

## Soke Tani Chojiro

Sensei Tani started his formal Karate training under Miyagi Chojun, founder of Goju, whilst a student at Doshisha University, Kyoto. After some years, Miyagi Sensei returned to Okinawa and Sensei Kenwa Mabuni, founder of Shitoryu took over the teaching. In deference to his friend, whom he had assisted on his arrival in Japan, Mabuni Sensei only taught Naha-Te at the university karate club. On graduation from university Sensei Tani followed Mabuni learning first the Shuri-Te system and then ultimately the developing Shitoryu system. After many years of training under Mabuni as one of his most senior students, Sensei Tani received the certificate of succession, entitling him to use the name Tani-ha Shitoryu (the Tani sect of Shitoryu).

In 1949 Sensei Tani, whilst still a high school teacher, founded his own school, which he called Shukokai. On the death of Mabuni Kenwa, in 1952, many of the senior students went their own way and at this time Tani Sensei adopted the name bestowed by Mabuni, Tani-ha Shitoryu. With two other senior students, Fujiwara and Fujitani, started creating the world wide system, for which he is now so respected. Fujiwara Sensei died some years ago and Fujitani Sensei now heads his own organisation called Myobukai.

Shukokai has been taught outside Japan mainly by three senior instructors, Kimura, Nanbu and Suzuki, between them assisting in the creation of a world wide recognition and respect for their style.

Tani Sensei died on January 11th 1998 leaving his system in the capable hands of Kawata Hanshi, , the founder of Seikukai, a major sub-system of Shukokai.

The Following article is from No. 41 (Vol 7 No. 5) issue of Fighting Arts International published in 1986. It features a brief interview with Master Tani.

Master Chojiro Tani

9th Dan Hanshi and founder of Tani-Ha Shito Ryu Karate

### **Interview by Bozena Tedder**

Master Tani demonstrates the long and exquisite Kata "Suparimpai", in a stark red wig which all but covers his face and his gi embroidered in resplendent gold, he looks like a reincarnated Kami (a Japanese God). Is the master fighting an imaginary opponent or invoking some timeless elemental spirit?

The Portland Leisure Center Audience on 16th November 1986 witnessed moving Zen. The performer is one with the Kata, representing the pinnacle of achievement in the marital arts. A legend in his own lifetime, Master Tani is a humble man whose youth was spent during the most harrowing period in his countries history. He founded and leads the Tani-Ha Shito-Ryu organization of Shukokai Karate. It was a great honor to

meet and speak with him.

**Sensei, where were you born?**

Kobe Japan. I have been studying Karate for fifty years.

**Does anyone in your family train in Karate?**

No, only me.

**Who has had the greatest influence upon your karate?**

Mr. Mabuni Kenwa - the most famous Karate teacher.

**How has Karate changed since you started training?**

Karate has changed. Previously, students adhered to the code of ancient budo - no fighting. Nowadays, with the advent of sports Karate, championships predominate. I can't say that it is a bad thing - previously, there was a small, elite group doing Karate. Now, sport karate is for everyone. This may be a good or bad thing, but some of the serious meaning of Karate has been lost. Previously, Karate was used in real fighting, to defend oneself, now it is used for competition.

**Do you train in weapons?**

My senior students train in weapons but I do not train with them a lot myself. I put more importance on kata than weapon practice.

**Do you have a favorite Karate technique or Kata?**

I always demonstrate the Kata "Suparimpai", one hundred and eight techniques.

**Do you have many ladies and children amongst your students?**

Yes. Karate is excellent for health; everyone can benefit.

**What sort of qualities do you aim to foster in your students?**

In Japan, especially the children, I teach to become strong in character and to have good control over the self - not violence. I never advocate violent behavior.

**Sensei, have you ever wanted to give up Karate?**

Before and during the second World War, the Karate training was very , very hard. At that stage I thought to give up, but did not.

**Is there any thought on Karate which you would wish to share with your students?**

Karate is not just punching, kicking, and blocking - that is technique. Karate is an art. Everyone should have a high goal and ideal. Strive for achievement; not low level but high level.