**Brief History of Wado Ryu**

**WADO Ryu** is a style of Japanese karate founded in 1939 by [Hironori Ohtsuka](http://www.wado-ryu-karate.com/Ohtsuka.html) (also spelled Hironori Otsuka). Wado means “way of peace” and is one of the four major styles of Japanese karate along with Shotokan, Goju Ryu and Shito Ryu.

Ohtsuka Sensei originally began his study of martial arts at the age of 6, learning jujitsu from his father. At 13 years of age, he became a student of Shindo Yoshin Ryu jujitsu, a style which utilized atemi striking more than other styles of jujitsu. Ohtsuka Sensei studied under Master Nakayama, 3rd head master of the style. In 1921, on his 29th birthday, Hironori Ohtsuka (Otsuka) was appointed as the 4th headmaster of Shindo Yoshin Ryu jujitsu. Along with other martial arts, Shindo Yoshin Ryu was one of the building blocks used by Ohtsuka Sensei to form Wado Ryu.

In 1922, Ohtsuka Sensei began studying karate under Gichin Funakoshi, the founder of Shotokan karate. In 1924, along with 6 others, Ohtsuka Sensei was awarded his black belt (dan) ranking by Funakoshi, the first such rankings in karate. After many years of study, Hironori Ohtsuka (Otsuka) was considered by many to be Funakoshi Sensei’s top student.

While still a student of Funakoshi, Ohtsuka Sensei began to experiment with various sparring ideas and jujitsu techniques. Ohtsuka Sensei wanted to incorporate Shindo Yoshin’s jujitsu techniques with Funakoshi’s karate techniques to create what he felt was a more complete system and left Funakoshi to create what is now known as Wado Ryu. Ohtsuka Sensei also studied with and borrowed ideas from other karate notables such as Kenwa Mabuni, the founder of Shito Ryu, and Choki Motobu, famous for his Naihanchi kata and street fighting skills.

Wado Ryu is different from many karate styles in that Ohtsuka Sensei did not believe in the use of the makiwara to toughen the parts of the body used for striking. Also missing from Wado are the hard contact elements of sparring. Wado students learn to use taisabaki (body shifting) to avoid the full force of an attack while at the same time positioning the body for an effective counterattack.

The ultimate goal of Wado Ryu is to develop a peaceful yet fully aware mind that is able to react to any situation. The study and perfection of Wado Ryu takes a lifetime of effort and leads to an inner peace within the student. As Ohtsuka Sensei once said, “Violent action may be understood as the way of martial arts, but the true meaning of martial arts is to seek and attain the way of peace and harmony”.

After the death of Master Hironori Ohtsuka (Otsuka), his son, [Jiro Ohtsuka](http://www.wado-ryu-karate.com/Jiro.html) became the master of Wado Ryu. The Grandson of Hironori Ohtsuka, Kazutaka Ohtsuka, is the current Master.

The current head of Wado Ryu karate for the Eastern United States is John V. Patterson. He is the son of Cecil T. Patterson, the founder and first President of the USEWF.