

Home | Whoppers | Sacharnoski

May 31, 2001

Whoppers

Rod Sacharnoski and Juko Kai

Don Cunningham



The self-proclaimed founder and headmaster of Juko-Kai International, Rod Sacharnoski credits himself with an impressive list of martial arts and educational credentials. In addition, he also created an organization dedicated primarily to "certifying" members as soke, or traditional headmasters, while sharply criticizing any who have self-appointed themselves as founders of their own styles. For a fee, individuals may receive appointments, referred to as "sokeships," at the recommendation of Mr. Sacharnoski in the Zen Kokusai Soke Remmei. Despite its Japanese-sounding title, the organization was created solely in the United States by Mr. Sacharnoski, who even credits himself with first introducing the term "soke" into Western culture when he founded it in 1973. Mr. Sacharnoski has often claimed that Juko-Kai International is "the world's foremost, non-Asian traditional Okinawan and Japanese martial arts union" with unspecified connections to many oriental organizations. Although no known legitimate Japanese koryu association has ever recognized the group, Mr. Sacharnoski insists that Juko-Kai International, created in 1961, is "one of the oldest martial federations in the United States."

According to their own publications, Juko-Kai International primarily promotes Mr. Sacharnoski's own martial art style, Juko-ryu, but also represents several Japanese koryu and Okinawan budo styles outside Japan. Among these, he claims Juko-Kai International houses the Dai Yoshin-ryu budo and bujutsu system, a school of various Japanese traditional martial arts. Juko-ryu is probably best known, though, for its bizarre body strengthening practices, allowing exponents to receive blows to the genitals and other vital areas. Mr. Sacharnoski has frequently demonstrated his skill by receiving full-strength strikes to the throat and kicks to the groin, a feat of which he is proud.

Mr. Sacharnoski has often written that he is "considered in the orient to be the West's highest graded, non-Asian martial arts master." Apparently, this lofty opinion is based primarily on his assertion of an 8th dan ranking in judo, allegedly awarded by the International Judo and Jujitsu League (IJJL), Holland Division of the European Judo Federation (EJF). To further bolster credibility, he also argues that his 8th dan judo rank was fully recognized in the 1980s by the United States Judo Federation through their Chicago yudanshakai. According to his account, the IJJF was based in Holland and active in numerous European countries, including the United States. The IJJF was purportedly directed by Dr. G.J.M. VanZantwijk, an economics professor. When contacted, however, International Judo Federation officials in Amsterdam claimed they never heard of the IJJF or Dr. VanZantwijk. Furthermore, they firmly denied any 8th dan judo rank was ever awarded to Mr. Sacharnoski in Holland.

Mr. Sacharnoski said the IJJF disbanded following Dr. VanZantwijk's death in 1980. Yet, in 1982, Mr. Sacharnoski presented a rank certificate allegedly signed by Dr. VanZantwijk to convince the Chicago judo registration chairman to issue him a USJF membership card listing Mr. Sacharnoski's judo rank as 8th dan. Although USJF officials have since insisted they never recognized his claim to 8th dan and the card was issued without any authority, Mr. Sacharnoski still frequently uses it to back up his original declaration of holding an 8th dan judo rank.

EXHIBIT

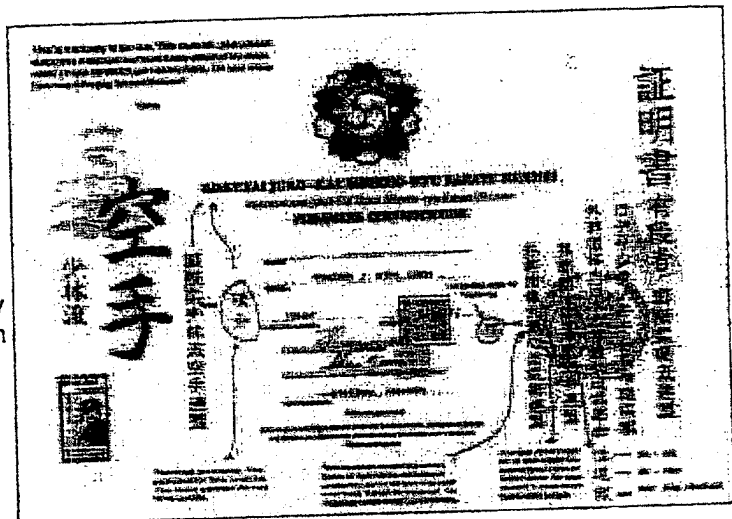
tabbles

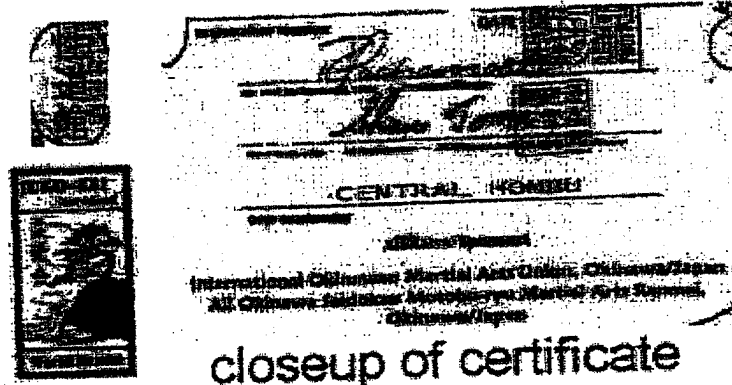
1

Mr. Sachamoski apparently likes to assume academic titles, such as professor and doctor. He evidently received a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice in 1982 from Columbia Pacific University, a non-accredited school which was later ordered closed by the Marin County Superior Court after the California Department of Consumer Fraud found it to be "a diploma mill" and offering non-recognized degrees for sale. The very same year that he received his Ph.D., Mr. Sachamoski started his own non-accredited school, the University of Oriental Philosophy, and issued a doctorate degree to its first graduate. Until recently, the UOP offered non-recognized degrees for money, ranging from \$35 for an associate's degree to \$100 for a doctorate degree. An inquiry to the authorities in Maine resulted in an investigation into Juko Kai's operations by the State Attorney General. According the Maine Department of Education, the UOP "has not been authorized to operate or to offer degrees in this state." Since this finding, the UOP has quietly ceased operation. Although many alumni have presented UOP diplomas awarded while the school operated in North Carolina, state officials deny that the school was ever licensed or authorized to issue such credentials in that state as well.

In 1991, Mr. Sachamoski contacted Inoue sensei, headmaster of the Hontai Yoshin-ryu, asking to visit his dojo and possibly represent the style in the United States. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Sachamoski and a few of his students appeared at the dojo in in Minamoto City, Japan, and trained for a few hours one day. According to witnesses, though, Mr. Sacharnoski spent the entire session seated in a chair due to a foot injury. This did not prevent him from later writing to Inoue sensei, requesting he be awarded a dan rank in Hontai Yoshin-ryu. Of course this request was denied. Yet, Mr. Sachamoski still insisted later that both he and Inoue sensei presented "side-by-side major demonstrations in the classical arts of Okinawa and Japan much to the delight of the great many martial arts headmasters and police officials who were present."

Over the years, Mr. Sachamoski has charged his followers certain fees for their certification of rank with Japanese organizations. Frequently, Mr. Sachamoski has even claimed to be the official representative of some of these associations. Yet, a yudanshakai certificate for 4th dan rank issued by the "Kokusai Juko-Kai Shorin-Ryu Karate Renmai" and clearly signed by Mr. Sachamoski has many unusual mistakes in the Japanese writing. In addition to missing characters and incorrect sequences including the wrong characters for Yoshin-ryu, the kanji representing "Seidokan" actually translates as "sex way house." The certificate indicates it is issued by the association's affiliates and sponsors, the International Okinawan Martial Arts Union and the All Okinawa Seidokan Motobu-ryu Martial Arts Renmai, both in Okinawa and Japan. It is highly unlikely that someone familiar with the Japanese language would ever make such mistakes.





closeup of certificate

性
道
館

This is the kanji used in the certificate shown. The first, pronounced "sei" represents "sex" in Japanese.

The second kanji, "do" represents "way" or "path."

The third kanji, "kan" means "hall" or "house."

正
道
館

The first kanji shown here is also pronounced "sei," but represents "truth" in Japanese.

The second kanji, "do" represents "way" or "path."

The third kanji, "kan" means "hall" or "house."

While Mr. Sacharnoski insists that "all Juko-Kai arts are Asian sponsored, recognized and affiliated," he did once state in an interview that he never actually met with or was ever affiliated with some of the organizations as formerly contended. In an ironic twist, Mr. Sacharnoski quotes an uncorroborated statistic for an article about police tactics, claiming that martial arts students "should also be aware that it has been estimated that more than 95% of all persons claiming to be a black belt in the West have never studied or earned their rank under a traditional Asian master or system. Most buy their ranks from mail-order houses, promote themselves or have their own lower-ranking students grade them, or receive their ranks from other non-recognized sources."

Related Resources

- http://www.jukokai.com/members/uop_handout.html Handout for the University of Oriental Philosophy, a Martial Arts Diploma mill that offers degrees for money.
- <http://www.jukokai.com/Articles/Soke%20Sac%201.htm> Article on ZEN KOKUSAI SOKE REMMEI, a division of Juko Kai that offers "Sokeships" for money.

Budo Quackwatch
1031 Algonquin Trail
Frankfort, KY 40601
bolerpj@bellsouth.net