

# Soke Kenei Mabuni

Contributed by Robert Lile  
Thursday, 28 December 2006

## Soke Kenei Mabuni

Mabuni Kenei was born on February 13, 1918 in Shuri Okinawa. He is the first born of 3 children of Master Kenwa, founder of Shito-ryu Karate-do. Beginning at an early age Kenei received personal instruction from his father throughout his childhood.

After the Mabuni family moved to the Kansai district of Japan in 1928, Kenei would sometimes accompany his father to various Karate related functions. He would be asked sometimes to participate in the demonstration with his famous father throughout Japan during the 1930's.

It was also during this time, March 1934, that Grandmaster Mabuni Kenwa first established a dojo in Osaka naming it Youshukan. Many times young Mabuni Kenei stayed with the Konishi family and was treated like a family member while his father continued to teach around Tokyo the Kanto district. (Left to right, standing): Funakoshi Gichin, unknown, unknown, Konishi Yasuhiro, and Mabuni Kenei (when he was at 13th), Master Mabuni Kenwa (seated). Kenei Mabuni at the age of 13. (left) Kenwa Mabuni, (right) Kenei Mabuni.

In March, 1939, Mabuni Kenwa would officially register the name of his Karate style called 'Shito-ryu' with the leading martial arts organization, the "Dai Nippon Butoku Kai", that governed all martial arts in Japan at the time. Kenei knew many of the famous karate teachers who came to study with his father including Master Motobu Choki, Konishi Yasuhiro, Moden Yabiku and Funakoshi Gichin.

After the end of World War II he continued to help his father teach and spread Shito-ryu Karate throughout Japan. (Left to right) Front Row: Mabuni Kenwa, Motobu Choki, Konishi Yasuhiro. Second Row (L-R) unknown, Mabuni Kenei, unknown Kinjo Hiroshi, Yamaguchi Gogen, Ohtsuka Hironori, Mabuni Kenei and Iwata Manzo.

Shortly after Master Mabuni Kenwa's sudden death from a heart attack on May 23, 1952, Mabuni Kenei succeeded his father as the Second Soke, or 2nd designated Master of the style. Mabuni Kenwa Geri in Guatemala. Mabuni sensei demonstrating Nipaipo kata in France. In November of 1960, Kenei sensei became the Western (Kansai-President of the Shito-ryu Federation, while Iwata Manzo was named the Eastern (Kanto-President).

During 1962 Kenei Mabuni sensei travelled around the globe continuing to instruct in Shito-ryu Karate. He visited Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and the USA.

During the Inagural 1970 1st World Union of Karate-do Organizations (WUKO) World Karate-do Championships Mabuni sensei first demonstrated the 'Nipaipo' kata of Gokenki sensei.

In 1972, he was certified by the Federation of All Japan Karate-do Organizations (FAJKO) as a first class examiner.

On January 15th 1984, Mabuni sensei was presented 'The Distinguished Service Medal' for his contribution to the Martial Arts presented by Japan Martial Arts Council (Nippon Budo Kyougi Kai).

On March 17th 1993, in Osaka, Japan, Kenei Mabuni sensei helped establish the World Shito-ryu Karate-do Federation and was named it's 'Governor' (Sosai).

Kenei Mabuni recall the days with Master Kenwa Mabuni

...Kenwa Mabuni's son Kenei wrote, "in his younger days many people would challenge my father to "kake-dameshi" (challenge mach, or exchange of techniques) after they heard that he was practicing "te". He accepted these challenges and would choose a quiet corner of the town for the mach. Each contestant would bring a second. There were no special dojo's like there are today; "we used to train and fight on open ground. There were no street lights, so after dark we used lanterns during the challenges." In this dim light, the contestant fought, and then after a period the seconds would intervene and stop the fight. They would then declare who would be the winner and who needed more training. Such challenges were often made to my father, and he frequently acted as a second to others. He pointed out though,

that people might easily get the wrong impression from these events.