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SEIBU KAN

THE SHORINJI-RYU KARATE OF SHIMABUKURO ZENRYO

By John Sells

Shorin-ryu karate is like a stout tree with many branches. Its base is firmly rooted in the karate that developed in Okinawa's old Shuri City and Tomari Village over a century ago. While mechanically sharing the same foundation, each branch points in a different direction, having been guided by



Kyan Chofu

varied influences. One of the largest branches, really an elemental division of the main trunk itself, is that line represented by the Shorin-ryu styles that trace their lineage to Kyan Chotoku (1870-1945), one of the founders of Okinawan karate as it is known today. And it is directly from Kyan that the karate of Shimabukuro Zenryo (Nov. 14, 1908 - Oct. 14, 1969) comes.

Any explanation of Seibukan must start with Kyan Chotoku, who was the son of Kyan Chofu, a high-ranking official in the Okinawan royal court. Chofu was a royal steward, attending to the Okinawan king, Sho Tai, personally. Though by the time of Chotoku's birth in Gibo Village, Shuri, the Okinawan kingdom was already in transition. Although the Satsuma samurai from Kyushu, Japan, had completely subjugated the Ryukyu archipelago in 1609, its monarchy and internal administrative bureaucracy (including its



Kyan Chotoku

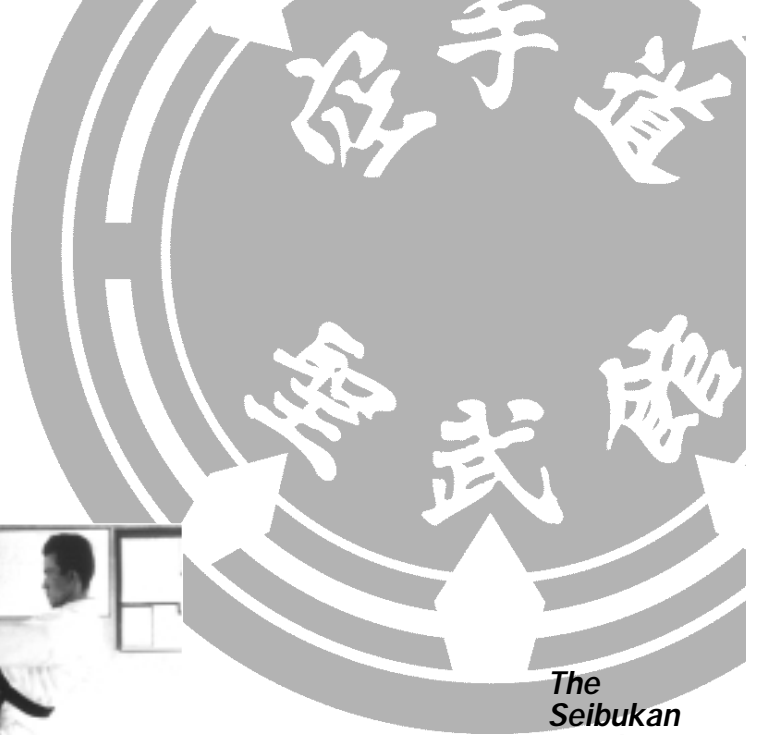
Photo by Walter Dailey

Shimabukuro Zenryo
(Nov. 14, 1908 - Oct. 14, 1969)





Zenryo Shimabukuro and his son Zenpo demonstrating a "sukui uke" or scooping block with a kick counter. Photo by Walter Dailey



**The
Seibukan
Patch**

civil police and royal garrison) had been allowed to continue as a puppet state. However, even this pretense was abandoned in 1872, when the monarchy was dissolved by a Japanese Government that had itself moved out of the feudal era under Emperor Meiji's leadership in 1868. The now former king and his family were subsequently taken to Japan, where they continued for some time to live an aristocratic life. Accompanying the king were some of his old retainers, including Kyan Chofu, who brought his twelve-year-old son to be educated in Tokyo. However, Chofu's service to the former king ended when Chotoku was sixteen and the Kyan family moved back to Okinawa to a land where much of the gentry class, the people who developed karate, had fallen on hard times -- their feudal largess having ended when Okinawa was made a prefecture of Japan and the kingdom period ended.

Still, young Kyan Chotoku was to receive a remarkable martial arts education from some of Okinawa's most prominent karateka. Though he was a small, slight individual -- Shimabukuro Zenryo said he was only 4'10", he overcame his physical size by training arduously, often devising techniques that enhanced the art itself. Techniques that he perfected under the guidance of such men as his grandfather, Kyan Oyakata (who was his first martial arts teacher); Matsumura Sokon, the old leading karateka of Shuri from whom he learned the old karate training routines (kata) Seisan, Naifanchi, and Gojushiho; Oyadomari Kokan of Tomari-te, another former high-ranking official, who taught him Passai kata; and Matsumora Kosaku, known as Tomari-te's leading exponent, taught Kyan Chinto kata. These men had been secured by Chotoku's

father to teach his son from the age of twenty. By the time Chotoku was thirty, he had become well known as a skilled karateka himself. He also sought out others whose knowledge and expertise he could benefit from. These included Maeda, another former official from whom he learned the Wanshu kata; Yara of Yomitan Village (a descendant of Chatan Yara, who was contemporary with Matsumura's alleged teacher, Tode Sakugawa), from whom he learned a beautiful long version of Kusanku kata; and Tokumine, the banished Shuri officer who is said to have taught Kyan his bo kata, Tokumine no Kon (though Tokumine may have been dead by the time Kyan visited Yaeyama Island, south of Okinawa Island, where the old regime had banished Tokumine).

It has also been said many times that Kyan was a student of Matsumura Sokon's most famous protege, Itosu Anko. However, Kyan's own students and Chibana

Chosin, Itosu's successor, steadfastly maintained that Kyan never studied under Itosu. Nonetheless, Kyan amassed a wide array of knowledge from some of the best sources in old-style Okinawan karate. With this expertise and knowledge, Kyan became a sought after and acknowledged master of the art. He was famous for his kicking skills and fast and light but effective movements. He was supposedly challenged many times and was able to emerge victorious throughout it all.

By the 1920's, karate was entering the modern era. Many of the old masters who taught Kyan's generation were dead, and times were difficult for many who had belonged to the old privileged class. Quite a few of them began to work out with each other and give demonstrations together.

Along with others, Kyan began teaching at various schools and institutions of higher learning. New territory was opened up by the expansionist Japanese Government, including the island of Taiwan, where Kyan went for a time accompanied by at least two other karateka, Kuwae Ryusei and Kudaka Kori (AKA Hisataka). Upon returning from Taiwan, Kyan began to teach a new kata called Ananku, which he had evidently devised as a basic kata from techniques developed from or



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inspired by his Taiwan adventures. Kyan also took part in the famous meeting in 1936 that essentially decided the future course of karate and changed the art's name from "China hand" to "empty hand."

It was during these times that the seeds of Seibukan were sown when Shimabukuro Zenryo, who had moved to Chatan Village and set up a bakery shop, became a student of Kyan. In those days, not just anyone was admitted into a master's course of instruction. However, after a formal introduction and much persuasion, Zenryo became Kyan's student. He was to stay with Kyan for ten years until the devastation that punctuated the final years of World War Two ended all training for some time. Not only did training end, but also many of the old karate masters did not survive the war. According to Zenryo Sensei, Kyan died of starvation in 1945, after giving what little food there was to children, so that they might survive.

After the war, karate as we now it today really began to take shape. Of course, karate instruction and training did not immediately begin anew, but by 1947, a few of the surviving instructors began to revive their classes. Shimabukuro Zenryo was one



Shimabukuro Sensei poses in a movement from the "Yara" Kusanku which he learned from Chotoku Kyan.

of these, and though he continued to ply his trade as a baker, he began to give lessons to perpetuate his teacher's karate to a few school-age students, who, by the 1950's, included his son, Zenpo, and nephew, Zenji. Like most Okinawan karateka of that era, their dojo was the open air, usually at Zenryo's house, but anywhere space could be found to train in would suffice. Gradually, Zenryo's group grew as did his reputation as one of Kyan's most senior surviving students, a position that he felt honor bound to continue his mentor's karate just as it was passed on to him. This meant that students learned Kyan's curriculum, the kata Ananku, Wanshu, Seisan, Naifanchi, Passai, Chinto, Kusanku, and Gojushiho. It also meant that he trained his students in hard, practical karate.

As the 1950's wore on, Shimabukuro was to become an acknowledged karate leader, though not a strident one. He was good friends with some very prominent karate people such as Chibana Chosin, one of the island's most senior leaders, and they had often demonstrated karate together, Shimabukuro representing Kyan's style and Chibana, Itosu's. Nakamura and

Shimabukuro had been friends for most of their lives, each believed that karate should be real and taught their students accordingly. Both Shimabukuro and Nakamura taught sparring, and hard sparring at that, something many of the other karate leaders did not agree with. In fact, when the original Okinawan Karate Federation was formed, Shimabukuro was not invited to become a member even though his longtime friend, Chibana, was a leader of that group. This evidently did not sit well with Chibana and would be one of the contributing factors to Chibana withdrawing from the organization within a few years.

THE BIRTH OF THE SEIBUKAN

By the end of the 1950's, the various karate groups who traced their lineages back to Shuri-te and/or Tomari-te of the Okinawan kingdom period were known generically as Shorin-ryu. The group Chibana headed used a different Chinese character (kanji) for "sho" than the original one, which represented the Chinese Mandarin "shao" as in Shaolin Temple (Shorinji in Japanese; "Young Forest"). However, many of the Kyan-derived groups were using the term Shorinji-ryu to describe their style. This was before Shorinji-ryu became the official name of one faction under Nakazato Joen, another student of Kyan's who was junior to Shimabukuro. Therefore, the end of the 1950's saw several groups emerge as Shorin-ryu and Shorinji-ryu, but these terms were often used interchangeably as the solidification of the various styles had not yet been completed. The Shorin-ryu of the Kyan-derived groups was also known generically as "Sukunaihayashi," an Okinawan (Hogen) rendering of the same kanji.

Things began to change rapidly around 1959, when a group of American servicemen stationed nearby heard of Shimabukuro's reputation. They were from the 2/503 Airborne Battle group (which became the 173rd Airborne, which saw

Shorin-Ryu Seibukan Zenshu-Ha

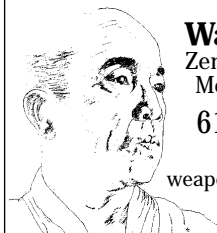
善秀派

The Zenshu-Ha promotes and preserves the Karate-Do and philosophies of Sensei Zenryo Shimabukuro.

For more Information Please contact:

Walter Dailey
Zenshu-Ha Hombu
Morgantown, PA.
610-286-7771

email:
weapons@ptdprolog.net



Shimabukuro Sensei overlooking dojo activities. Sempai Larry Hall sits next to him. Photo by Walter Dailey 1963



Shimabukuro Sensei and members from the 2/503 Airborne Battle group (which became the 173rd Airborne). The master's son Zenpo is seated to the far left. Photo by Walter Dailey 1961



Very rare photos of Shimabukuro Sensei actively teaching in a class at the Army Barracks in Mashisato, Okinawa. The Seibukan dojo was not yet built at this time. Photo by Walter Dailey 1961



Students of Shimabukuro Sensei would often take him to the Kadena Air Force Base Officer's Club for dinner. This picture was taken in 1963 in front of the newly built Seibukan dojo prior to an evening dinner at the club. Sensei would always dress up and wear his favorite hat. Photo by Walter Dailey 1963

heavy action in the Vietnam war), paratroopers who wanted to learn the Okinawan's karate. Rebuffed at first, the young troopers were persistent and finally persuaded Shimabukuro to take them on as students. This was at a time when the American forces who had occupied the island since 1945 were increasing in number and U.S. service personnel were really starting to explore the Okinawan martial arts. Before the late 1950's, karate was pretty much restricted to Okinawans only, though there had been a few exceptions. Also, Okinawans as a rule were not allowed onto the military bases, thus there was not as much interaction with Americans as one might think given their presence on the island.

It was due to the efforts of an influential U.S. Army sergeant major named Fuller, that the GIs had access to Shimabukuro's karate. Fuller secured permission for any GI



Zenryo Shimabukuro (center) displaying his 10th degree certificate from the All-Japan Karate-Do Federation in 1964. Seated to his right is Shigeru Nakamura and to his left is Joen Nakazato and Seikichi Odo.

who wanted to, to train with Shimabukuro. Fuller also was able to secure, on occasion, empty barracks or other facilities on the military base that he could get for the purpose of karate training.

They were often left without a place to train

as other groups with higher priority often bumped them out of on-base facilities. However, they did often train at the field house, an on-base athletic facility for the military. Off base, they trained wherever they could, Okinawans and Americans together, including graveyards. Included in this first group of Americans was Walter Dailey, who joined Shimabukuro's karate at the field house trainings in early 1960.

By 1962, Shimabukuro decided to take a gamble that would become part of his legacy. He arranged to borrow money, purchased land in Chatan and had a dojo built. Many of the students joined in the construction efforts and contributed much time and energy toward the building of the new dojo. During construction, Shimabukuro's mix of Okinawans and GIs continued to train outside, usually in back of

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his house. They often did kata near a grave or tomb that was right in the middle of their training area. After the dojo was built, they continued to train outside on weekends and at night. At that time, Shimabukuro's dojo was one of the biggest in all of Okinawa. He named it the "Seibukan," "Hall of the Holy Art."

POLITICS AND ORGANIZATIONS

However, more changes were to occur in the first couple of years of the 1960's. One change was represented by Tamotsu Isamu, a former Shimabukuro student who had been living in Japan. Tamotsu was representing a mainland group called the All-Japan Karate Federation, an organization headed by Toyama Kanken and Chitose Tsuyoshi, two Okinawans who had migrated to Japan decades before and established influential karate styles there. Originally, the All-Japan Karate Federation (AJKF) had included Funakoshi Gichin of Shotokan, Mabuni Kenwa of Shito-ryu and Higa Seiko of Goju-ryu. But by 1960, it was primarily a Toyama and Chitose group.

Tamotsu wanted to organize karate in Okinawa under the AJKF banner in Okinawa. He held a series of meetings with various Okinawan karate leaders including Shimabukuro, whom he persuaded to take a leading role. Out of this, the AJKF/Okinawa Branch was chartered in May 1960. Its officers were Shimabukuro Zenryo as president, fellow Kyan style teacher, Nakazato Joen as vice president, and the active participation of Nakamura Shigeru, Kaneshima Shinsuke of Tozan-ryu (a style more related to Shuri-te), and Seigyu Yonamine of Shorin-ryu. These karateka, along with some of their senior students who had become karate instructors themselves,

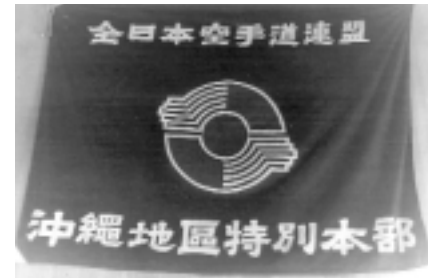


Shimabukuro Zenryo Sensei awarding a rank diploma to Mike Richardson in September 1962. Mike Richardson returned to the USA and opened up a dojo in Texas. Unfortunately he died in a car accident in the early 70s. Photo by Walter Dailey 1962

made up the bulk of the AJKF/Okinawa, though many others had been invited to join.

It was a somewhat amorphous group as some Okinawan karateka only participated initially but did not continue the relationship for long. All of the Okinawans were invited to Japan proper by Toyama Kanken to participate in a conference to be "certified" and to cement relations. However, only Shimabukuro Eizo went and was awarded a 10th dan (10th degree black belt) by Toyama. The organization soon became embroiled in politics and only lasted a few years.

Many of the Okinawans distrusted the motives of the mainland-sponsored initiative and the AJKF competed with the already established OKF, which made for an



The flag for the "All Japan Karate Do Federation". The bottom kanji reads "Okinawa regional special headquarters" referring to the Seibukan dojo.

Photo by Walter Dailey

unstable situation. However, one of the technical results of the relationship was that some of the Okinawans adopted the use of full body protective gear for sparring (bogu), which had been made popular in the schools of southern Japan. Shimabukuro and his friend Nakamura especially liked the gear and adapted it for use in their schools. By 1962, Shimabukuro and Nakamura formed their own training group, the Okinawa Kenpo Federation. Not a style, but a training organization that concentrated on the sparring aspect of karate with bogu gear.

Gradually, because of bickering and a distrust of the mainland Japanese, the All Japan Karatedo Federation, Okinawa Branch withered. However, not before its board of directors conferred the 10th dan on Zenryo Shimabukuro as one of its leading exponents. While the organization declined on Okinawa, it continued on in Japan under Toyama and Chitose. Tamotsu Isamu, who had lead the organization effort on Okinawa,



Shorin-Ryu Senseis gather at the Seibukan dojo to honor its grand opening. L-R: third from left: Chozo Nakama, Shigeru Nakamura, Choshin Chibana, Zenryo Shimabukuro, and Joen Nakazato. Photo by Walter Dailey



A typical "Kampai Party" at the Seibukan dojo. This one took place in 1962 to celebrate the grand opening of the dojo. This photo clearly illustrates a strong camaraderie and that there was also a time to let your hair down and have a "good time". Back row far left: Ben Schwartz, Walter Dailey, Zenryo Shimabukuro, Shigeru Nakamura and Joen Nakazato . Front row seated: second from left Chozo Nakama, third from left Zenpo Shimabukuro and fifth from left a very young Fusei Kise. Photo by Walter Dailey



Sensei Yoshimitsu Takenouchi controls a full contact "Bogu" match at the Seibukan in the early 60s. Photo by Walter Dailey



Sensei Uragami seated in front. Behind him (l-r) are Zenpo Shimabukuro, Walter Dailey and Zenji Shimabukuro. Uragami and Zenji founded the Renshinkan Dojo in Osaka, Japan in 1961. Uragami was the All-Japan full contact (Bogu) Karate champion during the late 50s and early 60s. Photo by Walter Dailey

organized what he called the Shorinji-ryu Renshinkan in Kyushu, billing Nakazato Joen as his instructor rather than Shimabukuro. Of course, Tamotsu had trained under Shimabukuro, but Zenryo had sent him to Nakazato to learn the bo kata, Tokumine no Kon, which Nakazato had taken pains to preserve exactly as Kyan taught it to him.

This was also the era that saw the rise and normalization of many familiar group names. While all of the groups descended from Kyan still looked virtually identical, and most still used the general name of Shorinji-ryu to label their style, each group began to spin off on its own and adopt new names. By the mid-1960's, Nakazato had taken the name Shorinji-ryu as his own and Shimabukuro's group was sometimes referred to as Sukunaihayashi-ryu. However, by 1966, Shimabukuro's school was known as Shorin-ryu Seibukan, by which it is still called.

Shimabukuro has been described as a quiet man, not one to call attention to himself. And for that reason, not much has been published about him in the West.

However, he was highly respected in his own time, even by those who originally ignored him in the old Okinawa Karate Federation. After the demise of the AJKF on Okinawa, Shimabukuro began to quietly lobby for the formation of a new, more inclusive organization to unify Okinawan karate. In the interim, he maintained his relationship with Nakamura as part of the somewhat informal Okinawa Kenpo Federation, but by 1967, Shimabukuro and many of the island's mainstream karate leaders formed the new All-Okinawa Karatedo Federation (AOKF) and Shimabukuro was named as one of its vice presidents. This was a significant event as the AOKF became the leading organization of the so-called "mainstream" Okinawan karate styles and included representation from Kobayashi Shorin-ryu, Uechi-ryu, Sukunaihayashi Shorin-ryu, Goju-

ryu, and related groups. In this affair, Shimabukuro showed the strength of his low-keyed leadership style. Zenryo Sensei received his 10th dan from the AOKF, making it his second such award.

As part of this AOKF, Shimabukuro also led another effort to form smaller, constituent groups within the AOKF consisting of the various Shorin-ryu groups. At first two geographically organized associations coalesced: the Nambu (Southern Okinawa) Shorin-ryu Association, headed by Joen Nakazato and the Chubu (Central Okinawa) Shorin-ryu Association, headed by Shimabukuro himself. These were political constructions involving---at first---all the different kinds of Shorin-ryu, not just Kyan style.

Eventually, the Nambu and Chubu groups merged into the Chubu Shorin-ryu Karatedo Rengokai ("confederation"), but predictably, this was not to last. It's history is rather convoluted, but essentially this Chubu Shorin-ryu group would, after Zenryo passing, evolve into a federation of five affiliated Shorin-ryu schools that included the Seibukan and would be headed by Katsuhide Kochi, who traced his own lineage ultimately to Zenryo-sensei. Eventually Kochi's school would simply be called the Chubu-Shorin-ryu Karatedo Kyokai (Association), teaching the Shorin-ryu of Zenryo-sensei.

SEIBUKAN IS EXPORTED TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Seibukan began to grow by the mid-1960's. This era saw Shimabukuro adopting the official emblem or patch of his organization that is known today. It was devised in Japan by a friend of Shimabukuro's who was part of a dojo

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The first Seibukan dojo in the United States was founded by Walter Dailey in 1962 at Norwood, PA.
Photo by Walter Dailey

organization run by someone affiliated with Tamotsu. Another member of Tamotsu's group was Uragami, who ran the Osaka Renshinkan and was the 1960 All-Japan full-contact (using bogu) kumite champion. Uragami also maintained strong ties to Shimabukuro and hosted Walter Dailey in 1962 when the latter had been sent to Osaka with Zenryo Shimabukuro's son Zenpo as Seibukan representatives.

The Seibukan emblem is steeped in symbolism and has significant meaning to the "old timers" of the organization.

Dailey actually received his black belt from the AJKF in Japan. Shortly afterward, Dailey returned to the States and opened up the first Seibukan school outside of Okinawa in Pennsylvania. It was to remain the only other school for years afterward. Dailey returned to Okinawa in 1966 and found that the terms Shorinji-ryu and Sukunaihayashi had been supplanted by Seibukan Shorin-ryu.

In 1963, Shimabukuro Zenryo sent a gift to Dailey, whom he had given the adopted name of Yoshihide (also pronounced Zenshu) -- Dailey also now represented Shimabukuro and was the East Coast U.S. Headquarters of the AJKF. This "gift" was



Walter Dailey and Zenpo Shimabukuro in the summer of 1965 at the Dailey residence in Pennsylvania. Photo by Walter Dailey

Shimabukuro's 19-year-old son, Zenpo. Zenpo was to live with Dailey for three years, helping to organize and teach his father's karate. During his stay in the United States, Zenpo also successfully competed in several karate tournaments, including the 1964 Pennsylvania State Championship, the 1964 National Kata Championship, and the 1965 Canadian International Championship. Finally, after a highly successful stay in the US, Zenpo returned to Okinawa in 1966 to

help his father run the Seibukan dojo.

Another American who was training in Okinawa at this time was Edward Takae, originally from Hawaii. Significantly, Takae won the All-Okinawan Karate Championship held in Nago on May 17, 1964. This event was a rough affair and showcased bogu sparring. Takae went on to serve multiple tours of duty with the American Army Special Forces in Vietnam and later established another Seibukan branch in the United States.

By 1969, Shimabukuro Zenryo and his Seibukan karate were continuing to gain recognition and influence. In October 1969, Zenryo Sensei was invited to the Japanese mainland to give a demonstration of his karate. He was scheduled to perform Seisan kata. However, on the ship from Okinawa, Shimabukuro was suddenly stricken with appendicitis, and on October 14, 1969 he died. He was buried in an old-style Okinawan tomb in Jagaru, Okinawa, near his dojo. Succeeded by his young son and the senior members of Seibukan, the style has flourished worldwide ever since. Zenpo became not only the leader of the style, but a successful real estate developer and leader within the Okinawan karate community.



Edward Takae bows at the grave of Zenryo Shimabukuro which is located near the dojo in Jagaru, Okinawa. Photo by Angel Lemus 1993.

Okinawa Shorinji-Ryu Zentokukai Karate-Do

The Zentokukai is a Karate-do Association created for the sole purpose of preserving and promoting the teachings passed down to us by Kyan Chotoku and Shimabukuro Zenryo. This association provides a medium to unite dojos as a family, to practice and share the same beliefs, common interests.



Kyan Chotoku



Shimabukuro Zenryo



- Kyan Style Karate (Shorinji-Ryu/Sukunaihayashi)
- Advanced Training
- Dojo Accreditation
- Bunkai Analysis
- Power Generation & Body Dynamics
- Okinawan Kobudo
- Instructor's Yearly Gashuku

For more information:

East Coast:
Saichian Kan
Sensei Tim Rodgers
305-623-3352

West Coast:
Nincho Kan
Sensei Angel Lemus

Chartered Zentokukai Dojos & Senseis

Sensei Tim Rodgers
Miami, FL

Morristown, TN

Sensei Keith A. Prewitt
Austin, TX

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Morristown, TN

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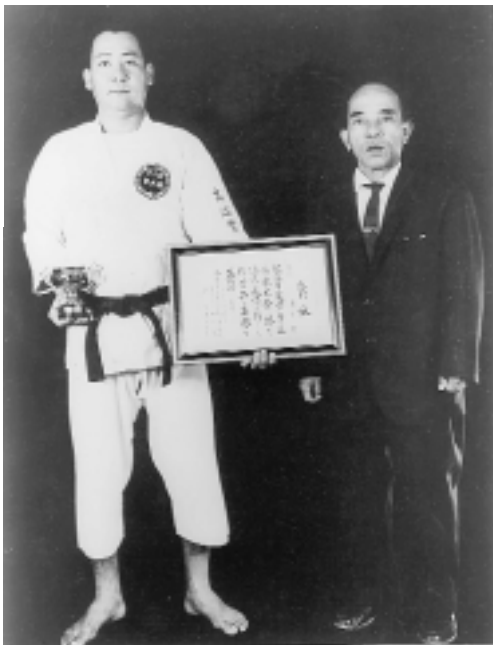
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Morristown, TN

Shidojin Chad Gray
Orlando, FL

Sensei Lola Hammer

Sensei Greg Dillon
Dunbar, WV

<http://www.geocities.com/tokyo/pagoda/3460>



Edward Takae and Zenryo Shimabukuro after Takae won the All-Okinawan Karate Championship in 1964.

SENSEI SHIMABUKURO ZENPO 1998 VISIT TO THE USA

Shimabukuro sensei will be teaching at the USANKF National Championships in New Orleans on July 29th and then will be giving a demonstration at the finals on Sunday August 2nd. He will also be in the USA for the Seibukan World Cup Championships October 9, 10 & 11. He will teach a seminar on the 9th for all Seibukan people. The event will be in Atlanta. We are having our 4th Seibukan National Championships on the 10th. The world cup will be hosting nine foreign countries with black belt teams. All Seibukan people are invited to attend.

If anyone is interested in more information or specific details they can contact Dan Smith at 770-844-0999, or e-mail (ussska@aol or www.seibukan.org)

Sensei Shimabukuro will be teaching in the following cities during July and August.

JULY

Atlanta, GA July 17 & 18
Wichita, KS July 19 & 20
Huntsville, AL July 22nd
Jacksonville, FLA July 23rd
Vero Beach, FLA July 24 & 25
Jackson, MS July 26 & 27

AUGUST

Grand Junction, CO Aug 5 & 6
Denver, CO Aug 8 & 9,
Portland, OR Aug 12 & 13
Seattle, WA Aug 15 & 16



Zenpo Shimabukuro

SEIBUKAN TODAY AND TOMORROW

Organizationally, the modern Seibukan "movement" is dominated by four groups. These groups are representative of three "ha" (from ryu/ha -- style/branch) or stylistic-branches and one independent branch:

1) **Seibukan International Karatedo Association.** The hombu (headquarters) dojo located in Jagaru (Chatan) Okinawa, is headed by the late master's son, Shimabukuro Zenpo. Zenpo is also the head and supreme instructor of the Seibukan International Karate-do Association (ISKA), which has branch dojo in over sixteen foreign countries, including two separate branches in the United States, one run by Edward Takae and one by Dan Smith, who is the president of the US branch.

2) **Zenshu-Ha.** Since 1962, Walter Dailey, the most senior sensei in the United States, has taught O-Sensei's teachings

under the Zenshu-ha rubric. This branch of Seibukan has maintained the integrity of not only the physical aspects of the art but the spiritual ones, which were paramount to Zenryo Sensei over and beyond the physical ones. Walter Dailey is still active and teaching out of Morgantown, Pennsylvania.

3) **North American Branch.** Edward Takae runs the "North American Branch" of the ISKA. This was the original US branch from the time the association was formed in 1978 in Philadelphia (Takae was the first president of this branch and Shimabukuro Zenpo was the supreme instructor under the ISKA). In 1992, Takae took over complete control of the North American Branch and became supreme instructor. At this time, Shimabukuro Zenpo assumed the position of "chairman" and no longer has any controlling power over it, other than at the ceremonial level. Takae now runs his organization from Tampa, Florida.

4) **Zentokukai.** The Zentokukai is an independent, Seibukan-based organization formed by Tim Rogers (a former student of Ed Takae) and Angel Lemus (student of Tim Rodgers). The name "Zentokukai" comes from borrowing elements from the names of Shimabukuro Zenryo and Kyan Chotoku. Tim Rogers (president) runs the Zentokukai Hombu Dojo located in Miami, Florida. Angel Lemus is the association's vice president

and runs his dojo in Los Angeles, California.

Of the four modern branches of Seibukan, only the Zenshu-ha and the Zentokukai exclude sport karate and modern



Zenryo Shimabukuro and Choshin Chibana at Chibana's backyard in October 1966. They were always very close friends. This photo was taken after Chibana Sensei underwent cancer treatment in Japan for the mouth and throat.

Photo by Walter Dailey



L-R: Tim Rodgers, Walter Dailey (Zenshu-Ha) and Angel Lemus during 1st annual Zentokukai training in 1997.

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competition from their core curriculum. Instead these two branches focus on old-style combative karate principles as well as introspective and spiritual aspects.

THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF SEIBUKAN

As a karate system, Seibukan represents the Sukunaihayashi branch of Shorin-ryu: the karate of Kyan Chotoku. As such the kata are a mix of Shuri-te and Tomari-te as inherited from Kyan directly to Zenryo Shimabukuro. It is based on the kata taught by Kyan: Ananku, Naifanchi, Passai, Seisan, Kusanku, Chinto, Wanshu, Gojushiho, and one bo staff form, Tokumine no Kon. These were the kata taught by Zenryo-sensei from the late 1940s on. However, Zenryo-sensei did not emphasize the Tokumine no Kon bo kata and was known to have sent students, including Tamotsu, to Nakazato Joen for advanced instruction on that bo form. Kyan was known for his legendary kicking abilities and his fluid Tai Sabaki (body movements). He was said to have been untouchable. These principles are in Seibukan as taught by Zenryo Shimabukuro and are inherent in the kata's Suri Ashi or foot sliding movement. Seibukan kata reflect their own unique flavor that is quite different than other Shorin-ryu branches.

In 1962, Shimabukuro Zenryo gathered principles that he'd learned from Kyan and placed these into an original kata he created called Wanchin. This kata




A treasured historical photo of Shorin-Ryu Senseis at the Seibukan dojo. Front row left to right: Shinsuke Kaneshima, Tatsuo Shimabukuro, Zenryo Shimabukuro and Chozo Nakama. Back row left to right: Zenji Shimabukuro, Isamu Tamotsu and Joen Nakazato.

displays very advanced concepts, not seen in other kata such as blocking and striking, or punching and kicking simultaneously. It is a very challenging kata to perform due to its unique timing and footwork. One can see Kyan's karate and Shimabukuro's own creative genius blended into one. This kata is considered a family kata and is only taught within the Seibukan schools.

Shimabukuro devised this kata when the AJKF was just getting started and the old OKF had not recognized. However, in the world of the AOKF that Zenryo Shimabukuro helped organize, non-contact and light

sparring became the dominant influence.

Shimabukuro had many, highly competent friends who were leaders in their own right, such as the aforementioned Chibana Chosin and old time Chibana student and associate Nakama Chozo, who was a very close, family friend of Zenryo Sensei. From Nakama, Shimabukuro Zenpo adopted the Pinan, Passai-gua, Naifanchi 2 and 3, and a sai kata. These kata were added to the Seibukan curriculum in the years just before Zenryo-sensei died.

However, regardless of branch or faction, the Seibukan still holds to Zenryo's principles. This very quiet, humble, and self-effacing man was a proponent of strong karate developed through solid basics; an attention to the detail of kata (practiced with an emphasis on each individual movement and hard, sharp, and powerful execution); and hard, strong, power-oriented, head-to-head fighting. In stature, Shimabukuro was a small man, but in character and toughness, he was a giant in the karate world. 



At the Seibukan after a testing and promotion session. It was this day that Walter Dailey was awarded his Yondan (front row wearing a headband next to Zenryo Shimabukuro). Visiting that day and participating in the testing panel was Shosei Kina 10th dan (a close friend of Shimabukuro). The wearing of the headband has a special meaning in Okinawa, it promises the sensei and everyone in the dojo that you are devoting yourself to train very hard. Photo by Walter Dailey

EDITOR'S NOTE

In an attempt to bring together all the major branches active in Seibukan today and to contribute in part to the writing of this article in honor of the late Zenryo Shimabukuro, all representatives were contacted and invited to participate. Bugeisha did not hear from Zenpo Shimabukuro, and Edward Takae declined to participate.