



# MASTER CHOJIRO TANI

## 8th Dan Hanshi and founder of Tani-Ha Shito Ryu Karate

Interview by Bozenna Tedder

**Master Tani** demonstrates the long and exquisite kata *Suparimpai*: In a stark red wig which all but covers his face and his gi embroidered in resplendent gold, he looks like a reincarnated kami (a Japanese god). Is the master fighting an imaginary opponent, or invoking some timeless elemental spirit?

The Portland Leisure Centre audience on 16th November 1986 witnessed *moving Zen*. The performer is one with the kata, representing the pinnacle of achievement in the martial arts. A legend in his own lifetime, **Master Tani** is a humble man, whose youth was spent during the most harrowing period in his country's history.

He founded and leads the Tani-ha Shito-ryu organisation of Shukokai Karate. It was a great honour to meet and speak with him



**Sensei, where were you born?**

Kobe, Japan. I have been training in Karate for fifty years.

**Does anyone in your family train in Karate?**

No, only me.

**Who has had the greatest influence upon your Karate?**

Mr. Mabuni Kenwa — the most famous Karate teacher.

**How has Karate changed since you started training?**

Karate has changed. Previously, students adhered to the code of ancient Budo — no fighting. Nowadays, with the advent of sports' Karate, championships predominate. I can't say it's a bad thing — previously, there was a small, elite group doing Karate. Now, sport Karate is for everyone. This may be a bad or a good thing, but some of the serious meaning of Karate has been lost. Previously, Karate was used in real fighting, to defend oneself, now it is used for competition.

**Do you train in weapons?**

My senior students train in weapons but I do not train with them a lot myself. I put more importance on kata rather than weapon practice.

**Do you have a favourite Karate technique, or kata?**

I always demonstrate the kata '*Suparimpai*' — one hundred and eight techniques.

**Do you have many ladies and children amongst your students?**

Yes. Karate is excellent for health; everyone can benefit.

**What sort of qualities do you aim to foster in your students?**

In Japan, especially the children, I teach to become strong in character and to have good control over the self — not violence. I never advocate violent behaviour.

**Sensei, have you ever wanted to give up Karate?**

Before and during the second World War, the Karate training was very, very hard. At that stage, I thought to give up, but did not.

**Is there any thought on Karate which you would wish to share with your students?**

Karate is not just punching, kicking and blocking — that is technique. Karate is an art. Everyone should have a high goal and ideal. Strive for achievement; not low-level, but high-level.



*This photo of Master Tani was taken on a visit that the Shukokai Grandmaster made to Gt. Britain in the early 1970's.*

