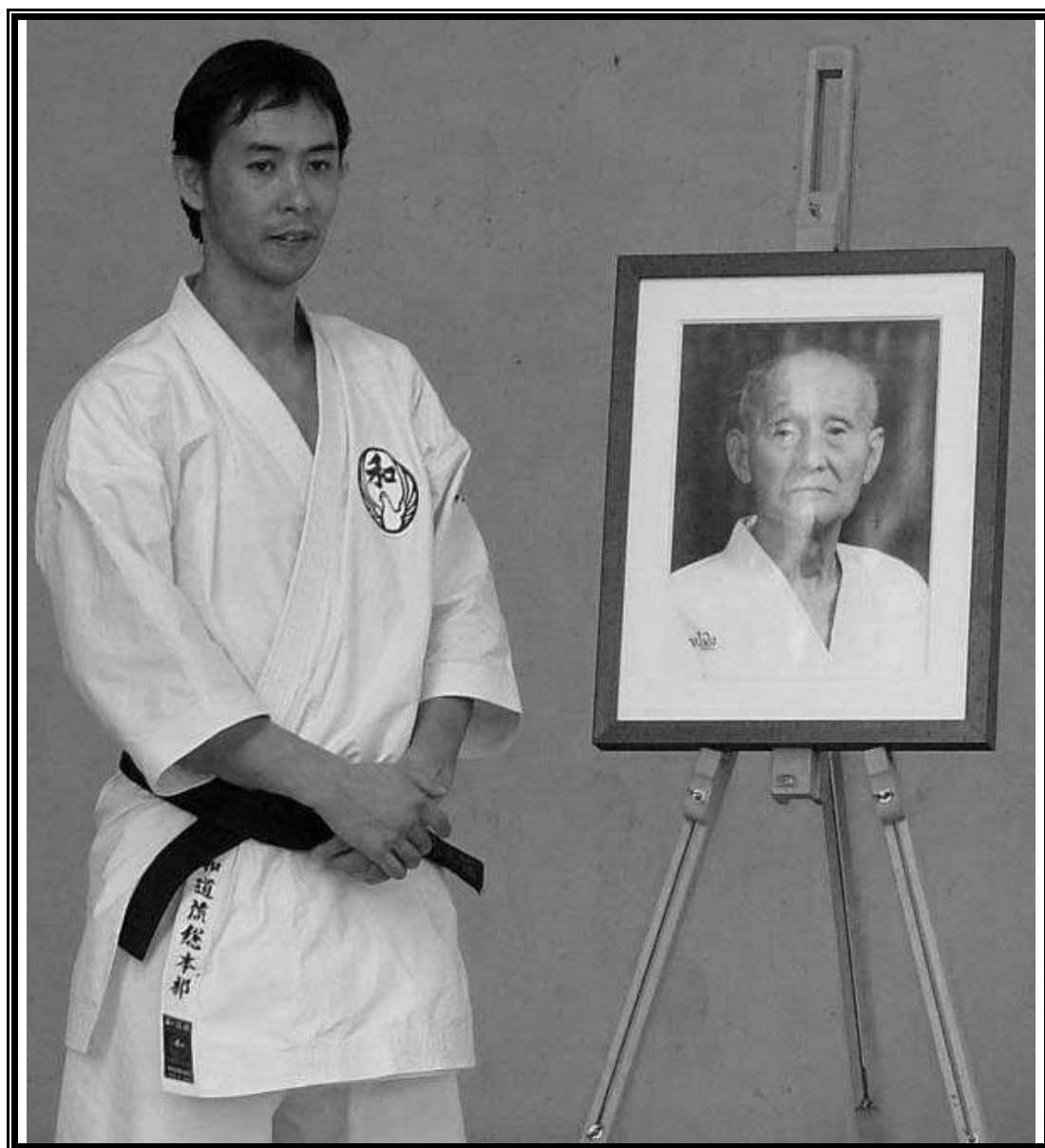


KAZUTAKA
OTSUKA



Interview Angoulême 2008 workshop



« Wado-Ryu is way of peace and harmony. »



- Amicale Balam 2008 -

What are the principles of Wado Ryu?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Wado Ryu is way of peace and harmony.

What is Budo and why Wado Ryu is part of Budo?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Budo, it is martial art. It is a way to study, to be stronger. Not only a physically way, but also a mentally way.

Kobudo, it is the old way, the traditional way. Wado Ryu was created in 1936. Wado Ryu *karaté* is not a part of kobudo but Wado-Ryu Jujitsu Kempo is recognised as it, as Wado Ryu is a mixed of jujutsu and new karate.

When you were a child, what was the point of spirit you have seen in karate?

Kazutaka Otsuka : When I was a child, I did not like so much karate. I liked to move my body in general. When I was 17 years old, I had to come back to karate. And after that I started to change my mind about karate, little by little. I had to go through another way: Wado Ryu, especially, is not developing the muscles but being relaxed. And I had to change that because the other sports generally used muscles...

Having the Grandmaster as father, isn't it difficult?

Kazutaka Otsuka : I do not feel Grandmaster as my father. Thinking like makes things not so difficult. But if I had mixed my father and Grandmaster, it might have been difficult, yes. Grandmaster and my father are the same person but different.

How do you see the future of karate do?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Before, it was different. Today there are so many different martial arts coming from Vietnam, China, Russia, Israel... Many people could choose many different martial arts.

Younger people are interesting in competition, but traditional karate is a little bit difficult for young people to understand.

In France there a quite good system: young people start in competition and after, they continue with traditional karate.

In Japan, it is different: they practise competition karate as a sport and when they have finished with competition, they just keep teaching the same competition karate to the others. The traditional part of karate is going to disappear in Japan. In France, I do not feel that it is like that yet: there are still people who want to study more about karate. In Japan, people are less interested in knowing meaning of katas, of each movement. They prefer to know combinations of punches/kicks, that's it, generally. But Wado Ryu is different. The style keeps the traditional way.

Don't you think that the spirit of structures like FFKMA, based on competition, is very different from the teaching of the masters of Wado Ryu?

Kazutaka Otsuka : I believe that the image of karate is competition and not yet Bruce Lee, as before. And also, many people go to competition. But in France, after competition, they generally come back to traditional karate. And so, it is a good point.

Is it possible for you or Grandmaster to do something in order to change the rule (based on Wuko rules), the way of judging competitions, Wado Ryu cups, for example?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Sometimes, we discuss about how can we put something else in kumite or kata competition. In Japan it is difficult to change the formal things. In France, I do not know. May be it would be possible.

To your mind, why people stop competition to go to traditional karate and why?

Kazutaka Otsuka : For me, until 25 years old, I can spend one hour, two hours just fighting. But after, I think about something else. If people think about how they can change the way to move their body, they can interest in traditional part of karate.



“The style Wado-Ryu keeps the traditional way.”

When have you started practising martial arts? Why did you choose karate?

Kazutaka Otsuka : I started when I was 6 years old, with karate. But I did not like karate so much! I said it to my father who answered me that if I wanted to quit karate, I had to do something else.

He recommended me iaido, so I took iaido and continue until 17 years old. When I was 17, the Wado Ryu Committee wondered who will be the Grandmaster in the next generation. Everybody pointed me so they asking me to come back to karate. That is why I coming back to karate.

First Grandmaster changed the way of training when the actual grandmaster was 40 years old, in order to give him more. Do you feel being in the same case?

Kazutaka Otsuka : I do not feel so much. I just keep doing all that I can do. For me it is still OK.

For the others, it could seems difficult as my father is always present to tell me what to do or not, how ...even if I am 40. But it is ordered by Grandmaster not by my father, so I had to follow.



What type of child were you?

Kazutaka Otsuka : I did not study at all. I was just playing all the day! Because, when I was born, I wasn't cry at all, I didn't breathe. The doctor took my legs and taped my back many, many times but I never cried. I cried thanks the help of a respirator. So the doctor said to my parents that I might have some problems at my brain due to this event. They were really scared about that, so they did not push me to study: they just want to keep me in good health. And I spend my time playing! But I paid it later by having to study harder to get to a good level

Who were your master (in iaido, judo,...)?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Iaido: *Tsumura sensei*, last student of *Hakudo Nakayama Sensei*.

Judo: I studied judo in high school. I was in physical education course and there were lot of class for judo. But I wanted to do kendo first. I took a kendo class. I was already doing iaido and was using kendo like iaido. After 2 weeks, the way I was hitting my opponents with Shinai (bamboo sword) was giving them too much pain and nobody was wishing to practise with me anymore. So finally the Iaido Sensei told me to move to judo. So I went to judo. In my high school were a tournament organized each year. I had never lost. Always won as, in the same time, I was doing wrestling. And wrestling and judo are very similar.

Do you remember any important story in your training, in karate?

Kazutaka Otsuka : When I was doing a kumitee training, I realized that doing kumitee with children is easier than with adults. And I wondered why I can not doing kumitee with the same feeling that I had with a child. Doing kumitee with a child, it is just like playing. Whatever I wanted to do, I can do it, with control.

It is the idea. If you see a person as a strong person, you might be a little scared. (And loose). Do not think like that. Just play. After having this idea, things seems easier to me.

Did you ever injured when you practised karate?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Yes... I never injured in Japan but here, in France. Unlikely! I think that practising kumitee all the time make me strong. I was confident to do kumitee with anyone.

When I arrived in France, the first time I restarted training, my head stock on the edge of the fist of my opponent. And my head went with violence behind: whiplash and then hernia. That is the biggest injure I ever had. How much you develop your body, humans still have weak points that you can not cover.

What is your favourite kata?

Kazutaka Otsuka : *Chinto*. It is a simple one but with lots of details and if you miss those details, *Chinto* can not be a good kata. Really simple but really difficult.



*“Wado Ryu, especially, is not developing the muscles
but being relaxed.”*

What dan grading test you remind the most?

Kazutaka Otsuka : For me? I never had any grading test myself.

Do you practise meditation?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Not study any meditation. But I have a way to make meditation by myself which is just make *Naihanchi dachi* and give punches during one hour. It is a boring movement and so you start thinking at many other things, problems or not. And I try to put an answer at each question. And keep doing punching. And it disappears. And another idea comes. And so, and so... And suddenly, you stop thinking at anything. An empty mind moment. But it is not so long. Maybe 2/3 seconds. I do not know how long. During that moment, you feel really good.

What are the benefits for you, in your karate, for having practised some other martial arts, like iaido?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Martial arts are finally the same. They are a way of learning how using your body, the center of your body, to control that point. If you know how to control that point, iaido, kendo, judo, (...) are the same things.

What are yours hobbies?

Kazutaka Otsuka : I like carve the wood. I never study that with an art professor. I just do that on my own way. I carve, I carve, and suddenly I see a kind of shape. I think it give to me good points in my karate too, as, when you practise kata, you need lot of imagination to see why the movement are so and not so. And carving develops imagination.



Who, amount karatekas you met, seems special, different to you?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Karatekas...Not so much different! But one of Wado Ryu student created a dojo in the university, at Dijon, when he was studying French in France. He left France and come back to Japan. He keeps teaching Wado Ryu. This Sensei is really interesting: he tries to save the world. Sometimes he just collects money for poorer people in the countries in way of development and sometimes he goes himself to help over there.

Do you have a personal training?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Personal training? It is just bases, not so much things. Just bases. Nothing special.

What gives to you karate?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Imagination. To see things through many different angles. Have you ever done competition?

Have you ever done competition?

Kazutaka Otsuka : No. Never.





When did you learn teaching?

Kazutaka Otsuka : From 22 years old, after graduate the university. At the Dojo, the headquarter office of Wado Ryu.

What is the main point you like to tell in your teaching? What is important for you to teach?

Kazutaka Otsuka : First, to relax. Relax is really difficult. And after how to control the centre of your body. When you have understood those two points, you can move in many different ways, you can change direction easily. But it is not understanding with the mind: you have to feel it.

What did you get from teaching?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Teaching is for me studying. When I teach I understand what point I did not understand. I am always getting back from the students. Teaching is really a good point for me.

What is your opinion about the practise of makihura and the work of pushing yourself to be stronger?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Makihura? I did a lot when I was student, at the university. Once I was doing it, I lost a piece of skin. I saw the bone inside and there was blood everywhere. I do not like so much: I do not think that it is still adapted. Nowadays there are good exercise tools, like punching ball for example, which are better than makihura, to my mind.

To you, what are the main qualities that should have karatekas?

Kazutaka Otsuka : It depends on the person. To study. And to understand things. And it depends on the Sensei and how he teaches because it is possible to change the personality of the others, to influence, thanks to practise.

What would you say to someone who start karate?

Kazutaka Otsuka : Karate is good but not like any other sports (basket ball, soccer,...)In the other sports, if you have a ball without knowledge, you can already play with friends. But karate...playing with friends without knowledge is very dangerous! People have to learn bases before. It is important to understand that.

What book would you advise to someone who practices martial art?

Kazutaka Otsuka : *Wado Ryu* 'ones are always good! ;-) Especially Karate n°1, translated in English but not yet in French. In this book, there are lots of explanations of philosophy of Wado Ryu. There are also good books, not translated in English or French, as *samurais'biography*.



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