

History Of Karate

Karate (空手?) is a martial art developed in the Ryukyu Islands in what is now Okinawa, Japan. It was developed partially from the indigenous martial arts of Ryukyu Islands called **Te** (手?, literally "hand"; *Tii* in Okinawan) and from Chinese kenpo. Karate is a striking art using punching, kicking, knee strikes, elbow strikes and open hand techniques such as knife-hands, spear-hands, and palm-heel strikes. In some styles, grappling, throws, joint locks, restraints, and vital point strikes are also taught.^[3] A karate practitioner is called a **karateka** (空手家?).

Karate was developed in the Ryukyu Kingdom and was systematically taught in Japan after the Taisho era.^[4] It was brought to the Japanese mainland in the early 20th century during a time of cultural exchanges between the Japanese and the Ryukyuan. In 1922 the Japanese Ministry of Education invited Gichin Funakoshi to Tokyo to give a karate demonstration. In 1924 Keio University established the first university karate club in Japan and by 1932, major Japanese universities had karate clubs.^[5] In this era of escalating Japanese militarism,^[6] the name was changed from 唐手 ("Chinese hand" or "Tang hand" verbatim, as the name of the Tang dynasty was a synonym to China in Okinawa) to 空手 ("empty hand") – both of which are pronounced *karate* – to indicate that the Japanese wished to develop the combat form in Japanese style.^[7] After the Second World War, Okinawa became an important United States military site and karate became popular among servicemen stationed there.

The martial arts movies of the 1960s and 1970s served to greatly increase the popularity of martial arts around the world, and in English the word *karate* began to be used in a generic way to refer to all striking-based Oriental martial arts. Karate schools began appearing across the world, catering to those with casual interest as well as those seeking a deeper study of the art.

Shigeru Egami, Chief Instructor of Shotokan Dojo, opined "that the majority of followers of karate in overseas countries pursue karate only for its fighting techniques ... Movies and television ... depict karate as a mysterious way of fighting capable of causing death or injury with a single blow ... the mass media present a pseudo art far from the real thing." Shoshin Nagamine said "Karate may be considered as the conflict within oneself or as a life-long marathon which can be won only through self-discipline, hard training and one's own creative efforts."

For many practitioners, karate is a deeply philosophical practice. Karate-do teaches ethical principles and can have spiritual significance to its adherents. Gichin Funakoshi ("Father of Modern Karate") titled his autobiography *Karate-Do: My Way of Life* in recognition of the transforming nature of karate study. Today karate is practiced for self-perfection, for cultural reasons, for self-defense and as a sport.

In 2009, in the 121th IOC (International Olympic Committee) voting, karate did not receive the necessary two-thirds majority vote to become an Olympic sport. Web Japan (sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs) claims there are 50 million karate practitioners worldwide while the WKF claims there are 100 million practitioners around the world.

Okinawa

Karate began as a common fighting system known as *te* (Okinawan: ti) among the Pechin class of the Ryukyuan. After trade relationships were established with the Ming dynasty of China by King Satto of Chūzan in 1372, some forms of Chinese martial arts were introduced to the Ryukyu Islands by the visitors from China, particularly Fujian Province. A large group of Chinese families moved to Okinawa around 1392 for the purpose of cultural exchange, where they established the community of Kumemura and shared their knowledge of a wide variety of Chinese arts and sciences, including the Chinese martial arts. The political centralization of Okinawa by King Shō Hashi in 1429 and the policy of banning weapons, enforced in Okinawa after the invasion of the Shimazu clan in 1609, are also factors that furthered the development of unarmed combat techniques in Okinawa.

There were few formal styles of *te*, but rather many practitioners with their own methods. One surviving example is the Motobu-ryū school passed down from the Motobu family by Seikichi Uehara.^[15] Early styles of karate are often generalized as Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te, named after the three cities from which they emerged. Each area and its teachers had particular kata, techniques, and principles that distinguished their local version of *te* from the others.

Members of the Okinawan upper classes were sent to China regularly to study various political and practical disciplines. The incorporation of empty-handed Chinese Kung Fu into Okinawan martial arts occurred partly because of these exchanges and partly because of growing legal restrictions on the use of weaponry. Traditional karate *kata* bear a strong resemblance to the forms found in Fujian martial arts such as Fujian White Crane, Five Ancestors, and Gangrou-quan (Hard Soft Fist; pronounced "Gōjūken" in Japanese). Many Okinawan weapons such as the sai, tonfa, and nunchaku may have originated in and around Southeast Asia.

Sakukawa Kanga (1782–1838) had studied pugilism and staff (*bo*) fighting in China (according to one legend, under the guidance of Kosokun, originator of *kusanku kata*). In 1806 he started teaching a fighting art in the city of Shuri that he called "Tudi Sakukawa," which meant "Sakukawa of China Hand." This was the first known recorded reference to the art of "Tudi," written as 唐手. Around the 1820s Sakukawa's most significant student Matsumura Sōkon (1809–1899) taught a synthesis of *te* (Shuri-te and Tomari-te) and Shaolin (Chinese 少林) styles. Matsumura's style would later become the Shōrin-ryū style.



Ankō Itosu
Grandfather of Modern Karate

Matsumura taught his art to Itosu Ankō (1831–1915) among others. Itosu adapted two forms he had learned from Matsumara. These are *kusanku* and *chiang nan*. He created the *ping'an* forms ("*heian*" or "*pinan*" in Japanese) which are simplified kata for beginning students. In 1901 Itosu helped to get karate introduced into Okinawa's public schools. These forms were taught to children at the elementary school level. Itosu's influence in karate is broad. The forms he created are common across nearly all styles of karate. His students became some of the most well known karate masters, including Gichin Funakoshi, Kenwa Mabuni, and Motobu Chōki. Itosu is sometimes referred to as "the Grandfather of Modern Karate."

In 1881 Higaonna Kanryō returned from China after years of instruction with Ryu Ryu Ko and founded what would become Naha-te. One of his students was the founder of Gojū-ryū, Chōjun Miyagi. Chōjun Miyagi taught such well-known karateka as Seko Higa (who also trained with Higaonna), Meitoku Yagi, Miyazato Ei'ichi, and Seikichi Toguchi, and for a very brief time near the end of his life, An'ichi Miyagi (a teacher claimed by Morio Higaonna).

In addition to the three early *te* styles of karate a fourth Okinawan influence is that of Kanbun Uechi (1877–1948). At the age of 20 he went to Fuzhou in Fujian Province, China, to escape Japanese military conscription. While there he studied under Shushiwa. He was a leading figure of

Chinese Nanpa Shorin-ken style at that time. He later developed his own style of Uechi-ryū karate based on the Sanchin, Seisan, and Sanseiryu kata that he had studied in China.

Japan

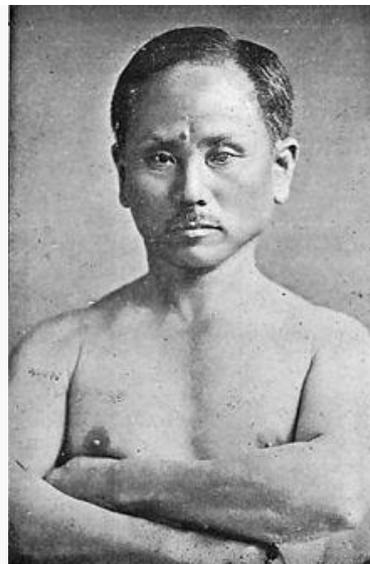


Masters of karate in Tokyo (c. 1930s)

Kanken Toyama, Hironori Otsuka, Takeshi Shimoda, Gichin Funakoshi, Motobu Chōki, Kenwa Mabuni, Genwa Nakasone, and Shinken Taira (from left to right)

Gichin Funakoshi, founder of Shotokan karate, is generally credited with having introduced and popularised karate on the main islands of Japan. In addition many Okinawans were actively teaching, and are thus also responsible for the development of karate on the main islands. Funakoshi was a student of both Asato Ankō and Itosu Ankō (who had worked to introduce karate to the Okinawa Prefectural School System in 1902). During this time period, prominent teachers who also influenced the spread of karate in Japan included Kenwa Mabuni, Chōjun Miyagi, Motobu Chōki, Kanken Tōyama, and Kanbun Uechi. This was a turbulent period in the history of the region. It includes Japan's annexation of the Okinawan island group in 1872, the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), the annexation of Korea, and the rise of Japanese militarism (1905–1945).

Japan was invading China at the time, and Funakoshi knew that the art of Tang/China hand would not be accepted; thus the change of the art's name to "way of the empty hand." The *dō* suffix implies that *karatedō* is a path to self-knowledge, not just a study of the technical aspects of fighting. Like most martial arts practiced in Japan, karate made its transition from *-jutsu* to *-dō* around the beginning of the 20th century. The "*dō*" in "karate-*dō*" sets it apart from karate-*jutsu*, as aikido is distinguished from aikijutsu, judo from jujutsu, kendo from kenjutsu and iaido from iaijutsu.



Gichin Funakoshi
Founder of Shotokan Karate

Funakoshi changed the names of many kata and the name of the art itself (at least on mainland Japan), doing so to get karate accepted by the Japanese budōorganization Dai Nippon Butoku Kai. Funakoshi also gave Japanese names to many of the kata. The five *pinan* forms became known as *heian*, the three *naihanchi* forms became known as *tekki*, *seisan* as *hangetsu*, *Chintō* as *gankaku*, *wanshu* as *empi*, and so on. These were mostly political changes, rather than changes to the content of the forms, although Funakoshi did introduce some such changes. Funakoshi had trained in two of the popular branches of Okinawan karate of the time, *Shorin-ryū* and *Shōrei-ryū*. In Japan he was influenced by *kendo*, incorporating some ideas about distancing and timing into his style. He always referred to what he taught as simply karate, but in 1936 he built a dojo in Tokyo and the style he left behind is usually called Shotokan after this dojo.

The modernization and systemization of karate in Japan also included the adoption of the white uniform that consisted of the kimono and the *dogi* or *keikogi*—mostly called just karategi—and colored belt ranks. Both of these innovations were originated and popularized by Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo and one of the men Funakoshi consulted in his efforts to modernize karate.

A new form of karate called Kyokushin was formally founded in 1957 by Masutatsu Oyama (who was born a Korean, Choi Yeong-Eui (최영의)). Kyokushin is largely a synthesis of Shotokan and Gōjū-ryū. It teaches a curriculum that emphasizes aliveness, physical toughness, and full contact sparring. Because of its emphasis on physical, full-force sparring, Kyokushin is now often called "Knockdown karate" (after the name for its competition rules). Many other karate organizations and styles are descended from the Kyokushin curriculum, among these is **Shinkukai Karate**.



Founder of Kyokushinkai
Masutatsu Oyama

Shinkukai, England

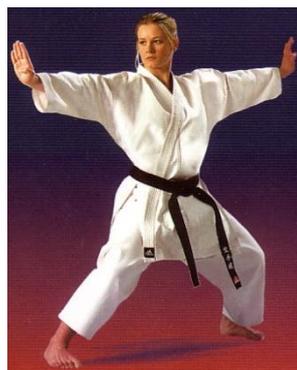
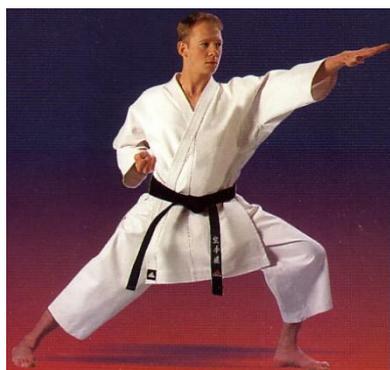
Shinkukai is a breakaway style from the great Kyokushin schools founded and developed in Japan by Kancho Masutatsu Oyama (10th Dan) and introduced to the UK by Bobby Bolton and Steve Arneil in the mid 1960's.

Former Kyokushinkai exponents Shihan Garry Pickford and Shihan Neil Harrison co-founded Shinkukai Karate in February 1981.

The word "Shinkukai" simply means truth (shinku) and togetherness/school (kai), shinku-kai.



Co-Founders of Shinkukai
Garry Pickford, Neil Harrison (centre)



真空会空手道

Calligraphy
Shinkukai Karate-do