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## **Itosu Anko *Okina*** **The Restorer of Karate**

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English translation by Patrick & Yuriko McCarthy

### **A photo of Ichiji no Tanme Finally Revealed**



Itosu Ankoh, he appears with a calm expression sporting a white mustache, in the center of the second row.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February [2006], in the Okinawa Times [newspaper] evening edition, Society Page, my article announcing the discovery of a photo of "Itosu Ankoh" appeared. At 87 years of age, I was overcome with a deep feeling of emotion having spent my entire life with karate. As a lineage descendant of Itosu's teachings, writing about him is what I see as a personal responsibility. I would like to write about the origins of this photo, as I am the person who donated it to the Prefectural Library.

In April 1956 I started publishing "*Karatedo*" monthly aimed at producing a general magazine for the Karate world. At that time I asked Miyagi Hisateru for an article about Itosu Okina as he was a pioneer of karate. Miyagi had learned karate as formal physical education under Itosu Okina during the time he studied at Okinawa Prefectural Shihan Gakko [Teacher's College].

Miyagi Hisateru's name may not be remembered by my fellow Okinawans or even by today's younger generation, for that matter, however, he was a graduate of the Teacher's College in 1916 and went on to become an elementary school teacher. Later, he went to Tokyo in pursuit of becoming a writer and worked for the "Kaizo Company." Under the pen name Miyagi Sou, he went on to win the Kaizo's writer's award with his 1934 publication entitled, "My hometown is the Globe." Miyagi also published the book, entitled "*Karatedo*," with Nichi-getsu Publishing Company in 1955.

I pursued every possible avenue in an effort to locate a photo of the great Okinawan senior, Itosu Okina, for Miyagi's article, but was not successful. However, remembering Miyagi's description of Itosu when he said, "*Wearing a*

*cotton hakama and walking with his legs open just like a Kiba-dachi posture,"* the words "Cotton Hakama" rang bell of familiarity. By the time I got around to this group photo, I was confident I recognized him as Itosu.

Around December of 1980, I traveled back to Okinawa to attend the anniversary of my alma mater, which has since become Shuri High School. One of my middle school seniors, named Arasaki Seibin (the late honorary professor of Tokyo University) from the old education system, was seated behind me, and handed me the group photo saying, "Ichiji (Itosu) no Tanme (Ojiisan) is there among them." He also said, "it [the photo] is from Tokuda Antei's [personal] album (Tokuda was an early student of Itosu's)" but he didn't say which one was Itosu Okina.

As I recall was around 1985 when I asked Itosu Angoh (heir by adoption to Ichiji no Tanmei) to help identify Itosu Okina. However, he replied that he couldn't remember if Itosu Angoh had a mustache or beard so he couldn't guarantee who was Tanme. Suddenly I remembered the comment made by Arasaki senpai. The photo was from Tokuda Antei's album, therefore, asking him directly seemed to make the most sense. I tried calling him at his residence in Ikebukuro, Tokyo, but was unable to locate him. I tried many more times after that but was unsuccessful.

Many years have since passed and the photo continued to lay unidentified. However, I was reasonably confident that Itosu was the main figure in the photo because of the cotton hakama, as mentioned by Miyagi Hisateru. There was also the memory of a white beard, or mustache, by Itosu Angoh and my estimation of Itosu Okina's age in 1909 or 1910 [when the photo was taken]. However, with no solid evidence I declined to make any [public] announcement at the time.

I donated the group photo to the Prefectural Library where Kadekaru Toru, the chief specialist from the Okinawa prefectural office of historically important documents, finally identified Itosu through thorough comparative analysis. What a particularly notable masterstroke in the history of Karate. I appreciate his great efforts.

Okay, let's talk about the photo: This wonderful photo was taken on an occasion to commemorate a judo & kendo competition. One person in a Kimono has a mon-tsuki [formal crested] haori and hakama while Itosu Okina does not. He appears in just an everyday cotton haori and hakama without a mon-tsuki. During the twilight of his life, he had been ill in bed for a long time. Maybe he didn't have a crested haori anymore or perhaps it was even pawned. I can't help but shed a tear for this great karateka during his late unrequited years.

I hope that my donations might be used superlatively to help many people.

Karatedo critic, Hiratsuka, Kanagawa Prefecture

*Part of Kinjo Hiroshi's donations, including the Itosu Anko photo, will be on public display at this year's artifacts exhibition from the 23<sup>rd</sup> thru the 27<sup>th</sup> [of March] at the Prefectural Library. Inquiries c/o 098 (834) 1218.*

**Translator's note #1:** The newspaper article mislabelled the photo as a graduation occasion, when, in fact, it was an occasion commemorating a judo & kendo competition [probably held at Okinawa Prefectural Middle School].

**Translator's note #2:** Also in the photo are School Principle Okubo Shuhachi, Judo Sensei Ikeda Takehiko, and School Judo & Kendo competitors.