

By the 7th century, China had officially recognized Japan as an independent political entity. At various times diplomatic and cultural missions made up of Japanese priests, soldiers, and statesmen passed between the Chinese mainland and Japan. It is plausible that these and other travelers introduced a martial art to Okinawa. Japanese Buddhism students in Chinese monasteries were undoubtedly exposed to the Shao-lin kung-fu techniques of Bodhidharma; it is reputed that the more adventurous of them, following their training, set sail eastward to spread the teachings to the known world. But such possibilities remain in the realm of conjecture.

There is a widely held view that kung-fu entered the Ryukyus by way of China's Foochow district during the 6th- and 7th-century reign of China's Sui dynasty. Such Chinese-Ryukyuan contacts are first mentioned in the section on Eastern Barbarians of the Sui Shu, the dynastic history of the Sui rulers. The definitive Japanese encyclopedia, *Dekai Dai-Hyakkaiiten*, states that karate or a type of kung-fu was probably brought to Okinawa from China during the T'ang dynasty (A D 618-906). From the end of the T'ang dynasty to the beginning of the Ming period in 1368, a span of 450 years, development of karate in the Ryukyus is unrecorded. Perhaps the strongest support for the claim that karate is innately Okinawan is based on some of the Ryukyu islander's classical dances.

In 1372, official Chinese-Okinawan channels were opened when Okinawa's King Sho-en established a tributary relationship between his domain and China. With Okinawa now a Chinese satellite, cultural proselytization began in earnest. Kung-fu mingled with an indigenous Okinawan form of fist fighting called *tode*. Oral traditions cite the beginning of the 14th century as the period when a karate like art began to be generally practiced. This budding art was greatly stimulated by the large mission of Chinese officials and their entourage, sent to Okinawa by Emperor Hung Wu-ti in 1372.

During the Ming period (1368-1644) a permanent Okinawan settlement grew up at the Chinese capital of Ch'uan-Chou. Commuting Okinawan citizens brought artifacts and customs back to their islands, and a general belief that all things Chinese were superior. A major contribution to the founding of Okinawan karate was the migration in 1392 of 36 Chinese families from Fukien province, China, to Kume-mura, a suburb of Naha, Okinawa. They established the community called the Thirty-Six Families. Here, Chinese masters taught their own systems of Chinese boxing (*kempo*) to Okinawans. (One of Meitoku Yagi's ancestors, a Chinese *kempo* master, arrived with this group.)

Before 1429 Okinawa was divided into three kingdoms: Hokuzan, Chuzan, and Nanzan. King Hashi from Chuzan conquered the kingdoms of Nanzan and Hokuzan and unified Okinawa; he banned all weapons on the island. With the subsequent opening of trade, Arabs, Malays, Indonesians, and Thais brought to Okinawa glimpses of Southeast Asian forms of unarmed self-defense. In 1477 Sho Shin, the grandson of Sho Hashi, reimposed the weapons ban, placing all weapons in a storehouse under his supervision. The ban stimulated training in weaponless fighting. Records in Okinawa's national archives, which were unfortunately destroyed during World War II, indicated that between 1432 and 1570 Okinawa established forty-four official embassies in Annam (Vietnam), Thailand, Malaya, and many of the lesser kingdoms of Java. This intercourse supports the conviction that modern karate kicking techniques were imported from Indochina (i.e., Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos), whereas the open-handed and finger-stabbing techniques in offensive karate movements originated in other locations.

In 1592, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, a Japanese general, raised an army to invade the Asian mainland. In 1599 Sho Nei, king of Okinawa, asked the Chinese court to send an embassy to his royal investiture. Because of the Japanese military threat to China, the Chinese Imperial court sent military men in this and subsequent embassies to Okinawa. Army generals who were prominent in martial arts taught Chinese *kempo* to the Okinawans.

A Japanese military expedition in 1609 ended Okinawan autonomy. The subjugated Okinawans were again denied weapons. In clashes with the victors, the Okinawans used the only weapons they possessed, their bare hands and feet. Okinawans, especially the owners of property, trained diligently to make their hands and feet into weapons in order to protect their lives and property. Martial arts experts never exchanged their techniques with other experts; therefore the development of fighting techniques proceeded in secret. At night, Okinawans went to caves or mountain hideouts and trained, using the trees as their enemies. On the trunk and shoots of the tree called "gajimaru" (banyan tree) they practiced jump kicks, kicks, punching and chopping, and hardened their fists. The "kakidameshi" was a fight to the death between two experts. Relatives of the slain expert would never seek revenge because they were ashamed to be seen. Many techniques were developed at the expense of human life.

Gaining little from such disunited resistance, the various Okinawan ch'uan fa groups and tode societies banded together in 1629; the result was a new fighting style, a combination of Okinawa-te and ch'uan fa, called simply te. During this period, and after, many Okinawans were secretly sent to China to learn fighting systems; such famous Chinese as Saifa, Seiunchin, Ason, Waishinzan, Ananku, Chinto, and Kusanku either taught the Okinawans or provided inspiration by their deeds.

The third book of the Oshima Hikki, a reliable chronicle, mentions that a shipwrecked Chinese boxer named Ko Sokun (Kung HsiangChun) with a group of followers introduced in 1692 a special kind of martial art to Okinawa. It uses not the term karate, but the word kumiai-jutsu, meaning "fighting technique." At any rate, a monument to karate exists at the foot of Chuzan Castle (Shuri Castle), containing written evidence that the Chinese lion and tiger schools of boxing were brought to Okinawa. (Written accounts of the development of karate are rare; one of the few is an 1830 book entitled Gokansen Tode Ko, or Okansen Karate Ko, by Sennan Choho.)

In the early days in Okinawa, there were three styles of unarmed fighting: Naha-te, Shuri-te, and Tomari-te, named after the three principal cities in which they flourished. Even today, little is known about Tomari-te, a style somewhat similar to Naha-te.

By the 18th century, the modern characteristics of Okinawan karate began to emerge. Because of the secrecy under which te was practiced, it is not clearly known how the different styles emerged. Okinawan karate today, however, is traced back to two major original groups. One is shorin-ryu (or Shuri-te) and the other is *shorei-ryu* (or Naha-te).

Naha-te is itself divided into two styles: goju-ryu and Uechi-ryu. Shuri-te is divided into three styles: shobayashi-ryu shorin-ryu, kobayashi-ryu shorin-ryu, and matsubayashi-ryu shorin-ryu. The general distinction between the two major branches in Naha-te's emphasis on flexibility in movement, while Shuri-te emphasizes speed. By the late 1880s, the term karate (T'ang hand) came into use in Okinawa, replacing the word te (hand). In 1905, Chomo Hanashiro broke with tradition and wrote a book using the new character for karate. The characters were pronounced alike, but Hanashiro's translation was "empty hand(s)." This angered some of the purists, who felt they should acknowledge their debt to the Chinese who had taught them. Gichin Funakoshi, who popularized the use of Hanashiro's character, is usually given credit for first using it. A conference sponsored by the flyukyu Shimpo newspaper in Oct. 1936 brought together karate leaders including: Kentsu Yabu, Chotoku Kyan, Hanashiro, Choki Motobu, Chojun Miyagi, Juhatsu Kiyoda, Choshin Chibana, Mashige Shiroma, Asatada Koyoshi, Eijo Shin, Miyashiro, Nakutsune, and Nakamora. At this important conference it was officially decided to adopt the term "karate" for the national martial art of Okinawa.

Several modern karate authorities claim that the intense seclusion of karate was maintained until about 1903. Others feel that in 1875, when the occupation of Okinawa ended, and the Ryukyu Islands became a part of the Japanese Empire, secrecy was relaxed. In any event, karate was opened up to the public. The period just prior to World War II saw a great popularization of karate on Okinawa. Between 1915 and 1940, in fact, almost all the major karate styles in existence today were founded.

In 1901-02, when the First Middle School and Men's Normal School opened on Okinawa, karate was officially installed as a part of the physical education curriculum. Karate grandmaster of Shuri-te, Yasutsune "Ankoh" Itosu, was the first karate master to instruct publicly on Okinawa. It is known also that in April 1901 the Shurijijo Elementary School on Okinawa had introduced karate training into its gym classes. This was the first time karate was taught in a group. In 1905, karate clubs were founded in the following schools on Okinawa: Okinawa-ken Junior High, Naha City School of Commerce, Okinawa-ken Trainers School, Prefectural Agricultural School, Prefectural Engineering School, and the Prefectural Fisheries College.

Karate on Okinawa was quickly accepted on the strength of its introduction into, and evaluation by, the Okinawan scholastic system. From 1900 to 1912, Okinawan karate had a great impact on the Budokai (Martial Arts Association), and on the navy of Okinawa. In the spring of 1912, when the First Fleet, under Admiral Izuha, anchored in Nakagusuku Bay, about ten petty officers were sent for a week of karate training at the First Middle School.

In Feb. 1920 Kentsu Yabu, a karate instructor for many years in the Normal School and earlier an army lieutenant, was invited to the U.S., where he successfully exhibited karate in Hawaii and Los Angeles. This marks the first international exposure of Okinawan karate.

Emperor Seijo visited Okinawa on March 10, 1922, while on his way to Europe. A group of Okinawan karate masters, among them Chojun Miyagi, had the honor of demonstrating karate in front of him at the Teachers School. In May 1926 the royal family visited and observed karate training at the same school.

In 1923 karate training was given in the Okinawan Police Academy, and in 1940 karate became the official martial art at the academy.

On Nov. 21, 1930 the Okinawa Taiiku Kyokai (Okinawan Athletic Association) was founded; its karate division combined with the Okinawan Karate Club, founded in March 1927.

On Okinawa today there are estimated to be more than 200 dojos. New schools crop up regularly. The main styles on the island are: kobayashi shorin-ryu, matsubayashi shorin-ryu, shobayashi shorin-ryu, Uechi-ryu, goju-ryu, matsumura orthodox, Okinawan kempo, and isshinryu. Less prominent offshoots of these styles can be found, as well as hybrid systems of recent invention.

STYLES: As previously indicated above, Naha-te is divided into two main styles: Uechi-ryu and goju-ryu. Uechi-ryu was founded by Kanbun Uechi, who had gone to China as a result of an unhappy love affair. He returned ten years later and opened a school. His style was based on the pangai-noon system of China and today is headed by his son, Kanei Uechi, who assumed leadership upon his father's death in 1947, and by one of the original students, Ryuko Tomoyose. Okinawan kempo, the least organized of the fighting systems, enjoys some following in the islands, but is little known outside the Ryukyus.

Another relatively small system is isshinryu. Tatsuo Shimabuku, after studying under such famed masters as Chotoku Kyan of Shuri-te and Choki Motobu of shorei-ryu, modified and combined the two styles to form the isshinryu (one-heart style) Though its following is small here in the U.S it is quite large because of the large number of American servicemen who studied this style while stationed in Okinawa.

The goju-ryu (hard-soft school) traces its origin to the external (hung style) and internal (pa-kua chang, fusing-l ch'uan, and mi"sung-I) systems of China. The great Okinawan karate master, Kanryo Higashionna (also known as Higaonna and West Higashionna) trained in Chinese kempo, or ch'uan fat (The Chinese ideograph for chtuan fa is read by the Japanese and Okinawans as kempo, meaning "fist way.") Higashionna sailed from Okinawa in 1866 at the age of 15 to Fukien province, China, to learn Chinese kempo. With over twenty years of training under the famous Chinese kempo master Liu Liu Ko, Higashionna mastered the art. He returned to Okinawa during the middle of the Meiji Era (1868-1911) and introduced a new school of karate there. The new style, called Naha-te, integrated go-no kempo and ju-no kempo (hard and soft); incorporated hard and soft, slow and fast movements.

Higashionna also introduced a special breathing exercise called Sanchin. In 1915, Master Higashionna died, leaving many devoted students. Chojun Miyagi, Higashionna's top student, became his successor as head of the Naha-te school of karate; Seiko Higa assisted.

Miyagi traveled several times to China after Higashionna died and remained a few years each time to train in the Chinese martial arts. Miyagi's unusual dedication to the martial arts earned deep respect from the Chinese kempo masters. He was considered an outstanding karate master of great skill, strength, and spirit. Miyagi further improved and developed the theory and techniques of Naha-te and scrutinized it scientifically for martial arts training on Okinawa.

In the late 1920s, Miyagi founded goju-ryu karate on Okinawa. He named the system "goju-ryu" (hard-soft style) from the old Chinese book Wu pei chih (Army Account of Military Arts and Science) by Yuan-I Mao, published in 1636. The term "goju" appears in the sentence: "The successful method required both give and take (go-ju)." Miyagi was teaching and promoting goju-ryu karate-do up to the time of his death on Oct. 8, 1953, at the age of 66. He was called the last great samurai warrior of Okinawa because of his legendary strength and skill as well as his intense dedication to the martial arts. Meitoku Yagi received the style's menkyo-kaiden from Chojun Miyagi and succeeded to the leadership of goju-ryu.

Meitoku Yagi is the foremost living Okinawan goju-ryu karate master. President of the Meibukan School of goju-ryu karate-do at Naha City, Okinawa, he and his two sons, Meitatsu and Meitetsu, continue in the strict tradition of goju-ryu. His school has branches on Okinawa and in other parts of the world. Its North American headquarters is in Watertown, Mass., under the direction of Anthony Mirakian, who first introduced Meibukan goju-ryu karate to the U.S. in 1960.

Shorin-ryu, a popular style of karate on Okinawa, traces its descent through distinguished Chinese fighting systems. Legend traces the history of shorin-ryu to two ancient Chinese masters, Iwah and Wai Shin-zan. Iwah's students were chiefly citizens of Kume (Maesato and Kogusuku), but included Sokon Matsumura of Shuri, whose descendants were to be influential in the formation of Okinawan karate. With the exception of Shimabuku of Uemdon, all of Master Waishinzan's students were from Kunenhoya (Senaha, Gushi, Nagahama, Arakaki, Hijaunna, and Kuwae). Kusanku, an 18th-century Chinese military official, is said to have learned from a Shaolin monk the Chinese art of ch'uan fat In 1761, he was sent to Okinawa, and it is through his subsequent teaching efforts that the art became more widespread.

"Tode" Sakugawa (1733-1815), born in Shuri Toribori, was first a student of Peichin Takahara (1683-1760), but on his teacher's death continued his training with Kusanku, traveling many times to China. During this period he is said to have combined chiuan fa and tode to form Okinawa-te. Sakugawa left the oldest surviving kata still in use today, the Sakugawa no kun, or staff form. He also passed down the Kusanku kata and is credited with founding the dojo kun (dojo etiquette).

After Sakugawa the record of transmission becomes vague. Known are the names of three masters who came between Sakugawa and the acknowledged founder of Shuri-te, Sokon Matsumura. Sometime between the death of Sakugawa and the rise of Shuri-te Urazoe Mayamoto, Chogun Suekata, and Makabe Chyan lived and taught. Surfacing for the first time are the names Gusukuma, the teacher of Azato, Kanagusuku, Oyatomari, Yamada, and especially Matsumura Nakazato, and Toguchi.

Sakugawa had befriended a political leader on Okinawa by the name of Matsumura. At the time of his death in 1799 he asked Sakugawato raise his 3-year-old son, Sokon Matsumura (1796-1884), who became the most important karate master of the mid-Meiji era (1867-1912). Sakugawa, training the child, affectionately dubbed him the Bushi, a term meaning Warrior. Matsumura is credited with creating all of the kata of the system that came to be called Shuri-te. Still taught in the shobayashi shorin-ryu system of karate, these include: Seisan, naihanchin (I through III), ananku, wanshu golushiho, Chinto, passai, and Kusanku. Living into his 90s, he left many disciples, among the most famous: Yasutsune Itosu and Yasutsune Azato. Of still other pupils little is known but their descendants, Choshin Chibana and Ankichi Arakaki, were prominent.

According to family tradition, Nabe Matsumura, the grandson of Sokon Matsumura, received all the so-called secret techniques and knowledge of his grandfather. The chief instructor of this style, now called the matsumura orthodox system (of shorin-ryu), is Hohan Soken (b.1889), Nabe's nephew. While this system teaches the traditional basic and advanced kata, it also makes use of the huRutsuri, or "white crane" forms. Miraculous skill is reputed to derive from proper practice of this technique, such as the ability to stand or even fight on a small board afloat in rough water. Great emphasis is placed on kobu-jutsu (art of weapons).

Another famous student of Sokon Matsumura is Yasutsune "Anko" Itosu (1830-1915). Itosu, a student also of master Gusukuma, created the pinan kata and developed the naihanchi kata to such an extent that he became known as the "Anko" or "Iron Horse," rooting himself uncannily in immobility. His senior student, Kentsu Yabu (b. cat 1870), taught only a few years before retiring and leaving the style to Itosu's second-ranking student. Perhaps because so many students had attained high levels of proficiency during Itosu's long life, or perhaps due to the unsettled times (late Meiji and early Taisho eras), each master felt he should assume leadership. Consequently, several distinct styles of shorin-ryu emerged. Splinter groups, of whom very little is known outside Okinawa, are Chomo Hanashiro, Chorán Yamakawa, Shinei Shiroma (the short-term instructor of Shugoro Nakazato), Ambun Tokuda, Chotei Soryoku, and Yabiku.

Conflicting stories exist about Yabu: that he was gentle and a good teacher; that he enjoyed shinken shobu or shobishi kumite (fight to the death or knockout). Legend says Yabu killed more than sixty men in unarmed combat, and even defeated the famous eccentric and enormous Okinawan shorei-ryu master, Choki Motobu. Yabu left two well remembered students, Shinken Taira and Kanken Toyama (1888-1966), the founder of shudokan karate.

Choshin Chibana (1887-1969), Yabu's successor, first named his style shorin-ryu in 1928. Master Chibana was universally respected on Okinawa, and was even decorated by the Emperor of Japan as a great karate master. Chibana left behind three kudan (9th-degree) students, several splinter students, and two kata: Kusanku-dai and gojushiho. At Chibana's death two followers disputed over seniority. Presently Katsuya Miyahira heads the kobayashi shorin-ryu (small forest shorin style) and Shugoro Nakazato heads the kobayashi shorin ken shuwakai (small forest shorin school of all Shugoro's students).

Shoshin Nagamine is the present head of matsubayashi shorin-ryu (pine forest shorin style). Nagamine had studied with Ankichi Arakaki, Chotoku Kyan, and Choki Motobu. His system is chiefly distinguished from the others by a typically faster, lighter movement; the kobayashi styles emphasize more power and less mobility.

Chotoku Kyan, another student of master Itosu, is remembered primarily as an outstanding instructor. Kyan's students included Tatsuo Shimabuku, founder of issihinryu, and Choshin Chibana himself.

Gichin Funakoshi (1868-1957) is perhaps the best known of the Shuri-te masters. Having trained under Itosu and Azato, he became widely known throughout Japanese society not only for his considerable skill in the fighting arts but for his dignity, academic acumen, and nobility of character. Funakoshi was chosen in 1917, and again in 1922, to demonstrate Okinawan karate at the annual Japanese exposition of martial arts conducted at the great Butokuden in Kyoto. He counted among his personal friends Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo; his students included virtually all of the subsequently important karate masters in Japan. Funakoshi's teachings formed the nucleus of the style, similar to Shuri-te, called Shotokan after his death. It is now the most prolific karate system in Japan and has since 1955 spread throughout the world. Funakoshi emphasized three things above all else: basic technique, kata, and improvement of character.

A contemporary and friendly rival of Funakoshi was Kenwa Mabuni (b.1889). In addition to his Shuri-te studies with Itosu, he trained in Naha-te under Kanryo Higashionna, and in goju-ryu under Chojun Miyagi. He later migrated to Japan and formed the Shito-ryu system in Osaka.

The Zen Okinawa Karate-do Remmei (All Okinawa Karate-do Association) was founded on Okinawa in 1956; it is the official body for Okinawan karate. The charter members were goju-ryu, Uechi-ryu, and two styles of shorin-ryu, matsubayashi and kobayashi. The members meet regularly in Naha City to establish karate policies governing the qualifications for grades, ranks, and titles for students, instructors, and masters.

In World War II, more than 90 percent of Okinawa's structures were destroyed by bombardment; 42,000 civilians were killed, among them several leading karate exponents. Following the Japanese surrender on Sept. 2, 1945, Okinawa was recognized as a U.S. territory under residual Japanese sovereignty. Several American military bases, including the huge Kadena Airbase, were established. The Taiwan tensions following 1949 and the Korean War of 1950-53 underlined the continuing strategic importance of the island and U.S. military units were constantly stationed there.

It was U.S. servicemen seeking involvement in Okinawan culture who found karate a viable practice and pastime, particularly those serving in the U.S. Marine Corps. So taken were many servicemen with Okinawan karate that they requested and frequently received extensions of duty in Okinawa to further pursue karate training. With these extensions came an increase in the number of marriages between American marines and Okinawan women, who would then immigrate to the U.S. in droves with their new husbands. The situation reached a saturation point and the reigning marine commander prohibited extensions of duty in Okinawa after 13 months of service.

According to Joe Lewis, a U.S. Marine who trained in Okinawa with Eizo Shimabuku(ro) in 1964-66, at every karate school but one the servicemen paid their own tuition. The exception was Tatsuo Shimabuku's isshinryu school. Steve Armstrong, one of Tatsuo's senior students, established a contract for his instructor wherein the U S government paid the \$5 per month training fee for each marine enrolled at Shimabuku's dojo Hence, more isshinryu black belts were produced than in any other Okinawan style at that time, which subsequently accounted for the widespread proliferation of isshinryu in the U.S. by returning servicemen.

Also according to Lewis, the advent of the Vietnam War in March 1965 greatly reduced the number of servicemen stationed in Okinawa, for the ground and air forces were committed to Vietnam in strength. Lewis, in fact, was a member of the first marine division that left Okinawa for Vietnam.

Vol. 2, No. 6; Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines, 1968; Okinawa. The History of an Island People, George H. Kerr, 1958; The Weaponless Warriors, An Informal History of Okinawan Karate, Richard Kim, 1975.

While sport karate is a product of the 20th century its roots can be traced to ancient India, China, and Okinawa. India, which developed yoga and its diaphragmatic breathing methods, has exerted influence on numerous combative techniques throughout the Orient. Many martial scholars consider India the birthplace of all martial arts. During the 5th and 6th centuries B.C. Indian combat techniques similar to modern karate were transmitted to China by Zen Buddhist monks.

It is thought that at the end of the 5th century A.D. a Buddhist priest named Bodhidharma travelled to China from India to instruct at the Shaolin monastery. There he taught the monks a combination of yoga and Indian fist-fighting that became the kung-fu system of Shao-lin. As the art proliferated throughout China, variation and local style appeared.

The fighting techniques of China were subsequently carried to the offshore islands, most notably Okinawa, by waves of immigrants, refugees, and priests. Weaponless combat, called te (hand), had already existed on Okinawa; with the ban against carrying arms issued by the Japanese occupation in 1470, these empty-hand techniques thrived.

Later, with the aid of Chinese kung-fu masters who fled from China, te developed into a crude form of karate. At first the new art was translated to mean T'ang hand, or China hand, to indicate its Chinese origin. It was not until the 20th century, when Gichin Funakoshi, an Okinawan karate instructor-introduced Okinawa-te to Japan, that it acquired the name karate. Yasutsune Itosu of Okinawa, an exponent of shuri-te (shoral-rtfu), is generally acknowledged as the first to teach karate as a sport. Itosu made this innovation in 1905 for middle-school students when occupying Japanese authorized karate for inclusion in the physical education curriculum. But it is the Japanese who are cited as the pioneers in the use of karate-do as an amateur sport, and the Americans to use of karate as a professional form of competition.

In the years following Funakoshi's arrival in Japan, other styles of karate-do were developed. Many Okinawan masters brought their styles to Japan, among them Kenwa Mabun, who introduced Shorin-ryu in 1930, and Chohan Mqagl, who combined hard Okinawan karate with soft Chinese forms and called it gop-ryu (hard-soft way). Other styles arising in Japan include wado-ryu, shukukal, and kyokushinkal. Rivalry among these groups was so intense that each style practiced its art in secret.

Following World War II, owing to the presence of many western servicemen in Japan and Okinawa, karate gradually acquired devotees in America and Europe. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, karate was well established, and by the 1970s, the art was practiced extensively throughout the world.

