

O-SENSEI (Master) OTSUKA

Master Hironori Otsuka was born June 1, 1892. As a boy he trained with his great-uncle, a samurai warrior, in “bushido” techniques that would later become the guiding principles and philosophies of Wado karate.

Master Otsuka began martial arts training at five-years of age under his great uncle and by age thirteen was formally studying *shindo yoshinryu jujutsu*. Whereas most schools at that time stressed throwing or grappling techniques, this school stressed *atemi* (striking and kicking techniques). It was during this period that Master Otsuka began studying *atemi*-style *Toshin-Kenpo* while he continued his studies in *shindo yoshinryu*.

By 1921, at the relatively young age of 29, he was awarded the coveted *menkyo-kaiden*, designating him as the successor and master of this style. A year later he began karate training under Gichin Funakoshi, the man who introduced karate to Japan from Okinawa. Master Otsuka asked to stay and study with him. In 1929 he started the first karate club at Tokyo University, and the next five years would see him establish clubs in many other universities as one of Funakoshi's most senior students. During this time, Master Otsuka also had the opportunity to study with other prominent karate stylists of the time, including **Kenwa Mabuni** of the *shito-ryu* style, and **Choki Motobu**.

By the early 1930's Master Otsuka traveled to Okinawa to learn karate from the masters who had instructed Funakoshi. Master Otsuka combined knowledge of Funakoshi's karate with his new knowledge of Okinawan karate, and added Jiu-Jitsu and other techniques from Japanese *bushido* martial arts to form Wado karate.

Master Otsuka eventually opened his own dojo in 1934. Master Otsuka registered Wado Ryu karate in 1940 at Butokukai, Kyoto, and it has become one the four major styles of Japanese karate, In the same year, Master Otsuka organized the All Japanese Karate-do Federation, Wado-Kai, which serves as the worldwide sanctioning body for Wado karate and its affiliates. As early as 1934 he had developed rules and

regulations for competitive free sparring to be incorporated into his system, the first karate style to do so. These rules have been wholly or partially adopted by virtually all modern martial arts competitions.

In 1966, Master Otsuka received the *Kun-Go-To*, or "The Fifth Order of Merit of the Sacred Treasure" from the Emperor of Japan, who also bestowed upon him the *Soko Kyokujitsu-Sho* medal for Master Otsuka's contributions to the development and promotion of karate. In 1972, he received the *Shodai Karate-do Meijin Judan* or "First Generation Karate-do Master of the Tenth Dan" and was designated the head of all martial arts systems within the All Japan Karate-do Federation. Master Otsuka passed away on January 29, 1982, after which Wado karate separated into several organizations based upon differences in leadership and teaching concepts.