

## Choki Motobu



Choki Motobu was an Okinawan karate student, teacher, and master, and was one of Tatsuo Shimabuku's (founder of Isshinryu karate) teachers. Originally from Akahira village in Shuri, Okinawa, Motobu was the son of Lord Motobu Choshin, and enjoyed many of the privileges that came with nobility. He was said to be a loud and colorful figure, having a similar status to what American sports stars have today. Motobu, as the last of 3 sons, did not get to study his family's te (early name for karate), so instead he embarked on his own studying under various teachers, and practiced mainly hitting makiwara, and doing other exercises such as pushing large stones to build his strength.

His detractors would say that he had no formal training, and he was crude and a street fighter, but despite his size he was rather agile, and took his practice of karate seriously becoming one of Okinawa's most prominent karate practitioners. He also became a teacher of the art he knew and taught many who later become prominent karate ka in Okinawa, such as the aforementioned Tatsuo Shimabuku, as well as Shosine Nagamine, Hironori Otsuka, and many others.

Choki Motobu was an avid fan of Nai Hanchi kata. Some people said it was the only one he knew though many sources now say he also practiced Passai, Chinto, Sanchin, and Kusanku. Motobu is also given credit for bringing a lot of 2 man "kumite" into his karate, which would feature a one on one match where the participants would practice attacking each other and defending with moves from kata, more commonly known as bunkai.

One of the most famous stories of Choki Motobu is his challenge of a heavyweight boxer from the west (Europe). In those days, popular "Boxer vs. Judoka" matches were being put together in Japan. According to the story, Motobu's friend, Yamaguchi, asked Motobu if there was anyone in Okinawa who could challenge the European boxing champion, as he had already defeated many Judoka in a tournament in Tokyo. Motobu told Yamaguchi he would take the boxer on to represent Okinawa. For the first few rounds, Motobu simply moved around avoiding the jabs and letting the boxer tire himself out. Later in the match, the boxer threw a powerful right cross, Motobu ducked, slid around behind him, leapt onto his back and then jumped high in the air and double kicked his opponent on the way down. Motobu then followed him to the ground and choked him into submission. The Tokyo papers were forced to publish articles on this obscure man and the power of karate, and due to this and other feats of strength and speed, Motobu was able to make many people take notice of the practice of karate.

Motobu was said to never have opened a traditional school, but taught many people his karate through his travels. He was a controversial karate ka, and though not always traditional, definitely made an impact on the evolution of Okinawan karate.