

Okinawan goju-ryu karate is unusual in the martial arts world because it employs both hard and soft techniques with equal effectiveness. Yet the system is not limited to simple punching or kicking, incorporating locks, holds and throws which are strongly influenced by several of the Chinese animal forms.

Goju-ryu can be traced to the Fokien Province of China. Though there are many theories as to how the art came to Okinawa, the person credited with its introduction is Kanryo Higashionna (1853-1917).

As a young man, Higashionna was a sailor on the *Shinko-Sen*, a ship which regularly traded with China. On one of these visits, he saved a drowning child who turned out to be the son of a noted pugilist named Liu. In appreciation, the grateful father began instructing the young Okinawan in the art of Chinese boxing. Higashionna remained and studied in China for approximately 15 years and then returned to teach on his native island. It was during this period in Okinawa that Higashionna modified the techniques



Seikichi Toguchi

THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF SHOREI-KAN™ GOJU-RYU KARATE

by Ichiro Naito and Scott Lenzi

learned in China to suit his people and thus created *naha-te*, derived by combining the name of the Okinawan city of Naha with *te*, the native barehand fighting technique. Among Higashionna's top students were Chojun Miyagi and Juhatsu Kyoda.

Miyagi, being independently wealthy, was able to devote his life to the study of martial arts and he further developed and refined the principles set forth by his teacher. He created the simplified forms, *gekisai* numbers 1 and 2, as well as the openhand kata *tensho*. Although a renowned technician, Miyagi's major accomplishment was his formulation of a cohesive system which would allow penetration into the deeper and more advanced techniques of *naha-te*.

Additionally, Miyagi was responsible for creating the name goju-ryu. At the first martial arts convention held in Kyoto, Japan in 1930, Miyagi sent student Jinan Shinzato as his representative. Since there were many martial artists attending who represented schools with impressive-sounding names, Shinzato, not wanting to feel

humbled, had to invent the name *hanko-ryu* (half-hard style) on the spot for his art. Later, when Shinzato related this to his teacher, Miyagi decided to use the name goju-ryu (hard-soft style), which was taken from a poem in the ancient martial arts text *Bubishi*.

Miyagi's curriculum consisted of four major components:

- *Tee chikate mani*. This referred to the study of solo forms, the traditional kata which combined various karate techniques into a moving sequence. These forms included *koryu* or classical kata such as *sanchin*, *saiha* and *seisan*, which originated in China. Miyagi also developed the *hoo-kiyu* (standardized) and *kihon* (basic) kata to allow a more progressive ap-



Kanryo Higashionna



Chojun Miyagi

Photos by Norman Dion, special thanks to Michael Robinson

proach to the koryu forms.

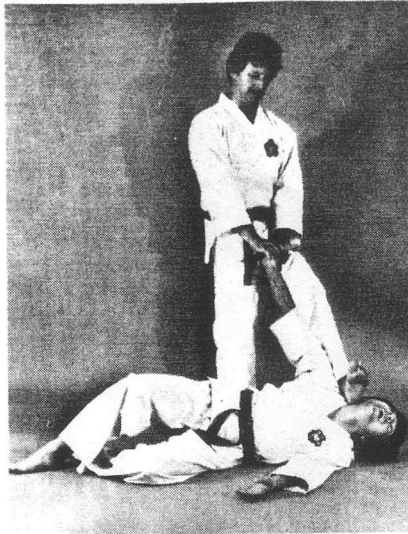
- *Kumite*. There was no freestyle *kumite* (sparring) in Miyagi's program, just prearranged combat practice enabling two persons to perform a kata together in order to experience the physical meaning of the form, and to see how the techniques could be used against actual attackers. This form is accurately called *bunkai kumite*. Both *kihon* and *koryu kata* have specific *bunkai kumite*.

- *Te tochimani*. This study consisted of short, two-man prearranged fighting exercises, each with its own special ending technique. It was used as a beginning approximation for real fighting situations. In today's practice, this form is called *kiso kumite*.

- *Ikukumi*. This last component involved real combat practice, but was set up in such a way so students were not injured. The junior was allowed to attack with any technique to any part of the senior's body without restraining kicks or punches. The senior man could block or dodge, but was not allowed to initiate any counterattack. Finally, when he saw an opening, the senior jumped in and pushed the junior back with the palm of his hand. The senior student accordingly had to master a tremendous number of techniques in order to use them instantaneously. Since scoring points was of no interest, the senior's counterattack had to be final and decisive. It generally took a minimum of ten years to reach this level.

In 1933, the *Dai Nippon Butokukai* (Greater Japan Martial Virtues Association) was formed and Miyagi was named the Okinawan representative. He presented his article "An Outline of Karate-do," at one of the organization's meetings and was subsequently awarded the title "Karate Master"

Photos by Charles Bentz and Jeff Thompson



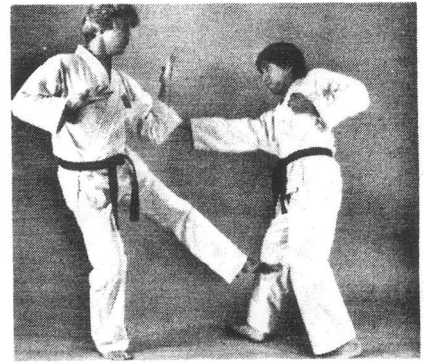
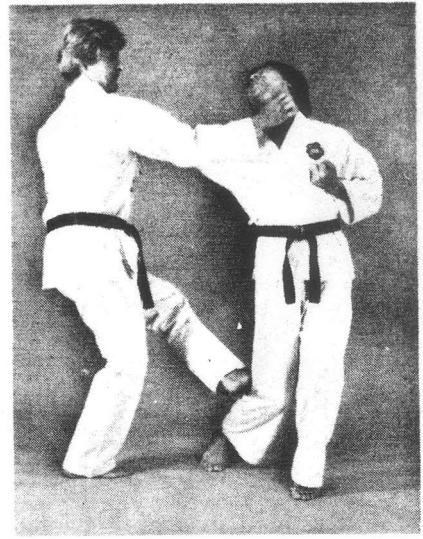
The Shorei-Kan goju-ryu kicks are typically low in nature and incapacitating in their result. They are generally accompanied by a simultaneous hand strike or a grabbing motion.

by the emperor. Miyagi thus became the first master so designated in the karate world.

Miyagi had a number of talented, dedicated students such as Seiko Higa, Seikichi Toguchi and Meitoku Yagi, who have all developed esteemed reputations in their own right. In the years before Miyagi's death, Toguchi remained with his instructor and other senior students and was given further insight into Miyagi's principles and theories.

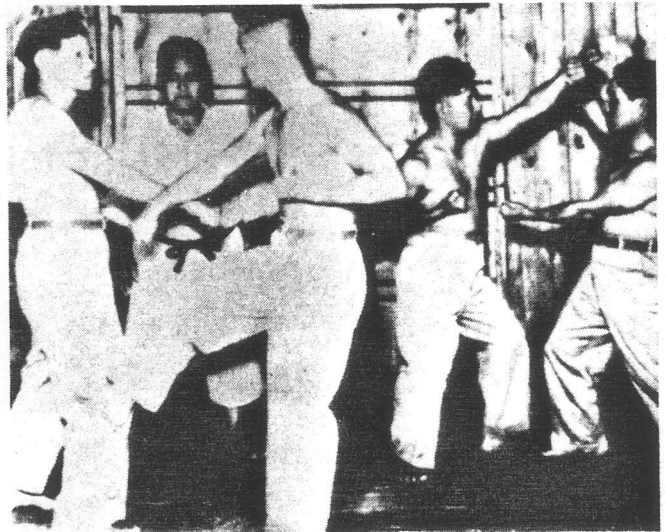
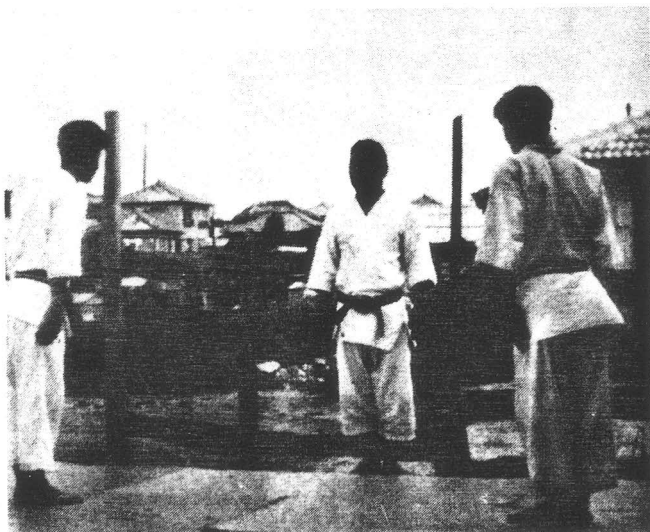
Shortly after Miyagi's death in 1953, Toguchi decided to carry on the principles of his teacher and formed

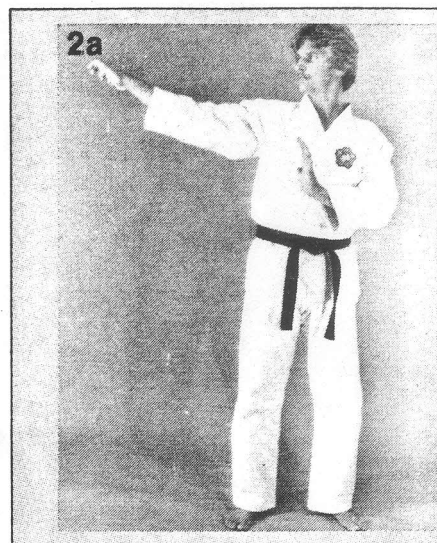
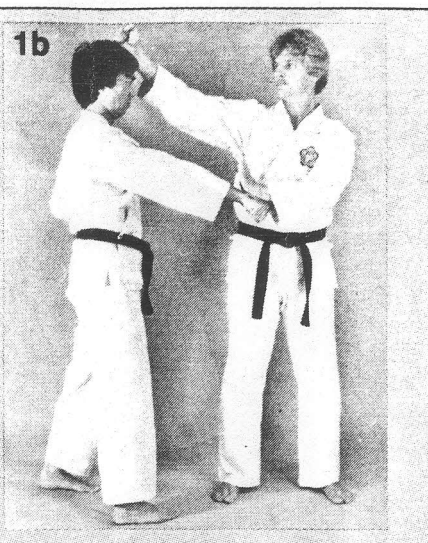
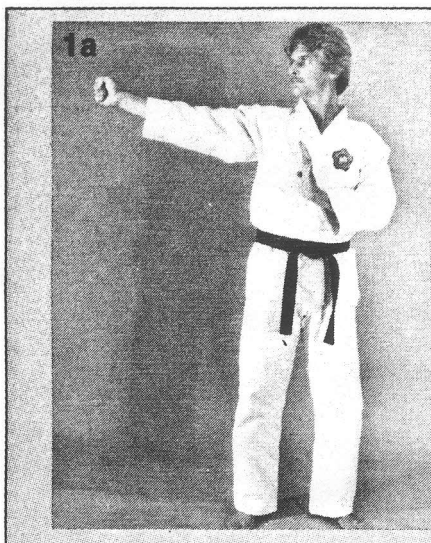
Students bow to Seikichi Toguchi (below left) at opening of first Shorei-Kan dojo in Naha city in 1955. Bottom right, Chojun Miyagi (in background) watches students practice, including Toguchi (second from right).



the *Shorei-Kan™* (school to respect courtesy and manners) Okinawan Goju-ryu Karate-do. He opened the first *Shorei-Kan dojo* (school) in Naha city in 1955, and since it was very close to a U.S. Army base, many American GIs came to study. Because of the introduction of Westerners into the Okinawan dojo, Toguchi realized the need for more development of the existing system. The forms of *gekiha*, *kakuha* and *bunkai* were thus created.

Toguchi further developed goju-ryu by creating a number of advanced





supplementary training methods. A typical Shorei-Kan class in the late 50s (and still today) consisted of the following:

1. Preparatory exercises to warm up the body for karate movements.
2. Supplementary exercises to practice the basic techniques used in kata.
3. Kata, bunkai and kiso kumite practice.
4. Application of kata techniques.

Toguchi also created *hakutsuru no mai*, a kata adapted from the original Chinese white crane form which is performed to music. The kata and subsequent bunkai tell the story of a white crane fighting a snake. This beautiful form is rarely seen in the United States and is known only to a small number of goju-ryu practitioners.

Toguchi's classes were noted for their strictness and discipline, a practice still common to goju-ryu today. His system did not utilize free sparring, but fighting takes on several forms, the most important and difficult being ikukumi.

Proponents of the Shorei-Kan sys-

tem believe their approach has several advantages when compared to styles which utilize mostly kata and *jiyu kumite* (freestyle sparring), simply because of certain detailed studies which include: extraction and application of kata techniques, logical progression of techniques, variety of advanced techniques, and safety of training methodology.

The meanings of forms are extracted and analyzed via a series of progressive kata and their respective bunkai kumite. The bunkai is arranged so that the student actually executes the specific self-defense application of each kata with his partner. The student progresses through a series of kata and bunkai, each successive form building on the one before. This progression of techniques was originally designed by Miyagi and further developed by Toguchi. In this way, the student learns new techniques but still practices, maintains, and sharpens his earlier skills.

At the black belt level, students begin the koryu bunkai kumite, which are the bunkai to kata such as *seiyunchin* or *seipai*. At this stage, *kaisai*

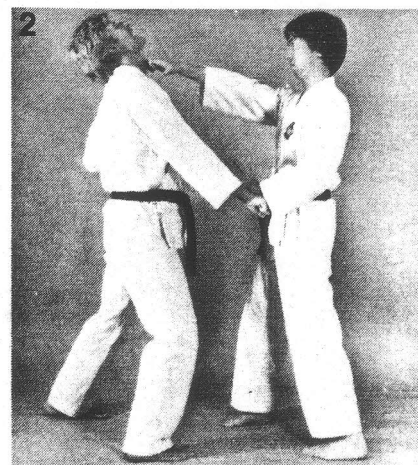
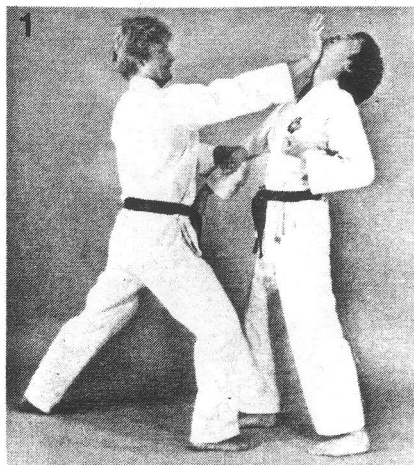
Author Scott Lenzi, a Shorei-Kan black belt and instructor, demonstrates some of the infighting techniques of the system and their application against an attacker (in this case, co-author Ichiro Naito). All sequences are from the saifa bunkai.

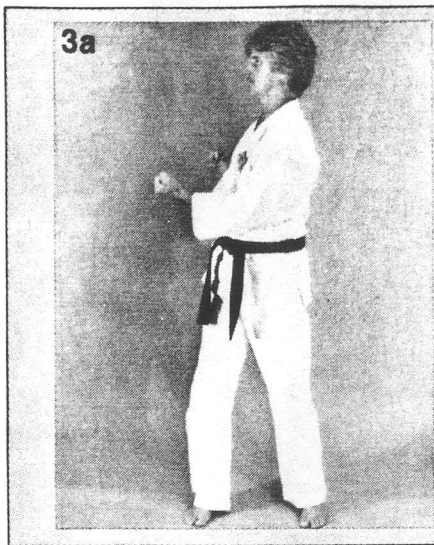
kumite is also introduced. Similar to bunkai, *kaisai* is an analysis of the application for a specific motion in the kata.

According to Toguchi, a student first learns the mechanics, and then after a time the kata becomes *part* of the practitioner. Only at this point can application of the motions become apparent and, more importantly, a part of the martial artist. At this level, the kata has a meaning and is no longer mere routine.

A good analogy of *kaisai* might be learning to catch a ball: initially it requires a great deal of concentration. But with continued practice, catching becomes a natural reaction. With further refinement, if you were thrown a ball of fire, you would not only be able to react as if to catch it, but also to ascertain its nature and move out of

The authors demonstrate some of the many simultaneous blocks and strikes which are the essence of goju-ryu karate. Note that the striking points are, in many cases, to vital, incapacitating areas of the body—the throat (2), eyes (3), and floating ribs (4). Other targets include the bottom of the chin (1) and the solar plexus (5).





the way. Achieving this state of subconscious action requires a great many years of practice, since karate is not as simple as catching a ball.

A variety of techniques can be practiced using the Shorei-Kan system. By placing a significant emphasis on kata, bunkai and kiso kumite, the Shorei-Kan student practices all techniques in both single and two-man forms at his level. This study includes unusual or dangerous techniques which cannot be practiced during a freestyle sparring match. Normally, freestyle sparring requires the use of techniques which are comparatively simple and only applied to limited target areas. Therefore, a karate student who engages exclusively in freestyle sparring will, for the most part, practice straight punches, a variety of high (above groin) kicks, and little else. While this approach might be good for tournament competition, targets and techniques more conducive to self-defense situations are not explored. On the other hand, the Shorei-Kan student practices throws, elbow techniques, locks, finger strikes, and more, with full power and

without restraint. Since these techniques are executed with a partner, both offensive, defensive, and counteroffensive moves are explored.

Safety has always been an important part of the Shorei-Kan training method. Emphasis on prearranged se-



quences will mean less chance of injury, a common occurrence in many dojo. Injuries which occur in martial arts classes can usually be avoided if adequate measures to protect practitioners are taken. Training in the martial arts should be beneficial, healthy

and fun.

Through many years of diligent practice of kata, bunkai and kiso kumite, and a variety of advanced training exercises, the Shorei-Kan student absorbs a wide variety of techniques. These disciplined practices develop the student's spirit, enlightenment and self-knowledge, the goal of all the martial arts. During this, the 30th anniversary of Shorei-Kan, we can look to many of the Okinawan karateka such as Seikichi Toguchi and see the real essence of karate-do goju-ryu—humility, happiness, health and serenity—all of which were exemplified by the great Chojun Miyagi.



About the Authors: Ichiro Naito is the appointed U.S. representative for Shorei-Kan and holds a black belt both in karate and kobudo (weapons). He presently conducts classes in New York City. Scott Lenzi is the assistant representative of Shorei-Kan, also holding black belts in karate and kobudo. Lenzi teaches in Buchanan, New York.

