

## The Meaning of the Chitokai Crest

After the Chitokai Soke Cup held in Newcastle in 2004, I found a serious falling out with the then Soke, Yasuhiro Chitose. It was over the matter of who should be president in Australia, and I stood my ground on the idea that according to our constitution a President must be elected, not appointed from outside.

In the ensuing crisis, the members held an extraordinary meeting and voted with a sound majority to leave the international organisation and to strike out on our own.

I was not satisfied with our ability to continue an authentic search of the Chitokai tradition on our own, and so I sought Sakamoto sensei, the brother in law of Soke Chitose and the uchi deshi, or full time student of O'Sensei for many years up to and at the time of his death.

The moment I stepped on the floor with him in Tokyo in 2005 I realized that he was indeed the holder of the deepest knowledge of Chito-Ryu technique, and had continued his research wholeheartedly into the secrets of Okinawa "ti", or traditional karate, that O'Sensei had been immersed in from an early age.

We came to the matter of the crest we would use going forward. I no longer had any desire to wear the crest of the international organisation, and it was time to forge a new journey for the students in Australia. I had remembered clearly a conversation I had with Sakamoto sensei in 1993 or thereabouts. We had shared a pot of o'cha, green tea, during a break from training. He made the observation that Chito-Ryu is but a river of tode. No-one owns the river of knowledge, but is a mere traveller, with a responsibility to add to the experience and breadth of this river through their own perseverance and dedication.

We used this as a starting point. We also wanted to change the kanji, or Japanese characters. Sakamoto sensei is an accomplished calligrapher, and understood well that many Chinese characters can be utilized to give the same sound, but with a different meaning.

The character for *chi* can be replaced with the character for kawa. This means river, but also blood. For life, the earth needs water, but for human life we need blood, and this adds depth to the meaning of the crest. We drew the curved line on the crest in red to denote the river was "blood of the earth", and this means the river of human endeavour.

The second character is *to*. This kanji means ocean. So the river of human effort runs from the source to its final destination, the sea, widening and deepening with experience and knowledge.

And *kai* means group. And so the crest is a call to practitioners to study hard the gift of martial arts, from the beginning of the journey, adding to the depth of understanding of the martial arts tradition through our dedicated effort and perseverance. It is an eternal cycle and carries the wisdom and guidance of those who came before.

The style of character is important.

Sakamoto sensei explained the three styles of calligraphy were Kaisho, Reishi and Sosho, and they were a sound lesson and related to the other better known concept, Shu Ha Ri.

A study of kata begins in Kaisho method, where the characters are clear, and like the brush lifting from the page, the practitioner seeks to develop strong and precise kihon.



The next level is Reisho, where the brush may lift between characters, but at other times the stroke order runs together. This is mastery of the kata program, and the style is clear and recognisable, although allowing some interpretative difference. This is the style of calligraphy we selected for the crest.

The koryu, or traditional karate world, however is sosho. Here the calligraphy is stylised, and the characters may not even be recognisable except by another expert. Characters run together as the pen does not lift from the page, and some

parts may even be shortened or left out in the interest of the overall emotion and interpretation of the artist. If this is koryu kata, then it explains clearly why it cannot be taught, but must be practiced and pained over for many years in lonely physical and introspective pursuit. It is this style of character that we use on grading certificates.

The additional characters on the crest, Ryu Sei, mean “dragon spirit”. This is the after- death name given to O’Sensei as a mark of honour for his contribution to the world of martial arts. It is also the name that Sakamoto sensei uses for his group. And so we are formally called Ryusei Chitokai Karate Australia.

