

Master Funakoshi's Karate
The History and Development of the Empty Hand Art
Part I

by Graham Noble

INTRODUCTION

GICHIN FUNAKOSHI's story has been told in earlier issues ('Fighting Arts' Nos. 33 and 34) but a second series of articles is now timely for a couple of reasons. First, because the broad sweep of the previous articles did not allow us to go into detail on certain points, such as the development of Funakoshi's karate, his views on kumite (sparring), etc., and second, because much new information has become available. There are several minor controversies about the history of Japanese Karate and I've tried to set these out as clearly as possible.

In any case, for the student of karate history, anything on Funakoshi is of interest. It has been a long journey from the old days of Okinawa-te to modern karate, yet Funakoshi bridged that gap in a way: he began learning karate when it was still an obscure, secret art, and died in the year of the first All Japan Championships, just as the art was about to enter into its worldwide expansion.

This series of articles is actually in two parts: in the first I go over various aspects of Gichin Funakoshi's karate, and in the second Harry Cook will give his detailed interpretation of 'Funakoshi's Twenty Precepts.' Karate history does not lend itself to systematic study, and for my half of this series I've relied heavily on contributions from fellow enthusiasts, so thanks to the following: Ian McLaren, Prof. N. Karasawa, and Prof. Y. Shimizu for wading through pages of translation from the Japanese; Harry Cook, who supplied a lot of the original Japanese material; Sensei Mitsusuke Harada, who not only gave me a copy of the 1935 "Karate-do Kyohan", but also has been of immense help with his personal recollections and clarification of many points; Henri Plee, Shingo Ohgami and Pat McCarthy for material from their collections; and the National Diet Library, Japan.

-- Graham Noble.

Master Funakoshi Comes to Japan

Until his early fifties Gichin Funakoshi laboured in obscurity as a schoolteacher in the provincial backwater of Okinawa. Then in 1922 he travelled to the Japanese mainland to give a demonstration of the little known art of karate, and thus perhaps only half consciously, set in motion the development of the art as a major Japanese and world wide Budo. That demonstration, The All Japan Athletic Exhibition held at Ochanomizu in Tokyo, was only scheduled for a week or so but after it ended Funakoshi stayed on, and as far as I'm aware, he never did return to Okinawa. The reason he gave was that numerous people had asked him to remain in Japan, but this contrasts with other accounts that we have, which indicate that the initial response to his karate instruction was only small. At any rate, for some time Funakoshi lived in a small room in the Meisojuku, a boarding home for Okinawan students, and to make ends meet he had to take odd jobs around the hostel, gardening, sweeping up, and helping in the kitchen. We can't be sure what decided Funakoshi to remain in Japan but evidently he had no wish to return

home. It seems a little strange, but his wife never followed him to Tokyo, and he didn't see her again till 25 years later when she was evacuated to Japan during the battle of Okinawa. So all may not have been well there. Hironori Ohtsuka (a student of Master Funakoshi who was to found his own style of karate -- the Wado-ryu. Editor) heard a rumour that Funakoshi had money problems back in Okinawa, and that was why he never returned -- but that amounts to little more than gossip; from what we know of Funakoshi in Japan his conduct was always exemplary. Whatever lay behind it all I think that at 53 years of age Funakoshi may have seen a last chance to make a break with his old, flat Okinawan life and start afresh in Japan. And perhaps above all he had genuine desire to introduce "the noble art of karate" to Japan and see it developed as a major budo. Funakoshi sensei had actually made an earlier visit to Japan, giving a demonstration of the art in Kyoto in 1917. The circumstances surrounding this are obscure and I have never been able to pin down an accurate account. At any rate Funakoshi returned to Okinawa after a short visit, but from this time he probably had in the back of his mind the possibility of teaching karate in Japan. When Crown Prince Hirohito visited Okinawa in 1921, and a karate demonstration was given in his presence, Norikazu Kanna (the captain of the Prince's ship and an Okinawan himself) (known as Kenwa Kanna, Seinenkai Editor) suggested to Funakoshi that such a fine art should be introduced to the Japanese mainland. Funakoshi wrote to an acquaintance, Saburo Kinjo, and it may have been through Kinjo's help that he was invited to take part in the Ochanomizu Exhibition. Shortly after the Sports Festival, Funakoshi was asked to give a demonstration at the Kodokan Judo hall, before Jigoro Kano himself and his senior instructors. To assist him, he took along Shinken Gima, a twenty-five year old Okinawan living in Tokyo, who had studied karate under the famous Kentsu Yabu. The two karateka were expecting to demonstrate before a few judo instructors and were a little shocked to find an audience of two hundred and fifty awaiting their appearance. Funakoshi demonstrated his favourite 'Kushanku,' Gima performed 'Naihanchi,' and together they showed applications of karate technique. Gima recalled:

"When I arrived at the Kodokan with Funakoshi sensei not only were the seniors there to greet us but the Director, Jigoro Kano himself. More than 80 members of the Tomishinsoku Kodokan branch were there too, so there were over 200 people assembled for the demonstration. We were both overawed. It was natural we should feel nervous because the Kodokan was considered to be the mecca of Japanese budo."

"Kano sensei was eager to learn about karate and he asked such detailed questions that Funakoshi sensei sometimes had difficulty in answering them. I believe that because we demonstrated at the Kodokan, karate was more easily introduced into mainland Japan. In other words, the fact that Kano sensei recognized karate meant that in turn karate was recognized by the Japanese budo world."

" ... After that Funakoshi sensei and I displayed karate in public at the Hekkistukan Dojo of Yagyū-ryū and at Neihaido Taisojuku, and also at the home of the old Okinawan king in Tokyo. I remember that we also visited the house of Professor Shinjo Tomari of Keio University, who was also eager to learn about karate. Among those who supported us were Kano Sensei, Hiromachi Nakayama, the kendo master, Vice Admiral Yakuro Yashiro, and Baron Shimpei. This all happened in the Tokyo area."

When Hironori Ohtsuka, then an instructor of Shinto-Yoshin-ryū jujutsu visited the Meisojuku to learn about karate, he found Gichin Funakoshi living in a small, dark room near the entrance of the building. This was just after Funakoshi had settled in Japan and as yet he had no students. He paid a rent of 10 yen but found this a little difficult to manage. To help with the rent he carried out odd jobs around the building, distributing newspapers to the rooms, sorting the mail, and sometimes helping in the kitchen

and garden. Shortly after this, around July 1922, Funakoshi began teaching his karate to a small group of students who had heard about him by word of mouth. For a dojo he was allowed to use the lecture hall of 20 tatami (mats) in the Meisojuku. His rent was put up to 15 yen because of this, so for a time at least he had to carry out his miscellaneous duties round the building. Shinken Gima was one of those early Meisojuku karateka and he remembered how makeshift things were at first. There were no karate uniforms, for example, and the trainees would simply take off their coats and jackets to begin practice.

Yasuhiro Konishi, who began karate training at the Meisojuku in 1923, wrote that Funakoshi taught daily for two hours, from 3 pm to 5 pm. The classes were small, from three to eight pupils at a time. "The training consisted only of the simple repetition of kata," Konishi recalled, "and viewed from today's perspective the method was really quite rudimentary."

Within a couple of years Funakoshi began teaching at other institutions and karate clubs were opened at several universities. This was an important step because the university clubs were a vital factor in the development of Japanese karate. The young student spirit gave an injection of fresh blood into the art and many of the top Japanese karateka came out of these clubs. Okinawan karate was introduced to a Japan which had a martial arts tradition of its own, a tradition moreover which was far more deep and extensive than Okinawa's. Karate soon came under the influence of Japanese ideas of budo and the range of the art began to expand. These modifications brought about a subtle change in the nature of the art and by the mid-1930s some of the senior masters back on Okinawa were saying that true karate no longer existed in Japan. Nevertheless, changes had to be made if karate was to become a major Japanese budo. Gichin Funakoshi was more forward-looking than most of his fellow Okinawans, and he was involved in many of the new developments, but I can't help feeling that sometimes things went a little too fast for him. When, near the end of his life, he wrote the preface to the second edition of 'Karate-do Kyohan,' his tone was of disappointment at the way post-war karate had turned out. Funakoshi sensei continued to teach into the 1930s, although by then he had trained several assistant instructors who ran the university and other clubs. The 1930s generation in fact, was the last to have direct experience of his teaching; his instruction after the war was only nominal. Toshio Kamata (Watanabe) who began studying karate in the 30s, recalled:

"When I began receiving instruction from Funakoshi sensei he had already turned 70 and his body was aged. Hence, without making rapid movements, he would execute a technique, giving pointers to his pupils. His movements were not particularly clean, or quick, but he was able to express precisely what was required. That is why we could sense clearly what the master was looking for."

By the mid 1930s Funakoshi had more or less retired from major teaching duties, which were passed on to his assistant instructors and, at the main Shotokan dojo to his son Yoshitaka. He would occasionally look over classes, but by this time he was around 70 years old and may have recognized that the development of Japanese karate which by this time was rather different from the form he had learned many years before in Okinawa -- should be left in younger hands. Throughout the war years karate teaching was disrupted by the constant turnover of students as they were called up for military service. Many fine karateka were lost in the conflict and then shortly after the Japanese surrender, Funakoshi's son Yoshitaka died too. It was a couple of years later before karate practice began again. Gichin Funakoshi was 80 years old by this time, and of course he could take little active role in the revival. Nevertheless, he was a potent symbol to his many students who rallied round him as a figurehead in the revival of the art . . . and he did do a little teaching. For example, he taught a class every Saturday at

Waseda University. In the post-war period the various Shotokan groups tried to come together but that didn't work out and splits occurred within a couple of years. Each group went their separate way, but all looked back to Gichin Funakoshi as their founding father. In his book on Budo, Master Nango wrote:

"Master Funakoshi left the Shotokan style of karate, but the curious thing is that no-one in this style has taken correctly the transmission of this technique, truly no one . . . By the end of Master Funakoshi's life, his students had already changed his techniques. His karate has therefore seen changed as if his own imprint had disappeared. All that remain are the name Shotokan, and the names which he gave to the old kata . . . "

"I can imagine the sadness he must have felt at the end of his life, in realising that almost all the techniques which he had tried to transmit for so long had been lost."

I give that quote for what it is worth. I am not quite sure myself what Nango is getting at and I think part of his argument rests on rather fine points of what constituted Funakoshi's view of karate. It would be true to say that today's Shotokan is rather different from the style shown in the first edition of Funakoshi's 'Karate-do Kyohan' (1935), but that is only to be expected; the world of martial arts has moved on since then. But, using the evidence of old books and photographs it is instructive to see just how things have developed.

2. The Origins of Funakoshi's Karate

It is well known that Gichin Funakoshi learned "te" from Ankoh Azato and Ankoh Itosu. He wrote something about these masters in 'Karate-do Ichiro' ('Karate-do, My Way of Life'), but he was not specific regarding dates, or what he learned from each master, and there is a minor historical puzzle here. In 'Karatedo Nyumon,' Funakoshi wrote that "without a doubt the greatest part of my knowledge of karate is based on the instruction that I received from Azato," yet it is difficult to identify Azato's influence anywhere in Funakoshi's kata. 'Naihanchi' and 'Pinan' were of course the basic teaching kata of Itosu's style, but most of Funakoshi's other kata such as 'Kushanku,' 'Passai,' 'Chinto,' 'Jion' and 'Jitte' -- follow the Itosu versions too. Azato's influence may come through occasionally in specific techniques or possibly in the general appearance of Funakoshi's style.

Funakoshi began learning karate when it was still taught secretly, perhaps around 1880. A few years later the art began to emerge from this secrecy but it still remained fairly difficult to obtain instruction in the kata. Generally speaking, karate experts knew only a few kata; according to Funakoshi himself, a great expert might know only four or five. As he wrote in 'Ryukyu Kempo Karate' (1922): "The old masters used to keep a narrow field but plough a deep furrow. Present day students have a broad field but only plough a shallow furrow." Genshin Hironishi says -- with what authority I don't know -- that Funakoshi's karate practice involved the study of 100 kata, but that seems unlikely. When he settled in Japan he taught 15 kata, and by the standards of the day that was a fairly large number. There is a theory, however, that he picked up many of these kata only shortly before he moved to Japan, and consequently may have learned some only imperfectly. I first read this theory a few years ago in articles by Kenji Tokitsu, an excellent historian. Tokitsu's researches suggested to him that Funakoshi had fully mastered only the three 'Naihanchi' kata and 'Kushanku' and had learned the others in a more superficial way to provide him with a larger teaching content when he went to Japan. He pointed out that Funakoshi did not come up through the Shihan Gakko at the time the 'Pinan' kata were introduced there, and retold

an anecdote in which Kenwa Mabuni corrected Hironori Ohtsuka's 'Pinan' kata that Ohtsuka had learned from Funakoshi. Mitsusuke Harada told me that when he was living in Brazil in the 1950s he made the acquaintance of some expatriate Okinawans who practiced karate (a Shorin-ryu form). In their talks on karate he was a little surprised to hear them refer to Gichin Funakoshi as "Funakoshi-san" rather than "Funakoshi sensei." Harada demonstrated 'Empi' kata before the Okinawans but there was something about their reaction which he didn't understand; they didn't seem too sure about the Shotokan version of the kata. (This was Harada sensei's favourite kata and the one he had performed for his shodan grading). Later, one of the older Okinawans, about 70 years old, told Harada that there were several "errors" in the kata; it was not a true transmission of Itosu sensei's form. I am not sure what to make of all this. If Funakoshi's 'Empi' was different then yes, he may have learned the Itosu version imperfectly. On the other hand he may have made his own changes in the kata, or learned another version elsewhere.

In studying karate history you often come across conflicting information and there seems little way of resolving such problems. For instance, Gichin Funakoshi wrote that he spent 10 years studying the three 'Naihanchi' and that was why he asked Gima to perform the kata at their Kodokan demonstration. In fact viewed in a historical context it may not mean a great deal. I think Funakoshi would have been fully familiar with the three 'Naihanchi' (at one time the basic kata of Itosu's system), 'Kushanku' (his favourite kata) and probably 'Passai,' which was one of the most widely practiced kata of Okinawan karate. I cannot judge his depth of knowledge in other kata but, for example, he would have been able to incorporate the 'Pinan' into his teaching fairly easily. In any case, if for his own practice he concentrated on only five or six kata, that would not have been unusual for an Okinawan karate expert. If he endeavoured to learn other kata to expand his teaching then that is to his credit. And if some of these were learned (slightly) imperfectly that only confirms the difficulty of learning kata in those days.

One other point to bear in mind is that in those early days kata were not standardised as they are now. Each expert was free to make his own modifications and in fact that is why the numerous variations of kata now exist. In few, if any, cases can we determine what was the original form of a kata. Mostly, Funakoshi's kata followed the orthodox forms but he did make some minor changes, often in an attempt to standardise his teaching. For example in 'Pinan Nidan' ('Heian Shodan') the final four knife hand blocks were originally performed at a lower level. Funakoshi changed these to middle level blocks, and he made a similar change to the three consecutive shuto-ukes in 'Passai.'

Judging from old photographs, Gichin Funakoshi's technique was in no way inferior to his contemporaries -- we shouldn't forget that he was one of the leading karate exponents in Okinawa. And in the final analysis his kata have not proved any less worthy than those of other styles; in fact the modern versions of his forms have become something of a standard in the karate world. Several people have pointed out that Funakoshi sensei only ever performed "Kushanku" at demonstrations. If so, this goes to show, not any lack of knowledge of other kata, but his genuine modesty: this was the only kata he felt he could perform to a high enough standard. Funakoshi once told Yasukiyo Takeda that he was concerned at how some of his students were rushing their practice and taking gradings too quickly. Rather than doing this, he said, he would like them to spend their time learning 'Heian Shodan' thoroughly.

3. Funakoshi's Books

Gichin Funakoshi wrote four books on karate technique: 'Ryukyu Kempo Karate,' 'Rentan Goshin

'Karate-jutsu' and the two editions of 'Karate-do Kyohan.' All are now collector's items. 'Ryukyu Kempo Karate' came out in 1922. That wasn't very long after Funakoshi settled in Tokyo so I imagine he must have been burning the midnight oil at the Meisojuku to get it ready for publication. It is a small book, just over 300 pages in all, and contains numerous forewords by important acquaintances of Funakoshi. It is primarily taken up by a description of his 15 kata, but although it is of great historical value -- as far as I know it is the first book published on the subject of karate -- its instructional value is limited by the use of rather crude drawings rather than photographs. That shortcoming was rectified in a revised version of the book published three years later (1925) entitled 'Rentan Goshin Karate-jutsu.' This is my own favourite of Funakoshi's books. Although not as complete as a work as the first edition of 'Karate Do Kyohan,' in my opinion Funakoshi's kata are shown here in their best light. I think he looks more comfortable with his technique than he does in the 'Kyohan' of ten years later. This is probably not an opinion many people would take since his karate -- the karate as he first taught it in Japan -- is rather different in appearance from the modern Shotokan style. The Shotokan kata can be seen here in embryo, but the large emphatic technique of modern Shotokan is absent from Funakoshi's forms: his stances are higher, his techniques shorter, and the hip and leg movement not so pronounced as we see today. Nevertheless, as Henri Plee pointed out to me, there is a certain "quality" (qualite) in Funakoshi's kata, and his style as shown in this book has a naturalness and apparent ease of movement that I find pleasing. There is also a kind of modesty in his technique; that is, a lack of any desire (which we often see today) to impress onlookers. If anything, Funakoshi's 1925 style could be considered a form of Shorinryu. As I said his kata are early versions of the modern Shotokan forms, the main difference lying in the way the kata are performed. The modern kata are done in a more dynamic way, in deeper stances, with pronounced focus, and in a different tempo. The basic sequences of the kata have been changed little although there have been certain technical changes. For example side snap kicks have replaced the traditional front kicks to the side in 'Pinan 2' and '4' and 'Kushanku'; the elbow strike in 'Chinto' is now performed at upper rather than middle level, and so on. In 'Seisan' ('Hangetsu'), Funakoshi used a characteristic open hand formation -- index finger extended with the other fingers curled up -- that I have not seen duplicated elsewhere. His style was also somewhat looser than we see today. For instance, in 'Naihanchi' ('Tekki') stance Funakoshi's toes often stray slightly outwards, and in 'Seisan' his stance is much less formal than the modern Hangetsu dachi. The rigorous technical emphasis which marks the modern Shotokan was much less evident in this early period. As Yasuhiro Konishi said, from today's perspective the karate training of the 1920s was rather rudimentary. Apart from the brief explanation of a few throws, both Funakoshi's 1922 and 1925 books concentrated solely on kata. His next book, 'Karate-do Kyohan' was published in 1935 and it showed something of the development that had taken place in the previous ten years or so. The fifteen kata were again demonstrated but in addition the book included techniques of pre-arranged kumite and gave examples of self defence from a sitting position, against knife, sword, and staff, and for women. 'Karate-do Kyohan' is usually regarded as Gichin Funakoshi's masterwork. Funakoshi sensei himself poses for most of the photographs and consequently we can discern a subtle change in his kata since 'Rentan Goshin Karate-jutsu'. Although the techniques themselves remain unchanged, his stances are somewhat longer and his movements a little larger. He is beginning, in fact, to look a little like the recognisable Shotokan style. His kumite techniques are fairly basic but he includes some sequences which contain exchanges of blocks and attacks between the two partners. One noticeable thing about Funakoshi's kumite techniques is that he usually grabs and twists the attacker's hand while delivering his counterattack. Mitsusuke Harada told me how surprisingly strong Funakoshi's grip remained even in his eighties, so apparently this was a basic feature of his kumite.

It was another 23 years before the second edition of 'Kyohan' was published. That was in 1958, the year after Funakoshi's death. Nonetheless, I imagine he did most of the work involved in the revision of the book. Because of Funakoshi's advanced age, the techniques in this edition were demonstrated by younger experts, primarily Shigeru Egami. By that time they were doing more or less the Shotokan style that we know today. The change from Gichin Funakoshi's original 1922 karate to modern Shotokan was a gradual process, but in many respects the style was there by the mid-1930s among some of the younger trainees. The change arose from several sources: Funakoshi himself, his son Yoshitaka and his associates, from a general infusion of new blood into the art and over the last three decades the contribution of the Japan Karate Association and its instructors. But if we go back a little to the 1935 edition of, "Karate-do Kyohan" it seems to me that Funakoshi sensei's personal karate did not go much beyond there, that is a karate based primarily on the practice of kata, augmented by yaku soku (prearranged) kumite and makiwara (striking board) practice. Funakoshi did not care for jiyu-kumite (free sparring) and even in that era he drew some criticism from other (Japanese) teachers for what they saw as his overemphasis on kata. Such teachers were familiar with the free-play of judo and kendo and felt that something of that sort should be introduced to karate. That was a new idea to Funakoshi and, because of long established habits of mind, something that he had difficulty coming to terms with.

Master Funakoshi's Karate The History and Development of the Empty Hand Art Part II

by Graham Noble

If you look through karate histories you will often read that Gichin Funakoshi combined two styles of karate, Shorin and Shorei, to form his own system. This has been repeated so many times that it is almost established as a historical fact -- but it is not really correct. The first recorded use of the terms Shorin and Shorei was by Ankoh Itosu in his "Ten Teachings" of 1908. Itosu wrote: "In olden times two styles of karate, called Shorin and Shorei, came from China. We consider that both have distinct advantages and should not be altered or combined." The origins of the terms are unclear but it's a good guess that Shorin refers to the Shaolin Monastery and its style of boxing. ("Shorin" is the Japanese pronunciation of Shaolin). Shaolin ch'uan had been famous for centuries and no doubt something of this fame had spread to Okinawa, which had strong links with China. Even so, Itosu could only have been generally aware of Shaolin because he used an incorrect character in writing the name.

"Shorei" is more problematical. Some writers have stated that this refers to a temple in China, but this is not backed up by any research. As far as we know there is no mention of a Shorei temple anywhere in the literature of Chinese boxing. I am inclined to accept Kenji Tokitsu's theory that "Shorei" was originally a mispronunciation of "Shorin" which then became identified with a certain style of karate. Ankoh Itosu did not give any details or description of the two schools of karate but it is generally agreed that Shorin referred to the style practised in Shuri (Shuri-te), and Shorei to the style of Naha (Naha-te). Shuri-te was developed into the modern Okinawan Shorin-ryu styles, and Naha-te evolved into Goju-ryu. Fourteen years or so after Itosu wrote his precepts Gichin Funakoshi supplied a definition of Shorin and Shorei in his book "Ryukyū Kempo Karate." He wrote:

"We have many ryu-gi (schools) in Okinawa under the direction of many different teachers, but

basically there are only two ryu. They are Shorin-ryu and Shorei-ryu. Shorei-ryu is supposed to be fitted for the bigger man while Shorin-ryu suits the smaller, lighter man. Each of these ryu has its strengths and weaknesses, but fundamentally Shorei-ryu's fault is its lack of mobility, and Shorin-ryu, though it is light and fast, lacks the power of Shorei-ryu. Those who study Karate must be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each style."

Some experts doubt the validity of Funakoshi's division but as a description of two tendencies in karate it seems fair enough. However, Funakoshi then applied his classification to each of the 15 kata he brought to Japan. They were split as follows, (the modern Shotokan names are given in brackets):

Shorin: The 5 "Pinan" ("Heian"), "Kushanku" ("Kankudai"), and "Passai" ("Bassai").

Shorei: The 3 "Naihanchi" ("Tekki"), "Seisan" ("Hangetsu"), "Wanshu" ("Empi"), "Chinto" ("Gankaku"), "Jitte", and "Jion."

Funakoshi's general idea can be seen. Kata with varied technique and covering a wide area, such as "Kushanku" were classified as Shorin. Those with more forceful movements, such as "Seisan" and "Jitte" were then described as Shorei. Even so it is difficult to see why "Passai" and "Wanshu" say, should be put in opposite categories. Basically, the classification was arbitrary and Funakoshi himself sometimes seems to have been confused. For example, the classification of "Chinto" seems odd since it is a kata characterized by mobility and balance, and in his second book (1925) Funakoshi reclassified it as Shorin. (Or maybe it was just a misprint in the first book).

The important point is that Funakoshi's categorization did not follow the usual one of equating Shorin-ryu with Shuri-te and Shorei-ryu with Naha-te. Funakoshi never studied Naha-te and in fact all the 15 kata he classified came from Shuri-te. Thus he never, as has often been asserted, combined two styles of karate in creating his own method. If anyone did that it was Kenwa Mabuni who taught all the kata of both Shuri-te and Naha-te in his Shito-ryu.

Although a few kata fit clearly into Funakoshi's categorization -- Goju's "Sanchin" and "Seiunchin" would be Shorei, and "Chinto" and "Kushanku" Shorin -- I'm not sure it means a great deal today, and it can be misleading. It is probably best taken as a description of the two main tendencies in karate training -- a stress on power, or on speed and mobility. Funakoshi's advice would then be, not to over-rely on one particular aspect, but to combine the best elements of each approach.

Gichin Funakoshi was a man of moderate behaviour, someone who made few enemies. Yet there were people he found it difficult to get along with, Choki Motobu for example. I don't know if there was a particular reason for this, but basically Funakoshi and Motobu were contrasting personalities with different views of what karate was and how it should be practised. Funakoshi believed in correct behaviour and was interested in the study of literature. Motobu, although he came from Okinawa's upper classes was rough natured and (possibly) illiterate. And where Funakoshi was always striving to make karate a "Do" with Motobu it remained essentially a jutsu. The Motobus were a high ranking family in Okinawa but Motobu's tastes were those of the lower orders. He loved to fight and as a youth it was his ambition to become the strongest man on the island. A lot of his time was spent in the red light district picking fights and consorting with prostitutes.

Choki Motobu studied karate with three main experts: Ankoh Itosu, Kosaku Matsumora, and Sakuma. His favourite kata was "Naihanchi" (Shodan) and since this used to be the first kata taught by Itosu it suggests that Motobu did not get very far into Itosu's Shuri-te. The same may apply to Matsumora and Sakuma. I get the impression that Motobu would try and get what he could from these teachers but he was not the kind of person to remain a faithful student for years, learning one kata after another. His primary interest was the effectiveness of karate technique and his aim was to learn whatever would make him a stronger fighter. This is not to say that he lacked application or intelligence because in many respects his karate was more practical and advanced than his contemporaries. He thought a great deal about fighting techniques and trained daily; to a large degree he was a self-made karateman.

One of Choki Motobu's claims to fame was that he once beat a boxer in a challenge match. The story of that bout has been told in an earlier issue of F.A.I., and without going into the whys and wherefores Motobu showed the effectiveness of his style at the age of fifty. His main strength was in his fast hand techniques but he was adept also at delivering direct kicks to the opponent's knees and groin during fighting. Motobu would often restrain the opponent's hands, or control his body when delivering counterattacks, and all in all his style provided an effective method of self defence. He can now be seen as one of the early pioneers of kumite. Gichin Funakoshi is often given the credit for introducing kumite training to karate, sometime in the 1920s, yet in 1926 Motobu published a book entitled "Ryukyū Kempo Karatejutsu, Kumitehen" and the study of kumite -- that is, the application of techniques against an opponent -- had formed the basis of his style for many years previously.

Unlike Gichin Funakoshi he was not a kata enthusiast and his uncompromising emphasis on application led him to criticise Funakoshi's karate. There is a story in "Nihon Budo Taikai" (a Japanese encyclopaedia of Budo) about a meeting between the two men at Yasuhiro Konishi's dojo in 1929. Hironori Ohtsuka was also present. Motobu had with him a strong young 4th dan judoka, and no doubt in an attempt to put Funakoshi down, he arranged a little test in which the judoka took a firm hold on his (Funakoshi's) collar and sleeve. "Now," he said to Funakoshi, "you are so proud of your basic kata, show me what value they have in this situation. Do what you wish to escape."

As Kenji Tokitsu (who translated this account for the French magazine "Bushido") observed, this was a somewhat ridiculous demonstration since it opposed a small, sixty year old karate teacher against a bigger, stronger, and younger judoka. Moreover, it immediately put Funakoshi at a disadvantage by allowing the judoka to take hold at the outset. To his credit, Funakoshi went ahead and tried to disengage himself with soto-uke and uchi-uke (outside and inside forearm blocks). This had no effect and he was lifted up and thrown against the wall of the dojo. Motobu then encouraged Ohtsuka to try. Ohtsuka had trained in jujutsu from his youth and was able to throw the judoka without too much difficulty.

That is the story. How much truth there is in it I have no idea, but it doesn't show Motobu in too good a light. And maybe we shouldn't feel too sorry for Funakoshi, because in a way he had the last laugh. His teachings formed the basis of one of the major modern karate styles and his followers today number in the tens of thousands, all over the world. In contrast when Motobu returned to Okinawa in 1939 his Japanese group collapsed. When he died a few years later he left almost nothing behind him.

Choki Motobu was generally correct in saying that Funakoshi's original (1920s) style overemphasized kata and neglected kumite, although since kumite development was then in its infancy that was probably

true of most karate training of the period. However, by the next decade, with an influx of fresh blood and new training methods this imbalance was largely corrected. Motobu had his own, strongly reasoned views, but he failed to appreciate the underlying strengths of Funakoshi's karate or its appeal to many people. Like Funakoshi, Motobu once had a karate club at Waseda University. However, the students found his training methods -- work on kumite techniques and repetition of "Naihanchi" kata -- too limited and the club lasted only two or three years. Shotokan has always been able to keep the three elements of karate training -- kihon, kata, and kumite -- in balance and I think there must have been something in Funakoshi's teaching that led to its successful growth. Although essentially conservative its structure was such that it was able to incorporate new developments in the art and spread worldwide. In contrast, although Motobu had many valuable insights his legacy is limited to a few techniques and influences in other styles. My impression is that Choki Motobu's style was essentially a personal way of using karate techniques, something he had developed over the years and which arose out of his own unique experience and no-nonsense approach to the art. This personal character enabled him to apply techniques in a natural forceful way in combat, but at the same time made it difficult for him to pass on a "system" to pupils -- who anyway may have lacked his temperament, ability, and particular mind for martial arts. Motobu is in many ways an attractive figure, but judged historically Gichin Funakoshi's style showed the greater potential for development, and in terms of popularity soon outstripped the Motobu school.

I believe Funakoshi had some kind of disagreement too with Kanken Toyama when Toyama began teaching in Tokyo, though I have no details on this. With the founder of Shito-ryu, Kenwa Mabuni however, I imagine he was on good terms. In many ways the two men thought alike. Even if there had been any potential for disagreement Mabuni lived some distance away in Osaka so the two pursued their separate paths. Kenwa Mabuni was born in 1889 in Shuri, Okinawa. He was a weak child but he was inspired to become strong by stories of his ancestor Keiyu Oshiro, who had been a famous warrior many generations back.

Mabuni began karate training with Shuri-te's Ankoh Itosu at the age of 13, and later, when he was 20 he was introduced by his friend Chojun Miyagi to Naha-te's Kanryo Higaonna. After he graduated from school and finished his national service, Mabuni joined the Police Force and eventually became a police inspector. All this time he continued his study of martial arts and the travelling involved in his police work allowed him to study with other experts such as Aragaki and the kobudo weapons experts Tawada and Soeishi. Mabuni Sensei often used to say that his karate training had been useful in his work as a policeman, but unfortunately we don't seem to have any examples of this. No doubt it gave him confidence in carrying out his duties and helped in restraining or arresting suspects.

Kenwa Mabuni's son Kenei wrote, "In his younger days many people would challenge my father to 'kake-dameshi' (challenge match, or exchange of techniques) after they heard that he was practicing *te*. He accepted these challenges and would choose a quiet corner of the town for the match. Each contestant would bring a second. There were no special dojo like there are today; we used to train and fight on open ground. There was no street lighting so after dark we used to fight the challenge matches by the light of lanterns. In this dim light the contestants fought, and then after a period the seconds would intervene and stop the fight. They would then declare who was the winner and who needed more training. Such challenges were often made to my father, and he frequently acted as a second at others. He pointed out though that people might easily get a wrong impression from these events."

Kenwa Mabuni recalled, "A young man taught himself to fight independently -- he had no sensei for this. He attempted to prove himself by challenging many famous sensei. Of course these sensei all refused his challenge. So he returned home feeling proud that even famous teachers were afraid of him. He did not understand that they refused for his sake!"

Mabuni taught karate in his garden and also at the Okinawa Police School and Okinawa School for Fishing. He was also one of the karate experts involved with the Okinawa Karate Kenkyukai (Karate Study Group), established in 1918, and the Okinawa Karate Club, a few years later.

In 1928 Mabuni Sensei moved to Japan and settled in Osaka. Presumably his wish to devote his time to budo -- he once wrote a poem containing the line "Nothing in my mind, except to row to the Island of Bu" -- could not be satisfied in Okinawa and this was why he moved to Japan with its long, deep tradition of martial arts. He may also have been encouraged by judo founder, Jigoro Kano. In 1927 there was a conference in Okinawa for judo yudansha (black belt holders), attended by Kano. Mabuni and Chojun Miyagi demonstrated and explained the kata of karate, and afterwards Kano told them how he had enjoyed their performance. He expressed the opinion that such an excellent budo should be spread throughout Japan. Kenei Mabuni believed that it was this conversation which persuaded his father to make the move to the Japanese mainland.

He established his dojo at Nishinari in Osaka and later named his style Shito-ryu. In choosing this name Mabuni commemorated his two teachers Itosu and Higaonna. The characters for Itosu's name can also be read Shi-shu and for Higaonna's, To-on-na, so Mabuni took the first character of each name to give "Shi-to."

I have always liked the appearance of Kenwa Mabuni's kata; of all the experts of that time he seems to me to have the best style. His techniques are neither too long nor too short, and although his form is always correct, at the same time it remains easy and natural, without the exaggerated attention to form we often see today.

People like Hironori Ohtsuka and Yasuhiro Konishi regarded Mabuni as exceptionally knowledgeable in kata. He certainly knew a very large number of kata and could demonstrate them in good form and in this respect he may have been the leading kata expert of the day. He was perhaps unique in teaching the full range of both Shuri and Naha kata. The Shuri kata he could have learned direct from Itosu. As for the Naha-te kata, he certainly studied with Kanryo Higaonna but I think a lot of instruction must have come from his friend and senior Chojun Miyagi. Some Goju-ryu sensei have said that Mabuni did not complete the full Naha-te system with Higaonna (perhaps because of periods of ill health), but the real give away is that Mabuni's kata follow so closely the Miyagi style. (The kata of Higaonna's other senior student Chuhatsu Kyoda show certain differences). Mabuni also taught kata, such as "Tensho," which we know were created by Miyagi.

What is clear is that Mabuni Sensei had a love of karate technique. Not only did he fully research Shuri-te and Naha-te but he also trained in Kobudo (traditional or old budo) and studied the *te* of Master Aragaki, an expert about whom we know almost nothing except that he taught three kata "Niseishi" ("Nijushiho"), "Sochin," and "Unsu". I am not sure about this but it may have been through Mabuni that these kata entered the mainstream of modern karate. That is certainly the case with the "Nipaipo" kata now sometimes seen at karate tournaments. (It is the special kata of Wuko Womens' World Kata

Champion Mie Nakayama). Although this is now modified from its original Chinese form, Mabuni learned this kata from the White Crane expert Go Ken-kin, a Chinese who made his living as a tea trader in Naha.

Mabuni must have passed on his love of kata to his students because study of kata remains something of a speciality in today's Shito-ryu dojo. Chojiro Tani in his work "Tani-ha Shito-ryu Mokuroku no-Kata" lists 45 kata in his school, and Ryusho Sakagami in "Karate-do Kata Taikan" (1977) details a selection (not all his kata are included) of 38. Sakagami in fact has brought in more traditional kata such as "Matsumura Passai" and "Ishimine Passai" to further enlarge his teaching. Mabuni sensei died in 1952. His students included his son Kenei, Manzo Iwata, Kosei Kokuba, Ryusho Sakagami, Chojiro Tani, Ken Sakeo, Kangei Uechi, Takeshi Ueno, Ryusei Tomoyose, Teishin Tsujikawa and Muneomi Sawayama.

Hironori Ohtsuka, the founder of Wado-ryu, was not exactly a student of Mabuni, but he did get some instruction from him. This was mostly in the "Pinan" kata, and the Wado-ryu and Shito-ryu "Pinan" are quite similar. I think Ohtsuka also learned something from Choki Motobu since there are similarities of Motobu's style in certain Wado hand positions and blocking techniques. Some of the Wado-ryu "Naihanchi" kata is said to come from Motobu although going by photographs, the two versions of the kata are not identical.

However, by far the larger part of Ohtsuka's karate instruction came from Gichin Funakoshi. He was one of Funakoshi's first students, back in 1922, and acted as one of his assistant instructors throughout the 1920s. Ohtsuka had been aware of karate for some time and planned to visit Okinawa to research the art when he heard of Gichin Funakoshi's demonstration of June 1922. He looked up Funakoshi at the Meisojuku and found him "Surprisingly open and frank, innocent even." Ohtsuka was fascinated by Funakoshi's description of karate and resolved to master the art. Funakoshi explained that he taught 15 kata of karate and that it would take someone 5 years to learn them. However, he added, a person with previous martial arts experience could expect to learn the kata in a year and a half.

That "year and a half" sounds a little odd, considering that Funakoshi always said kata was a lifelong study, and once wrote that he had spent 10 years working on the three "Naihanchi." Probably he meant that the kata could be learned (but not mastered) within that timescale. He may also have realised that the pace of learning would have to be speeded up in Japan. Whatever the reason, it seems that Ohtsuka did learn the kata within a couple of years and became an important assistant to Funakoshi as the latter expanded his teaching.

Hironori Ohtsuka was 30 years old when he began studying karate. That was rather a late start but he was able to pick the art up quickly because he himself was an expert in martial arts; only a year before he had received his teaching licence in Shindo Yoshin-ryu Jujutsu, an art he had begun studying at 13 under Tatsusaburo Nakayama.

Ohtsuka's first couple of years with Funakoshi would have been spent in learning the karate kata but once he gained a measure of proficiency in the art he began to look a little deeper. Initially he had seen something in karate -- a comprehensive system of striking and blocking -- that was generally lacking in Japanese budo, but inevitably his experience in those budo led him to think of ways in which karate technique might be developed or enhanced. He had an independent mind and a long-standing ambition to make his living as a martial arts instructor, so a parting of the ways with Funakoshi was always in the

cards. Yasuhiro Konishi remembered an occasion at the Meisojuku when Funakoshi remonstrated with Ohtsuka in front of the students for introducing certain jujutsu elements into the training. From an early point too Ohtsuka began to think of ways of introducing more kumite into the art, and especially something like the randori (freeplay) of judo. Ohtsuka had probably worked out the larger part of his ideas by the late '20s but the split with Funakoshi didn't occur until 1930/31. In 1934 his teaching was recognized as a separate karate style ("The Dai Nippon Karate-do Shinko Club," according to "Wado World--magazine"), although the name "Wadoryu" was not registered with the Butokukai until 1939.

Actually, I'm not too sure on the exact dates of the Funakoshi/Ohtsuka split. It may not have been as abrupt as we tend to think, and the two men seemed to remain on speaking terms. There are many photographs of Ohtsuka demonstrating techniques in Funakoshi's 1935 edition of "Kyohan" (although of course we don't know when these were taken) and Ohtsuka is in a group photograph of karate experts taken at Funakoshi's house, dated 1935.

Mitsusuke Harada had heard stories that it was actually Yoshitaka Funakoshi who had expelled Ohtsuka from the Shotokan group. On a recent (1987) trip to Japan he asked about this and was told the background information. It seems that Hironori Ohtsuka, while within Funakoshi's group, was always trying to go his own way and introduce his own ideas to the teaching. This was not appreciated by many of Funakoshi's followers. Ohtsuka did break away, but the break was not clean. Gichin Funakoshi himself would not expel Ohtsuka, mainly because he did not want to cause any unpleasantness. If he met Ohtsuka he would still greet him and talk to him.

Unfortunately, this only built up more resentment among Funakoshi's followers, and Genshin Hironishi told Yoshitaka that for the good of the Shotokan group Ohtsuka should be expelled. Thus it was that Yoshitaka forced Ohtsuka out. I believe this may have been the time that Yoshitaka replaced Ohtsuka as instructor at Waseda Karate Club. Harada Sensei explained to me that he had thought deeply about this, and he stressed that Yoshitaka did this, not because of any personal animosity towards Hironori Ohtsuka, but because it had to be done to preserve group unity. Harada said that he himself realised the problems of just such a situation when a split occurred in his own Shotokai organization -- and a similar clean break had to be made.

Ohtsuka kept the kata he had learned from Gichin Funakoshi but made certain changes. The "Pinan" showed Mabuni's influence and Ohtsuka added his own ideas to all the kata. For example the chudan (middle area level) inside and knife-hand blocks of Funakoshi's kata appear as jodan (upper-level) blocks in the Wado forms. The Wado-ryu kata differ from the modern Shotokan forms in having a lighter, less forceful appearance. In some respects the techniques of the kata are quite close to Funakoshi's original (early 1920s) method, but I think that most of the distinctive, economical character of the Wado forms must have come from Ohtsuka. He believed in fast, economical movements which avoid a direct clash of forces. There is a story that following a demonstration around 1924/5 Ohtsuka's reputation began to exceed Funakoshi's at least in some quarters. If true this can partly be explained by the age difference -- Funakoshi would have been almost sixty and partly because Ohtsuka showed a style of movement that other Japanese experts could appreciate. Such opinions are subjective and, for what it's worth, my own view is different. Going from photographs of the two men I prefer Funakoshi's kata to Ohtsuka's.

Although "Pinan," "Naihanchi" and the other traditional kata were transmitted to Ohtsuka, his own

ideas are better represented by the set of kihon kumite techniques he created. These could be considered the "kata" of Wado-ryu in fact. Ohtsuka originally devised 24 of these kumite forms but over the years this was whittled down to the 10 now practiced. In their principles of distancing, timing, taisabaki (body evasion), and simultaneous parry and counter, they show Ohtsuka's approach clearly: flexibility, technique, and body movement rather than a reliance of physical force. Ohtsuka himself was of slim build and this was probably one reason why he always placed technique above force

A while ago, when I had the chance to talk to Tatsuo Suzuki he told me of a *shiai* (contest) he remembered from years ago. It was between Wado-ryu and a group of Tatsuo Yamada students. Yamada was a tough-guy type of karate teacher who stressed body conditioning and hard technique. As the two groups faced each other the Yamada students took off their gi jackets to reveal powerful, muscular torsos. When the Wado fighters saw this they grew apprehensive. Yet as the first round of matches progressed one Yamada student after another was knocked down or knocked out. (These were the old days of Kokan-geiko). When the second round of fights was due to begin none of the Yamada group came forward.

Master Funakoshi's Karate The History and Development of the Empty Hand Art Part III

by Graham Noble

Some Thoughts on Yoshitaka.

There is a certain romance about Master Funakoshi's third son, Yoshitaka (or Giko). The stories of his training, his early death, and the excellence of his technique evident from old photographs, continue to exert their fascination. He is a favorite subject of mine, but trying to dig up details of his life is frustrating; for a variety of historical reasons he remains a neglected figure. The stories are that he began karate training as a child. Obviously he must have learned the art from his father, yet he somehow developed his own instinctive way of performing techniques; "dynamic" is the word that springs to mind. Photographs of past karate experts usually appear old fashioned, yet Yoshitaka's techniques look surprisingly modern. The development of his karate must have been given added impetus when his father passed on the major part of his teaching responsibilities in the 1930s.

I have previously written that it was Yoshitaka Funakoshi who developed modern Shotokan but now I don't think that is strictly correct. It is true, for example, that his stances were much deeper than his father's, but to judge from early photographs there was a movement towards deeper stances a little before Yoshitaka. And the theory of Yoshitaka as the true originator of modern Shotokan does not explain the postwar development of the style by people such as Masatoshi Nakayama, Isao Obata, and Hidetaka Nishiyama who had never studied with him. Nevertheless, he was the most important figure in the style's development in the prewar years. Gichin Funakoshi's karate was the starting point but its "Shotokan-ness" needed to be brought out and strengthened. If we compare Yoshitaka's technique with Gichin's, certain differences are immediately apparent --Yoshitaka's stances were much deeper and more

rooted, and his whole body applied more in defense than attack. He used kicks in a much more vigorous way, and the delivery of attacks looks stronger.

All these elements are part of modern day Shotokan but other parts of Yoshitaka's karate are no longer practiced. For example his favorite stance of fudodachi (unmoveable stance) and his 'Tenno-kata' are rarely seen nowadays. Tenno-kata, Ji-no-kata, and Jin-no-kata, representing Heaven (Ten), Earth (Ji) and Man (Jin). I have never seen Ji-no-kata or Jin-no-kata and am not sure whether the series was ever completed. Shigeru Egami told Mitsusuke Harada that Yoshitaka had also created a "Shoto" kata. Unfortunately Egami did not learn this kata fully and it may now be lost.

Harada sensei related a story he had been told by his seniors. Yoshitaka was sucked into an argument with some judoka who were the worse for drink. They set on him but their mode of attack--reaching for a collar hold to apply their throwing technique--made them open targets for Yoshitaka's powerful kicks and punches. Within a short time he had knocked the judoka down. This event gave him great confidence in his technique. Yoshitaka taught at the Shotokan dojo till 1944 or '45. By 1945 he was seriously ill and much of the teaching at that time was carried out by Genshin Hironishi. Occasionally, in the last couple of years or so, Yoshitaka would recover and take a class. During a class Yoshitaka would instruct and supervise, not actually joining the training very much. Sometimes, at the end of the session, he would get a sempai (senior) up to spar. The sempai would attack, with Yoshitaka defending and using his open hands to cuff or push the opponent back. I get the impression that he would "play" with the attacker. Even so, some of these open hand cuffs hurt and Shigeru Egami recalled his soreness after these sessions. A few modern experts such as Mitsuke Harada and Taiji Kase look back to Yoshitaka as a great karate expert. However, although his methods worked their way through Shotokan, he seems to have had few real students. I asked Harada sensei who could be considered students of Yoshitaka. He thought there was Egami, Okuyuma, maybe Hironishi in the war period and then he began to run out of names. This is one reason why Yoshitaka has been neglected in the study of karate history. How good was he? This is something that cannot be answered, not only for Yoshitaka but for all the old karate masters.

Karate is not a competitive sport like boxing, where we have fighters' full records, and, more often than not, films of their best-known bouts. There are no films of the old time karate experts, often no photographs, and written material is usually scanty or biased. For Yoshitaka we have the testimony of a few of his followers (often at second hand), and it is interesting, for example, to hear from Mitsusuke Harada that in kumite, "No one could block Yoshitaka's punch." As for the photographs, they are always excellent: his form looks attractive and strong and his stances as solid as a rock. There is just one fly in the ointment, dating back to a 1970s article by American writer Andy Adams on Gichin Funakoshi. Adams spoke to several contemporaries and students of Funakoshi, including Mas Oyama (the world leader and founder of Kyokushin-kai Karate) who trained at the Shotokan in the late 1930s. During a general criticism of Funakoshi's karate, Oyama said: "Yoshitaka took 10 of his best kumite men to Osaka and fought with Goju men there. All lost. Even Funakoshi's son was beaten in his match with Chil Soo. Everybody saw all the great Funakoshi men lose. . . After that Funakoshi's son became a real karate fighter. Very strong. I like." Several writers have latched on to these few sentences, speculating that it was this event--supposing it did happen the way Oyama described it--which precipitated the development of Yoshitaka's "new" form of karate. I am not sure about that at all, and there may be a problem with dates. By his own account Oyama began training at the Shotokan around 1938. Yet photographs dated 1936 and 1937 showed that Yoshitaka's technique was fully formed by that time. The

story also suggests that Goju karateka were more advanced in jiyu-kumite, which contrasts with something Mitsusuke Harada told me.

In his recollections of the kokan-geiko of the early post-war years, Harada sensei said that initially Goju-ryu students had difficulty with the Shotokan karateka's longer attacks and greater familiarity with jiyu-kumite. Of course, the story fascinated me too and over the years I asked many karateka if they knew of it. Some of these karateka were fairly senior Shotokan people, but (with one exception) no one could supply any information at all, and I began to doubt whether the contest ever happened. I suppose the Shotokan group might have tried to sweep it under the carpet, but I never got the impression that anyone was holding anything back.

The exception was Richard Kim, who replied to my inquiry with the version of the story he had heard: "Regarding your inquiry on Oyama's account of a match between Funakoshi's son and the Goju people. The story involves Nei-chu So, the highest ranking Goju-kai sensei under Yamaguchi. There is no verification of the story--it depends on whose version you trust. "Nei-chu So in his match with Giko Funakoshi grabbed Giko and threw him hard against the wall. So, at that time, was one of the most powerful men in Japan and used his physical strength to win his matches. The Funakoshi people claim it was against the rules and walked out." I don't know if Oyama actually witnessed the contest but his teacher in Goju-ryu was this very Nei-chu So. There is a photo of So in the early editions of Oyama's "What is Karate" and he does look a muscular, powerful man, so the story is plausible. The tale must have been circulating in the Goju world, where it was heard by Oyama and Richard Kim. I give it here for what it's worth. No doubt there was a Shotokan version of events; if anyone has heard it please write to me at this magazine.

The War Years and Special Training

Throughout the 1930s Japan was geared up as a wartime economy. Manchuria was annexed in 1932, the war with China began in 1936, and then in 1941 came Pearl Harbor and the entry into "The Great Pacific War". Many karateka were posted overseas, and the turnover of young students was heavy. Funakoshi recalled: "I would often hear a young man say, as he knelt before me: "Sensei, I have been drafted and I'm off to serve my country and my Emperor." Every day I would hear my students report to me in this fashion. They had been strenuously practicing karate day after day in preparation for hand-to-hand encounters with an unmet enemy, and they believed they were ready. . . Of course, many students died in battle, so many, alas, that I lost count of them. I felt my heart would break as I received report after report telling me of the deaths of so many promising young men. Then I would stand alone in the silent dojo and offer a prayer to the soul of the deceased, recalling the days when he had practiced his karate so diligently. I once asked Mitsusuke Harada who had been the karate instructors at certain university clubs during the war. He replied that because of the constant coming and going to the front it was impossible to say. How did karate change during the war? Well, the art has little relevance to modern warfare but it seems that the whole atmosphere of the times led to greater seriousness in training.

Taiji Kase, who trained at the Shotokan in the last year or so of the war, remembered that emphasis was placed on strong basics and intense practice of kumite (especially jiyu-ippou) with much physical contact. Kase, a person not given to exaggeration, described it as "very hard". Tatsuo Suzuki told me

that the well rounded pre-war training gave way to practice on "fighting", and he stressed "fighting" rather than sparring (jiyu-kumlte). I had heard stories (without details) of Yoshitaka Funakoshi and Shigeru Egami teaching special troops during the war. I asked Harada sensei about this and he told me what he had heard.

The institution concerned was the Nakano School, a training school for military espionage analogous to our MI5. Trainees were on a one year course covering undercover work, guerrilla warfare and so on. Unarmed combat was also included and the original teacher for this was Morihei Uyeshiba (of Aikido). Uyeshiba himself was good but when the students tried to apply the techniques they couldn't make them work under real conditions. In a way, Aikido had too much "technique" for the limited one year of training. The military leaders decided to look at karate as an alternative, and they observed the different styles, such as Goju, Wado, and Shotokan.

Goju-ryu, with its heavy stress on sanchin training, did not seem to have the practical application necessary, at least in its initial stages, and Wado-ryu technique seemed too "light". However, the Shotokan style as demonstrated by Yoshitaka looked impressive, and he was asked to teach at the Nakano School. Unfortunately, he was too ill and it was Shigeru Egami who did the actual teaching. Egami concentrated on two techniques: choku-zuki (straight punch) and mae-geri (front kick), and when he began teaching a class he would pick out participants and tell them to attack him as hard as they could. In this way he was able to prove the validity of his technique. Injuries were frequent. Kicks were often delivered to the shins - and this was while wearing boots.

After the war Harada sensei met someone who had trained in these classes under Egami. He recalled one time when he had hardly been able to walk for a week because of such shin kicks. But injuries were no excuse for missing training. If someone was wearing bandages, they had to be removed. If a bad injury occurred, then no doctors could be called for during training. A hard rule, but no doctors would be present on the battle front. All in all, however, this "Nakano-ryu" was successful in achieving its objectives. The military was pleased with the results and Yoshitaka and Egami gained prestige from it. Something similar was recounted by Wado-ryu karateka Takatoshi Nishizono in a chapter he contributed to the 1977 book "Karate-do". (Sozo Co. Translation courtesy Ian McLaren and N. Karasawa). Nishizono began karate training when he entered Tokyo University in 1941. He became so wrapped up in karate that in fact he neglected his studies and his academic performance was poor. But after graduation he managed to get a job with the North China Transportation Company in Peking; a boring, routine job as he recalled.

In early 1945 however, he was summoned by head office and asked to take on a role as karate instructor to a Special Army Squadron in Taigen. Nishizono felt he was not really up to this but after he was told it was his duty he agreed:

"When I arrived at the special squadron I was introduced to the young Commanding Officer and the other officers. I was made aware of the aim and organization of the squadron but was ordered to keep it secret for security reasons.

"Taigen was the HQ of the 1st Army Group, North China, but our squadron consisted of only 250 volunteers, all of whom had distinguished themselves in battle. We usually wore normal military uniform with the Cherry Blossom badge, but when we began operations we changed into normal

Chinese wear and we acted like ninja, carrying no weapons. We were an intelligence and guerrilla unit named "Sakura Squadron" We trained in horse riding, martial arts disguise technique and physical exercise. We never trained with swords or guns; it was required that the Sakura Squadron be able to defeat the opponent with bare hands, and this was why karate was selected.

"I began instruction immediately, on the first day. I was led to a building to be used as the dojo and found the whole squadron lined up, all stripped to the waist. They had superb physiques and sharp eyes. The commanding officer gave a briefing which included the words: "Our training must be real, just like a battle! So it may be that some of you will be killed!"

"That briefing was very effective in impressing the soldiers. Even though they were brave men, some said afterwards that it had made them feel uneasy.

"You cannot teach 200 men sufficient karate to defeat an enemy in one month if you rely on the normal methods of training. I made an instant decision and, selecting two soldiers who looked strong, ordered them to attack me using any technique they wished. They had no experience of karate so I was able to beat them easily; my kicking technique was enough. But they were very brave and continued to attack. But despite the briefing by the commanding officer I did not have the heart to attack the kintekki (testicles). I refrained from using that technique and using only sokuto I knocked them to the floor. After this the soldiers respected my ability and it was much easier for me to teach them.

"My method of training was a simple one. For punching (tsuki) I demanded that they strike to the enemy's face, and for kicking, that they attack the kintekki. For defense we used jodan-uke and gedan-barai. I trained them every day repeating these basic techniques many times. As training progressed the soldiers' stances became stronger. Then we moved on to hon-kumite--serious kumite.

"There was no stopping in our kumite and naturally some arguments arose during this practice. Also, as I could not easily oversee over 200 men I learned that when I was near they would go full force, but when my back was turned they took it easy. I knew that they were tired after their battlefield experiences and at first I pretended not to notice. However, my task was to train them to combat readiness in a month, so eventually I had to be hard with them. If I found anyone being idle I pulled them out and fought them till they could no longer stand.

"They had all practiced judo, kendo and tsuken-jutsu (bayonet fighting) and were able to pick up karate technique quickly. After training we would take a bath. Some of the soldiers had powerful physiques and I was somewhat ashamed of my own small body.

"That month passed so quickly. All the soldiers trained hard and performed well. On the final day we said our farewells, the officers expressed their gratitude to me, and we had a party. Then I left Taigen and returned to Peking where life continued in the same way as before.

"I never found out what happened to the Sakura Squadron. I heard stories that they had been sent south on a mission and that all had been killed. The men who wore that Cherry Blossom badge were all from Northern Japan; they were so naive and kind. Now it all seems like a dream."

The Post-War Years

The Shotokan dojo was destroyed in a bombing raid in the spring of 1945. When Japan surrendered in August of that year Funakoshi left for Oite in Kyushu where his wife was living. (She had been evacuated there during the battle of Okinawa.) Life was hard during those early post-war years and Funakoshi sensei's involvement with karate ceased for the time being. However, in 1947 his wife died and he moved back to Tokyo. As his train stopped at each station on the way there were former students waiting to meet him and offer their condolences. He was moved to tears. Many fine karate students had been lost in the war, and such was the chaos afterwards that for a couple of years Masatomo Takagi (Secretary of the JKA) was not even aware of what had become of Master Funakoshi. Eventually Takagi discovered that he was still alive and recovering from illness. It had been almost 19 years since he had seen Funakoshi and when he introduced himself the old master failed to recognize him.

"I once knew someone called Takagi, a long time ago" he said. When Takagi exclaimed "It's me, sensei!" Funakoshi took his hand in surprise. It took a few years for the karate world to pick itself up and by then its development was in the hands of a younger generation. Gichin Funakoshi was the rallying point for Shotokan karateka but by this time he was over 80 years old and did not take an active role. But he still retained his love of the art and taught when he could. He taught on a limited basis at Waseda, Keio, and maybe at times at other universities. His class at Waseda was held on a Saturday, but attendance was poor. Things had moved on and few of the young trainees wanted to learn from an eighty-year-old teacher who was interested only in kata--especially when they wanted to practice kumite. At one point Tsutomu Ohshima, the club captain, had to tell trainees that, unless they attended Funakoshi sensei's classes they would not be allowed to take their gradings. So they turned up, albeit grudgingly. All credit to Ohshima for taking this action because those classes were the bright spot in Master Funakoshi's week.

After the war many budoka saw their arts as fulfilling a need in installing values in the Japanese people. In 1954 a major demonstration of Budo took place in Tokyo. It featured demonstrations by greats such as Mifune (Judo), Nakayama (Kendo), and Gichin Funakoshi, who was then 86 years old. His demonstration was loudly applauded and when he was invited onto the dais he received a standing ovation.

By the time Funakoshi died in 1957, things were moving in the Japanese karate world. Immediately after the war the Shotokan group was dispersed and it was not till the late 1940s that the seniors began to organize. Even then it was a faltering start. In his interesting interview in this magazine (F.A.I. No. 51) Hidetaka Nishiyama recalled that many of the seniors had forgotten their kata and often had to get together to pool their knowledge. But, through the efforts of people such as Genshin Hironishi the various Shotokan groups were brought together and in 1949 or '50 the Japan Karate Association was founded.

As an aside, I don't know whether Hironishi was actually involved with the JKA, but he did form the Shotokai together with Shigeru Egami. (Hironishi became President, with Egami taking sole responsibility for the technical development.) Hironishi was one of Funakoshi's favorite students, and he had taught at the old Shotokan dojo in the later war years. In the Sino-Japanese war which began in 1937 he saw action on the Chinese front. He was officer material but because of his socialist views had to serve in the ranks. Nevertheless, through strength of character he became a sergeant in the Army. When he returned to Japan in 1943 he was asked to teach at the Shotokan.

Anyway, in 1949 the JKA was formed. In this original JKA Isao Obata was Chairman, Kichinosuke Saigo President, Masatomo Takagi administrator, and Masatoshi Nakayama chief instructor. Master Funakoshi had the figurehead role of Honorary Chief Instructor. With so many different groups involved friction was probably inevitable. Each university group had its own slightly different form of "Shotokan" and problems could arise, for example, at gradings if seniors from another university were on the panel. There was an interesting article in the American magazine "Black Belt" a few years ago ("A New Day in Karate", Oct. 1965 issue) which shed some light on the problems of the early JKA. The article concentrated on the rivalry between the various University Old Boy clubs and their different approaches to karate. Many of the top positions in the JKA were held by Takushoku university men such as Nakayama, Takagi and Nishiyama. Unlike, for example, Obata and Saigo, who were well off and believed karate teaching should be on an amateur (unpaid) basis, the Takushoku karateka were paid a salary and had a more commercial approach.

Anyway, whatever the exact reasons, the Hosei and Waseda groups left in the early 1950s, and in 1953 or '54 Obata and the Keio group left too. What remained was still strong, however, and formed the basis for what we now know as the JKA. In having a more business-like approach the men involved in this group--Masatoshi Nakayama, Hidetaka Nishiyama, Teryuki Okazaki, Kimio Ito--were more forward looking than their contemporaries, and it is their system which is now the major form of Shotokan. They set up a training course for instructors in 1956, the first three trainees being Kanazawa, Mikami and Takura. Takura I know nothing about but Hirokazu Kanazawa and Takayuki Mikami were regarded as outstanding young karateka.

Between them they shared the first three of the JKA's All Japan Championships. That first Championship, won by Kanazawa, was held in 1957 and was, in its way, epoch making. I'm not exactly sure if this was the first karate tournament but it is usually held to mark the beginning of modern sport karate. In many cases this has become an end in itself but the JKA has always been able to keep it in balance with the other elements of kihon and kata to preserve a well rounded karate.

The JKA is one of several Shotokan bodies, and we could say that none of them practice karate in exactly the way Funakoshi did, that is the way he demonstrated in "Karate-do Kyohan's" first edition. That is to be expected, of course; times have changed and the art has moved on. But, for example, Masatoshi Nakayama, the late J.K.A. chief instructor, was a student of Funakoshi sensei from 1932 to 1937, so his karate was obviously based on Funakoshi's teaching. The changes we can see in the modern JKA are natural developments which occurred with time and the influx of a younger generation of instructors. Even so, today's kata are more or less the same as those shown in the second (1958) edition of "Kyohan". By that time the Shotokan form was well established, and all who practice that form today look back to Gichin Funakoshi as their founding father.

Master Funakoshi's Precepts

Gichin Funakoshi left us twenty precepts. In doing this he was probably more aware of the precedent of Ankoh Itosu (who in a note set down his "10 teachings") and of various kenjutsu masters who put down the principles of their teaching in this fashion. Funakoshi's maxims are very similar in tone to some of these kenjutsu writings (Donn Draeger gives examples in his "Modern BuJutsu and Budo", pages 103/4 and 109/10). Some writers have tried to point out the spiritual nature of Funakoshi's precepts, but I don't

think they are profound in that sense. Funakoshi did believe in the "Do" of karate, but more in the sense described by the Zen priest Takuan (1573-1646): "The law of the Buddha well observed, is identical with the law of mundane existenceÉ The Way (Do) is practical only." "Master Funakoshi wasn't one to give metaphysical explanations for everything," recalled Tsutomu Ohshima. "He was very practical and was influenced by the teachings of Confucius who never talked about great mysteries or spiritual issues. Funakoshi, like Confucius, was more interested in the realistic world of people, ideas and events." So the precepts cover not only Funakoshi's wider view of karate--its underlying social and moral basis--but also advise on technical principles, on principles of self-defense, and on how to integrate karate into daily life. Thus, they are well rounded and complete--and moreover, they give us an insight into Funakoshi sensei's philosophy of karate.