

Manzo Iwata

Contributed by Robert Lile
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Manzo Iwata (1924-1993) ...Manzo Iwata(1924 - 1993) was born in Tokyo, Japan , February 1924. At the early age of 10, Manzo Iwata was first introduced to the Martial Art of Shito-ryu Karate by the manager of his families tea business (Iwata-en Tea Co.). While attending Jr. High School he also learned Judo and Kendo. friend of Manzo's grandfather, Ueshiba Morihei, the founder of Aikido, would teach Manzo when he would frequently stop by to visit. While enrolled at Toyo University in Tokyo, in 1941, at the approximate age of 18, Manzo Iwata training in Karate-do directly under the guidance of Grandmaster Kenwa Mabuni, the founder of Shito-ryu Karate

In the next few years, very little information was ever documented regarding the specific type of training being conducted at the time, but what is known through reliable sources indicates Manzo Iwata became a very proficient skillfull fighter who developed tremendously strong and powerful arms. Besides being tough and possessing superior fighting ability, he also demonstrated a unique capacity for completely understanding the full essence of Grandmaster Mabuni's Shito-ryu system. Iwata Sensei with Mast

Manzo Iwata received instruction in Kobudo Bojutsu (6ft. staff techniques) from Master Mabuni as well. It was during this time Master Mabuni felt Manzo Iwata would be suited more to the shorter staff-art of Jojutsu and encouraged to seek instruction from Master Seiko Fujita, a longtime friend of Master Mabuni's from the early 1930's. right) Iwata Sensei, Master Fujita and Master Kenwa Mabini

Master Fujita was considered by many to be a very mysterious martial artist. Master Mabuni was noted for being a very open-minded person that enjoyed the respect and close relationships with various masters of different martial arts. He was acutely aware of each systems short-cummings, but always looked for the positive aspects in each art. Mab sensei included many of these positive aspects in the development and teaching of his Shito-ryu Karate especially in the Gyaku-waza (reverse techniques), and Nage-waza (throwing techniques). In 1943, Manzo Iwata was honored by receiving the 'Shihan' (master/teacher) diploma of DAIENRYU JOJUTSU from Master Fujita, who later revealed Manzo Iwata that he was actually the 14th generation Master of the KOGARYU NINJITSU system of martial arts.

After graduating from Toyo University in 1944, Manzo Iwata received the 'Shihan' of Shito-ryu Karate-do directly from Master Kenwa Mabuni. A short time later, Master Mabuni requested Iwata Shihan to become 'Zenkuren-President' Shito-Kai Karate-do Kanto District and establish a headquarters in the Tokyo area. He accepted the request and eventually established the headquarters at his home. Master Mabuni previously had moved to the Kansai District city Osaka years before and established the western headquarters there.

Manzo Iwata Shihan felt it wasn't necessary for anyone to watch him personally train because he believed was for self-development and not an open demonstration of his considerable abilities. He learned long ago from Mabuni the fundamental basics of Shito-ryu Karate lie in the simple, practical and logical approach to self-defence. TH he pointed out was clearly demonstrated in the explanation of techniques that incorporate the proper concentration power (both strong and weak) combined with the correct attitude. During the next few years Iwata Shihan also continued his training as 'UCHI-DESHI' (principal disciple) with Master Fujita, and in 1948, was personally directed to accept all the hereditary knowledge and assume the leadership of NANBAN SATORYU KENPO, (a Jujutsu-like grappling combat system) including, SHINGETSU-RYU SHURIKEN JUTSU (throwing-projectile art). He received his Shihan diploma from Master Fujita and accepted the position of 'SOKE'. The term 'Soke' is a peculiar form of Japanese culture which refers to a position of honor or title of honor conferred on the first born son, or a specially selected person to accept all the hereditary knowledge and traditions associated with that particular system which was handed down continually from one generation to the next.

After the unexpected death of Grandmaster Kenwa Mabuni on May 23, 1952, Kenei Mabuni (the first born son) was appointed as the second 'Soke' of Shito-ryu Karate-do and maintained the Kansai headquarters in Osaka, while Manzo Iwata was Kanto District President of the Nihon Karate-do Kai Shito-ryu sytem in November of 1960.

Special events and competitions were held separately the next few years by both headquarters until April 1964, when the first joint All-Japan Shito-ryu Karate-do Championships was held. Championships, Long Beach, California, Left to right Teru Hayashi, Kenei Mabuni, Manzo Iwata, Hiroshi Kin

In October 1964, the formation of the FEDERATION OF ALL-JAPAN KARATE-DO ORGANIZATIONS (F.A.J.K.O.) was also due in large part to the tremendous efforts of Master Iwata, who became the youngest Shihan of any Karate-do system to be elevated to the level of 8th Dan by F.A.J.K.O.

In 1972, Manzo Iwata was involved in a motor vehicle accident and was in a coma for approximately 2 months. His strong will and superior Karate ability is credited with bringing him out of the coma.

Over the years a definite need arose to merge the two existing headquarters of Shito-ryu's Nihon Karate-do Kai into one, and on February 1973, the joint body was inaugurated as the JAPAN KARATE-DO FEDERATION-SHITO-KAI. (L to R) Nakayama Sensei, Eriguchi Sensei, Yamaguchi Sensei, Ohtsuka Sensei, Takagi Sensei, Iwata Sensei

Iwata Manzo, Nakayama Masatoshi, Ohtsuka Hironori at Los

Master Iwata continued to promote Shito-ryu Karate-do around the world and never varied from the teachings and philosophy of Grandmaster Mabuni, especially, in the area of the transmission of Kata and related Bunkai.

Iwata Shihan recalled that Grandmaster Kenwa Mabuni was very rigorous in transmitting the techniques and Kata for to him. "Master Mabuni tried to teach us until we grasped the meaning of each technique and Kata. He was very thorough in teaching us the respective features and differences between the Itosu and Higaonna schools. He did not alter or deform what he had learned, and was very particular about the correct transmission of the original techniques and Kata. "Master Iwata personally believed that, " the student who is willing to learn, will be the one who learns best." He expected the students to show initiative and to ask questions, then he would be more than willing to teach them as much as he could digest.

He stressed that Shito-ryu Karate-do was a system that was composed of logical and practical techniques which utilized a minimum of wasted movement to produce the maximum effect without unnecessary wasted energy. This, he believed could be easily accomplished by constantly striving to achieve the proper Kamae and correct positions of techniques and Kata form. Master Iwata continued the further development of Shito-ryu Karate-do through many students which included Genzo Iwata, his son, (Chief instructor - Iwata Honbu Dojo) and Shihan Kunio Murayama (Chief Technical Director - Mexico), just to mention a few. On March 20-21, 1993, the inaugural formation of the WORLD SHITO-RYU KARATE-DO FEDERATION and the 1st. World Shito-ryu Karate-do Championships were held at the Tokyo Budokan, in Ayase, Japan. (Left to right) Master Ken Sakio, Tanaka

Iwata Sensei recall the days with Master Kenwa Mabuni Master Mabuni

The first thing I recall of master Mabuni is his gentle and modest personality. He was rare among the karate masters of those times in that he modestly asked for instruction from any person for things he didn't know, in order to obtain broad knowledge.

He learnt many forms in the quest for the essence of karate. He was the first to introduce bunkai kumite. He defined the meaning of each form and established the correct way to use each form for transmitting it to the younger generation. Master Mabuni was very rigorous in transmitting the arts and forms to us correctly. He tried to teach us until we had grasped the meaning of each art and form. He was thoroughgoing in teaching us the respective features and differences between the Itosu and Higaonna schools. He did not deform what he learnt and was very particular about the correct transmitting of original arts and forms.

Master Mabuni also urged me to absorb the knowledge and arts of karate widely and introduced me to master S. Fujita, to learn under him. All I obtained from master Fujita was a valuable asset of my life, and I am particularly grateful for of master Mabuni's recommendation.