

Shimabuku Shinsho “Ciso” Sensei – His Father’s Keeper

By: Jeff Perkins

Most of us like to talk about ourselves, our accomplishments, our awards, our titles, and the things that make *US* feel important. As I sat down to write this article, I suddenly realized that I had little personal information about the founder of Isshinryu’s 2nd son, Shimabuku Shinsho “Ciso” Sensei. I’ve had the pleasure of being involved in several interviews with Ciso Sensei over the years. As I reviewed those interviews, I came to the realization that few if any personal questions were asked of Ciso Sensei. The focus of the interviews were always the history and traditions of Isshinryu and his Father, Shimabuku Tatsuo Sensei. Ciso Sensei was more than happy to discuss Isshinryu’s development and talk about his Father. His eyes would glow and his face would smile when he would tell “episodes” of Shimabuku Tatsuo.



I’ve thought about this article for many years and even made a promise to a particular Sensei, who now over-sees our Isshinryu from Heaven’s dojo, to write this article. The recent passing of Ciso Sensei has now fueled this fire.

Shimabuku Shinsho was born in 1942. The first part of his given name came from the first part of his Father’s name, Shinkichi. His older brother, Kichiro, got the second half. He started learning his Father’s Karate at the age of 14. Shortly thereafter he was assisting his Father in the dojo with teaching. His nickname from students was “small Sensei”. Although a white belt and Junior High School student, Shimabuku Tatsuo felt confident enough in his 2nd son’s karate to allow Ciso to teach even American military who eventually flooded his Isshinryu dojo. While many Okinawan Junior High Schools had Judo and Kendo clubs, in Ciso Sensei’s school he started the first Karate club. He later went off to college on the Japan mainland and returned to Okinawa to become a Junior High School teacher specializing in shop activities.



Later in life, Ciso Sensei took a back seat in the globalization of Isshinryu. While his name is not commonly spoken in Isshinryu’s modern history, it’s apparent from talking with Ciso Sensei that his Father gave him special knowledge about karate and also schooled him in the art of the Sumuchi (fortune telling). He often talked about the Gokui or secret principles of Isshinryu many of which were not techniques at all. Ciso once stated that to be highly ranked in Isshinryu one has to understand the styles Gokui. This could only be accomplished by many years of study under his Father or another knowledgeable karate teacher.

The many episodes he told of his Father and his Father’s teachers were enlightening. Some portrayed them as normal men, others as skilled and knowledgeable fighters. In every story

though, there was a principle that was being taught. With all the stories, you could see Ciso's face glow and heart swell with pride when discussing his Father. He would often thank us for the interest in his Father and remind us to honor Tatsuo when we returned to our home dojo.

Ciso Sensei would occasionally demonstrate but not often. He was more interested in explaining his Father's ways so that we could understand our Isshinryu mentally instead of physically. I guess he figured the physical was easy. Because of the wealth of information he gave us to ponder, during one of my last interviews with Ciso Sensei, I told him that his photo sits within our dojo shomen (front, place of honor). He graciously smiled and thanked me.



Many first generation Isshinryu Americans from the Agena, Okinawa dojo acknowledge that Ciso Sensei instructed them along with Tokumura Kensho Sensei. Ciso Sensei also talked about splitting the teaching responsibilities with Tokumura. Ciso remembers some of the Americans who came through the dojo but apologized for not remembering more, stating that many were only there about one year.

In August 2006, Ciso Sensei passed away at his home in Okinawa. With him went the important teachings or Gokui of his father. I feel very lucky to have met and been taught by Ciso Sensei. I will always have fond memories of our interviews. He was a kind, gentle and giving soul. He was his Father's keeper.

“Harryu” Sensei.....I finally did it.



**Shimabuku Shinsho “Ciso” Sensei
1942 - 2006**

