

## GTKA SHIMBUN JANUARY 2002

*There are no secrets in karate only to practice 100 techniques 100,000 times.*

As in previous issues we have solicited articles from our senior members, covering a number of subjects including the historical, mythical/philosophical and practical. Any delay in producing this newsletter is the fault of the editor alone and he apologises to all for the long delay.

### **Black Belt Grading:**

Congratulation to Hieu Lathi and John Chamberlin for their hard work and dedication. Both were being graded to Shodan in August 2001.

### **Christmas Party/Dinner:**

The GTKA annual Christmas party/dinner was held at the Beacon Hill Community Centre on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2001. We had over 80 people showed up this year. It was by far the best party we have had.

### **Next trip to Watetown:**

Our next planned trip to Watertown, Mass. to visit and train with Mirakian Sensei is to be on the first weekend of (5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>) April 2002. Any student who is interested, please talk to Chan Sensei.

### **The History of Karate:**

#### **Some Historical Notes Part I: General Comments By (Matt)hieu Ravignat**

Much controversy exists on the origin of Goju-Ryu karate. Given the geographical location of the island of Okinawa (its birth place) some have proposed what seems to be the most reasonable hypothesis that Karate is the result of the mixing of two different and yet distinct fighting traditions: Chinese Chuan-Fa and Okinawa-Te. The latter is generally poorly documented and experts have differing opinions on its characteristics. The indigenous populations and cultures of the south-east islands, of which Okinawa is an example, definitely have their distinct warrior traditions. Some similarities between them also exist. The Samoans and the Hawaiians for example share the narrow oar as a weapon and the turtle shield with the Okinawans and the

Shiko-Dachi or horse stance with feet out at angles (characteristically Goju) to the sides is also seen in tribal Samoan warrior dancing. This research is difficult at best but still needs to be recorded. It is primarily difficult because like most indigenous societies and their traditions the history is largely oral. It is even more difficult to ascertain these indigenous traditions in Okinawa because of the uniqueness of its culture, which has often been at the crossroads of China and Japan. One would need to peel back too many layers of cultural influence. However, of what we know of Okinawa-te it seems to be related more to a throwing art and not a hitting art. I am making a distinction here between To-te (Tang (China) Hand) and Okinawa-te (Ryukyu Hand). The term To-Te seems to be increasingly used on the island to mean the inner secrets taught by accomplished masters. Of what this author has seen of them they seem to be a series of techniques influenced by Chinese grappling or Chin-Na.

The influence of Chinese Chuan-Fa (Kung-Fu) on the evolution of Goju Karate is considered by most experts (including Goju-Ryu founder Miyagi Chojun Sensei) as paramount. It is clear that the founders of Goju like Higaonna the teacher of Miyagi and Miyagi himself travelled to China to improve their style called Naha Te at the time. But what they learnt is not clear, and to modern Kung-Fu experts Karate seems far removed from China. It is generally agreed that it is related to the Fukienese martial traditions arts and it does indeed seem to share certain structural similarities, the triangle stance, the narrow stepping, low kicking and the predominance of short range fighting techniques. A number of styles are candidates for the origin of Goju, including White Crane, Monk Fist (Southern Lohan), Tiger Fist, and Five Ancestor fist. An important note is that its theoretical influence is largely due to a book called the

Bubishi. In this book are found two styles considered complementary the White Crane style and the Monk Fist Boxing. It is from these two styles (embodied in the eight poems of the fist) that the hard and soft concepts are taken in Goju (discussed below in practice by Paul Morris). Though these theories (hard Yang soft Yin) ultimately have their origin in Taoist philosophy one cannot claim with assurance that Karate is strictly influenced by an internal Chinese Taoist style like Bagua (Eight Palm Changes Kung-Fu). Taoism was the predominate philosophical paradigm of China for thousands of years, and it is therefore natural that everything is referred to it to greater and lesser subtlety. The breathing methods of Goju have more in common with what is called Wai Dan Qigong, in China or in other words External Qi Exercises. These martial toughing traditions are very dominant in southern Kung-Fu styles. They include a coupling of breathing and muscular contraction, as well as a regimen of hitting, to produce an outer shell around the body which may resist blows. They are largely derivative of southern Shaolin traditions with their Buddhist emphasis on asceticism and not from the more scientific and hedonistic practices of the Taoists. The Taoist philosophy does not lend itself well to quick Qigong methods resulting simply in structural development. It even considers these dangerous and harmful to the body's internal health. It is this authors opinion that Sanchin is theoretically related to the Yin Jin Jing (Muscle and Tendon Changing Classic of Shaolin) but modified by the Fukienese tribal fighting traditions. One must remember that Fukien is one of the last areas of China to be absorb into Chinese civilisation.

What is also clear is that Karate looks very different from White Crane and southern Monk Fist (Lohan) Kung-Fu as they are taught today. Its link with Uechi-Ryu (considered a sister style) is also clear especially in footwork. The major difference between Uechi and Goju is that Uechi is the result of the mixing of Monk Fist and Tiger Fist, whereas Goju is the mixing of Monk Fist and White Crane. Hence the difference in Mawashi Uke's, the one which blocks like

the movement of wings (White Crane/Goju) and the other which tears more like claws (Tiger Fist/Uechi). Examples of Monk Fist techniques in both styles are the hard blocks with closed fists such as Jodan Uke and Gedan Barai, clearly Shaolin (Monk Fist) in origin.

Part II will discuss what style today is the most likely ancestor of Goju.

### **The Philosophy of Karate: Myth in the Martial Arts Part I: By Julee Moroz**

The existence of martial arts owes much of its legacy to the reality of war in the history of humanity. Methods were developed to enhance combat skills and were eventually diversified to create various methods of fighting requiring specialization. Social stratification designating classes of warriors contributed to the enculturation of martial arts throughout cultures such as those of India, China, Japan, Thailand, Korea, the knights of medieval Europe and indeed many others. Where martial tradition of a culture may have survived invasion, occupation and oppression, we see evidence of a continuing tradition today that, in many cases, suggests a system not merely of combat, but a veritable philosophy seeking to actualize the total potential of individuals. These traditions persist today, and continue to be propagated with the assistance of symbolic mediation. Mythology is one of the forms of symbolism used. The purpose of this essay will be to show that traditional teachings passed on in the martial arts, in the form of myth, are conducive to transmitting a particular philosophy and world view to the students who will continue to perpetuate the art.

To classify tales of martial heroism as myth may seem to stretch the folktale into something much more culturally significant. Indeed, many tales of martial arts masters have the flavour of legend and nothing more. However, to leave it simply at that is to ignore that these stories embody the very values of a culture; they present the popular world view, spinning it in the context of mystical epochs of developing cultural symbols, they deal with the notions of death and evil, of nature, and

definitely they keep alive cultural heroes. Martial arts myths for the most part do not describe cosmogonies, but they do describe the birth of the art form. On the subject of differentiating myth from folklore, William Paden writes:

*Myth is essentially different from folktales that tell of a make-believe realm set in a nonexistent time and place with deliberately fictive characters. Rather, myth posits ostensibly real times and places, real heroes and ancestors, real genealogies and events . . . intended by the believers to represent an actual account of the world. (Paden, 72)*

Cross-culturally these myths include historical characters in historical times, and include as historically correct genealogical data and some events as can often be found.

Lévi-Strauss once commented that the problem lay in knowing where the myth ended and where history began (Lévi-Strauss, 38), however myths such as those used in martial arts are often "for spiritual instruction" (Campbell, 71) and thus lay beyond the realm of mere historical connotations. Hence we have our functionalist view. For we know that it is not likely that Bodhidharma (the founder of Zen Buddhism) actually sailed across the Blue River on a reed, but we can appreciate that his exemplary degree of spiritual enlightenment may have been likened to his walking on water, leaving a path in his wake (pun intended) that was inspirational to his students.

Many martial arts myths include reference to the legendary Bodhidharma ("Damo" in Chinese). Bodhidharma was a Buddhist monk said to have left his Kashtriya (Warrior) caste in India to cross the Himalayas into China around 500 C.E. After frustrating Emperor Wu, an enthusiastic Buddhist, with the complexity of his doctrines, Bodhidharma settled in the Shaolin Temple to continue teaching his form of Ch'an, or Zen, Buddhism. Seeing that the monks were too physically unfit to withstand the demanding meditation practices, Bodhidharma implemented rigorous martial training regimes to harmonize their spiritual development with

the physical (Soo, 14). Time-honoured Chinese martial arts exercises such as the Yin Jin Jing (Muscle Change Classic), Hsi Sui Jing (Marrow Washing Classic), and the Eighteen Lohan Hands are attributed to Bodhidharma (Cook, 28). "An interesting story, but unfortunately not one word of it is true, although it is repeated time after time by most followers of the martial arts" (Ibid.). Spiritual enlightenment, exemplified by Bodhidharma, comprises many martial arts myths which are used to emphasize the unity of the mind, body and spirit as a goal. This practice is in existence even today as many schools continue to use meditation as part of their training.

This brings us to the philosophy inherent in the martial arts, which can be directly linked to the warrior's proximity to death. In the *Phaedo*, Plato explores Socrates' calm acceptance of his impending execution, declaring that philosophy is a detachment from life, and a preparation for death. A cultural philosophy or world view affects its institutions. *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* by Inazo Nitobe is an "exposition of Japanese thought" which includes the code of the samurai. "Bushido" translates as bu (military), shi (man or knight), do (way) and provides a sample of encultured ethics (Nitobe, 4). In this ethnographic example, the position is that war is the "foundation of all the high virtues and faculties of men" (Nitobe, 9). The tenderness of a warrior is what is considered noble, and mercy most brave (Ibid., 41). For the samurai of feudal Japan, successful training meant acceptance of the inevitability of death, and the willingness to meet it honourably (Nitobe, 72-81). Moreover, it is this resolve that produces the best warriors.

Part II will be published in the next issue.

## **EDITORIAL:**

ADAPTING TO THE DIFFERENCES IN BODY TYPES BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR OPPONENT

By Paul Morris

Goju Ryu (Hard and Soft style Karate-do)

A unique attribute of our style of Karate-do is that it incorporates both hard and soft techniques. I have noticed however that

when faced with a sparring partner most students forget all about the "soft" techniques and use only the "hard" part of our style. This is true even when the opponent is clearly large enough and strong enough to take the best punch or kick that can be delivered. In many real life situations soft techniques may be much more likely to be successful. An attacker will not attack you unless they think they can easily win. This means that they will in all probability be bigger and stronger than you are, in which case you will be much better off using soft techniques than brute force hard techniques. For example, a woman attacked by a larger man would probably have more success defending herself with open hand strikes to the eyes, throat, groin, or soft blocks that can be turned into throws (especially if she can throw him into the path of a passing bus or subway train), than she would if she tried to "duke it out with him". This is especially true if she has not previously conditioned her hands for hard punches (knuckle pushups, and work on the makiwara, sand bag or heavy bag). This crucial reality should always be kept in mind by the student if Karate is to be understood and performed well.

**Goodbye to a good student and good friend:** by Poon Chan

Yves Paquette has joined the Canadian Army in January 2002. He had reported to the base in St Jean, Quebec on January 15<sup>th</sup> 2002.

Yves had started his Goju training with me since he was 15 years old back in 1986. Over the years I have seen him developed into a good martial artist, good husband and a good father. It is very sad to see him leave us after 17 years. My class will not be the same without him around.