

Gogen Yamaguchi **'The Cat'**

1909 — 1989

As a young man during my year's of training in Australia, I had read with avid interest countless articles written about *Gogen Yamaguchi*, the celebrated leader of *Gōjū Ryu Karate* and a man known to most as simply, 'The Cat'.

On most occasions, *Yamaguchi* wore dark traditional Japanese dress and with his long flowing black hair, was the epitome of a *Samurai Warrior*. To most, and I was no exception, he had become a legend in his own lifetime.

One day in December 1967, I was winding my way through the Tokyo streets in the suburb of *Ichigaya*, heading for *Yotsuya* station where I would take a train on the *Chuo Line* to *Korakuen* and the *JKA dōjō*.

By 9.30am, I had crossed the busy highway and turned on to a little path that ran alongside the canal. Approaching the station, I bought a ticket and walked onto the platform just as the train pulled up.

Deep in thought over the previous day's lesson, I boarded the train and sat down. I remember staring at the floor as I went through the moves of the *Kata Bassai-Dai* (To Storm a Fortress) in my mind. When I had completed my mental exercise, I looked up and gazed across to the other side of the carriage.

I froze!

Sitting in front of me, only a few feet away, in all his glory, was the resplendent figure of *Gogen Yamaguchi* — The Cat!

I reacted by going into a state of shock, to which he gave me a