

SHOSHIN NAGAMINE
AND SOME OF HIS MASTERS

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"THERE IS NO FIRST ATTACK IN KARATE."

BY: FUNAKOSHI

Shorin-ryu is from a island of Okinawa. Okinawa is the main island chain which stretches from Japan to Taiwan. Okinawa is a small island, about 460 square miles. Okinawa is about the same size as Los Angeles, California.

TO TE SAKAGAWA

Sakagawa was born in Shuri Toribori on March 3, 1733 and died on August 17, 1815 at the age of 82. Born out of a request from his dying father was the suggestion for his son to learn the fighting arts.

At the age of 17, Sakagawa set out to find the best possible teacher. In the city of Akada, Sakagawa found Peichin Takahara (1683-1760), who at the time was 67 years of age and was widely acclaimed as a famous warrior of the Okinawan fighting arts that had come to be called tode ("Tang hand"). Sakagawa respectfully asked to become a student of Takahara's. It was agreed he would be taken on as a student.

Four years before his death in 1760, Peichin Takahara gave his blessing to Sakagawa to study with the visiting master Kung Syang from China. Sakagawa's ability increased day by day, and others looked upon him in awe. Just two days before Takahara's death, he summoned Sakagawa to his bedside. He told him, "After I die, you are to be known as 'Karate' Sakagawa. In all your endeavors, remember always to help your country."

After Takahara's death, Sakagawa continued his study of the fighting arts by becoming a student of Kusanku's, traveling many times to China. It is during this period that Sakagawa combined the Chinese art of ch'uan-fa and the Okinawa art of tode, forming 'Okinawa-te' ("Okinawa hand") or Te ("hand"), which had also already come to be known as "Karate," meaning at this time "Chinese hand."

ARAKAKI

Arakaki was Shoshin Nagamine's first instructor. Shoshin Nagamine is the master and founder of Matsubayashi-ryu Shorin-ryu. Arakaki showed the relationship between karate and Okinawan culture and considered karate as an art. Arakaki lived to be only 28, but he had a great influence on the development of karate as an art.

Ankichi Arakaki was born in November 1899, in Shuri. The first born in a family of eleven children. Born to a sak'e (rice wine) brewer. He was a quiet but a bright boy in elementary school. In junior high school he began to neglect his studies in favor of sports and eventually had to quit school.

Arakaki began to study karate early in his boyhood. His first teachers were Shinpan Gusukuma and Cho mo Hanashiro. After quitting school he studied under Choshin Chibana, who later brought honor to the karate world when he received Emperor Hirohito's Fourth Order of Merit.

Arakaki was not a large man, but he was sturdy and had a natural ability for sports. He was from a rich family so he could afford to put his heart and soul into karate practice. After a few years he was known as a good karateman.

At 19, Arakaki's ability and strength came to the public's notice. That year Arakaki participated in a sumo wrestling tournament in Shuri. He was matched against a giant wrestler from Yomitan. Everyone thought Arakai would be defeated, but Arakai won using his hidden strength and ingenuity.

Another episode of Arakaki's life was told by Chojo Oyama, former Mayor of Okiawa (Koza) City. Arakaki was a member of the Tokyo Metropolitan

Honor Guard Battalion when he was twenty years of age. The division was holding a river crossing exercise, the soldiers were ordered to dive into the Tone' River and carry a rope to a small boat two miles up river. After securing the boat; they had to return to the bank. Arakaki was the first man to come back among the few who completed the feat.

Upon discharge from the military service in 1921, Arakaki moved to the villiage of Kadena, where he learned karate from Chotoku Kyan, one of Okinawa's greatest karatemmen.

Twenty year old Nagamine went to study under Arakaki, at the age of 28, Arakaki impressed Nagamine with his broad knowledge of karate and scientific attitude, not only toward karate, but all the martial arts.

Arakaki was a good dancer he once proformed the saru-mai (monkey dance), one of the most difficult classical dances. He would climb a pole on stage and come down head first, doing cartwheels. His movements were light, fast, and percise.

Not only could Arakaki dance well but he also had a profound knowledge of the classical plays of Okinawa and was well versed in poetry.

Arakaki begen to learn kata from Masters Chibana and Shiroma as a young boy. Because of his family's wealth, he had no difficulty in finding time for intense karate practice. He had superb coordination which enabled him to master almost anything he encountered. He was a master of karate and inventor of his unique tsumasaki-geri (toe-tip kick).

Arakaki always devoted his time to karate. What ever he did was in his best interest for karate. He practiced judo, sumo, swimming, climbed trees, and walked tip-toe to strengthen himself for karate. After a year of total dedication to the training of nidan-geri (flyéng front kick) and tsumasaki-geri (toe-tip kick), he mastered his own unique style of tsumasaki-geri.

No other karateman could match his speed and power in his technique.

There were two episodes in Arakaki's life which showed his power in tsumasaki-geri. The first was when he was 19 years old. He was at a tea house when a huge man over six-feet tall, was provoking him. Arakaki tried to ignore him but he was then pushed down the stairs to entangle Arakaki legs and arms. Arakaki lost his temper and gave a kick to the mans body, with a deep groan, the man sank to the floor. The man died six months later of a hemorrhage of the lung.

The second incident was when Arakaki's brother Ansuke, wanted money to buy sake'. He challanged Arakaki to kick him for that amount of money. Arakaki accepted the challenged in a brotherly way and kick Ansuke as light as he could. That night Ansuke ran a fever, and had to have an operation on his thigh several days later. No doubt his kick was lethal.

Because of his fathers death the family's fortunes were declining in the economic crisis following World War I. The hardships were bad, and he fell ill and died of ulcers on December 28, 1927.

CHOTOKU KYAN

Chotoku Kyan was born in December 1870, the third son of the Kyan's who were the eleventh descendants of King Shosei of the Ryukyu Kingdom. His father, Chofu Kyan, held the post of steward to the family of Sir Shotai, the last of Ryukyu royal lineage. Chofu Kyan was good at Chinese classics, Japanese arts and lettering, and an excellent karate man.

At the age of twelve, Chotoku went to Tokyo with his father and studied Chinese classics until he was sixteen. Chotoku was smaller than his father and in poor health. His father thought his son's health should improve so that he could become an honorable samurai and descendant of the Shosei royal lineage. Chotoku's father, Chofu, took him outdoors on cold winter days to train him in sumo and karate wrestling.

Chotoku came back to Okinawa after his father finished his duty as a steward in Tokyo. Chotoku started practicing karate regularly at the age of twenty. His father gave him some advice about how to turn his weakness to an advantage: "You are not blessed with physical constitution, yet you have to pluck more than sufficient to conquer your physical handicaps. Furthermore, success in budo does not necessarily rely on how you are built rather, it depends on how strenuously you try to train yourself. The most important thing is to master one waza which is best adapted to your physical constitution. Then you can be self-confident enough to believe that you are second to none as far as budo is concerned.

At that time there were three noted karate men in Okinawa: Sokon Matsumura in Shuri, Anko Itosu, also in Shuri, and Peichin Oyadomari in Naha. Chofu asked the three of them to teach his son karate. He asked them, not because he could not do so himself, but because he loved his son too much to be severe in karate exercises.

Chotoku learned Tomari-te and Shuri-te karate very rapidly. In only a few years he mastered secrets of karate which could be used by a small man like himself. The secret was that when a small man faces an opponet, he must not take backward steps to evade blows or kicks; instead he should take forward or side steps so that he can take the offensive right after defending himself. To acquire this "offense-right-after-defense" technique by steping forward or sideways, Kyan used to train himself on the banks of the Hija River, keeping his back to the river or on the railings of the bridge.

Kyan was very often challenged. Although he consequently had to fight very often, no one ever heard that he was beaten. By the time he was thirty years old, he had become distinguished throughout Shuri and Naha.

Because of the reform of the social system under the Meiji government, most of the lords and samuri were deprived of their social privileges and economic supports, and sank into poverty. Among those who fell on hard times were members of Kyan's family. They were forced to move to the villiage of Yomitan, where they owened a small amount of property. Kyan had to struggle for a living by doing such odd jobs as raising silkworms and pulling carts. In spite of his miserable life, the thought of giving up the study of Karate was the furthest thing from his mind.

Under these depressing circumstances, Kyan mastered the form Kusanku from a karate expert named Yara, wellknown in the area of Yomitan.

The sucuss of Kyan's training can be clearly seen in the following episode, which occured when he was a wagon driver at the age of forty. There was a large, powerful young man called Matsuda, who made it a habit of teasing and picking on youngsters in the village. When Kyan reproached Mastuda for his bullying, Mastada turned his anger on Kyan and challenged him. He asserted that even if Kyan were a renowend karate master, he would be nothing in a real fight. Matsuda went too far when he told Kyan that his

defeat would prove that karate was one thing and actual fighting another. Kyan accepted the challenge.

The two fought in a vacant lot by the Hija River. Kyan stood with shizentai-dachi (natural stance), keeping his back to the river. When Mastuda tried to deliver a blow to Kyan's abdomen as though to strike makiwara, Kyan instantly shifted his position to evade the attack and simultaneously kicked the outer part of Matsuda's thigh. Matsuda flew spinning into the river. He emerged a chastened man.

In addition to his mastery of Kusanku, Kyan also invented a special jodan-zuki (upper punch). Kyan fully realized his own handicap and turned it to advantage by means of hard training and creativity.

Later Kyan taught karate to the young people of the village and gave instruction at the Kadena Police Station and other places. Kyan's favorite forms were Passai, Chinto, and Kusanku.

Kyan said: "A mastery of karate does not depend on the learner's physical constitution, but mainly on constant practice." One of the examples he gave concerned the development of fists: "The daily practice of Makiwara striking can produce power destructive enough to break boards or bricks, but powerful fists can easily be weakened through negligence of constant practice."

MOTOBU

Choki Motobu was born in Shuri in February, 1871, the third son of a high ranking aji, or lord.

Because the tendency of the time was to neglect the education of all but the first-born son, Choki and his brothers were ignored in favor of the eldest. The elder brother, Choyu, designated to carry on his family's heritage, recieved the excellent education and training in the martial arts that befitted a samurai.

Without the education his brother was given, Choki Motobu grew to be a man of rough character whose chief ambition was to be the strongest in Okinawa. In an attempt to realize this ambition, he trained himself and engaged in makiwara striking exercises and heavy rock lifting. He learned much on his own, and his ability to move quickly and nimbly earned him the name "Motobu the Monkey."

In the evenings, Motobu made it a habit to go to the entertainment district where he would start fights to test his prowess. He was once badly defeated when he challenged a karate expert called Itarashiki, who disposed of him as though he were a child. He was so enthusiastic about karate practice that he intansified his efforts, continuing to pick fights and learning new fighting techniques from his opponents. Most of the karate masters at that time were highly critical of Motobu's aggressive attitude and his reckless manner of learning karate by street fighting, and they refused to teach him. One karateman, however, Kosaku Matsumora of Tomari, was impressed by Motobu's enthusiasm for karate and taught him Naihanchi and Passai.

Motobu also asked Matsumora to teach him the art of kumite. Since kumite is directly linked to actual fighting, Matsumora was afraid that Motobu might use it in the street. He refused him, telling him to study

fighting techniques on his own. But Motobu didn't give up. According to the late Ryojin Kin, the distinguished master of Ryukyuan music, Motobu studied Matsumora's kumite by secretly watching him nightly through the fence around the dojo.

Not until Motobu was well into middle age did he achieve popular recognition as a powerful karateman. It happened soon after Motobu moved to Osaka in 1921.

On a trip to Kyoto, Motobu and a friend witnessed a contest in which amateur participants from any martial art were invited to pit themselves against the professional boxers. After a few matches, there appeared a foreign professional, about six-feet tall. A referee announced that any challenger would be welcome against the foreigner with a prize for the winner.

No one came forward. The foreigner became more arrogant, so much so that Motobu's friend urged him to challenge the boxer, adding that he would bet on Motobu. Motobu stepped into the ring, his fighting spirit aroused by this new challenge.

The boxer was taken aback by Motobu's strange fighting stance and small stature. For two rounds he circled Motobu with a disdainful smile. In the third round Motobu realized that the boxer was making fun of him and changed to the offensive. The audience heard a sharp kiai by Motobu and the boxer fell to the floor. Beside the big body lying in the ring, little Motobu stood nonchalantly. The fight was certainly over, but nobody knew what had happened. "As a matter of fact, with his lightning-like karate-hand, Motobu had struck his opponent's temple with such speed that the audience was unaware of it. Motobu was fifty-two when he fought the boxer.

The story of Motobu-zaru appeared in a popular magazine, making him known throught the country. As a result, Motobu began to teach karate in Osaka and opened a karate dojo in Tokyo. He was eventually asked to teach at universities.

Later in his life, Motobu put aside aggression and studied karate to seek its true spirit--conquest of self, and not others. The change in Motobu's attitude is illuminating and inspiring. We can learn much in his switch from an aggressively violent man who had become famous through his mastery of fighting skills to a seeker who concentrated on kata to find the true essence of karate-do.

Motobu went back to Okinawa later in 1939 and visited all his masters to discuss the situation of karate-do in Tokyo. He examined the original Okinawan karate forms and the kobujutsu forms (kata with ancient style weapons) and then returned to Tokyo.

Motobu did not develop his mastery of karate only by fighting. He combined what he had learned in fighting with a mastery of kata, which came only after long practice and work with instructors like Matsumora. Because Motobu's style developed as a balance between kata and kumite, it was unique. For instance, the position of his hands in the postures of tsukiwaza and keriwaza was a bit higher than that of other karate schools--Shuri-te and Tomari-te. He also posed the knuckle just below the breast and beside the lung.

One of Motobu's specialities was keikoken-zuki (forefinger knuckle punch). Motobu always attached great importance to the use of makiwara, but the difference between Motobu and the others was that he could strike with keikoken. No other karateman in the history of Okinawan karate has ever matched Motobu in the destructive power of keikoken. Motobu's theory for evaluating keikoken's importance was drawn from his rich experiences in actual fighting.

"In actual fighting, you must get close to the opponet in order to give him a fatal blow. However, when you get to close to the opponet, you can't use seiken properly and effectively. In this case, either keikoken or uraken can produce the most vitally destructive power."

Just before World War II, Motobu returned to Okinawa. On September 2, 1944, he died of a stomach disease in Naha at the age of seventy-three.

SHOSHIN NAGAMINE

Born on July 15, 1907, in Tomari, Naha City, Okinawa, Nagamine has devoted over half a century to the study of karate.

Nagamine was born just three years after karate was introduced as a physical education requirement into Okinawan public schools. It was then that karate really began to become popular. The Satsuma occupation had ended a generation before, in 1875, and Okinawa had become part of Japan.

Nagamine began to study karate while he was a teenager. "I spent my childhood plagued with ill health," he says. As a sophomore in high school, he had a gastroenteric attack. Doctors feared he might have tuberculosis. "I found that karate gradually improved my health," he says. He became the captain of the school's karate club in the senior year of high school, which might be equivalent to quarterbacking a high school football team in America.

Nagamine studied under the best of them in Okinawa. Among his teachers was Chotoku Kyan, a student of Itosu. Another was Choki Motobu, who came over to "mainland" Japan with Gichin Funakoshi in 1922, hitting Tokyo and Osaka with the new art. Nagamine was very much influenced by Motobu's approach, having had personal instruction from his kumite.

Lest anyone think of Nagamine as just a "street fight" advocate, he is quick to point out that karate means much more to him. One of his favorite sayings is taken from Funakoshi: Karate ni sente nashi--There is no first attack in karate.

Nagamine attributes the increase in karate's popularity among the Japanese to the karate tournament, which is called "kumite match." In the tournaments, techniques such as ^{Uke}ken--backfist strike--and hiji-ate--elbow smash--were eliminated. This was done, he says, to "simplify the referee's judgement," and, he claims, the limitations destroyed the true meaning of karate. The same complaint is registered among many American karateka, particularly in