

And The Legacy Of

This is the exclusive story of Seidokan karate and kobudo. It is also, as naturally follows, the story of Shian Toma, Soke (father/head of family) of the Okinawan Seidokan system.

by Roy G. Hobbs

FORWARD

The following article was written by Shihan Roy J. Hobbs, Rokudan, personal student of Soke Shian Toma, Judan (10th dan), of the Seidokan Karate and Kobudo Assn., Okinawa, Japan.

Master Hobbs serves as the United States Director of the United States Seidokan Karate and Kobudo Association, Okinawa/Japan. In addition, he serves as a Captain in the United States Air Force and is stationed in Japan.

This is the first article ever written on Shian Toma and the Seidokan Association. Concerning the United States development of Seidokan Karate and Kobudo, Dr. R. Sacharnoski, Soke, 10th dan, President of Juko-Kai International, is personally sponsored by Soke Toma.

Dr. Sacharnoski, via written authorization, serves as Soke Toma's personal representative on an international basis, and is a fully graded and licensed Seidokan instructor.

An important and little-known aspect is that Juko-Kai International is directly affiliated with the Seidokan Karate and Kobudo Assn., Okinawa/Japan; Soke Toma and Shihan R. J. Hobbs serve as Vice-President of Juko-Kai International.

Dr. Sacharnoski — his arts, and his 10th-dan ranking — is the only known caucasian Soke (Founder/Head of Family) that has direct rank sponsorship in both Okinawa, Japan, and other Asian countries.

This is a story of Seidokan karate and kobudo. It is also, as naturally follows, the story of Shian Toma, Soke (founder/head of family) of the Okinawan Seidokan system. This story, along with its many details, dates, figures, etc., was related to me personally by Soke Toma. It should be noted that the majority of the dates are approximations, since many years have transpired between most of the events described here.

Shian Toma was born on the island of Okinawa in 1929. He first studied karate at the age of 16 in the city of Osaka, where he lived for a year during the war years.

Upon his return to Okinawa, he began to study from his sensei of over twenty years, Shinjato Sokishi, Master Sokishi had studied from the famous Chojun Miyagi (1888-1953), who founded the Goju-Ryu system. He also studied from Tatsuo Shimabuku (who passed away in 1975), the founder of Isshin-Ryu, and many others throughout the island of Okinawa.

Soke Toma has related, on numerous occasions, that in the early years, there was not the wide differentiation of styles that we know today. In those days, Okinawan karate was simply Okinawan karate. Another interestingly related aspect was that in the early years, most sensei taught only a small number of kata. In fact, it would not have been unusual to find a sensei teaching only one kata. But over time, as there was comparison and exchange of kata, the numbers grew.

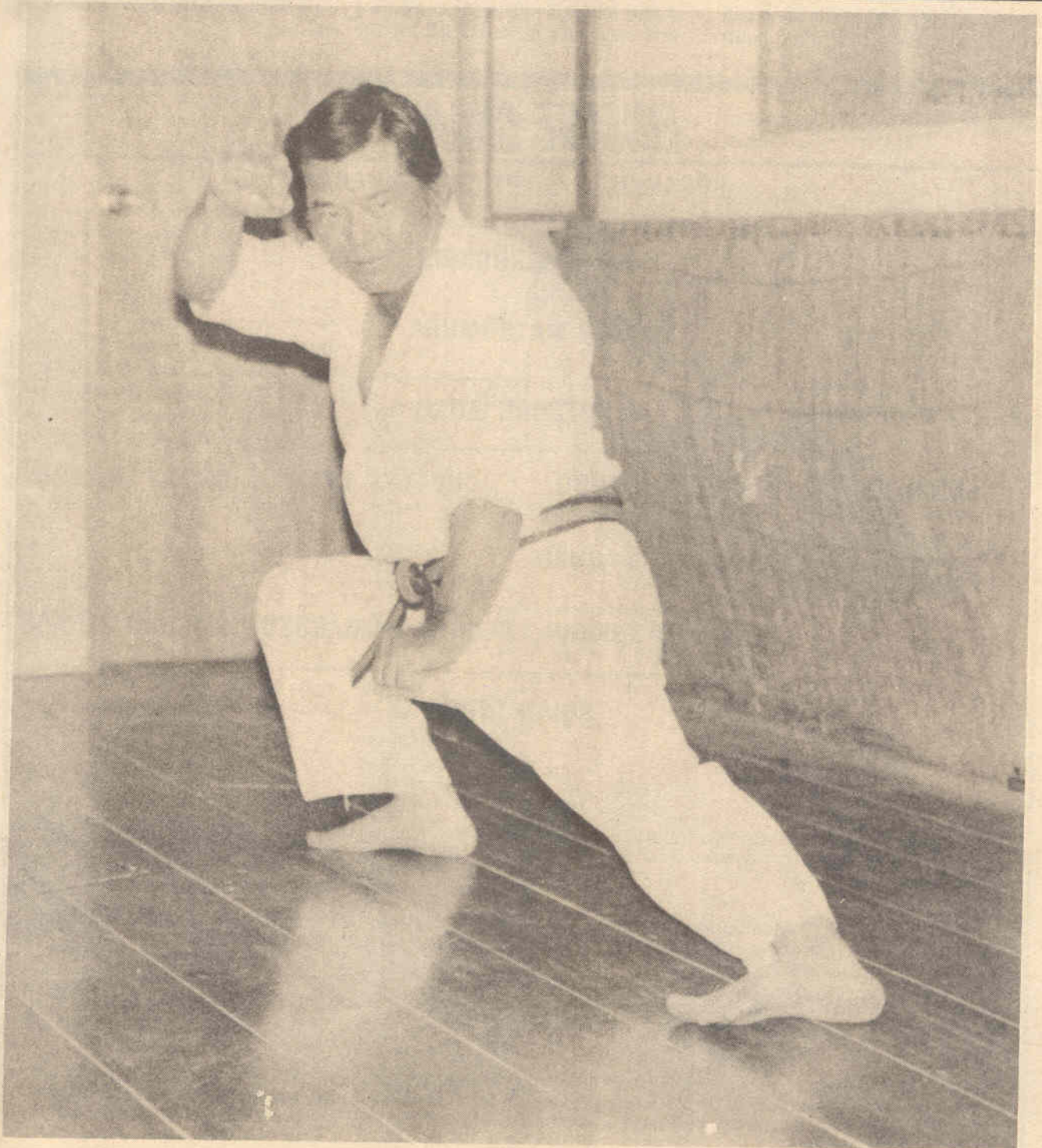
Master Sokishi taught four kata — Seisan, Sanchin, Chinto, and Bo (wooden staff). It was from Grandmaster Miyagi that sensei Sokishi had learned Sanchin kata, which emphasizes strong internal breathing. Master Sokishi, who was a policeman by profession, had studied from Miyagi-san while he (Miyagi) was teaching at the Police School in Okinawa. A noteworthy happening occurred when Soke Toma had the opportunity to perform the Sanchin kata before Grandmaster Miyagi during one of the training sessions at the Police School.

In respect to the previously mentioned small number of kata, it should not be deduced that this made for little kata practice. Soke Toma readily admits that he spent over a year learning and practicing Seisan kata before being allowed to go on to the Sanchin kata. Perhaps this is part of the reason why most of the old Okinawan masters are so strict as to the precise execution of kata.

During the early Sixties, Soke Toma became affiliated with the All-Japan Karate Association, then under the guidance of Grandmaster Zenryu Shimabuku. Shimabuku had been a student of the famous Chotoku Kyan (1870-1945), who is generally recognized as the founder of the Shobayashi branch of Shorin-Ryu. Grandmaster Kyan's most prominent instructor was the equally well-known Yasutsune Itosu; Grandmaster Kyan's other notable students were Eizo Shimabuku (the present head of Shobayashi Shorin-Ryu) and Shosin Nagamine (founder of the Matsubayashi branch of

TOMA

Okinawan Karate



Soke Toma (Photo by R.J. Hobbs)

Shorin-Ryu). Grandmaster Zenryo Shimabuku passed away in 1970.

From Grandmaster Shimabuku, Soke Toma learned the majority of the kata that he now practices and teaches. These kata include: Wansu, Anaku, Passai, Pinan 1-5, Naihanchi, Passai-Sol, Gojushiho, Kusanku, Sai kata, Tonfa kata, and Kama kata. These, plus Seisan, Chinto, and the Bo kata, brought Toma's group into the mainstream of what has become known as Shorin-Ryu karate.

In the mid-Sixties there was a significant split within the All-Japan Karate Association. The main point

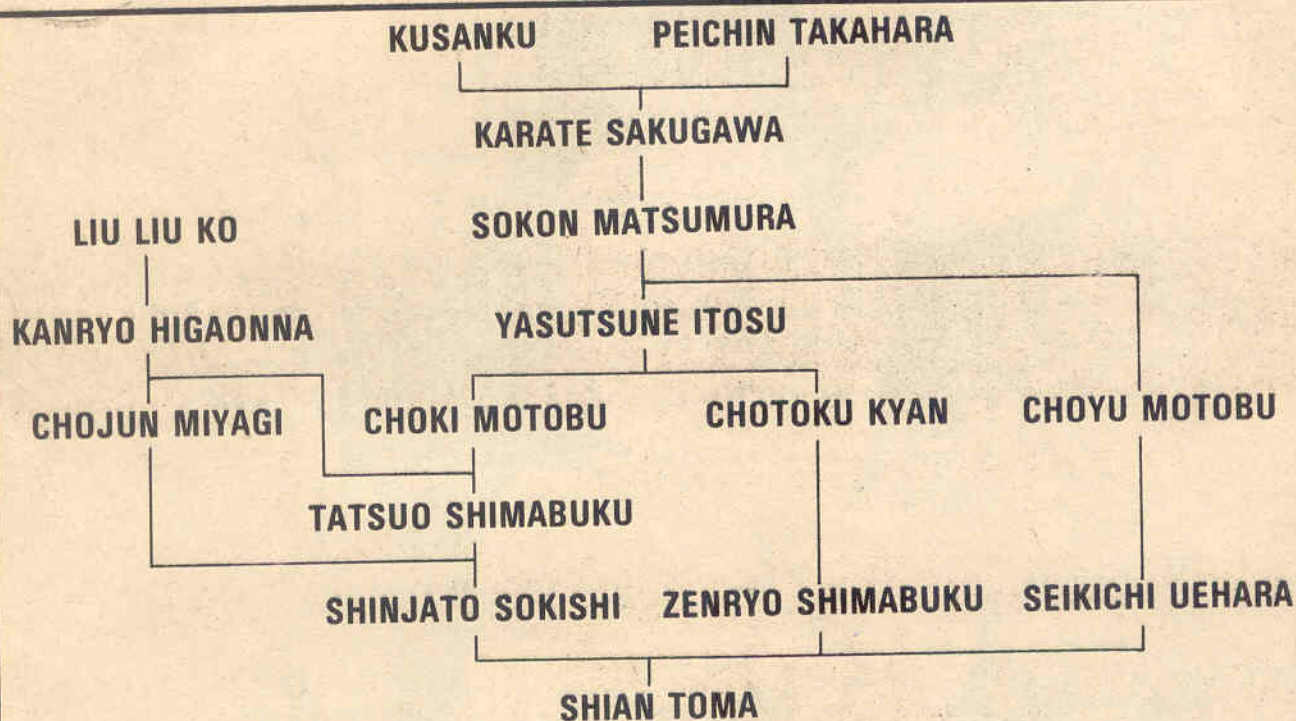
of contention was the traditional full-contact method of sparring utilized on Okinawa. This type of sparring involved the use of body armor similar to that used in Kendo (Japanese fencing). It was quite brutal, and knockouts were not uncommon.

Since the All-Japan Karate Association had as its main goal the integration of the karate of Okinawa (now officially part of Japan) with that of the karate of Japan, conflict was bound to arise. The most widely accepted method of sparring in Japan was, and still is, the no-contact variety. It was generally felt, by the

hierarchy of the All-Japan Karate Association, that this no-contact sparring should be taught, practiced and officially sanctioned.

Many, like Soke Toma, were brought up in the hard methods and also felt that this was the true Okinawan way. Soke Toma also had a reputation as a tough, no-nonsense karate man, and was well-respected for his fighting abilities — both in and out of the dojo. Thus, the split occurred and the Okinawan Kempo Association was formed, made up of similarly traditional hard-and-tough sensei.

LINEAGE CHART



1. *SHORIN-RYU*: The Shorin-Ryu influence on Seidokan is depicted by the center portion of the chart: that portion beginning with Kusanku and Peichin Takahara and ending with Shinjato Sokishi and Zenryo Shimabuku.

2. *MOTOBU-RYU*: The Motobu-Ryu influence on Seidokan is depicted by the right portion of the chart: that portion beginning with Kusanku and Peichin Takahara and ending with Seikichi Uehara.

3. *GOJU-RYU*: The Goju-Ryu influence on Seidokan is depicted by the left portion of the chart: that portion beginning with Liu Liu Ko and ending with Shinjato Sokishi.

4. *OTHERS*: There were/are other influences on the development of Seidokan. Nearly all of the above indicated sensei had other lesser sensei themselves and generally learned whatever from whomever they could. This is why Soke Toma, still to this day, basically considers all Okinawan Karate (for a lack of a better word) the same.

The Okinawan Kempo Association thrived for several years. Then, in 1968, it officially merged with the All-Okinawan Karate and Kobudo Association headed by Grandmaster Seikichi Uehara. Grandmaster Uehara was, and still is, the head of the Motobu-Ryu system of bu-jutsu (martial arts). The Motobu-Ryu system is a little-known Okinawan martial art which strongly resembles the old fighting methods of the Japanese samurai. To the untrained eye, it resembles Aikido in its unarmed methods. However, the throwing and joint-locking techniques of Motobu-Ryu are most similar to the ancient Aiki-Ju-Jutsu of Japan.

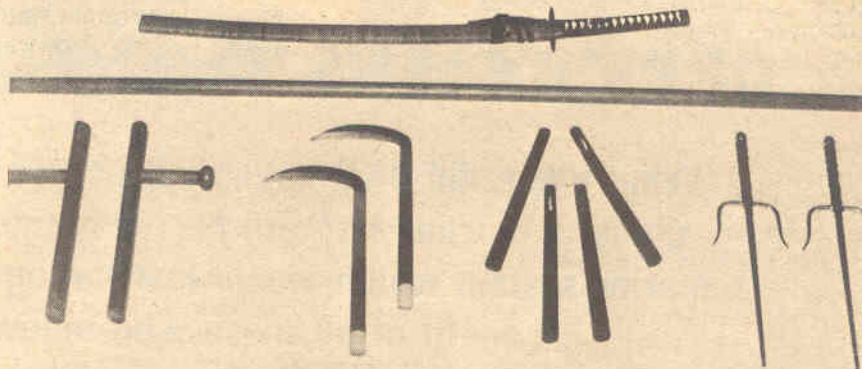
Grandmaster Uehara learned his art from Choyu Motobu, the older brother of the renowned Choki Motobu. It was from bushi (warrior) Sokon Matsumura that Grandmaster Choyu Motobu originally learned those techniques — both weapons and unarmed methods — that eventually became known as Motobu-Ryu.

Motobu-Ryu is also referred to by some as "Go-Ten-Te," which literally means "Palace Hand." The name signifies the fact that the art was strongly associated with the Okinawan kings for centuries.

It should be noted that the weaponry of Grandmaster Uehara's Motobu-Ryu are those normally found in the traditional Japanese bu-jutsu systems. These weapons include, but are not limited to, katana (sword), yari (spear), and naginata (halberd). Thus, as previously mentioned, Motobu-Ryu bu-jutsu is an art in line with the Japanese samurai tradition.

From Grandmaster Uehara, Soke Toma learned the intricate throwing, joint-locking, and *tai waza* (quick-draw sword techniques) that are now incorporated into Seidokan. With the inclusion of these techniques, Seidokan became a "total" fighting art that included the kicking, punching, and blocking techniques of karate; the throwing and joint-locking techniques of Aiki-Ju-Jutsu; the traditional weaponry of Okinawa; and the sword techniques of the samurai. It is a most unusual art, requiring open-minded students with strength, flexibility, and dexterity.

There are now many schools throughout Okinawa/Japan, the United States, and Greece that teach this complex art created by a remarkable man — Shihan Toma. ■



The major weapons utilized in Seidokan: katana, bo, tonfa, kama, nunchaku, and sai. The weapons pictured are the personal weapons of

Shihan Roy J. Hobbs, the author. (Photo by R.J. Hobbs)



Soke Toma demonstrating the use of the double batons in countering a bo attack. He is assisted by Shihan Yamauchi. (Photo by R.J. Hobbs)



Soke Toma demonstrating a Seidokan free-fighting technique. He is assisted by Shihan Tamae. (Photo by R.J. Hobbs)