

Traditional Karate and its historical beginnings

In its earliest stages, the martial art known, as "karate" was an indigenous form of closed fist fighting, which was developed in Okinawa, referred to as "Te" or "hand". Weapons bans, imposed upon the Okinawans at various points in history, encouraged the refinement of empty hand techniques. For this reason, "Te" was trained in secret until modern times. Further refinement came with the influence of other martial arts introduced by nobles and trade merchants to the Island. Te continued to develop over the years, primarily in three Okinawan cities: Shuri, Naha, Tomari

Each of these towns was a center to a different sect of society; the aristocracy (kings and nobles), the middle class (merchants and business people) and the fisherman and farmers, respectively. For this reason, different forms of self-defense

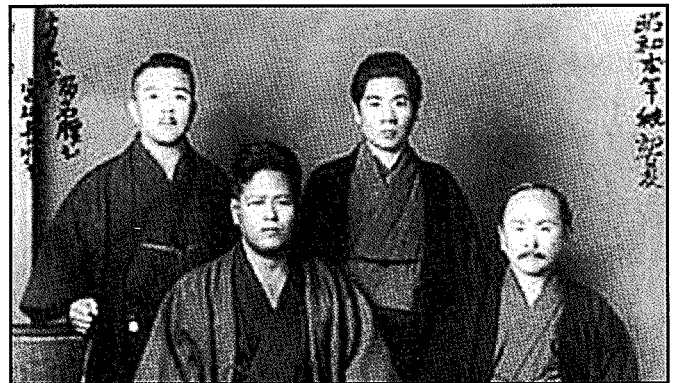
developed within each city and subsequently became known as Shuri-te, Naha-te, Tomari-te. Collectively these practices or early systems were called Okinawa-Te or "Tode", meaning Chinese Hand

The first demonstration of "Karate" took place in Japan in 1917 when Gichin Funakoshi performed at the Butoku-den in Kyoto. This and subsequent demonstrations not only greatly impressed many Japanese, but drew the attention and enthusiasm of the Crown-Prince Hirohito. The first demonstration of Karate takes place in Tokyo which was supported by Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo. Karate was still not a codified system and was not considered a "legitimate martial art" due to the prejudice of the Japanese populace toward the Okinawans. Yasuhiro Konishi, a board member of the Dai

Nippon Butokukai (the sanctioning body for martial arts in Japan) becomes interested in Karate in 1924. In 1935, Konishi succeeded in having Karate accepted as a legitimate martial art and registered the system with the Dai Nippon Butokukai. With this, a formalized curriculum was established for each "ryu" or system of Karate as a requirement for sanctioning.

SIX SYSTEMS ARE REGISTERED:

Goju-ryu under
Chojun Miyagi
Shito-ryu under
Kenwa Mabuni
Wado-ryu under
Hironori Ohtsuka
Shotokan under
Gichin Funakoshi
Kushin-ryu under
Ueshima Sannosuke
Shindo Jinen-ryu under
Yasuhiro Konishi



From the six original systems, four of them became very popular and established themselves as the primary systems within Japan:

GOJU-RYU

Developed out of Naha-te. Its popularity was primarily due to the teaching success of Kanryo Higaonna (1853-1915) who opened a dojo (school) in Naha using eight forms brought/introduced from China. The best student of Higaonna was Chojun Miyagi (1888-1953) who founded the formal system of "hard/soft way" or "Goju-ryu". A signature quality in this system is the emphasis that is placed upon combining soft circular blocking techniques with quick strong counter techniques delivered in rapid succession.

SHITO-RYU

Founded by Kenwa Mabuni (1888-1952) A system influenced by both Naha-te and Shuri-te.

The name "Shito" is constructively derived from the combination of the Japanese characters of Mabuni's teacher's names; Ankoh Itosu and Kanryo Higaonna. Shito-ryu schools house a large number of Kata students, each with over fifty. Shito-ryu is characterized not only by its emphasis upon execution of techniques, but with the economy of movement as well.

SHOTOKAN

Founded by Gichin Funakoshi (1868-1957) Funakoshi studied karate with Yasutsune Azato one of Okinawa's foremost experts in the art.

In 1936 Funakoshi opened his own training hall, which was called "Shotokan" after the pen name he used for those poems he authored in his youth.

Shotokan Karate is characterized by its powerful and linear techniques coupled with deep strong stances which were developed to accommodate the larger physical stature of Japanese practitioners.

WADO-RYU

A system of Karate developed from jujitsu and karate techniques by Hironori Otsuka. Means "Way of Harmony" Otsuka was already a master of Yoshin-ryu jujitsu when he was introduced to Karate. This style of Karate combines basic movements of jujitsu with techniques of evasion with a strong emphasis on softness or "the way of harmony". Spiritual discipline is a hallmark characteristic of the Wado-ryu work ethic.