



# Toyakwai Formal Karate Titles

- 1. Sensei "Teacher or One who has gone before":** This title is by far the most often used title in karate and generally refers to someone of Yon-Dan level (4th Degree Black Belt.) Many senior instructors including Hanshi Masami Tsuruoka, will state that this is the most honorable title that a student can use when referring to the senior as their teacher. The title Sensei implies a close bond between the student and teacher's relationship.
- 2. Shihan: "Master or Expert Teacher":** It is important to understand that the meaning Master as used in the martial arts is someone who has mastered the basic and advanced understandings {Principles} of a particular style or system, thus the title Shihan means someone who has mastered the basic and advanced techniques as well as the principles, concepts, and theory of their respective style of karate. The title Shihan does not mean that this person has stopped learning because they know all of the answers. On the contrary, they are considered to be the most serious and dedicated students in any style of martial arts. The title Shihan is generally considered to be an organizational title alone and has little meaning (May not be recognized) outside of the holders style or organization.
- 3. Doshi: "Leading Teacher":** Title sometimes used before Renshi
- 4. Renshi: "Senior Expert Teacher":** This is the first of the three generally (Most Often) used teacher titles. Although this title is independent of rank, it is seldom given to anyone below the rank of Go-Dan.
- 5. Tasshi or Tesshi: "Apprentice Master Teacher":** This title was originally the title used instead of Kyoshi. It is now sometimes used between the levels of Renshi and Kyoshi by the Dai-Nippon-Butoku-Kai.
- 6. Kyoshi: "Master Teacher, Teacher of Teachers":** This is the second of the three generally (Most Often) used teacher titles. Although this title is independent of the ranking system, it is seldom given to anyone below the rank of Roku-dan and in most cases Shichi-dan).
- 7. Hanshi: "Senior Master Teacher":** This is the third and highest of the three generally (Most Often) used teacher titles. Although this title is independent of the ranking system, it is seldom given to

anyone below the rank of Hachi-Dan (8th Degree Black Belt)

## In Reference to the three titles Renshi, Kyoshi and Hanshi

**Ren= A Trainer of the Way  
Teacher of the Way  
of the Way**

**Kyo=A  
Han=A Model**

## Other Formal Karate Titles

- 1. Seito Deshi or Deshi:** A student, pupil or disciple of a martial art.
- 2. Uchi Deshi:** A personal student who lives and trains with the Master of a martial art.
- 3. Kohai:** A title used to refer to one who is lower in rank than oneself. The opposite of Sempai
- 4. Sempai:** A title used to refer to one who is higher in rank than oneself. The opposite of Kohai.
- 5. Kancho:** A title sometimes given to the head of a dojo or organization. This title is independent of any rank, but in most cases this person will be a very senior student of the arts. In most cases the person holding this title will be the highest ranking instructor of a specific Ryu-Ha or Kai-Ha.
- 6. Kaicho:** This title generally refers to a Regional Head or Director of a style. It may also refer to a Branch/Regional or Head Representative of an organization or association.
- 7. Taiso:** The term used to designate a great master of the martial arts.
- 8. Kaiso:** The founder of a particular style or organization/association. A Senior Advisor of the founder may also hold this title.
- 9. Soke:** Founder of a system or style. This title may also be used by the successor of the founder of a style or system. This person will be a Ju-Dan (10th Degree Black Belt) in most all cases.
- 10. Shoshu:** The title used to designate a Master of a particular art.
- 11. Saiko Shihan or Shihan-Dai:** This title refers to the person who has been designated as the Senior or Head Shihan. Shihan-Dai is sometimes issued prior to the recipient receiving the full Shihan title and therefore in this situation it would be considered a lesser or lower title than the title of Shihan itself.
- 12. O-Sensei or Dai Sensei:** This title means Great or Greatest Teacher, Highest Respected

Teacher. This title is spoken by students in honorable reference to the traditional martial arts founder.

**13. Sosai:** Governor, (Highest Honorary Position of an Organization.)

**14. Soshi:** Title used to designate the Head Master of an Organization.

**15. Shidoin:** Title used referring to a Senior Instructor.

**16. Meijin:** Title used for a Martial Arts Master.

**17. Kensei:** Sacred Fist, a title used for Chojun Miyagi, founder of Goju-ryu, by his students.

**18. Mukyu:** One who does not hold any rank in karate.

**19. Shokyu:** Secondary level learning grade such as a Sho-dan.

**20. Chukyu:** Used to denote a student who is at the post secondary grade/Intermediate level learning grade.

**21. Jokyu:** Advanced grade. Used for a Yon-dan Sensei who is in the advanced learning stage and is on foreign assignment.

**22. Hokai:** Used to denote a student below dan grade.

**23. Nyumon:** Entry level learning grade.

**24. Kyoren:** A student of San-dan grade who is not in training for instructor grade (Yon-dan)

**25. Ani-deshi:** Senior disciple

## Informal Titles often used in the Western World

**1. Kir-obi:** Yellow Belt

**2. Midori-obi:** Green Belt

**3. Cha-obi:** Brown Belt

**4. Kur-obi:** Black Belt

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## **Koshin-ha Chito-kai Grading System**

The Koshin-ha Chito-kai makes use of nine kyu-grades and ten Yudansha-grades.

The following is a list of the Kyu/Dan ranking system as used by the Koshin-ha Chito-kai. This rank system will begin at Ku-kyu (9th Kyu) and will advance through Ju-Dan (10th Degree Black Belt).

### **{Mudansha} Kyu Grading System**

1. Ku-kyu (9th Kyu) White Belt. (Yellow Stripes may be used during this period of instruction)
2. Hachi-kyu (8th Kyu) Yellow Belt.
3. Shichi-kyu (7th Kyu) Orange Belt.
4. Roku-kyu (6th Kyu) Green Belt 3rd level.(3-white stripes on one end of the obi)
5. Go-kyu (5th Kyu) Green Belt 2nd level. (2-white stripes on one end of the obi)
6. Yon-kyu (4th Kyu) Green Belt 1st level.(1-white stripe on one end of the obi)
7. San-kyu (3rd Kyu) Brown Belt 3rd level. (3-white stripes on one end of the obi)
8. Ni-kyu (2nd Kyu) Brown Belt 2nd level. (2-white stripes on one end of the obi)
9. Ik-kyu (1st Kyu) Brown Belt 1st level. (1-white stripe on one end of the obi)

### **{Yudansha} Dan Grading System**

1. Sho-dan (1st Degree Black Belt) (It is at this level that the student is considered to be a serious dedicated student.)
2. Ni-dan (2nd Degree Black Belt)
3. San-dan (3rd Degree Black Belt) Assistant Instructor grade
4. Yon-dan (4th Degree Black Belt) Instructor Grade (The Title of Shihan may be awarded at this grade and

designated by the wearing of a red and black belt.)

5. Go-dan (5th Degree Black Belt) (May wear a red/black belt if one has received Shihan title.)
6. Roku-dan (6th Degree Black Belt) This rank may be designated by the wearing of a sectioned Red & White obi.

## **{Kodansha} Senior-Dan Grading System**

7. Shichi-dan (7th Degree Black Belt) This rank may be designated by the wearing of a sectioned Red & White obi.
8. Hachi-dan (8th Degree Black Belt) This rank may be designated by the wearing of a sectioned Red & White obi.
9. Ku-dan (9th Degree Black Belt)
10. Ju-dan (10th Degree Black Belt)

**The rank of Ju-dan is reserved in memory of Dr. Tsuyoshi Chitose, the founder of Chito-ryu Karate-do.**