painted dry wall. This adds psychological "warmth." Painted surfaces should be in earth tones rather than in bright or "loud" colors. The effect desired is to tone down the emotions rather than excite them. Calm spirit must pervade the dojo.

One of the hardest to explain features is the apparent lack of heating and cooling equipment. By our standards, this may seem crude. But, under the conception that a dojo is a health spa, then you come to terms with the philosophy of training in the elements of nature. In winter, heat should come from body activity; On the other hand, in summer, sweating is allowed to have its effect on the body, a natural cooling effect. To many this is cruel, but it should never be forgotten that too much pampering of the body weakens the spirit. The notion of austere training (*shugyo*) is essential to forging an indomitable spirit (*fudoshin*), the aim of training in budo.

The dojo is representative of the struggles of life. To overcome adversity requires strength of character forged by training of mind as well as body. A dojo cannot avoid testing the spirit. There is no argument that modern science and technology have made tremendous contributions to our understanding of mind/body fitness. Many old methods of training have been improved and newly developed equipments, thus enhancing training effectiveness. But a dojo, above all, is a "place of enlightenment." Enlightenment is a journey which takes place in the mind; and the mind cannot be fooled with frills. The most direct route to self realization is through self-confrontation. A dojo, a traditional dojo, is the place where the journey is played out. The elements of a traditional dojo remind us constantly of that journey.

Reports

Again this month there is nothing to report. However I am taking this opportunity to ask you to share your experiences and impressions from seminars with all Academy members. I truly believe it is worthwhile.

Recommended Courses:

Francois Van Binst, 6thdan, will teach on 13 & 14 March 2004 in a course organized by Andre Lallemand and the Sei Sen Kan Karate Club Arlon, in Arlon Belgium. Information or reservations by Lallemand André, 70, rue de Toernich, 6700 Arlon, tel/fax/rép 063/22.34.68, e- mail andré.lallemand@skynet.be

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 27/3, 24/4, 29/5 and 27/6, in Terneuzen, the Netherlands. 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. And last but not least; if you want to combine holidays with budo training, Dave Wilkins, 5th Dan SRKH, will run a course with Derek Ridgeway, 6th Dan Shito Ryu, in Tenerife - Monday 1st November to Thursday 4th November with specially reduced rates at a 4 star hotel in Playa De Las Americas. For anyone interested, email Dave Wilkins, www.leicesterkarateclub.co.uk for more details.

Membership status:

Normally by that time the procedure for fulfilling the membership requirements for 2004 should have closed; however no plan survives contact with the enemy. Due to difficulties with the transfer of money to Academy's account, the procedure will remain open till 31 March 2004. For those who intend to transfer money, the following information from our Treasurer, on bank account details are important:

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: 60-50-16
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: 60-50-16
IBAN No: GB69NWBK 60720308791120
SWIFT CODE: NWB KGB 2L

For payments by a bank cheque or international money order nothing has changed. Make your cheque payable to Shotokan Ryu Kase Ha Instructors Academy and posted it 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). **PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOUR NAME IS ON ALL TRANSFER DOCUMENTS. DO NOT STATE "MEMBERSHIP FEES" – WE ONLY RECEIVE MEMBERSHIP FEES**

You will find attached the list of those members who on 1/3/2004, according to our bank archives, did not fulfil their financial obligations. It is important to note that

strikethrough names are those who neither last year did, so if a second time occur they will be, by Shihankai decision, deleted from the Academy. If you have paid but you are on the list, please contact our Treasurer Alan Armstrong, alan@armstrong-associates.fsnet.co.uk , for the necessary clarifications

Be reminded that 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 April 2004. Stay strong, train hard and enjoy life.

Oss

Spiros G. Drossoulakis