

Hironori Ohtsuka (1892 – 1982)

A brief history



Sensei Ohtsuka started studying jujutsu arts under his great uncle Chojiro Ebashi (who was a samurai) at the age of 5. His father took over his martial arts training as he grew older and Ohtsuka continued his jujutsu training whilst at university.

Sensei Ohtsuka studied Yoshin Ryu Jujutsu which was different to other jujutsu styles at the time in that it included kicking and punching techniques as well as the traditional locking and throwing techniques.

In 1921 sensei Ohtsuka received a certificate of mastery and a licence to teach Shindo yoshin-ryu jujutsu, but then in 1922 he began training in Shotokan karate under Gichin Funakoshi, at the same time starting a medical practice treating martial arts injuries.

By 1928 sensei Ohtsuka was an assistant instructor in Funakoshi's school in Japan and he also trained under Choki Motobu and Kenwa Mabuni who are both famous martial artists in their own right. Motobu was descended from Okinawan royalty and he liked to test his performance in street fights. Mabuni trained under the legendary Anko Itosu

Sensei Ohtsuka began to have doubts about Shotokan as a style which may have stemmed from a difference of opinion regarding sparring. Funakoshi did not believe this was necessary but sensei Ohtsuka, probably spurred by his training with Motobu, felt it was important as part of the application of karate training. Sensei Ohtsuka parted company with Funakoshi in the early 1930s.

In 1934 Ohtsuka opened his own karate school in Tokyo where he blended Shotokan with jujutsu to form 'wado-ryu karate', although it only received this name a few years later.

In 1944 Ohtsuka was appointed Japan's Chief Karate Instructor.

Following World War 2 martial arts practice was initially banned in Japan but after the ban was lifted sensei Ohtsuka held regular competitions for karate-ka.

In 1964 three of sensei Ohtsuka's students, Tatsuo Suzuki, Toru Arakawa and Hajime Takashima brought wado to Europe and the US. Sensei Bill Evans trained under sensei Suzuki and formed Sei-Bu-Kan karate in 1982.

See also Keizu ('history') flowchart.