

Chojun Miyagi named his style of Karate-Do “Goju-Ryu” in 1930. From since, Goju-Ryu Karate-Do is spread internationally and now it's one of the most important styles of karate-do. But respect to other styles of karate-do, there seems to have a lack of material about it in pre-second world war period. There are a number of photos of Miyagi: in a previous work I collected 29 photos and later I was able to find two more. There are 3 manuscripts related to Chojun Miyagi and we can find his opinions in the minutes of okinawan karate masters meeting in 1936.

There were some rumors, as reported by Charles C. Goodin, that a film was shooted of Chojun Miyagi during his visit in Hawaii in 1934-1935, but it has never been found.

And there is a video. To best of my knowledge, the first written record of this video was in Morio Higaonna's book “The History of Karate – Okinawan Goju-Ryu” (Dragon Books, 1995).

The video shooted in Okinawa in 1940 and titled “*Ryukyu no fubutsu*” (Ryukyuan Things) (Black & White / 16mm / 13 min). The video was recorded by Doctor Soetsu (Muyeyoshi) Yanagi. Doctor Yanagi was born in 1889 and lived until 1961, and he is known as the founder of the Japanese craft (*mingei*) movement that championed the art of the people—the crafts of ordinary use rather than the fine arts. The current owner of the copyright of the video is “The Japan Folk Crafts Musuem”.

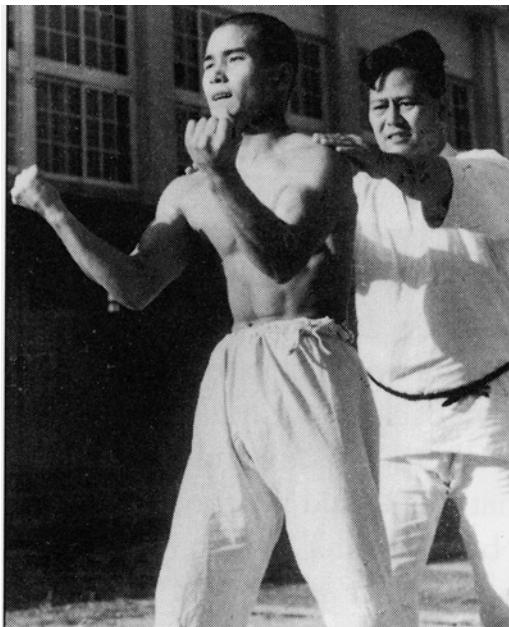
Morio Higaonna wrote: “In 1940 Doctor Muneyoshi Yanagi, who had been born in Tokyo, brought a group of assistants to Okinawa to research traditional Okinawan culture and folk craft. Among the arts and crafts they studied and recorded were Okinawan karate, Ryukyu *buyo* (classical dance), *yakimono* (pottery), *kosei bingata* (weaving) and *shikimono* (laquerware).

Doctor Yanagi also vistited Kumejima and other islands, recording his research both in writing and on film, and later published a book about Okinawan culture. Having great respect for the Okinawans, he was instrumental in introducing their culture to Japan.

Four students of Chojun Miyagi demonstrated the art of karate for Dr. Yanagi's group, a demonstration that was recorded on film. In 1982 Dr. Yanagi's son brought this film to Okinawa and presented it to the Shuri Museum. About one year later the Museum held a special festival for one week in which the film was shown every day. I went six times during that week to view this piece of history”.

According to the catalog of the 2003 Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, where the video was shown, “shot primarily on location in the towns of Itoman, Shuri and Tsuboya, these pre-war film present the landscape of Okinawan daily life and introduce the arts and crafts of each locale. The film offer glimpses of *uminchu* (fishermen)'s expressions, traditional architecture, popular cuisine, funeral parades, the atmosphere of bustling markets, and traditional crafts such as Tsuboya-yaki pottery and Bashofu cloth. These work show that the representation of local scenery and folk art, which at first glance seem to be artless “slice of life” pieces of culture, in fact manifest the spirit of the era”. This are the information about the video, as reported in the catalog:

**Supervisors:** Yanagi Soetsu, Shikiba Ryuzaburo  
**Photography, Editing:** Ikai Suketaro  
**Sound:** Tojo Kenjiro  
**Music:** Yanagi Kaneko, Yamauchi Yoshiaki  
**Titles:** Serizawa Keisuke  
**Planning:** The Japan Folk Crafts Association  
**Production Company:** Dainippon Bunka Eiga Seisakusho  
**Source:** The Japan Folk Crafts Museum



The description in the catalog don't write about the karate scene. It lasted 65 seconds and it included a portion of Tensho kata, a third of Kururunfa kata, a performance of *tan* exercise, a performance of *tan* and *ishi sashi*, a performance of *chishi* and *nigiri game*.

The location of the demonstration should be the yard of Okinawan Prefectural Teachers College (Okinawa Kenritsu Shihan Gakko). In that period Chojun Miyagi taught also in Naha Commercial High School, in Okinawa Prefectural Police Academy and in the garden of his house in Wakasa-machi, Naha.

The students of Naha Commercial High School used a karate uniform with a badge, and that badge don't appear

in the uniforms of the students in the video. Also, according to Okinawan Prefectural Museum, the photographer, Manshichi Sakamoto, took many pictures during the film and Chojun Miyagi was in one of the pictures "performing *shime* on Kotaro Kohama at the Teacher's College" (as reported in Morio Higaonna's book). To have more information about the pictures, I wrote to Akiyoshi Sakamoto: he answered me that at the beginning of 2005 they gave all the plates to Japan Folk Craft Museum.

I wrote two times to Japan Folk Craft Museum to have more information about the video and the photos but, unfortunately, I hadn't receive any answer.

“a portion of Tensho kata”



It's not known who performed the kata. According<sup>1</sup> Tetsuhiro Hokama, an Okinawan karate master, he could be Juhatsu Kyoda. Juhatsu Kyoda (1887-1968) was senior of Chojun Miyagi, he began his learning with Kanryo Higaonna few months before Miyagi, at the very beginning of the 20th century. Chojun Miyagi created Tensho kata in 1916 – 1924. Kyoda didn't teach Tensho kata to his students, but he introduced them to the techniques of Rokkishu, very similar to the techniques container in Tensho kata, but not formalized. It is claimed that both Miyagi and Kyoda based their creation on a chapter of the Bubushi.



There are also rumors the performer was an ex-school principal (as Kyoda) by the name of Tamanaha, but there is no confirmation.

“a third of Kururunfa kata”



The kata start from *heiko dachi* position. According to some researchers, Chojun Miyagi changed the kamae position at the beginning of each kata sometime during the war. After the 1945, the kata began by assuming a musubi dachi position with hands crossed in front of the tanden, and not in heiko dachi with the fists drawn to the side of the body, like in the photo.

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication, Naha July 2004

“a performance of *tan* exercise”

We don't know who was the performer of the *tan* exercise, but, according to some rumors, he could be Chojun Miyagi in person. If the rumors are true, the video is the only media material with Chojun Miyagi performing hojo undo.



“a performance of *tan* and *ishi sashi* and a performance of *chishi* and *nigiri game*”



The student with the *chishi* should be Sogen Sakiyama Roshi in his youth, now the zen master of Okinawan International Zen Center. Sogen Sakiyama was born in 1921 and began his training in Buddhism in 1949. In 1940 he had 19, and he was and is related to karate circles from then until now.



Dojo opening ceremony after the war. Second row, second from right: Chojun Miyagi; Top row, fifth from left: Sogen Sakiyama Roshi. Okinawa, 1948.