

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*  
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*Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting*

**Kyan Chotaku**



**1879-1945**

Chotoku Kyan was born into a high-ranking family in Shuri in 1870. His father Chofu was a steward to the King of the Ryūkyūs or Okinawan islands.

When Japan took over Okinawa King Tai was replaced and Okinawa became a department or province of Japan. The King was sent to Japan along with his retainers which included Kyan Chotoku and his father, Chofu. Chofu was a cultivated man having studied both Chinese and Japanese literature. It is also believed that he was the one who interested Kyan Chotoku in *karate*. However, he felt that his love for his son would prevent him from adequately teaching Chotoku and so left the training up to other masters. Consequently, when Chotoku turned 20 he became a student of three great karate teachers: Oyadomari Kokan, Matsumora Kosaku and Itosu Ankoh. Kyan Chotoku was small both as a child and as an adult. In addition, he had the appearance of a schoolmaster or accountant rather than an expert in the martial arts. Notwithstanding, he was considered an expert in both the *Tomari-te* and *Shuri-te* fighting systems of Okinawa by the age of 30 – a mere ten years after beginning study! Because of his slight build, Kyan knew that he could not fight larger, stronger fighters based on size alone. Consequently, he practiced evasive techniques of escaping and countering. These techniques helped to neutralize the advantage of size of most of his opponents. In addition, Kyan developed his kicking technique to a high standard and was recognized as an expert in those techniques. Kyan's size and his training style and methods were

instrumental in the development of his system of fighting which today is known as *Shorin-ryu*. Smaller, lighter fighters are typified by quickness and mobility of movement. Kyan taught *karate* at the Okinawan College of Agriculture and the Kadena Police Station. Two of his students were Arakaki Ankichi and Shimabuku Taro. Kyan was known for instructing his students that whatever they did they should keep in their minds the idea of *busai*, or awareness of surroundings – the martial way. Arakaki Ankichi and Shimabuku Taro would visit Kyan *Sensei's* home for training at night, carrying lanterns to light their way. Kyan had them stop using the lanterns in order to develop their night vision. He would choose uneven terrain and even threw water on the ground to make it difficult to keep balance.

The syllabus that Kyan taught consisted of seven *kata*, as follows:

- Kata* - Teacher**
- *Ananku*
  - *Wanshu* - Saneida Maeda
  - *Chinto* - Kosaku Matsumora
  - *Passai* - Kokan Oyadomari
  - *Kusanku* - Chatan Yara
  - *Seisan* - Sokon Matsumura
  - *Gojushiho* - Sokon Matsumura

Kyan also may have taught *Naihanchin*. If so, he would have learned it from Itosu Ankoh. Kyan's favorite *kata* were *Chinto*, *Passai (Bassai)*, and *Kusanku*. He often performed these at demonstrations. They were, however, his variation with distinctive and significant differences in technique from the more widely practiced forms from the *Shotokan*, *Wado*, or *Shito* schools.

Master Kyan died at 75 in September 1945.

### Miscellaneous

*Meijin* is a master of the martial arts. S/he is one who has attained *mushin* (no-mind), with a deeply developed intuition (*kan*) and has achieved self-mastery in the art which goes beyond physical abilities.

Takuan was a great *Zen* master at the *Katori* and *Kashima* shrines. His philosophical teachings were assimilated by almost all of the great martial artists of the time, including Musashi Miyamoto. The school most influenced by his teachings was *Shinkage Ryu*.

*Nesshin* is best translated as “fire in the heart.” This is the part of the life of the *bushi* in which s/he is engulfed in spiritual forging (*tanren*) through life experiences. Such fire is believed to burst from within and spread to others. It is this fire which is implied in the dragon’s eyes of MYB.

*Zanshin*, usually given as “perfect finish,” refers to the complete physical and emotional overwhelming of an opponent. With this state of mind, there is no opening for attack!

As a teenager, Jean Claude van Damme’s (real name: Jean Claude Van Vaerenbergh) karate teacher was Claude Goetz. Goetz was a European karate pioneer who studied with Oshima Tsutomu, a disciple of Funakoshi Gichin. In addition he studied kickboxing,

Muay Thai, and Tae Kwon Do. Van Damme was also a bodybuilder, winning the *Mr. Belgium Bodybuilding* title at the age of 18. He also took up ballet at the age of 16.

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