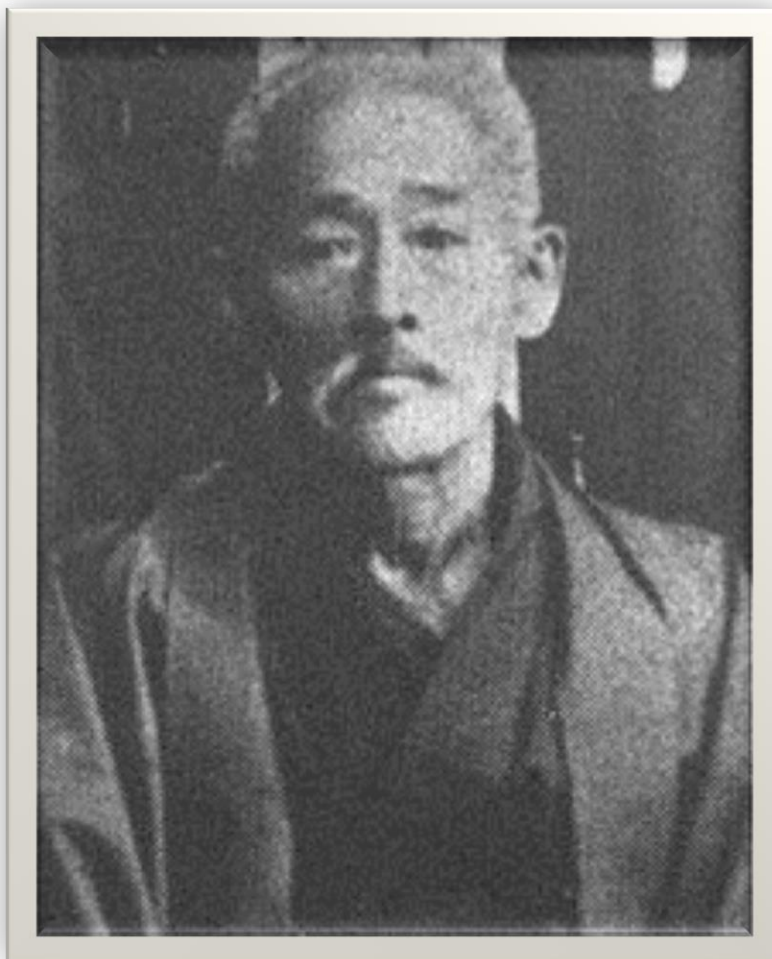


THE KANRYO HIGAONNA LINEAGE

1853 to 1915



Kanryo Higaonna

東恩納 寛量

CHAPTER 16

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LINEAGE TWO – HIGAONNA

This lineage can be traced to the teachings of **Ryu Ryu Ko** who taught martial arts in Fuzhou, China. In 1868, Mr. **Kanryo Higaonna** left Okinawa and arrived in China in search of a martial arts teacher. There, in this city of southern China, he met Ryu Ryu Ko and was accepted by him as a student. After about fourteen years of studying the Chinese martial arts under the tutelage of Ryu Ryu Ko, Mr Kanryo Higaonna returned to Okinawa and established this karate lineage in his native country. This lineage led to the development of several modern styles of karate-do. These styles include Goju Ryu, To'on Ryu, and to some extent Shito Ryu.



Kanryo Higaonna (seated 3rd from the left) with some of his students

Mr. Higaonna's most well-known students were **Juhatsu Kyoda**, **Chojun Miyagi**, and **Kenwa Mabuni**. Of these three men, Juhatsu Kyoda was Mr. Higaonna's most senior student and became the founder of the relatively obscure style of To'on Ryu. Chojun Miyagi was Mr. Higaonna's second most senior student. He is the person most responsible for preserving, systematizing, and propagating the teachings of Mr. Higaonna through Goju Ryu. Additionally, Kenwa Mabuni was

a student of both Mr. Higaonna and Mr. Yasutsune Itosu. Mr. Mabuni founded the style of Shito Ryu which preserved the teachings of both Mr. Higaonna and Mr. Itosu (who was a student of Mr. Sokon Matsumura).

Furthermore, this lineage of karate was also influenced by another Chinese national who, in this case, emigrated from Southern China and settled in Okinawa. **Wu Xiangui** (Go Ken Ki) was a tea merchant and a martial artist who contributed to the development of this lineage. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, he was a member of *Karate Kenkyukai* – the karate study group which was dedicated to perpetuating and disseminating Okinawa karate. It is well documented that Wu Xiangui (Go Ken Ki) influenced the karate that was developed and taught by Juhatsu Kyoda, Chojun Miyagi, and Kenwa Mabuni.

Finally, **Gogen Yamaguchi** is an individual who disseminated the teachings of Mr. Miyagi's Goju system not only in Japan but also across the globe. At one point, the name of Gogen Yamaguchi became virtually synonymous with Japanese Goju Ryu throughout the world of karate. Because of these accomplishments, he should be considered to be one to the most influential promoters of traditional karate in the twentieth century.

Kanryo Higaonna was born into a family of lower nobility in Naha, Okinawa in 1853, and his father was actively involved in the trade that went back and forth between Okinawa and China. As a boy in Okinawa, Kanryo may have practiced karate (*Chinese-hand*) under Mayaa Aragaki, but research on this issue is not definitive.ⁱ This training, if it did take place, had less influence on the development of Kanryo Higaonna's karate than the stories that Kanryo Higaonna's father told his son about the wonders of China and about the power of the Chinese martial arts. These stories roused the imagination of young Kanryo Higaonna and made him curious about the vast Empire of China and particularly about the Chinese martial arts.ⁱⁱ

Then in 1867, when Kanryo Higaonna was about 14 years old, his life was abruptly altered. His father was killed in a fight. As the young Kanryo Higaonna grieved his father's death, he recalled the stories that his father had told him about the lethal powers of the Chinese martial arts. With

these stories firmly implanted in his mind, Kanryo Higaonna “decided to travel to China to learn these deadly arts, and then return to Okinawa to avenge his father’s death.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Within that same year and with vengeance still burning in his heart, Kanryo Higaonna set sail for Fuzhou in Southern China. After he arrived, he sought out a teacher in the Chinese martial arts with the intent of eventually returning to Okinawa to settle the score with the man who had killed his father. He was introduced to Ryu Ryu Ko who owned a furniture making shop and who was also an extremely skilled martial artist.^{iv} Kanryo Higaonna presented him with a letter of introduction from a well-respected public official from Okinawa. After judging the young Higaonna as possessing the proper character to learn the martial arts, Ryu Ryu Ko accepted him as his student.^v

As a condition of learning the martial arts from him, Kanryo Higaonna was required to swear an oath of allegiance to Ryu Ryu Ko. During this ceremony, he also promised to adhere to the principles of Ryu Ryu Ko and to never misuse the knowledge which he was about to learn. Young Mr. Higaonna stayed in Fuzhou for about fourteen years working for and training with Ryu Ryu Ko. Every morning for the first five or six years of his stay in China, Kanryo Higaonna walked from the Okinawan hostel in Fuzhou to the residence of Ryu Ryu Ko. During the day he labored diligently in his teacher’s workshop, and in the evenings he received instruction in the martial arts prior to returning to the hostel.^{vi}

During these first years of his instruction, he was taught only one kata, Sanchin. However over the passage of time, Ryu Ryu Ko and Kanryo Higaonna became extremely close, and the teacher began to treat his student like a father treats his son. Mr. Higaonna moved into the house of his mentor and received the type of detailed instruction in the Chinese martial arts that was usually transmitted only from father to son. After their relationship had deepened, Kanryo Higaonna learned eight other empty hand kata as well as the several weapons kata that were known to Ryu Ryu Ko.^{vii} As a result, Mr. Kanryo Higaonna became an extraordinarily proficient martial artist.

In 1881 when Kanryo Higaonna was about 28 years old, he became somewhat homesick. With the approval of his mentor, he returned to his native Okinawa.^{viii} However by this time, the fire of

revenge that once burned in his heart had been extinguished by his mentorship under Ryu Ryu Ko, and he had lost all interest in avenging the death of his father.

It must be noted that the dates surrounding Mr. Kanryo Higaonna's life and the time spent in China are not without dispute. Mr. Eiichi Miyazato tells us that Kanryo Higaonna was born in 1853 and died in 1917. We are also told By Mr. Miyazato that he left for China in 1873 at the age of 23 and returned to Okinawa when he was 38. This means that Mr. Higaonna would have trained with Ryu Ryu Ko for 15 years and returned around 1888. However, there is an inconsistency in Mr. Miyazato's dates. He states that Mr. Higaonna was born in 1853, and this would have put his age at 20 when he set sail for China 1873, and age 35 when he returned in 1888.^{ix} To complicate the issue even further, Richard Kim states that Mr. Higaonna was born in 1845 and died in 1915. He also states that Mr. Higaonna was 35 when he returned to Okinawa, and this would have put the date of his return at around 1880.^x

TEACHING in OKINAWA

Several years after he returned to Okinawa, Kanryo Higaonna began to teach his karate (still known as *Chinese-hand*) to a very small and select group of students. Training under the watchful eye of Mr. Higaonna was extremely intense.^{xi} Additionally, each student had to ask permission to study with him and had to complete a period of character evaluation in order to be accepted as one of his students. Any student could be dismissed from Higaonna's tutelage for having a violent character or for violating social norms.^{xii}

Of this cadre of students who trained for lengthy periods with Kanryo Higaonna, three of them eventually established their own styles modern karate-do based on his teachings. Juhatsu Kyoda would establish To'on Ryu (*Higaonna Style*). Chojun Miyagi would create Goju Ryu (*Hard-Soft Style*), and Kenwa Mabuni would establish Shito Ryu (*Itosu-Higaonna Style*).^{xiii}

Mr. Kanryo Higaonna learned nine empty hand kata from Ryu Ryu Ko and taught them to his students in Okinawa. These kata were Sanchin, Saifa, Seiyunchin, Sanseiryu, Shisochin, Seipai, Seisan, Kururunfa, and Suparinpei. Additionally, Mr. Higaonna learned the bo, long sword, short sword, and other weapons kata from his teacher in China.^{xiv} Whereas Mr. Higaonna continued to

practice and demonstrate both empty hand and weapons kata, it is not clear if he transmitted his knowledge of Chinese weaponry to his students in Okinawa.

It should not be considered unusual that Kanryo Higaonna learned both empty hand and weapon fighting arts from Ryu Ryu Ko: “In Chinese systems it is quite normal to learn weapons and empty hand arts as part of a complete package, so it is not so surprising to learn that Kanryo Higaonna was skilled in Chinese weapons. However, while he may have demonstrated them, he did not teach them, and there are no traces of Chinese weapons in any of the systems such as *Goju Ryu* or *To'on Ryu* which can be traced to him.”^{xv}

It must be noted that researcher Mario McKenna contends that Mr. Kanryo Higaonna did teach his Chinese weapon arts to one other person, Juhatsu Kyoda.^{xvi} However, there is no evidence that Mr. Kyoda ever taught these weapon kata to any of his students. It is interesting to note that Mr. Kyoda offered his opinion on the futility of teaching the weapon arts of kobudo: “In this day and age, you don't need these sort of things (weapons).”^{xvii}

One must question why Mr. Kanryo Higaonna did not teach the weapon arts that he had learned in China from Ryu Ryu Ko. Perhaps he felt what Mr. Kyoda expressed, and he too believed that these ancient weapons had little application in a modern world. Mr. Morio Higaonna offers his perspective on why Mr. Kanryo Higaonna dropped these kata from his curriculum: “Perhaps because Okinawa was in a time of peace he felt that there was no need for his students to learn weapons. He wanted to concentrate on karate, which he felt was more important to the development of the human spirit.”^{xviii} These are certainly plausible explanations of Mr. Higaonna's motives for not teaching his weapon arts that he had learned to his students.

However, it is likely that there are at least two other plausible reasons why Kanryo Higaonna did not teach others the weapon arts that he had learned in China. As we recall, by the late 1800s anti-Chinese sentiment was prevalent in Japan and Okinawa, and teaching things that were Chinese was unpopular. Hence, teaching Chinese weaponry would not have been a welcome addition to a martial art curriculum. Additionally, the Japanese greatly revered the katana (sword of the samurai), and considered other weapons to be inferior. To teach the use of the bo (wooden staff) or sai (three tined short sword), would have been looked upon with antipathy in Japanese society.

Whereas Mr. Higaonna's motives for not teaching the weapon kata that he had learned from Ryu Ryu Ko are not entirely clear, one thing is certain. The weapon arts of Mr. Kanryo Higaonna are forever lost to posterity.

Mr. Kanryo Higaonna was tremendously influential in the development of karate-do. He went to China, learned Chinese martial arts, and brought his knowledge back to Okinawa. There in his native country, he started a second lineage of Okinawan karate. He taught this art to a cadre of young men who were subsequently inspired to take their instructor's teachings and form new styles of traditional karate-do. In the twentieth century, the styles which can be traced to Mr. Kanryo Higaonna were spread to every inhabited continent on the globe. His teachings now reach millions of people who train in karate-do in the twenty-first century. There are few other individuals in the history of karate-do whose influence is so pervasive.

WU XIANGUI

(Go Ken Ki)

1886 to 1940

FROM CHINA to OKINAWA



Go Ken Ki

CHAPTER 17

Wu Xiangui came to Okinawa from Fuzhou, China in 1912. He was a tea merchant who operated a successful business between China and Okinawa. He also had a profound impact on the development of karate in Okinawa. He taught the Southern Chinese gongfu (功夫 kung-fu) style of White Crane and “had a major influence upon Miyagi Chojun, Mabuni Kenwa, Kyoda Juhatsu, and Matayoshi Shinho.”^{xxix}

Research provides an interesting narrative regarding Go Ken Ki and his training: “Through the day, Go Ken Ki [Wu Xiangui] worked in his shop, but at night he taught White Crane Boxing... Tuition was free but the students were expected to provide four or five raw eggs which were eaten during training.”^{xxx} This training took place in the second floor of his tea shop and involved both White Crane Boxing and supplemental training equipment which was used in hojo-undo to strengthen the body. Furthermore, some of the kata that he brought from China have become part of Okinawan and Japanese karate-do through Mabuni Kenwa and Kyoda Juhatsu. The kata Nipai or Nipaipo is a well-known example of this.^{xxxi}



Mr. Wu’s influence on the development of karate was quite extensive: “In the 1920s Go Ken Ki [Wu Xiangui] was a member of a number of karate study groups which included Chojun Miyagi, Kenwa Mabuni, and Shinpo Matayoshi, so it is reasonable to assume that he passed on his version of Fukien White Crane to interested members of these groups.”^{xxxii} Consequently we know that beyond a doubt, Wu Xiangui’s teachings influenced the development of this second lineage of karate.

Wu Xiangui (Go Ken Ki) with Mr. Mabuni in the background

WU XIANGUI and GOJU RYU

Wu Xiangui helped to shape the development of Goju Ryu. He was instrumental in Mr. Miyagi's second trip to China in 1936. He accompanied Mr. Miyagi and acted as his interpreter. For ten days, the two men stayed as guests at the home of one of Mr. Wu's White Crane Boxing students and tea trading partners. While in China, Mr. Miyagi demonstrated karate-do and was also introduced by Wu Xiangui to Miao Xing, a Monk Fist Boxing expert. There are some researchers who assert that it was through his exchange of ideas with Miao Xing that Mr. Miyagi was inspired to develop the Geki Sai kata.^{xxiii}

However, it must be noted that this assertion about the development of the Geki Sai kata is not without dispute. Whereas no one disputes that the development the Geki Sai kata occurred after Chojun Miyagi return from his second trip to China, not all researchers agree that his experiences on this trip inspired the development of these kata. Mr. Morio Higaonna tells us that there was no connection between Mr. Miyagi's trip to China and the development of the Geki Sai Katas: "Miyagi however, was unable to conduct any meaningful research on this trip."^{xxiv} Furthermore, Mr. Morio Higaonna tells us that Mr. Miyagi's inspiration for developing these kata was quite different: "He had two purposes in mind: the physical and spiritual development of the individual practitioner and increasing the popularity of karate."^{xxv}

Mr. Morio Higoanna does agree that Mr. Miyagi and Wu Xaingui (Go Ken Ki) were very close friends. They were frequently in each other's company and would often engage in recreational activities into the early hours of the morning: "When Miyagi and Go Ken Ki played Chuji (the game of Go), as they did frequently, Kina [a student of Mr. Miyagi] stayed up all night serving tea and attending to their needs."^{xxvi} Their friendship also involved their mutual love of the martial arts, and Mr. Miyagi often invited Wu Xiangui to his dojo "to come and demonstrate his art of white crane."^{xxvii}

Since Mr. Miyagi and Wu Xiangui (Go Ken Ki) were close friends, were members of the same karate study group, and often trained together in the martial arts, it is safe for one to infer that each of these men influenced the martial arts of the other. The depth and breadth of that influence will often be the subject of debate.

THE MYSTERY of the *BUBISHI*

Finally, there is speculation that Wu Xiangui is the person who introduced the *Wubeizhi* 武備志 (or *Bubishi* in Japanese) to the Okinawans. “Okinawa’s *Bubishi* is an anthology of Chinese *gongfu* [*kung-fu*], its history, philosophy, and application. Focusing on White Crane style from Yongchun village, Fujian [Fuzhou] Province, this compilation also addresses Shaolin Monk Fist *gongfu*...”^{xxviii} It is generally accepted that this text greatly influenced the development of Okinawan and Japanese karate-do. It should be noted that Goju Ryu (which means the hard and soft style) was named after a passage in this text: “The way of inhaling and exhaling is hardness and softness.”^{xxix}

It is surmised by some researchers that Wu Xiangui brought the *Bubishi* to Okinawa when he arrived in 1912. Mr. Wu’s nephew, Go Seibi “stated that his uncle gave him a copy of a book which was almost identical to the *Bubishi* in terms of content.”^{xxx}

Although no one knows who actually authored this martial arts text, and no one is absolutely certain who first brought it to Okinawa, all are in agreement that this text was influential in the development of karate-do. Nonetheless, we are certain that Wu Xiangui possessed an early copy of the text, and that he found it important enough to bequeath it to his nephew.

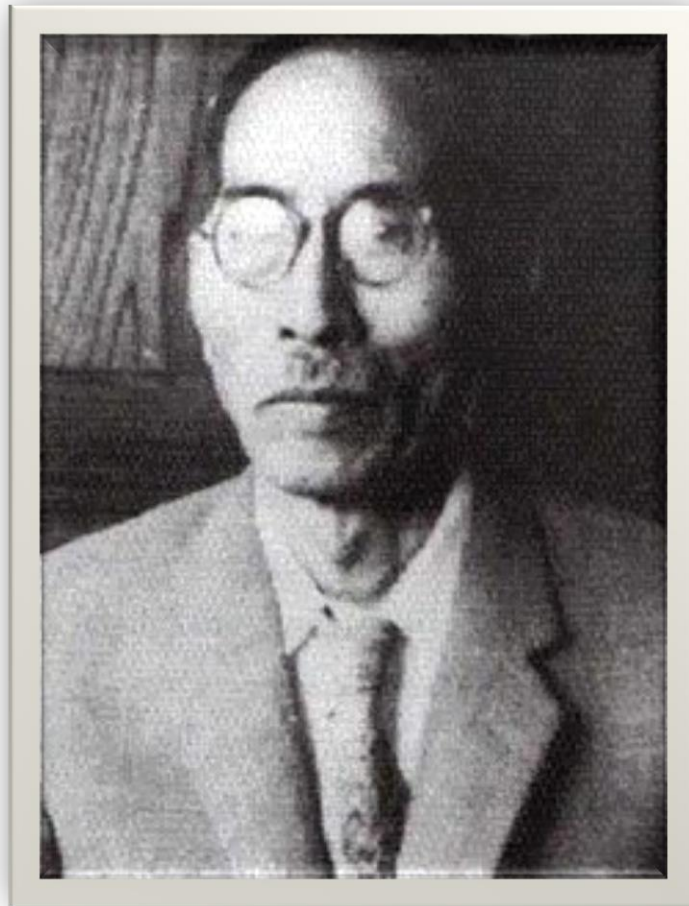
No one can deny that Wu Xiangui (Go Ken Ki) was instrumental in the development of Okinawan karate-do. He contributed to Mr. Mabuni’s Shito Ryu, Mr. Kyoda’s To’on Ryu, and Mr. Miyagi’s Goju Ryu. Moreover, it is possible that he introduced the *Bubishi* to the Okinawans which further influenced the development of karate-do.

JUHATSU KYODA and TO'ON RYU

1887 to 1968

KARATE'S OBSCURE MASTER and KARATE'S OVERLOOKED STYLE

STUDENT of KANRYO HIGAONNA



Juhatsu Kyoda

許田 重発

CHAPTER 18

Juhatsu Kyoda was born on December 5, 1887 and began to study martial arts at an early age. He may have had several teachers prior to becoming a devoted student of Kanryo Higaonna in 1901. Mr. Kyoda was a year older than Mr. Chojun Miyagi and began his training with Mr. Higaonna a year earlier than Mr. Miyagi.^{xxxix} Thus he was considered a sempai (senior student) to Chojun Miyagi in both age and time in training with Higaonna sensei. He attended Okinawa Prefecture Teachers' College, became a teacher, and eventually a school principal. Moreover, Mr. Kyoda continued to study under Mr. Kanryo Higaonna until the death of this great teacher in 1916.

From Higaonna sensei, Mr. Kyoda initially received the same training that all of his devoted students received. He spent the first few years training in Shanchin footwork, breathing, applications, kakie (push-hands), and yakusoku kumite (pre-arranged sparring). Mr. Mario McKinna explains: "Once these fundamental training methods had been adequately mastered, Higaonna would teach one or more other additional kata and their respective applications... Furthermore Kyoda, unlike Miyagi, learned the use of Chinese weaponry from Higashionna [Kanryo Higaonna] including the use of the spear and broadsword."^{xxxix} Whereas Mr. Kyoda included all of the empty hand kata that he had learned from Mr. Higaonna in To'on Ryu (the style that he later developed), he included none of these weapons kata.

Additionally, when Mr. Miyagi was serving in the Japanese military, Juhatsu Kyoda learned Sanseiryu kata directly from Higaonna sensei, and over time it became his favorite kata. Since Mr. Miyagi had not learned Sanseiryu directly from Mr. Higaonna, this acquisition of knowledge became a matter of great pride for Juhatsu Kyoda.^{xxxix}

KARATE in SCHOOLS

During the period between the first and second World Wars, Japan embarked on a social program called Kokutai. (Chapter 5) One aspect of this program was to instill in all citizens a strict sense of discipline and an absolute loyalty to the Japanese Empire. Some researchers have described this aspect of the Kokutai program as the "samuraization" of Japan. This aspect of the national essence program included "dissemination, among the lower levels of the population, of the disciplinary ideals and extreme 'loyalty' code that had exemplified the education of the samurai."^{xxxix}

Mr. Kyoda believed that these qualities could and should be taught to school age children through karate-do. “Kyoda, in his role as an educator, set about popularizing karate-do in accordance to ‘kokutai’ by establishing several karate-do clubs at the elementary and junior high schools at which he worked prior to World War II.”^{xxxv} Consequently, like most Okinawans of the time, Mr. Kyoda saw this aspect of Kokutai as a desirable goal and promoted it in the public schools.

Mr. Kyoda was also extremely involved in the program which was designed to systemize and standardize karate-do in both Okinawa and Japan. During this period of Kokutai in 1933, Mr. Kyoda’s style of To’on Ryu karate-do was recognized by the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai (Greater Japan Martial Virtues Association). In the following year, he received his Kyoshi certification from the same organization. “Kyoda himself was a strong proponent of the renshi/kyoshi/hanshi system of licensing which was used by the Butoku Kai and was instrumental in promoting it in Okinawa and later in mainland Japan. In addition, Kyoda was named the chief director and head instructor in the Naha branch of the Butoku Kai.”^{xxxvi}

TO’ON RYU

東恩流

Mr. Kyoda was an extremely devoted student of Mr. Kanryo Higaonna and named his style after his teacher. To’on Ryu uses the Chinese pronunciation of the kanji characters used to write Mr. Higaonna’s name. In fact, Ryu Ryu Ko refereed to Mr. Higaonna “as Ryuchu no To’onna (Higaonna from the Ryukyus).”^{xxxvii} Many people dismiss this style as being essentially another branch of Goju Ryu. However, this is an inaccurate simplification of both Goju Ryu and To’on Ryu.

The kata syllabi of the two styles are not identical and the execution of the techniques (kihon) within the kata is different. To’on Ryu includes two kata which are not found in Goju Ryu. They are Jion which Mr. Kyoda learned from Mr. Yabu Kensu^{xxxviii}, and Neipai which he learned from Wu Xiangui. Moreover, the manner in which To’on Ryu is practiced differs significantly from Goju Ryu. Eiko Miyazato, who studied under both Juhatsu Kyoda and Chojun Miyagi, tells us that “there were a number of differences between his [Kyoda’s] teaching and Chojun Miyagi’s. I

remember in particular that the Sesan [Seisan] kata I learned from the two Sensei were different.”^{xxxix}

Another karate student familiar with both styles has described some of the differences: “To’on Ryu is characterized by swift springing movements and places little emphasis in rooted stances; a characteristic of Goju Ryu. Techniques in To’on Ryu are executed in a more circular and flowing pattern than their Goju counter parts. There is definitely a more distinctive and obvious Chinese flavour to To’on Ryu.”^{xl} Although both Mr. Miyagi and Mr. Kyoda studied under Mr. Kanryo Higaonna, it appears as if there are salient differences between the karate styles that each man developed. To dismiss the important differences and focus only on the similarities of the two styles does justice to neither style.



However, one must question why Goju Ryu is well known around the world while To’on Ryu has remained relatively obscure. The answer to this may be that after Mr. Kyoda retired as a school principal, he moved to the island of Kyushu in southern Japan. There he maintained no permanent dojo, but instead taught out of his home. His training methods were extremely demanding, and “modern karateka [karate students] could scarcely imagining learning in such a manner.”^{xli} Perhaps it was

Chojun Miyagi and Juhatsu Kyoda training together

this lack of a permanent dojo, the absence of a stable body of students, and these severe training methods which caused Mr. Juhatsu Kyoda to become one of karate's most obscure karate masters and To'on Ryu to become karate's most overlooked style.

Nonetheless, Mr. Kyoda was instrumental in introducing karate-do to a large number of Okinawan children through the public school system, and was influential in standardizing and systematizing karate-do in both Okinawa and Japan. Additionally, Mr. Kyoda and his knowledge of karate-do held great sway with the other great masters in both Okinawa and Japan. In his later years when Mr. Chojun Miyagi was ill, he would tell his Goju Ryu students that if they had any question about the kata of Goju Ryu that they should ask his senior, Kyoda Juhatsu.^{”xlii} Consequently, Mr. Kyoda¹ must be considered one of karate-do's great masters.

¹ For other references to Juhatsu Kyoda, see Chapter 20.

CHOJUN MIYAGI

1888 to 1953

THE FATHER OF GOJU RYU



Chojun Miyagi

宮城 長順

CHAPTER 19

Chojun Miyagi was born into a wealthy merchant family in 1888,^{xliii} and he was accepted by Kanryo Higaonna as a student in 1902.^{xliv} All of the students who trained under Mr. Higaonna found the training extremely severe and demanding: “Most of the students didn’t have the perseverance to continue such hard training and many of them stopped.”^{xlv} However, young Chojun Miyagi not only persevered the severe training, he excelled in his martial arts studies and became one of Mr. Higaonna’s most knowledgeable students. Mr. Eiichi Miyazato explains: “Not only did Miyagi Sensei have the fortitude to continue training, but he was so enthusiastic in his research, that he often forgot to eat or sleep and practiced late into the evening. Because of this, Kanryo Higaonna Sensei treated Miyagi like his own child.”^{xlvi}

Students were required to learn Sanchin kata for a period of three or four years before they were allowed to learn any other kata.^{xlvii} In those days, this kata was performed while moving forward and backward across the room. All the while, Higaonna Sensei would perform shime, pushing and slapping the student to see if his stances were correct and to see if he was contracting his muscles correctly. When students appeared tired, he would tell them that their training had just begun and to perform the kata “one more time.” Sometimes the students would lose consciousness during these severe training sessions, and on other occasions they would report seeing blood in their urine. Only a few persevered. Young Chojun Miyagi was required to repeat the Sanchin testing procedure of Mr. Higaonna again and again. Eventually he developed callouses on his shoulders from the repeated strikes of his teacher.^{xlviii}

Mr. Higaonna would never teach a student the true essence of his karate until the student had proven that he was earnest and trustworthy. Furthermore, he taught each student differently depending on a variety of factors including their age, ability, and body type. The young Miyagi earned the complete trust of his teacher and was often asked to remain after the other students had been dismissed from the training session. Mr. Miyagi began to receive the type of instruction from Mr. Higaonna that few others received. Because the young Mr. Miyagi was trusted, physically strong, and talented, Mr. Higaonna taught him Suparinpei as the first kata he learned after Sanchin. This extremely complex kata became Mr. Miyagi’s specialty.^{xlix}

As time went on and their relationship deepened, Kanryo Higaonna wanted his student to experience the same type of training that he had experienced in China. Consequently, he told Mr. Miyagi: “Before you die you must go to China and see Fuzhou with your own eyes.”¹

Consequently in 1915 he, like his teacher before him, left Okinawa to study martial arts in Fuzhou. Upon arriving in China, he sought out the legendary Ryu Ryu Ko only to discover that he had died. Mr. Miyagi then visited the grave of his teacher's teacher and paid his respects.

He remained in China for another two months researching the training methods and the kata of Ryu Ryu Ko. Mr. Miyagi was able to locate an elderly man who had also been a student of the late Ryu Ryu Ko. In fact, he had been a junior student to Mr. Higaonna and they had trained together under the late master Ko. Mr. Miyagi was able to train with the elderly gentleman, and during these training sessions was able to verify that all nine of the kata that Mr. Miyagi had learned from Mr. Higaonna were the same nine kata that were once taught by Ryu Ryu Ko. During his stay in Fuzhou, Mr. Miyagi also learned the Chinese characters used to write the names of these kata.^{li} The nine kata were Sanchin, Saifa, Seiyunchin, Sanseiryu, Shisochin, Seipai, Seisan, Kururunfa, and Suparinpei. (三戰 碎破 制引戰 三十六手 四向戰 十八手 十三手 久留頓破 壹百零八)

Upon his return from China, Mr. Miyagi diligently practiced both what he had learned from Mr. Kanryo Higaonna and what he had learned from the research that he had conducted in Fuzhou. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Mr. Miyagi returned to China for a second time again in 1936 with the purpose of expanding his knowledge of the martial arts.^{lii} These trips, his diligent research, and his relentless practice would lead him to establish what is now known as Goju-Ryu Karate-do.

THE EVOLUTION OF TWO NAMES

As mentioned in several previous chapters, there were no specific style names for karate. *Chinese-hand* was the general term used for the Okinawan martial arts. Then in the mid-1920s, karate was referred to by the city of its origin. For instance, Naha-Te (*Naha-hand*) was a name that referred to the martial arts which were being taught in or around Naha, Okinawa. This included the teachings of Mr. Miyagi and several others. However, when karate was being introduced into the larger Japanese society during Kokutai (national essence), all references to karate by these general

terms would come to an end. Specific style names were needed in order for karate to become genuinely Japanese.

As the national essence program (Kokutai) was forging Japan into a homogeneous empire, many of the Okinawan karate instructors realized that they must give their styles specific names or face their rejection by the Japanese public. Consequently, Mr. Chojun Miyagi gave his karate an official name to make more acceptable within the Japanese Empire: “He realized that it was important for his style to have a formal title, especially if it was to be recognized and respected by the Japanese as a martial art comparable to judo and kendo.”^{liii} In 1930, Mr. Chojun Miyagi selected the name Go-Ju after a quote from a text on martial arts, *The Bubishi*. “‘Ho go ju donto’ (The way of inhaling and exhaling is hardness and softness.) Given the nature of Miyagi’s style, a style containing hard and soft techniques with the emphasis on breathing, Goju seemed to be an ideal name,”^{liv} Hence, the martial art that Ryu Ryu Ko had taught to Mr. Kanryo Higaonna and that he had transmitted to Mr. Chojun Miyagi became known as Goju Ryu – the hard and soft style.

Go Ju Ryu

剛 柔 流

Hard Soft Style

An evolution of another name would also occur. As mentioned previously, *karate* originally meant *Chinese-hand*. However, world events would cause virtually all karate teachers and karate styles to change the character *Kara* from *Chinese* to *Empty*. Japan was involved in a military conflict in China, and things of a Chinese origin were considered unpatriotic. Consequently, changing the name from *Chinese-hand* to *empty-hand* was viewed as an act of patriotism.^{lv}

In October of 1936, a meeting of Okinawa’s leading karate teachers, political leaders, and military officials was sponsored by an Okinawan newspaper company in the meeting hall of Naha, Okinawa. There “Chojun Miyagi and most of the karate-ka were amenable to the use of the characters for ‘empty hand’.”^{lvi} Hence, what was formerly known as *Chinese-hand* was changed into *empty-hand*, the same term we use today. (For more on this subject, refer back to Chapter 6.)

Mr. MIYAGI'S ORIGINAL SYLLABUS and METHODOLOGY

Originally, Mr. Miyagi taught a syllabus that is very different from the syllabus which is taught today. From the nine katas that he had learned from Mr. Higaonna, he taught each student only two katas – Sanchin and one other kata. “Before the war Miyagi taught one heishugata, Sanchin, and one kaishugata according to the needs and abilities of each student.”^{lvii} The only way that students could learn another kaishugata was to learn it from another student. The rest of the syllabus included “hojo undo, uke harai, ude tanren, yakusoku kumite, (and) kakie”.^{lviii}

Teaching a standardized karate-do curriculum to large groups of students is a relative new development. Mr. Miyagi taught in secrecy, and did not teach to large groups of students. He taught only to individuals that he had personally chosen: “Practice was quite secretive and took place behind closed doors...The martial arts at that time were taught to only carefully selected students whose character had been observed by the teacher.”^{lix} Consequently, before Miyagi would actually give a student detailed instruction, they had to endure a “long-term testing and evaluation period of performing chores and learning only basics. Unworthy members would be weeded out or kept at a basic level”^{lx}

Additionally, his methodology was individualized and geared to the needs of each person. Mr. Miyagi taught the same kata to many different students. However, he did not teach the same kata the same way to each person. Mr. Miyagi taught kata by the same method that he had learned it from Mr. Higaonna. This method was based on the belief that no two students were exactly alike in their needs and abilities, and consequently they should not be taught the same thing in the same manner. Mr. Miyagi explained: “Whether we consider factors of age, physical strength, nature of work, nutrition, etc., each person’s position in life is different. It therefore follows that each person’s physical development will be different.”^{lxi}

This methodology of teaching in secrecy and individualizing instruction is greatly different from the group classes and standardized curriculum that developed later and which is currently used in today’s modern approach to karate-do.

THE EVOLUTION OF GOJU-RYU

Before the Pacific War, Chojun Miyagi realized that the world was changing and that alterations in the original Goju-Ryu syllabus and teaching methodology needed to be made in order for Goju-Ryu to thrive in modern Japan and in the world beyond. In January of 1936, Mr. Miyagi delivered a speech in Osaka, Japan. He told the audience: “The days of teaching karate in secret are over. The time has now arrived where karate-do must be practiced with a commitment to society...This trend is not limited to Japan; ...it will spread throughout the world and become truly international.”^{lxii} Mr. Miyagi was quite prophetic in his prediction about the future of karate-do, and he initiated changes which would ensure that Goju-Ryu would be accepted first by the Japanese and later by the international community.

In his in his speech, Mr. Miyagi outlined the five parts of the Goju-Ryu syllabus that needed to be taught. These five parts are (1) *junbi-undo* (the stretching and strengthening exercises which were developed by Mr. Miyagi), (2) *hojo-undo* (exercises with supplementary equipment), (3) *kihongata* (the fundamental kata of Sanchin and Tensho), (4) *kaishugata* (the eight other Goju Ryu kata), and (5) *kumite renshu* (sparring training).^{lxiii}

Mr. Miyagi explained that *junbi-undo* will “strengthen the body and develop stamina.” *Hojo-undo* will “develop strength and power in the body as a whole.” *Kihongata* will “develop good posture and form, correct breathing methods, and correct harmonization of breath with movement.” Mr. Miyagi concluded by stating: “Through *kaishugata* and *kumite* practice, even the smallest details of karate-do may be absorbed into the body. With practical applications of attack and defense the true spirit of the martial arts can emerge.”^{lxiv}

GOJU RYU AFTER THE WAR

The aforementioned changes in Goju Ryu came about before the Pacific War. During the war, Mr. Miyagi was witness to a great deal of death and destruction that resulted from the Battle of Okinawa. During this terrible conflagration, he saw many of Okinawa’s finest karate instructors and students die. All of his literature about karate and its history was destroyed by the allied bombing, and most tragically, three of Mr. Miyagi’s children perished.^{lxv}

He did not want to see the karate that he loved destroyed and lost to future generations. Consequently, he became determined to survive the war so that he could pass Kanryo Higaonna's karate on to future generations around the globe. After the war Mr. Miyagi altered the curriculum and training methods even further in order to promote Goju Ryu to the younger generations in Okinawa, in Japan, and around the world. Mr. Miyagi had developed the relatively simplistic Gekisai Ichi and Ni kata in 1941, but their use in teaching had previously been limited. After the war, these two kata took the place of Sanchin as the first kata which all students learned. He also arranged the kata into a fixed sequence of how they were to be learned. After the two Gekisai kata were learned, students were to continue with Sanchin, then Saifa, Seiyunchin, Sanseiryu, Shisochin, Seipai, Kururunfa, Seisan, Suparinpei, and finally Tensho. This last kata was developed by Mr. Miyagi to emphasize the soft elements of Goju Ryu.^{lxvi}

Together, these twelve kata make up the core curriculum of virtually all of the traditional Goju Ryu organizations today, and these changes transformed Goju Ryu from a secretive and selective Okinawan martial art into an international martial art that is practiced by millions of men, women, and children around the world.

It must be noted that one element of Goju Ryu that Mr. Miyagi never altered was his approach to awarding dan ranks (black belts). He never awarded a black belt or any other rank to any of his students. Mr. Miyagi took this approach because he feared that his students would be recognized by their belt rather than for their abilities: "Chojun Miyagi believed that once a dan rank had been awarded, it would inevitably lead to trouble. For those reasons Chojun Miyagi awarded ranks to no one, neither Okinawan nor Japanese."^{lxvii} The first Goju-Ryu black belts² were not awarded until after Mr. Miyagi's death in 1953.^{lxviii}

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The tradition of using an education in karate as a means of developing the character of its students can be traced back to the earliest beginnings of this art in Okinawa. Without a doubt, Kanryo

² See Appendix: Ranking and Title System in Traditional Karate-Do

Higaonna continued this tradition, and Chojun Miyagi followed in his teacher's footsteps. Mr. Miyagi tells us that: "Training the body and mind in karate results in the cultivation of a strong character and an indomitable spirit."^{lxi}

Mr. Eiichi Miyazato was a direct student of Mr. Chojun Miyagi. After Mr. Miyagi's death in 1953, Mr. Miyazato assumed the responsibility of teaching in Mr. Miyagi's Garden Dojo. Shortly thereafter, he established the Jundokan, one of Okinawa's oldest Goju Ryu organizations. He explains that karate-do must "Begin with Rei [respect] and end with Rei [respect],"^{lxx} and advises us never to compromise our character by losing our respect for ourselves and for others: "From time to time Rei [respect] is lost, mistakes are made, and lifetime regrets are often the result... Ancient Budo teaches that the fighting techniques are techniques used to escape... The wisest thing to do in a confrontational situation is to run away."^{lxxi} As we can see, Mr. Miyazato goes beyond the concept *karate ni sente nashi* – there is no first attack in karate. He tells his students to avoid confrontations altogether.³

Mr. Miyazato offers the following moral advice to his students:

- Be mindful of your courtesy with humbleness
- Train yourself considering physical strength
- Study and contrive seriously
- Be calm in mind and swift in action
- Take care of yourself
- Live a plain and simple life
- Do not be too proud of yourself
- Continue training with patience and steadiness
- Emphasis is on virtue over technique
- Respect both the technique and those who teach it
- Do not take lightly what is taught^{lxxii}

³ Also see Chapter 24 – *There is no First Attack in Karate*.

Finally, Mr. Miyazato tells us that the message that Mr. Miyagi wished to pass “on to his students is best summed up by the words ‘modesty’ and ‘hard training’.”^{lxxiii} Today, the best Goju-Ryu instructors encourage their students to develop their character, to be modest, and to train hard. Consequently, the Goju-Ryu tradition which began in the 1800's on the tiny island of Okinawa continues in the lives and in the training of each one of its dedicated students.

GOGEN YAMAGUCHI

1909 to 1989

AN ENIGMATIC MASTER



Gogen Yamaguchi

山口剛玄

CHAPTER 20

Few people in the history of modern karate-do have commanded as much respect and generated as much controversy as the enigmatic Gogen Yamaguchi who was the founder of the International

Karate-do Goju Kai Association. During his lifetime, he was an almost legendary figure who was rumored to have superhuman mental and physical powers. By some accounts, he was the legitimate successor of Mr. Chojun Miyagi, and the person who was responsible for spreading the Goju system of karate-do around the world.

Today, Mr. Yamaguchi is still very much of a mystery to many students of karate-do. Many people still do not know which stories are accurate and which have been exaggerated or entirely fictionalized. Consequently, research into the life of Mr. Gogen Yamaguchi is needed in order to shine some light on the enigma surrounding this twentieth century karate master.

The researched leads into four areas: (1) Who was Mr. Gogen Yamaguchi? (2) What was the nature of his relationship with Mr. Chojun Miyagi, the founder of Goju Ryu? (3) Was there any substance to the claim of Mr. Yamaguchi's superhuman powers? (4) Was he truly responsible for the spread of Goju around the world? Finding the answers to these four questions could do a lot to shed some light on the mystery surrounding Mr. Yamaguchi.

WHO WAS GOGEN YAMAGUCHI?

Mr. Gogen Yamaguchi was born on January 20, 1909 on the island of Kyushu in southern Japan. He was one of ten children, and all six of the Yamaguchi boys practiced the martial arts. However, it appears as if the young Mr. Yamaguchi was exceptionally interested and talented in the martial ways, and he practiced Japanese fencing and karate-do. His training was intense, and Mr. Yamaguchi tells us that "I believe that I trained myself in the fundamental alertness of a cat in these early days."^{lxxiv} Even today, Mr. Yamaguchi is often referred to as The Cat.

Additionally, Mr. Yamaguchi tells us that as a youth he was drawn to the spiritual side of life. "I longed for unseen and mysterious things and... I tried to talk to the Supernatural God... I realize now that what I am today has been deeply rooted in my childhood."^{lxxv} Consequently, the early life of the young Mr. Yamaguchi was marked by an intense martial training and a deep spiritual longing.

It is interesting to note that “Gogen” was actually not the name given to Mr. Yamaguchi by his parents. “Yoshimi” was his given name, and it is still the name by which some Okinawan Goju Ryu masters refer to him.^{lxxvi} Mr. Yamaguchi tells us that he legally changed his name after the end of World War II, and that the alteration occurred at the desire of Mr. Chojun Miyagi: “I was greatly impressed when he requested that I change my name to Gogen (following the War, I legally registered my name as Gogen with the court in Kagoshima).”^{lxxvii} Consequently, “Yoshimi” Yamaguchi is known to us as Gogen Yamaguchi.

Mr. Yamaguchi attended and was expelled from Kansai University where he had developed a reputation for being a ruffian. He then entered Ritsumeikan University, but confessed that “I doubt that Ritsumeikan University would have admitted me if they knew about the ‘Rough Yamaguchi’ who was expelled from Kansai University.”^{lxxviii} In 1932, Mr. Yamaguchi graduated from Ritsumeikan, passed the Bar Examination, and became a lawyer.

After his graduation from the university and after the outbreak of war with China, Mr. Yamaguchi was persuaded to go to Manchuria by General Kanji Ishihara. There he served as “a mixture of administrator, trouble-shooter, spymaster, and undercover agent.”^{lxxix} Mr. Yamaguchi tells us that he agreed to move to Manchuria because General Ishihara desired “to make Manchuria a ‘Heavenly Land’ where Japanese, Chinese, Mongolians, and Koreans could live in peace and prosperity. He had been my friend since I became a student and I supported his views.”^{lxxx} However, the general’s ideals were not the reality of life, and “Manchuria was oppressed and ruthlessly exploited. For the native population, Manchuko [Manchuria] was anything but a heavenly land.”^{lxxxi}

Historical research is replete with General Ishihara’s military actions and his radical views. It was he who conceived and planned every detail of the Manchurian Incident of 1931 where “Japanese troops of the Kwantung Army faked an attack upon themselves, and used this as a pretext to seize Manchuria.”^{lxxxii} Additionally, the general predicted a war which would last up to thirty years between the East (led by Japan) and the West (led by the United States). He concluded that the war “would end in the annihilation of the West.”^{lxxxiii}

The closeness of the relationship between General Kanji Ishihara and Mr. Gogen Yamaguchi may come as a surprise to many people. It is possible that Mr. Yamaguchi did not know the full scope of General Ishihara's radical views even though the general had articulated his views as early as 1928 in *The Final World War Theory*. However, one must consider that the association between the general and Mr. Yamaguchi occurred during a war, and history has shown that both nations and individuals act differently during times of war and times of peace. Perhaps it is best to put their relationship in this historical perspective.

At the conclusion of World War II in 1945, the Soviet Union invaded Manchuria and Mr. Yamaguchi became a prisoner of war. He was sent to a Soviet Gulag for two years where he suffered the inhumane conditions and cruel treatment for which this prison system was notorious.^{lxxxiv} After he was released from Soviet captivity, Mr. Yamaguchi returned to Japan, but he became depressed over many of the social changes that had occurred since the end of the war. Mr. Yamaguchi decided to commit Seppuku (the type of self-disembowelment that had been used by the warrior class of Feudal Japan). As he prepared himself for the final moment, he had a revelation. He had a mission in life – to contribute to the world by disseminating the Japanese martial arts.^{lxxxv} For the next four decades, “the development of Goju in Japan was the work of one man, Gogen Yamaguchi.”^{lxxxvi}

Throughout his life, Mr. Yamaguchi had a variety of occupations, experiences, and penchants. He was a lawyer, an undercover agent, a prisoner of war, and a karate master. He was a Shinto priest, a practitioner of yoga, and a profound mystic. Clearly, he was no ordinary person. In 1988 at the age of 79, he died in Tokyo, Japan.

WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH MR. CHOJUN MIYAGI?

The nature of the relationship between Mr. Miyagi and Mr. Yamaguchi has long been the subject of debate. Whereas Mr. Yamaguchi makes several claims regarding Mr. Miyagi, a number of people including several Okinawan Goju Ryu masters refute those claims. Can the truth on these issues be found?

Mr. Yamaguchi tells us that he was named as the successor to Mr. Miyagi, the founder of Goju Ryu. Mr. Yamaguchi asserts that Mr. Miyagi told him: “Mr. Yamaguchi, you are well qualified to become the successor of Goju School Karate...I have nothing more to teach you... Thus...you must make a diligent effort to develop karate in Japan”^{lxxxvii} If these words actually came from Mr. Chojun Miyagi, then it would appear as if Mr. Yamaguchi was designated as the successor to the Goju system. However, these words were spoken in private, and the veracity of this claim is difficult to either prove or disprove. No witnesses are available to either affirm or negate Mr. Yamaguchi’s claim.

Moreover, Graham Noble tells us that Mr. Yamaguchi’s claim that he was designated By Mr. Miyagi to be his successor in Goju Ryu is disputed by many of Mr. Miyagi’s senior Okinawan students: “It irritates some of the Goju men on Okinawa to hear Yamaguchi described as Chojun Miyagi’s successor, since Miyagi was never in Japan for periods of longer than two or three months... In view of this, it may be doubted whether Yamaguchi ever learned the whole Goju system from Miyagi.”^{lxxxviii}

Furthermore, shortly after Mr. Chojun Miyagi death, several senior Goju Ryu students traveled to Japan to ask Mr. Juhatsu Kyoda to become the successor of Mr. Miyagi and take stewardship of Goju Ryu. He was the most logical person to succeed Mr. Miyagi since he was a direct disciple of Mr. Kanryo Higaonna and was one year senior to Mr. Miyagi. Mr. Kyoda had formed To’on Ryu (meaning “Higaonna Style”), and was teaching out of his home in Oita Prefecture, Japan. After speaking with the senior students from Okinawa, Mr. Kyoda reluctantly agreed to take leadership of Goju Ryu, but upon one condition. He insisted that the name of the style be changed to To’on Goju Ryu to reflect the name of Mr. Kanryo Higaonna. This was not agreeable to the Goju Ryu officials in Okinawa, and Mr. Kyoda never became the successor to Mr. Miyagi.^{lxxxix} However, these events indicate that the senior Goju Ryu officials in Okinawa never considered Mr. Yamaguchi as a successor to Mr. Miyagi.

Additionally, Mr. Morio Higaonna of Okinawa tells us that after the death of Mr. Miyagi, “Eiichi Miyazato claimed that Chojun Sensei had named him as successor” and that Mr. Miyazato was appointed by Mr. Miyagi’s widow to teach in the famous Garden Dojo in the Miyagi family home.^{xc} This would certainly indicate that the Miyagi family saw Mr. Miyazato as the successor

to Mr. Chojun Miyagi. Furthermore, we are told by the Okinawan students at the Jundokan that “Eiichi Miyazato Sensei is well known as the successor to Chojun Miyagi Sensei.”^{xcvi}

Consequently, one is left wondering whether Mr. Yamaguchi was actually appointed to be the successor of Mr. Chojun Miyagi, and whether he really possessed the depth of knowledge about Goju Ryu to become the successor of Mr. Miyagi. It is quite plausible that Mr. Miyagi intended for there to be more than one successor; he may have wanted there to be several people who were responsible for teaching and disseminating Goju Ryu. In this manner Mr. Miyagi would increase the likelihood that the style that he founded would survive and be spread throughout the modern world.

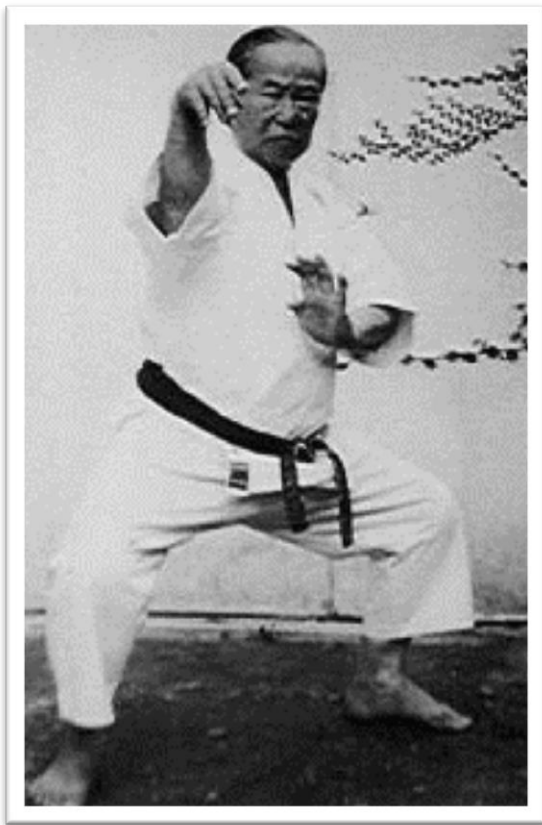
This theory gains credibility as one begins to investigate Mr. Miyagi’s experiences during the Pacific War. As the battle of Okinawa was raging, Mr. Miyagi had attempted to preserve from the allied bombing “the fruits of his research into karate, information gathered in China, numerous books on a variety of subjects and records of his personal martial arts philosophy, including extensive notes about his own dreams. Despite his efforts, everything was lost.”^{xcvii} To make matters worse, Mr. Miyagi’s top student and chosen successor, Jin’an Shinzato, was killed in the battle of Okinawa.^{xcviii} Due to these terrible losses, it is quite possibly that Mr. Miyagi realized that in order to ensure that Goju Ryu would survive in the modern world several successors would be needed.

Consequently, it is plausible that Mr. Yamaguchi was designated to be the successor who was responsible for the development of Goju in Japan. If one assumes that Mr. Miyagi did indeed tell Mr Yamaguchi “you must make a diligent effort to develop karate in Japan” then one can infer that Mr. Yamaguchi was to spread Goju in Japan. Additionally, Mr. Miyazato could have been designated as the successor of Goju in Okinawa.

In addressing the issue of the depth of knowledge of Mr. Yamaguchi, Graham Noble suggests that Mr. Yamaguchi did not learn the majority of his Goju from Mr. Miyagi. Instead, he learned “the complete range of Goju kata later from students of Miyagi such as Meitoku Yagi.”^{xcix} However, Mr. Morio Higaonna tells us that the practice of teaching kata indirectly through other students was a common practice of Mr. Miyagi, and that at one time the only way that students could learn

all of the Goju kata was to learn it from other students.^{xcv} Consequently, there appears to be nothing unusual about the manner in which Mr. Yamaguchi learned Goju Ryu.

Whereas it appears as if Mr. Yamaguchi could have been a successor to Mr. Miyagi, and the manner by which he learned Goju Ryu was not out of the ordinary, one must entertain two academic questions regarding Mr. Yamaguchi's depth of knowledge of Goju Ryu. Could the months that Mr. Yamaguchi spent studying and training directly with Mr. Miyagi have been considered commensurate to the decades of study and training that some of Mr. Miyagi's students in Okinawa enjoyed? Could the karate that Mr. Yamaguchi passed on to his followers have contained the same depth and breadth of knowledge as those instructors who had spent decades training directly under Mr. Miyagi in Okinawa? These are questions that I will pose, but that I will leave to each reader to answer.



Meitoku Yagi: Mr. Yamaguchi learned the majority of the Goju system from him.

Another issue is whether Mr. Miyagi awarded Mr. Yamaguchi a tenth dan. Whereas there is not a specific reference in Mr. Yamaguchi's book claiming that he was in fact awarded any dan grade (black belt) by Mr. Miyagi, many other authors and organizations have asserted that Mr. Yamaguchi received a tenth dan from Mr. Miyagi.^{xcvi} In complete opposition to this assertion, Mr. Morio Higaonna told us in the previous chapter that Chojun Miyagi never awarded a black belt to anyone.^{xcvii}

This apparent discrepancy in facts may be due to the fact that dan ranks were viewed differently in Japan and in Okinawa. As we have discovered from previous discussions, originally Okinawans did not award dan grades in their systems of karate, but the Japanese saw them as a necessary part of a budo. In Chapter 5 Patrick McCarthy told us that in order for Okinawan karate

to be accepted in mainland Japan, a system of black belts and lesser belts needed to be adopted.^{xcviii} Therefore, it is quite plausible that Mr. Yamaguchi assumed his tenth dan because he believed that he had been designated by to spread the Goju system in Japan, and that this was something that Mr. Yamaguchi saw as being necessary to gain the acceptance of Goju by other Japanese martial artists.

I asked Mr. Motoo Yamakura who studied Goju Ryu in Japan under Mr. Seigo Tada, a direct student of Mr. Yamaguchi, about the issue of Mr. Yamaguchi's tenth dan (black belt). He supports the aforementioned hypothesis. Mr. Yamakura states: "My guess is that Mr. Miyagi was not aware of the ranking system and probably did not care. So if Mr. Yamaguchi was chosen in any particular time to lead the art in Japan, it was not such a big deal what rank Mr. Yamaguchi held." It does not appear as if Mr. Yamaguchi did anything unusual. Dan grades were common among the martial artists in mainland Japan, and Mr. Yamaguchi did what was customary.

WAS THERE ANY SUBSTANCE TO THE CLAIM OF MR. YAMAGUCHI'S SUPERHUMAN POWERS?

Mr. Gogen Yamaguchi is well known for performing a variety of yoga and Shinto rituals with the expressed purpose of increasing his spiritual awareness. Not only was he a Shinto priest, but at least sixty pages in his book are expressly dedicated to the subject Shintoism and yoga.^{xcix} Whereas it is well established that Mr. Yamaguchi engaged in a variety of activities with the intent of strengthening his spirit, the question becomes, did these activities give him superhuman mental and physical powers?

In an interview in 1977, Mr. Yamaguchi told the interviewer that "if you were to face me in combat, I would be able to tell in a second the strength of your Ki. Immediately, I would know if you were a good opponent. It is this quality and no other that has given me the name The Cat."^c Whereas the power that Mr. Yamaguchi claims to possess is interesting, it could hardly be classified as a superhuman power.

Furthermore, in the video "*The Cat – Gogen Yamaguchi 10th Dan*" there is some old footage of Mr. Yamaguchi naked to the waist under a waterfall. As he stands under the falling water, he

contorts his hands and fingers in various positions, and he repeatedly raises them skyward. The commentator explains that this is a manner by which Mr. Yamaguchi increases his spiritual awareness.^{ci} This type of austerity training is a bit out of the ordinary, but does not enter into the realm of being superhuman.

Graham Noble tells us something much more extraordinary. He was viewing a film, *The Way of the Sword*, and “Mr. Yamaguchi was shown sitting in front of a crystal ball. He performed various mudras (mystic hand movements) in the direction of the crystal ball, while doing breathing exercises. According to the narration, Yamaguchi uses the crystal ball to communicate with the spirits of fighters of the past and future. They give him secrets.”^{cii} If the narration is correct, and if Mr. Yamaguchi can in fact contact the deceased and the unborn, then he truly possessed a superhuman power. However, I am certain that many individuals will be skeptical that Mr. Yamaguchi was able to communicate with the dead and the unborn.

Peter Urban has written an account of an incident that supposedly occurred in China and this, more than anything else, has contributed to the belief that Mr. Yamaguchi possessed superhuman physical powers. In one of the chapters of his book, *The Karate Dojo*, he told his readers that while Mr. Yamaguchi was in Manchuria, he kicked, punched, and choked an adult tiger to death.^{ciii} There are several problems with Mr. Urban’s account. First of all Mr. Yamaguchi never mentioned this event in his autobiography. Additionally, Mr. James Genovese who trained with Mr. Yamaguchi in Japan insists that Mr. Yamaguchi denied that the event occurred; and finally, many wildlife experts do not believe that it is plausible for an unarmed human to kill an adult tiger.^{civ} It is most likely that the accounts of Mr. Yamaguchi possessing superhuman physical powers are nothing more than an urban myth.

One cannot conclude that Mr. Yamaguchi possessed any superhuman powers. The assertion of the narrator of “*The Way of the Sword*” cannot be verified with any other sources, and the contention of the author of *Karate Dojo* has been directly refuted. It appears as if Mr. Yamaguchi was a man who possessed a deep spiritual longing and engaged in a variety of activities that he believed would improve his spiritual well-being.



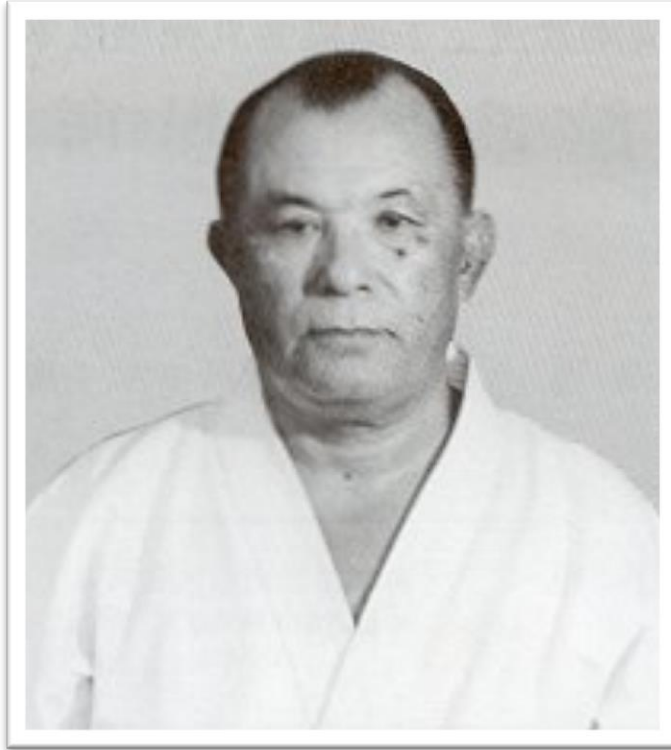
**Gogen Yamaguchi under a waterfall in
austerity training**

**WAS MR. YAMAGUCHI
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
WORLDWIDE SPREAD OF
GOJU**

Many people in karate-do believe that Mr. Yamaguchi was responsible for the worldwide dissemination of the Goju system of karate-do. Mr. Morio Higaonna tells us that “Yamaguchi Sensei went on to create the Goju Kai organization and was successful in spreading Goju Kai throughout Japan and the

world.”^{cv} Additionally, Mr. Richard Stamper, the Co-chairman of Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai, told me that he remembers Mr. Yamaguchi as a “showman who brought a lot of attention to karate and Goju.” Graham Noble supports this opinion stating Mr. Yamaguchi had “charisma” and was a “semi-legendary” figure in karate-do: “He always wore traditional Japanese dress and also wore his hair long which made him look like some Yamabushi (mountain warrior) from days gone by, transported incongruously to the Tokyo suburbs.”^{cvii} His actions and manner of dress caught the attention of the mass media and this did a lot to promote Goju around the world.

This view of Mr. Yamaguchi as being the sole person responsible for disseminating Goju Ryu across the globe is not without controversy. The leaders of the Jundokan tell us that “Eiichi Miyazato is well known...for establishing the Jundokan, and his tireless effort to develop and expand the Okinawa Goju Ryu Karate-do around the world.”^{cviii} Consequently, the belief that Mr. Yamaguchi is the only person responsible for the worldwide spread of Goju Ryu is disputed by members of the Jundokan in Okinawa.



Eiichi Miyazato 宮里 栄一 1922-1999

However, Mr. Miyazato was never flamboyant and never drew a lot of attention to himself or his accomplishments. In fact Mr. Miyazato condemned showmanship in karate, and explained his antipathy towards flamboyant behavior: “Recently, some Karate practitioners have completely disregarded the essence of Karate, and its legacy and have made it into a show or performance. It has become a common sight to see the breaking of clay tiles and wooden boards, or breaking

wooden staffs across the body... Chojun Miyagi Sensei strongly condemned such performances.

»^{viii} Mr. Miyazato worked in a manner that was different from the manner of Mr. Yamaguchi. He worked quietly to promote Goju Ryu and actively avoided ostentatious behavior in both his private life and in front of the media.

Both of these gentlemen have contended to be the successor of Mr. Chojun Miyagi, and both of them have supporters stating that they are responsible for the worldwide propagation of the Goju system. I believe that both are correct. As was mentioned previously, it is plausible that Mr. Miyagi intended for there to be more than a single successor and that he did this intentionally to ensure that Goju would survive and prosper in the modern world. It seems obvious to me that both of these fine teachers succeeded by using different methods, and they were both successful in spreading the Goju system throughout Okinawa, Japan, and the world.

THE ENIGMA CRACKED

The research has revealed who Mr. Gogen Yamaguchi was and who he was not. He was a man who, from an early age, was captivated by the martial ways, and he was also an individual who

was caught up in the politics of the Second World War. He was a man who possessed no superhuman powers, but was a person who had a deep spiritual longing. Certainly, he was one of the men who seized the opportunity and spread Goju around the globe, and he accomplished this in a manner which grabbed our attention. It is obvious that he was no ordinary individual.

SHUJI TASAKI, HANSHI

Founder of Seiwa Kai Goju Ryu Karatedo



By Des Tuck

When I first heard of Tasaki Shihan in 1970, the year I began training with Lipinski Shihan, I have to admit I hoped I would never meet him, let alone be his student. The stories I heard about his extraordinary ability and hardness were enough to make me want to avoid coming anywhere near him. At that time, he was still chief instructor in the Tokyo dojo of Gogen Yamaguchi Shihan.

The following year, Tasaki Shihan left the Yamaguchi organization and founded Seiwa Kai. I began training with Stuart Booth Shihan in late 1972 shortly after his return from 18 months of training with Tasaki Shihan. Booth Shihan had joined Seiwa Kai, and trained his students like a demon. The brutality of training under Tasaki Shihan must have left its mark on Booth Shihan, and for reasons I can't really explain, I became a Seiwa Kai member too, and soaked it up. For the first time in my life I received a taste of what really hard physical training might be like under Tasaki Shihan, albeit vicariously.



We did things that nobody else in South Africa was doing at the time, including training on goldmine dumps and using a steel pole with a rope wound around it as a makiwara, instead of the traditional flat wooden board. The warm-up exercises were enough to discourage most people, and the ones who managed to keep up included bikers, ex-Congo mercenaries, rough street kids, and me. During training, Booth Shihan would relate stories about his training with Tasaki Shihan, whether it was during class or in the sauna afterwards. My mind's image of Tasaki Shihan grew much larger than life when I heard the hair-raising anecdotes of his prowess and toughness.

After about three years of training with Booth Shihan, I returned to Lipinski Shihan's Yamaguchi group where I remained until 1989, when Lipinski Shihan himself joined Seiwa Kai. I went with him and in 1992 Vassie Naidoo Shihan and I formed Seiwa Kai USA. Shortly before that, I met Tasaki Shihan personally in London for the first time. I remember meeting him in a small bed and breakfast hotel where he was staying, and my first impression was consistent with everything that I had heard.

Before we went off to the training session that evening, Tasaki Shihan asked Fujiwara Shihan to demonstrate Sanchin kata in the tiny lobby of the hotel. Fujiwara Shihan immediately assumed the beginning position and then executed the first move, stepping into right Sanchin-dachi. Tasaki

Shihan walked behind him and executed a kin-geri from behind to insure that Fujiwara Shihan's hips were angled properly forwards and his groin was protected by his thighs. It was a religious experience, not only for me but, judging from the expression of pain and shock on Fujiwara Shihan's face, for him too.

I dreaded the training that was to come, but to my surprise, Tasaki Shihan showed a sensitivity and insight which I didn't expect. On the other hand, he refused to tolerate people not paying attention to him, and was quick to express his anger when that happened. This was particularly true of higher grades, whom he expected to toe the line without compromise. At those times when I saw him berating high ranking practitioners as if they were school kids, I could only imagine what it must have been like to train at his Oshiage dojo, infamous for the rigor, and perhaps brutality of the hard training there.

Through the years, Tasaki Shihan showed me his kindness in many ways. On my first visit to Japan in 2001, he treated me like a son, and helped me immeasurably to transition into the beginnings of understanding what Japanese training was about. I approached my JKF Goju Kai 5th Dan grading at that time with trepidation and considerable pain because of osteoarthritis in my hips, but somehow he and Fujiwara Shihan managed to coax me through it and made me feel, and become, successful, with barely a word of English passing between us.

In later years when I attended numerous international seminars taught by Tasaki Shihan and Fujiwara Shihan, I came to really understand how special they both were, not only during the training but also when sightseeing, shopping, eating, drinking and all the other activities we engaged in together. Throughout these times, it was patently clear that the thing Tasaki Shihan loved most was to be with the students who revered him. This was his greatest joy, and it was a monumental privilege for me to have been able to be there and share in his joy so many times, even without our being able to speak much to each other.

Tasaki Shihan's sense of humor often caught me by surprise. One day, when I was eating a meal in Fujiwara Shihan's Ryokan, Tasaki Shihan was staring at my legs sticking out of my shorts. He said (translated for me) "You're too fat to practice karate."

My sense was that he really wanted to be understood by his students. I remember once at the end of a seminar he offered to answer any questions. Somebody asked him “What is the difference between training here and training in Japan?” He answered “In Japan, I am somebody, and here, nobody knows me.” These were poignant and intensely human words from such a great man.

As his health began to fail him over the years, it was sad to see him, cigarette in hand, summoning his own end inhale by inhale. When I last saw him at the first Mexico JKF Goju Kai Seminar in November 2010, he was doubled over in pain most of the time, after having suffered a lower back injury when he fell off a bicycle. Yet he insisted on traveling internationally to see this new, eager group of students whom he had never met before, and between the grimaces of pain, you could see he was glad he made the trip.

I will treasure my memories of Tasaki Shihan, and know that the way to honor him is to remember what he taught me and to pass it on. His karate was the essence of sophisticated simplicity, an oxymoron but true about him nevertheless. We are all in his debt.

KATA, SELF DEFENSE, and BUNKAI

型 自衛 分解

“You may be able to perform a beautiful kata, but if you cannot defend yourself, you are not doing karate.”^{cix} – Fumio Demura

「美しい型を行なうことができるかもしれませんが、自己弁護することができなければ、空手を行っていません。」出村 文男



Students of Mr. Miyagi publicly demonstrated kata bunkai that included throws and attacks to the eye.

The study of kata is at the heart of virtually every traditional Okinawan and Japanese system of karate-do. Virtually every one of the traditional Okinawan and Japanese karate-do masters believes that kata and its corresponding bunkai applications train the participant for and instruct the participant in the ways of self-defense. To this end, all of the traditional karate-do masters have placed kata at the center of their training, and it has often been said that without kata there is no karate-do.

However, it is only fitting to point out that there are some popular martial artists who contend that the study and practice of kata is of no self-defense benefit whatsoever. Joe Lewis, a popular 1970s era tournament fighter and professional kick-boxer, once stated that the study of kata will “actually teach you bad habits which could get you hurt in a fight” and Bruce Lee, the legend of martial arts movies, “once compared trying to learn to fight by doing kata as attempting to wrap up water in a brown paper bag.”^{cx}

Furthermore, there are those who believe that the best way to learn self-defense is to train for competition. Andy Sherry, an extremely successful international competitor and coach, stated: “I think that the well trained, powerful, agile and spirited tournament competitors are the ones most likely to be able to defend themselves and this cannot be done by bunkai alone.”^{cx} Perhaps there is some truth in this observation. Jiyu kumite (a form of which is used in competition) produces a powerful and well-conditioned karate-ka, teaches proper reaction timing, and fosters the development of a strong spirit – all of which are needed when defending oneself. Mr. Eiichi Miyazato who is a very orthodox Okinawan Goju Ryu sensei, supported this view. He told us that competition allows the student to experience what cannot be experienced in kata or yakusoku kumite alone – mental toughness, body movement, timing, and training of the eyes.^{cxii}

However, it is imperative to point out that tournament jiyu kumite and self-defense is not the same thing. In tournament sparing, targets are limited and contact is minimized in order to ensure the safety of the competitors. The contrary is true when one is defending life and limb. There are no limits on the targets that one can use or on the amount of contact that one can make to those targets.

Although some popular individuals have made disparaging remarks against the practice of kata, most traditional karate instructors keep kata at the center of their training. They tell us that “those who train to learn self-defense methods will discover many useful techniques within the kata.”^{cxiii} Attacks to the joints and other weak points of the body, chokes, throws, and ground fighting are all needed in self-defense situations, and they are all taught through kata and their corresponding bunkai applications. “Joint locks, strangulations, grappling, biting and eye gouging are also considerations not addressed in [sport] kumite but represent the issues upon which kata are based...”^{cxiv}

BUNKAI

However, some traditional karate students fail to see the relevance of kata to self-defense because instruction in bunkai is often neglected by some of today’s instructors. We must remember that karate was initially altered when it was introduced to the general public in Okinawa, and it was further altered when it took on a Western competitive sport format during the Post-World War II era. In accordance with both of these alterations, many dojos teach sport jiyu kumite instead of bunkai. The main reason for this is that all dojos teach to the general public, and many dojos also teach children. Sport kumite is much safer and much easier to teach to any age group. As we recall from our discussion in Chapter 7, teaching karate as a sport requires much less training and is much easier than teaching karate through kata and its bunkai. Additionally, sport kumite is much more appropriate to teach to children. Few karate instructors would suggest that strangulation, biting, and eye gouging are appropriate to teach to a group of fifth grade students.

Consequently, the karate that is taught in the vast majority of dojos has been altered to make it safe and easy to learn for all students but particularly for children and adolescents. Research supports this point, and we are told that today karate is taught: “more like physical education; so for this reason, the way of doing kata is kept simple.”^{cxv} The result of this shift from self-defense to sport and physical education has had profound consequences on the karate. Once taught

exclusively to selected students as a vehicle for acquiring the skills of self-defense, karate is now taught to everyone as fitness and sport.

Patrick McCarthy supports the view that bunkai has been removed from the karate curriculum to make it appropriate to teach to the public and to children: “Removing what was then considered too dangerous for school children, the emphasis shifted from self-defense to physical fitness through group *kata* practice, but neglected its bunki (applications). By not teaching the hidden self-defense moves, the actual intentions of the *kata* (e.g., to disable, maim, or even kill by traumatizing anatomically vulnerable areas if necessary) became so obscure that a new tradition developed.”^{cxvi} *Kata* is now taught for physical exercise, coordination, and discipline. As a result, the self-defense applications of bunkai are often neglected.

This development is not new; it occurred during the lifetime of Mr. Gichin Funakoshi, and he explains this in his book *Karate-Do My Way of Life*. “The karate that is practiced today is not the same as karate that was practiced even as recently as ten years ago, and it is a long way indeed from the karate that I learned when I was a child in Okinawa... What is most important is that karate, as a form of sport used in physical education, should be simple enough to be practiced without undue difficulty by everybody, young and old, boys and girls, men and women.”^{cxvii} Consequently for several generations, bunkai applications (which are considered inappropriate for children and difficult for adults to learn) have frequently been neglected in the traditional karate curriculum and have been replaced with a sport-oriented curriculum.

Another reason why bunkai applications appear to be neglected is because some of the very traditional karate-do instructors teach bunkai applications only when they feel that their students are physically and emotionally ready. This is the manner in which Mr. Chojun Miyagi instructed his students, but it appears as if some of the students of Mr. Miyagi had a difficult time grasping this concept. Mr. Morio Higaonna explains that his teacher eventually learned to both fear and respect Mr. Miyagi’s bunkai demonstrations. “An’ichi recalled one training session in which he asked, ‘Sensei, what does this movement mean?’ Miyagi then invited An’ichi to punch him. When he did so, he found himself thrown to the ground firmly and painfully. Such experiences eventually taught him not to ask questions about techniques that he wasn’t ready for.”^{cxviii} In

other words, when some students feel that they are not being taught bunkai applications, it may be because they have not yet reached a state of physical and emotional development where they are receptive to the learning those applications. This is particularly true in the case of young students and beginners.



Students practicing kata bunkai under the supervision of Mr. Miyagi

CONCEALED TECHNIQUES

Today there is often a misconception about kata and bunkai. Some instructors and students make the assumption that a kata's bunkai techniques are obvious. A well-known Shotokan competitor from the U.K. maintains that bunkai applications are easy to figure out. "Once the student has acquired a certain level of competence, most of the kata movements are self-explanatory."^{cix} This type of assumption has led to a misunderstanding and a simplification of the true meaning of kata bunkai.

Many traditional karate-do instructors warn their students not to look at the outward appearance of a kata in an attempt to discern its inner meaning – the bunkai applications. Mr. Morio Higaonna, a highly respected Goju Ryu sensei explains the existence of concealed kata

techniques. “[A] technique may appear one way in the kata, and yet have a very different application. In addition, there are many hidden meanings that are not shown in the kata at all.”^{cxx} Mr. Eiiichi Miyazato, another highly respected Goju Ryu teacher, agrees with this assessment of kata bunkai applications: “Techniques within the kata have been developed by our predecessors and are purposefully difficult to distinguish from one another. For example . . . what appears to be a defensive move is actually an attack.”^{cxxi}

Many of our traditional karate instructors tell us that a technique may appear one way in the kata, but it may have an altered, backward, or even hidden bunkai application. Consequently, one should not assume that the bunkai applications from a kata are obvious and self-explanatory. The proper instruction of bunkai applications should be learned from a qualified and experienced instructor who has a connection to the founder of a traditional style of karate-do.

For a variety of reasons, bunkai applications are now being taught with greater frequency in traditional karate-do styles, and many well-known instructors are now making the bunkai applications more readily available to their students. The Japan Karate-do Federation now includes bunkai applications with each one of its Shiteigata [standardized kata],^{cxxii} and many video productions of kata now include the bunkai applications with their presentation of the various Okinawan and Japanese kata.

These applications are usually presented as a yakusoku kumite (prearranged sparring) series unique to each kata. The series of prearranged drills is infused with a variety of self-defense techniques and target areas which are too dangerous for sport (jiyu) kumite. Moreover, since both the attacker and the defender know what the other is going to do, the risk of serious injury is reduced. In this manner, bunkai applications are now being taught in a format which is safe for people of a variety of ages, but which still contains the essence of self-defense effectiveness.

The bunkai applications which were once neglected in the traditional Okinawan and Japanese karate-do curriculum are now being emphasized through yakusoku kumite drills and are being taught with each kata. The application of joint attacks, chokes, throws, and ground fighting make kata a relevant vehicle from which one can learn self-defense. Additionally, most traditional

dojos also train in jiyu kumite, and this can help in developing a well-conditioned karate-ka who possesses a strong spirit and who understands proper timing. By reaping the benefits of both kata bunkai and jiyu kumite, today's karate practitioners have the opportunity to become well prepared for self-defense.

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CHAPTER 16: Kanryo Higaonna

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- ⁱⁱ Higaonna, Morio: *The History of Karate*: page 9
- ⁱⁱⁱ Higaonna, Morio: *The History of Karate*: page 10
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- ^v Miyazato Eiichi: *Okinawan Den Goju Ryu Karate-do*: pages 20-21
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