

INTERVIEW WITH SENSEI KATSUYA YAMASHIRO

Conducted by Sydney Leijenhorst and Kana Nakamoto
[translator]

Sensei Katsuya Yamashiro¹ [1959] lives in Okinawa and has his *dōjō* in Itoman and Yonabaru. He holds an 8th *dan*, is the IOGKF Chief Instructor for Japan & Okinawa, and has taught in dozens of different countries, all over the world.

He started his training in *goju-ryu karate* when he was 19, in 1978, in the *dōjō* of *Sensei* Ko Uehara. When *Sensei* Ko Uehara started to change the original *kata*, he left *Sensei* Ko Uehara and continued to train *goju-ryu* with *Sensei* An'ichi Miyagi. During his early years he occasionally also received instructions from *Sensei* Shuichi Aragaki in various contexts. In 1987 he started to train with *Sensei* Morio Higaonna in the Higaonna *dōjō* and became a member of the IOGKF. When *Sensei* Higaonna left the IOGKF, *Sensei* Yamashiro stayed, like the majority of senior instructors, with the IOGKF to contribute to safeguarding the treasure of *Sensei* Chojun Miyagi's heritage.

Having received instructions and guidance from several highly capable and respected Okinawan *goju-ryu* teachers, and having trained Okinawa *goju-ryu* for more than 45 years, he offers a broad, deep and refined transmission of Okinawan *goju-ryu karate*, that clearly radiates a genuine Okinawan vibe.

Although his approach can clearly be labelled as 'traditional' he has engaged in full-contact competition in his younger years, which also offered him some valuable insights into the traditional principles of his style of *karate*.



Those who have visited his *dōjō* will recognize this banner, with the slogan:

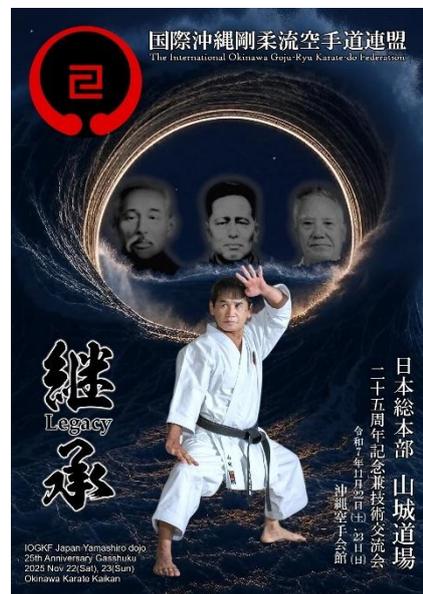
‘人を育てる空手道’

心

‘Karate-do that nurtures people’
Heart

These days his classes and seminars are highly appreciated by many IOGKF members because of its depth, subtlety, and precision, and his character as a human being. His use of simple and evocative imagery and metaphors adds depth to his teachings. There is a clear connection between what he teaches and demonstrates in his *kata*. As such he offers a valuable, and to my opinion also essential, contribution within the whole and rich spectrum of senior IOGKF instructors.

Because of this I requested to interview him, and he gracefully accepted my request.



¹ In this introduction I followed the Western style name order ‘*Sensei* Katsuya Yamashiro’, later, in the interview I used the traditional Japanese order – Yamashiro Katsuya *Sensei* - to align with *Sensei* Yamashiro’s use of this name order.



I also want to thank my student Kana Nakamoto, *shodan* IOGKF, who is from Okinawa. This interview would not have reached the depth and detail it has today.

I hope it will inspire many and help others to pass on, conserve and develop the heritage.

Sydney Leijenhorst

Wageningen, Netherlands, May 30, 2025

PART 1 – THE GENERAL PICTURE

Japanese [main Island] *karate* and Okinawan *Karate*

? Compared to other Okinawan styles or mainland Japanese styles—and even *karate* practiced globally—does Okinawan *karate* have any unique characteristics?

When we speak of other Okinawan styles, it depends on which style. Even within Okinawa, *karate* styles differ.

Compared to mainland Japanese *karate*, Okinawan *karate* is significantly different.

Karate spread across the mainland mainly as a university sports activity. The sport aspect became the major driver in the development of mainland Japanese *karate*. That is how it became very different from Okinawan *karate*.

Differences between co-lineages

? Compared to other *goju-ryu* lineages, like for example Meibukan *goju-ryu* or Hokama Sensei's *goju-ryu*, are they different?

An'ichi Miyagi Sensei originally came from Miyazato Sensei's Dōjō, the *Jundokan*, so there isn't much difference between the *karate* from the *Jundokan* and our [IOGKF] *goju-ryu karate*.

But *Meibukan*, which was led by Yagi Meitoku Sensei, and Hokama Tetsuhiro Sensei's *goju-ryu*, which comes from Higa Seiko Sensei, are somewhat different.

? Can you explain why these co-lineages differ in style, training or other aspects?

Yagi Meitoku Sensei and Higa Seiko Sensei both received limited instruction from Miyagi Chojun Sensei due to some life choices.²

? Have you trained with other teachers from the older generation of *goju-ryu karate*. And, if so, what did you appreciate in them?

Uehara Ko Sensei was my first Sensei. When he started to change his *kata*, I left him. After that I started to train with Miyagi An'ichi Sensei, and later with Higaonna Morio Sensei. And yes, I have also



² Yamashiro Sensei explained these during the interview, but preferred not to share these stories publicly.

been in touch with different other Okinawan *karate* teachers. But I never saw a teacher that was as good as An'ichi Miyagi *Sensei*.

Unique Qualities and Instructional Differences

? Did Miyagi An'ichi *Sensei*, Aragaki Shuichi *Sensei* and Higaonna Morio *Sensei* have different ways of teaching *kata* or a different approach to training?

Yes. Miyagi An'ichi *Sensei* always spoke in Okinawan dialect, in daily life and even during training. He taught with great care and detail.

Aragaki Shuichi *Sensei*, on the other hand, spoke standard Japanese and only taught *kumite* to me. He didn't really instruct *kata* directly to me. I think he held back because he noticed differences in *kata* styles between An'ichi Miyagi *Sensei*, Higaonna *Sensei* and himself.



Higaonna *Sensei's* training was characterized by repetition. And he especially stressed power, speed and *kiai*. We were often instructed to make stronger *kiai*. Again and again.

? Was Higaonna *Sensei's* teaching method more *go*?

Yes.

Differences in movement qualities

? How was An'ichi Miyagi *Sensei's* and Higaonna Morio *Sensei's* *kata* different?

There were not so much technical differences, but more differences in characters, which came to expression in how they performed the *kata*. An'ichi Miyagi *Sensei* was more *ju*, Higaonna *Sensei* more *go*. Higaonna *Sensei* said he couldn't perform the *kata* like An'ichi Miyagi *Sensei*. He wasn't able to do such a soft movement. What is called *muchiten*³ in Okinawan dialect. *Muchi*⁴ is sticky rice.



From go to ju

? You used to do full-contact *kumite*, in which you obviously had to use power. Yet, when performing *kata*, I can really see the "*ju*"—the softness—stand out, which I appreciate very much. It is different from Higaonna *Sensei's* approach, which is indeed more oriented towards power and speed. Did you take this aspect from An'ichi Miyagi *Sensei*?

³ ムチテン

⁴ ムチ

That's a very interesting question. Yes, when I did full-contact *karate*, I did think that it was primarily about power. That was also an aspect of my personality and aim. But one day I realized that you should try to be fierce and fast, but that that can also evoke [blind, gross] aggression. I concluded that I needed to combine fierceness - fervor – with accuracy and attention.

This made me understand, among other things, that in Okinawan *karate* one tries to develop great power and speed through minimal effort. Through this I discovered that the power and speed of techniques depends on the angles in the various joints in the body that are involved in the execution of the technique.

🔗 Thank you for sharing this. So, how I understand this is that you did not only learned the ju-aspect from Miyagi An'ichi Sensei, but also through experiencing 'go'.

Yes.

PART 2 – UCHINAAGUCHI⁵ - OKINAWAN TERMINOLOGY

Commonly used Okinawan terms [within the IOGKF]

🔗 I made this list with the Okinawan terms we do use. Can we go through them. Can you briefly explain how you see the meaning of these terms?

Yes.

Muchimi

Simply speaking *muchimi* means soft⁶ movement.

Chinkuchi

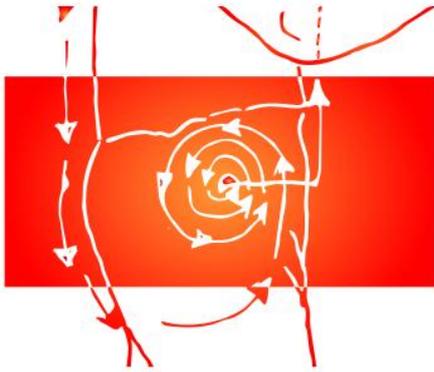
Chin relates to muscle power. *Kuchi* means bone. *Chinkuchi* is the locking of muscle and bone in a particular position.

🔗 Do you usually just say *chinkuchi*? Or *chinkuchin kakin*? I have also heard 'chinkuchi kakire'?

Chinkuchi kakin means I apply *chinkuchi*. *Chinkuchi kakire* is more like a command or encouragement "apply *chinkuchi*" [more fully, strongly, etc.].

⁵ ウチナーグチ; 沖縄口, meaning 'Uchinaa language' [or 'Okinawan language']. Also known in Japanese as 沖縄方言 *Okinawa Hōgen* ['Okinawan dialect'] or just *Hōgen*. The word *Hōgen* however, even though used by both Japanese and Okinawan people, reflects the suppression of Okinawan culture by Japanese mainland governance, as it means 'dialect', not 'language'.

⁶ *Yawara* [柔]: flexibility, gentleness.



Tanden

? What is *tanden*?

The *tanden* is the place where energy [*ki*] gathers, which is the source of enormous power.

For this to happen – the gathering of energy – the pelvis [*koshi*] needs to be ‘upright’.⁷

That’s what allows techniques to be executed perfectly, without relying on thought, without ‘head’.

For me it works this way: if I use my head I begin to doubt. but when I use *tanden*, the *kata* always comes out right. Then it comes out naturally.

? Is this maybe the same as *muishiki*⁸?

Yes, I agree. Personally I like [the word] *mushin*⁹ more than *muishiki*. *Muishiki* means ‘without consciousness’ [conscious thought¹⁰]. With *muishiki* I feel I need to make sure I am not doing it with consciousness / conscious thought. The concept of *Mushin*, in a way, says that consciousness does not exist. You need the feeling that even *muishiki* does not exist.



<https://shodocalligraphy.wordpress.com/about-mushin-%E7%84%A1%E5%BF%83/>

? Like ‘total *mushin*’?

Sou desu ne. Hai.

Chiru nu chanchan

? What is the meaning of *chiru nu chanchan*?

Chiru is *tendon*. “*Chanchan*” is a word that describes or suggests a sharp, sudden sound¹¹. Like snapping, whipping, smacking or spatting sound¹². Not literally audible—but as the quality or feel of a movement or technique.

? How do you teach *chiru nu chanchan*?

⁷ As in *sanchin kata*.

⁸ 無意識, literally ‘without consciousness’. That is: without constructed conscious content like thoughts, images, etc. Example: 無意識 / のうちにそれをした = I did it unconsciously / without realizing it.

⁹ 無心, literally ‘no heart’ or ‘no mind’. No self mind, no constructed mind, no ‘self-operating system’. Freedom from ego and thought.

¹⁰ self-related conscious content, such as e.g. thoughts, a sense of self, etc.

¹¹ A so-called ‘onomatopoeia’. A word that evokes the memory of a sound to describe the nature or quality of an action or thing.

¹² In Japanese: *bashi*; バシッ.

I cannot explain it, because most Okinawan people also don't understand *Hōgen*, so they also don't understand what *chiru nu chanchan* means. I can only show it.



? Do you maybe use an image?

[Yamashiro Sensei bends a flexible ruler and lets it snap back, see screenshots]. This is the image. A short, fast whip-like motion.

? I feel images are very important.

Mmm... Mmm ...

? The use different parts of the brain.

Mmm... Mmm ...

? The more easy parts of the brain 😊

Mmm... *hai*.

? Is the word *chiru* or especially *chanchan* also used elsewhere in Okinawan culture? Or only in *karate*?

Yes, you might also hear for example '*chan makasee*'¹³ in daily life. For example in Okinawan singing. This means 'show me your '*chan*'!'. For example in Okinawan singing this is something like an encouragement to express your passion. Like letting the feeling or emotion spat [*chan*] off.¹⁴



¹³ *Chan makasee* [チャン マカセー]

¹⁴ Like the English sentence/expression: 'the emotion jumps off the canvas' or 'bursting with emotion'; or the Dutch expression 'het spat er vanaf'. It reminds me of the cheerful, confident island vibe, in which sometimes words, songs or movements are spoken, sang or danced with rhythm and flair.

There is also a word *hiya*¹⁵ *makasee*, that is also used in Okinawan singing and dancing. This more has the feeling of activating, like ‘getting the party going!’

Nujisashi

? What is *nujisashi*?

It is related to increasing and decreasing the application of force.

In Japanese it is called ‘*chikara no kankyu*’¹⁶.

Instead of losing the power¹⁷, you ‘pull’ it back.

? Higaonna *Sensei* once explained it to me with an image. He showed the movement of trusting with a spear and then pulling it back to be able to thrust again.

Yes. Something like that.

? *Nujisashi* is a Japanese word?

No, *Hōgen*.

Nujisashi is Okinawan, just like ‘*kakin*’. It is also something you have to apply. If you push something forward, you generate advancing power, but when you pull back you apply a retreating power. So, in that case, you don’t lose or lessen power, but you change the power.

Ti nu Umui

? Is there a dialect word for heavy hands?

Yes, *ti nu umui*¹⁸. It means ‘weight of the hand’.¹⁹

¹⁵ ヒーヤ *hiya* : *Interjection*, a cry or shout used to pump up spirit. Equivalent to Hey! or Here we go!.

¹⁶ 力の緩急. Modulation of speed and power. Of strong and gentle, fast and slow.

¹⁷ After the expression of it.

¹⁸ ティヌウムイ or 手の重み

¹⁹ Higaonna Morio *Sensei* would often refer to this as ‘dead hand’, or use Japanese [*te no omomi*].

Shimechurasan [Shimejurasan]²⁰

? What does 'Shimejurasan' mean?

That's a beautiful term. It relates to a person whose techniques are beautifully executed. Not only in the posture and form. But also in the eyes, and the power the person radiates. That is also a part of it.

Shimejurasan means "holistically beautiful". This *shime* has a different meaning from the *shime-ru* of *sanchin*. This *shime* in the Okinawan language means "determined" or "to perfect (*kime*)" in Japanese. If you say it roughly, "cool", I think. So, I think the interpretation of Sydney sensei of "to complete" and completion" is not wrong.

? So, it is about beauty and radiation?

Hai. Yes, like 'aura'.

? In Japanese there are two words for different types of beauty, *bi* [美] and *yugen* [幽玄], what is the Okinawan word for beauty.

Churasan.

? And what is *shime*?

Like *kime*.²¹ But in Okinawan *karate* we use the word '*shime*'²². Simply speaking it means 'end' [in the sense of completion]. Like the wholeness and beauty radiating from each completed technique.

Noon di

? Are there any other areas where you use *noon di*, except for *sepai* and *suparinpei*?

No.

? Is 'di' in '*noon di*' the same as 'te' in '*karate*'?

Yes, but 'te' does not only means hand but more in general [or symbolical] 'technique'.

[ChatGPT: The Okinawan words 清らさん (ちゅらさん / *churasan*) and 美らさん (ちゅらさん / *churasan*) both stem from the Ryukyuan language, particularly the Okinawan dialect, and are associated with the concept of beauty or purity—but with subtle differences in nuance and usage.

1. 清らさん (ちゅらさん / *churasan*); meaning: 'Pure' or 'clean', often referring to purity of heart, cleanliness, or spiritual beauty. Components: 清ら (*chura*): 'Pure' or 'clean' (akin to 清らか in standard Japanese). さん (*san*): A suffix used to give a respectful or endearing tone. Usage: More traditional or poetic. It emphasizes spiritual or moral purity, and is less commonly seen in modern or casual contexts.

2. 美らさん (ちゅらさん / *churasan*). Meaning: "Beautiful one" or "beautiful person/thing." Components: 美ら (*chura*): "Beautiful" in Okinawan. さん (*san*): Same respectful suffix. Usage: More common in contemporary Okinawan culture, including tourism and media. Example: 美ら海水族館 (ちゅらうみすいぞくかん / *Churaumi Suizokukan*): Okinawa's famous Beautiful Sea Aquarium.

²⁰ *Churasan*: ちゅらさん - 清らさん [old, poetic, spiritual] or 美らさん [modern, common]. See: [JLect - ちゅらさん【清らさん・美らさん】 : churasan | define meaning](#)].

²¹ 極め.

²² 締め [*shime*] (しめ) means 'tie', 'fasten', or 'close' (like the end of something — e.g., 締めくくり = conclusion). In this context I think the best translation here would be 'completion'.

? For 'noon' there is no *kanji*, right? Only *katakana* or *hiragana*?

No, no *kanji*. It is *Hōgen* and there is no *kanji* for *Hōgen*.

Terms less commonly used in the IOGKF

? Miyagi An'ichi Sensei only used *Hōgen*²³ and in the IOGKF we use some of these Okinawan terms. Like *chinkuchi*, *muchimi* and a few others. Did Miyagi An'ichi Sensei use any other Okinawan *karate* terms in teaching?

Yes.

Yagui / Yagii

Yagii [ヤギイー](Kiai) is written as 矢声 "arrow-voice" in Japanese. It's a sharp voice like an arrow, as written. The arrow of sound is not wrong, I think, but Gii means voice in Okinawan language. So, it means the arrow of the voice. The meaning of *Yagui* is similar to *kiai*. *Yagui* means strong spirit or focused energy.

Higaonna Morio Sensei explained it as 'sound arrow'. **Okinawan-English Wordbook**, A short Lexicon of the Okinawan Language with English Definitions and Japanese Cognates, by Mitsugu Sakihara: *yagwii*, n. [*yagoe**]. A shout to mark time; a shout of encouragement; a fighting cry; a fighting spirit; *Yagui*, n. Same as *yagwii*.
Jlect: イヤ, *iya* = arrow and くいー, *kwii* = 1. voice 2. news [of someone] word [of someone]; something said [of someone]. For example: くいーちちゅん or 声聞ちゅん, *kwii chichun* = to hear (about somebody), to hear word (of someone), to catch wind (of someone). For more extensive explanations, see:
<https://www.jlect.com/search.php?r=%E3%82%A4%E3%83%A4&l=okinawa&group=words> and
<https://www.jlect.com/entry/913/kwii/>

Nuchun [ヌチュン] ²⁴



Nuchun means 'to stab' or 'to pierce' [used when explain that a punch has to penetrate its target].

Miyagi An'ichi Sensei often said *nuke, nuke!* Or *nuchun*.

Miyagi An'ichi Sensei was very skilled with *nukite* [spear hand]. I once saw a demonstration of *gekisai dai ichi*, from Miyagi An'ichi Sensei where every movement had *nukite* [spear hand]. Even upper blocks, high punch, reverse punches, etc. were done with *nukite*.²⁵

Miyagi Chojun Sensei taught that to him. He had said to him: "you are small, so you can better use *nukite*." It was a consistent part of his instruction.

? Did Miyagi An'ichi Sensei also taught open hand *sanchin*?

²³ 方言, Okinawan language.

²⁴ See: <https://www.jlect.com/search.php?r=nuchun&l=all&group=words>.

²⁵ Higaonna Morio Sensei also played with this idea for a short while. When he brought the Panther Productions Video Series, where he demonstrated all the *bunkai kumite* for *gekisai dai ni* with open hand [*shuto, nukite*, etc.]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVE4wlz8Vas>

Personally, I never saw it, but I have heard that he practiced that.

Gamaku

Gamaku refers to how you use the connection between the pelvis and thighbone. How you use the hip joint. Just like *chinkuchi*, *Gamaku* controls the angle between the pelvis and the thighbone and then it causes an optimal explosion of power.

🔗 I did some study on sources from Okinawan *karate* and Okinawan dance, and noticed that some teachers or authors speak more about the front of the core, others about the side or the back, some about the whole girdle. How do you look at this? What is the most important part for 'getting *gamaku*'.

In *karate*, through using the right and left hip joints properly, you can involve front and back side in an optimal way.

🔗 Can you explain that a little more?

The hip joints play a crucial role in generating essential power. They act as a kind of hinge through which energy flows to the *hara*. Here, in the *hara*, 'air pressure' is also gathered and built up. This air pressure takes on the form and feel of a kind of basketball. It is like pumping up this 'basketball' and then letting it explode. This is what generates explosive power.

🔗 Speaking about this explosion *Sensei*, I feel that the way you / it explodes is different in different techniques. For example in a *gyaku zuki* in *zenkutsu dachi* or a *gedan barai* in *shiko dachi* it feels like different explosions. In *shiko dachi* the *hara* opens up. Is that contradictory to the idea of building and releasing abdominal 'air pressure'?

Using *gamaku* during a *gedan barai* in this way, I think is harder. As you are showing, you can use back-side of the *gamaku* for *gedan barai* in *shiko dachi*.

🔗 Did Miyagi An'ichi *Sensei* also use the word *gamaku*?

Yes. He always taught in Okinawan language. Because of this, it stood out less as a special term, but he used it often.

🔗 Higaonna Morio *Sensei* didn't seem to use the word *gamaku*, why would that be? Did he adapt to international language maybe?

He may not have said '*gamaku*', but he *used* it naturally. It was so instinctive for him, there was no need to name it. It was so natural to him that he probably didn't feel the need to break it down technically, reflect on it and to use the term.

Wata & Hara

🔗 Is *wata* the Okinawan word for *hara*?

*Wata*²⁶ means ‘belly’. It is a more colloquial word. *Hara* refers more to the lower part of the belly. *Hara* is similar to *tanden*.

*Kusabi kakire*²⁷

🔍 Are there any other important terms that were not mentioned?

Miyagi An’ichi Sensei also used *kusabi kakire*

🔍 What does “*Kusabi kakire*” mean?



Kusabi is a carpenter’s wedge. A wedge that is driven between two beams to make sure nothing moves or falls apart. It looks a little like *chinkuchi*. You must apply [*kakire*] it, therefor: ‘*kusabi kakire*’.



🔍 Do you use this in *sanchin*?

No, I don’t use this in *sanchin*. This is to perfect a technique. I also use it for example in *kaki-e*.

🔍 To lock your opponent?

No, it is about limiting the space [‘play’] in a joint to maximize power.

🔍 This reminds me of a word that a *karate* instructor once shared and was also said to be *Hōgen* [but I never found any proof of it]. He said he received the word from an other Okinawan *karate* teacher from another style. The word was ‘*gyame*’ and it was supposed to mean ‘opening the joints’. Do you recognize this word?

No, I never heard of it.

🔍 I feel it is important to treasure and pass on these Okinawan *karate* terms and was recently surprised by the fact that an Okinawan third generation representative of a *goju-ryu* lineage was not familiar with the term *chinkuchi*.

Yes, most younger people in Okinawa don’t learn Okinawan anymore. And even if you learn it, it is important how you learn it. If you only learn what Okinawan word is an equivalent of what Japanese word, it isn’t really learning Okinawan. You must be able to feel the words.

🔍 Like understanding it with your body and soul.

Yes. Indeed.

²⁶ *Wata*: わた / ワタ [see: <https://www.jlect.com/entry/113/wata/>]

²⁷ *Kusabi*: くさび / 楔 ; *Kakire*: カキレ-

? Any other terms you feel we haven't discussed yet.

No, I think as far as *karate* is concerned. This is about it.

Unfamiliar terms from other sources

碎破

Atifa

? Do you know or use *atifa*²⁸? Was it used by for example Miyagi An'ichi Sensei

No, it is not used in *goju-ryu*.

But it is *Hōgen*. It means 'to hit'. From 'ateru'.

'Fa' in *atifa*, is the same as in *saiifa*²⁹. To tear. *Saifa* means is to hit and tear.

Atifa means trusting power.

? I often saw it explained as shock power

Yes, I think that is a good translation.³⁰

*Shisee*³¹

? *Shisee* is posture, right?

Yes.

Mutimi

? *Mutimi*?

Same as *muchimi*. There are two meanings of *muchimi*. In *goju-ryu* it means sticky from *muchi* [*mochi*]. In *shorin-ryu* *muchimi* means 'whip power'. These are almost opposite in meaning.³²



The investment in the training of *shisee* can clearly been seen and felt in this photograph of Miyagi Chojun Sensei [and Juhatsu Kyoda Sensei].

²⁸ アティファ [当破]

²⁹ 碎 [*sai*] — to smash, break, shatter; 破 [*ha*] — to tear, rip, destroy, break through; Together, 碎破 [*saiifa*] can be interpreted as 'smash and tear', 'break and destroy'.

³⁰ Of course one may encounter *goju-ryu* teachers who use the term. On Okinawa it was quite common that teachers would meet-up with teachers from other styles or learned more then one style in their life. These days with books and internet, even more informational exchange happens.

³¹ ししえー [Japanese: 姿勢 *shisei*]

³² The first one referring to a slow application of power, the second one to a fast application of power.

Mitudi [Japanese: meotode]³³

? Meotode?

In *Hogen* it is called *mitudi* ミー トウ デイ ー. *Mitu* means 'as a couple', as in man and wife. 'di' means hand. The term comes from *shorin-ryu* [see photo from Motobu Choki Sensei on the right]. In *goju-ryu* this is similar to for example *hojo uke* in *seiyunchin kata*.



? Sensei, I still have more questions, but it is already late in Okinawa...

No problem, this is a wonderful opportunity.

Goju-ryu – Go & Ju

? How do you teach *Go* (strength) and *Ju* (pliancy) to your students? What would be the most important elements you would share?

Go is about power. This is both about a strong body and a strong mind, mental toughness. Both are important.

? How about *ju*?

Ju is often explained as soft, but I prefer to describe it as flexibility. Just like a willow. It's the power that can respond to anything without clashing.

? Personally, I was taught that *go* is the foundation, with *ju* coming later as a more refined stage. But I have often seen that people got stuck in *go*-aspect and didn't develop the *ju*-aspect very much. Some *karateka* are very strong in *go*. They have strong bodies and strong spirit, but not many develop the *ju* very much. Higaonna Sensei embodied *go* and *ju*, but was most known for his *go* qualities and was less oriented on *ju*. Some teachers like Nakamura Sensei and yourself, seem to be more oriented towards exploring and developing the *ju*-aspect equally. What is your view on the development of *go* and *ju*?

First of all, I think that *ju* exists in *go*. In the beginning, in *go*, you want to win and be strong. This is often a very ego-centric orientation.

But when you train with various training partners you can learn to distance yourself from this limited and ego-centric orientation. You also learn to practice without clashing.

Like I said earlier in the interview, in the beginning you train to become strong and fierce, but this can also make you aggressive and rough or harsh. By training together, you learn to distance yourself from these derailments of fierceness and then *ju*-aspect comes more to life. This is what I have experienced for myself. It is like polishing these 'rough edges' away, again and again. So *ju* comes alive.

³³ 夫婦手.

? So, the way I understand this, is like purifying the *go*, also awakens the *ju*?

Yes, that is how it is, then the unnecessary aspects of *go* are being eliminated.

? Clear, thank you ...

ON PEACE ...

? Did you finish your explanation on *go* & *ju*, or did you want to share more or something else?

The philosophy of Okinawan *karate* is to train your entire life, in order never to use it, your whole life.

This is what I always hope. *Karate* is not about fighting. It is for peace. I hope that all people will use it in such a way, all over the world. That *karate* is used for peace.

? I think that is a very beautiful point. Earlier, Kana and I already wondered about how we can express this orientation of *goju-ryu* as an art of peace more fully. It feels very important and is also a paradox. On the one hand we have this message of peace. And, on the other hand, I have been in the martial arts for almost 50 years, and I have seen so many fights between people, teachers, organizations, etc. More than anywhere else. And recently of course also with the split off of the TOGKF. It's a bizarre paradox, but I feel we must keep trying.

Yes, yes, I agree.

? I am also very touched now. When you started to explain about this aspect of peace, I could feel that something energetically shifted in you. I could feel it has a deep meaning for you. I have also seen this during some interviews I saw online, with some older Okinawan *karate* masters, when they were talking about this aspect of peace. I want to thank you for sharing the depth and the feeling of this point of peace. Thank you.

Mmm. Thank you.

? I also feel that with all that is happening now in the world this message is even more important.

Yes.



Artwork by 'Quiet Butterfly' -
<https://www.etsy.com/nl/shop/quietbutterfly>

SOME FINAL QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

? Through history, there have been different influences, like those from China and Japan. In Japanese *dōjō* *karate* life seems to be more strictly and hierarchically organized, stricter *dōjō* etiquette, etc. Sometimes even more harsh. In Okinawa the vibe, to me, seems to be a little bit more

relaxed, more flowing, a little bit more friendly, a little more 'heart, in the *dōjō*. How do you look at this, do you see the Japanese influence as a bad thing? Or do you also see some good things coming from Japanese culture or budo?

I think there are differences in the vision of each *dōjō*. The rules of the *dōjō* are depending on the vision; whether you want to train students to make them stronger in *karate*, or whether you want to develop their personality and for this reason you teach karate.

The priority makes the difference; when the *dōjō* thinks *karate's* techniques first and students second, or development of the personality of the students first, and you have the *karate* training to grow them.

There are *dōjō* with the wrong priority. If the *dōjō* thinks that they have students for *karate*, then the rules of the *dōjō* become stricter and training becomes reckless. But, if the *dōjō* thinks that they want to grow their students, and they have *karate* training for this purpose, then there will be no reckless training anymore.

 *Sensei do you feel that the orientation is different between mainland Japan and Okinawan karate?*

Yes, some teachers in mainland Japan often think that their students exist to develop *karate*, but no, *karate* exists to develop the student. Not the other way around. So, you can even have a *dōjō* just for one person.

I am always very clear about this [when I am in Japan]. It makes me angry when I see this attitude, that the people are there for *karate's* sake. No, *karate* is there to develop the people. No matter if there is one or if there are many students.

 *What are your main sources of inspiration for life, from a spiritual perspective? Is it karate, or Zen Buddhism, indigenous Okinawan culture or ... ?*

To stay close to my purest, most honest self. That is what I always consider important. I want to have and develop a pure heart. And that this expresses itself in my actions. From my heart and pure self.

For example if you see some trash on the ground, then you pick it up and throw it in a trashcan or take it home to do that. When you act like that, you follow your 'pure heart'. But when you think something like '*that's not my job, somebody else should do that, I didn't throw it there!*', then you don't follow your heart. I don't want to be and live like that. I want to do what feels right [pure].

 *Thank you, I recognize this in who you are and how you act in the world. Thank you Sensei, I don't want to take more of your time. But if there is something left you want to say or ask, please do so! And otherwise I want you to have a good sleep!*

I'm deeply grateful for this beautiful and educational time! I also find it very special and beautiful to talk with someone about this from outside of Okinawa. Somebody who wants to deepen and research Okinawan *karate*. I had a beautiful time. I feel very grateful!

 *Arigato Gozaimashita!*

Arigato Gozaimashita!



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