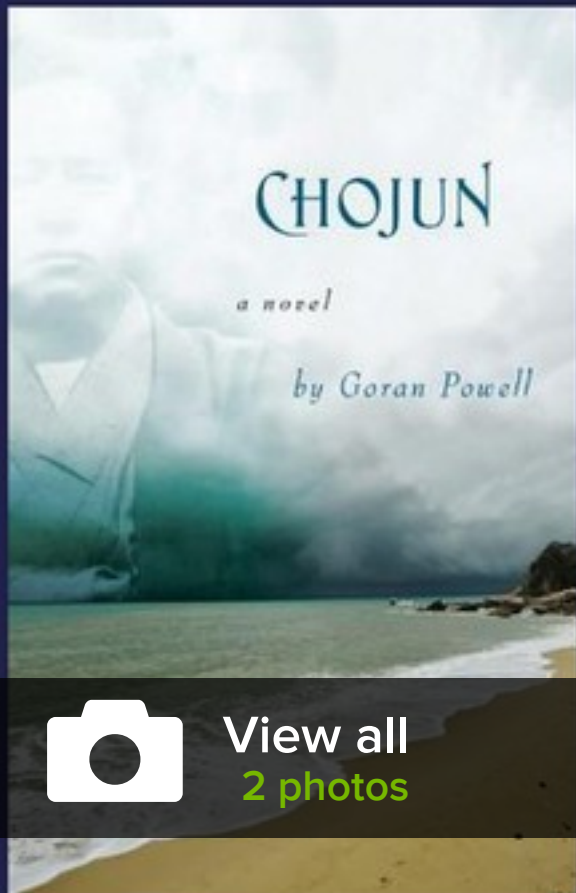


Chojun: a good read

January 5, 2013

9:33 PM MST



View all
2 photos

Book Cover of Chojun

Goran Powell

During the holiday, I read [Goran Powell's](#) novel [Chojun](#). It is a historical fiction novel about Grandmaster and founder of [Gojo-Ryu Karate](#), Chojun Miyagi (1888 – 1953), who lived through Japanese invasion of China (1937 – 1945) and the Battle of Okinawa (April – June 1945), the largest battle combining air, sea and land during World War Two (WWII). The novel is enthralling with suspense. It was hard for me to put it down before finished it.



Goran Powell

Goran started his [martial arts](#) journey at age 7. He studied [Judo](#), [Shotokan karate](#), [Kyokushin kaikan](#) and [Taekwondo](#) before settling on Goju-Ryu [karate](#). At age 37, he completed the grueling 30-man kumite (full body contact combat) and wrote his experience in [Walking Dragons](#), which has been a best-seller in the karate genre. Goran is an accomplished martial artist ranked 4th Dan in karate. His knowledge of martial arts is not limited to karate though. With his vast knowledge of Eastern martial arts, he wrote an award-winning historical fiction work, [A Sudden Dawn](#), on Buddhist monk [Bodhidharma](#).

Chojun was written from the perspective of Kenichi Ota, a fictional student of Chojun Miyagi. From Kenichi's life and interaction with Miyagi, we learned the life, family, character and personality of Chojun Miyagi as well as the origins and history of karate, particularly Goju-Ryu karate through Goran's excellent storytelling. Owing to Powell's extensive research, we also learn the colorful history of Okinawa in the recent 500 years including its cultural ties to China, its political invasion and then annexation by Japan and its occupation by the U.S. military after WWII.

Karate means "empty hand" and is a barehanded form of martial arts. It was developed in the Ryukyu Islands or Okinawa with the influence of Chinese martial arts. Karate applies techniques of knife-hands, spear-hands, elbow striking, punching, kicking, knee striking, grappling, throwing, joint locking, restraint and pressure-point striking. There are four major Ryus (schools): [Shotokan](#), [Shito-Ryu](#), Goju-Ryu and [Wado-Ryu](#). Go means hardness and Ju means softness. Goju-Ryu combines soft techniques with hard techniques to create a power form. Even though Grandmaster Miyagi was very humble and did not promote his art like other schools, Goju-Ryu is now popular and widely practiced around the world.

Depicted by Goran, Chojun was a noble man not just because of his caste and upbringing but also because of his mannerism, attitude and spirit. He constantly kept his master [Kanryo Higashionna](#) and his teaching in his thoughts. He attributed many of the techniques to Higashionna. He followed Higashionna's footsteps and went to China to seek advanced techniques and martial arts theory. After decades of practice, self-study and soul searching, Miyagi created a powerful kata called Tensho or turning palms that completes the Goju-Ryu as a fighting system, which combines hard and soft techniques.

As a [Tai Chi](#) practitioner, I was pleasantly surprised to learn there are many similarities between Goju-Ryu karate and Tai Chi, at least at the conceptual level. Like Tai Chi forms, both Tensho and Sanchin (three battles) katas are forms of mediation. In *Chojun*, Miyagi taught the young protagonist Kenichi to focus on mind, body and spirit, how to breathe properly with movements, how to cultivate Qi and how to build up the internal strength. Miyagi instructed rooting and yielding techniques.

In the world of martial arts, we tend to divide various styles into internal or external categories. But in the ultimate Kung Fu, the dividing line is nonexistent. When asked by Kenichi, "Can a kata be both internal and external?" Miyagi's answer via Goran's pen was "It depends how one decides to practice it". He furthered, "Internal and external, like hardness and softness, are Yin and Yang – opposites contained within the whole". I was totally shocked when I read, "At some point, it is important to leave all ideas of Yin and Yang behind – all issues of form and non-form. Only by transcending such concerns can you be at one with the universal Tao. That is the supreme expression of our art." For a second, I was wondering whether I was reading something about Tai Chi. It seems that both Tai Chi and Goju-Ryu have the same philosophy. Is it because that Goju-Ryu was heavily influenced by Chinese culture or because the great martial arts are all the same in spirit and principle?

Subscribe to this column to get reviews, recaps, and latest news regarding Tai Chi, [Qigong](#), health and martial arts sent directly to your inbox. If you enjoyed this article **please click the social media links above and to the left to share it with your friends**. You can also **subscribe to [my page on Facebook](#) here**. You can also **follow me on [Twitter](#)**.

SUGGESTED LINKS

- **Adding 20 pounds to your workout**
- **Is Chen Tai Chi bad for the knees?**
- **T'ai Chi Companion: a highly innovated Tai Chi textbook**
- **An English version of Yang Sheng Gong DVD is available now**
- **Bette Midler and Tai Chi**



Violet Li

Tai Chi Examiner

© 2006-2015 AXS Digital Group LLC d/b/a Examiner.com