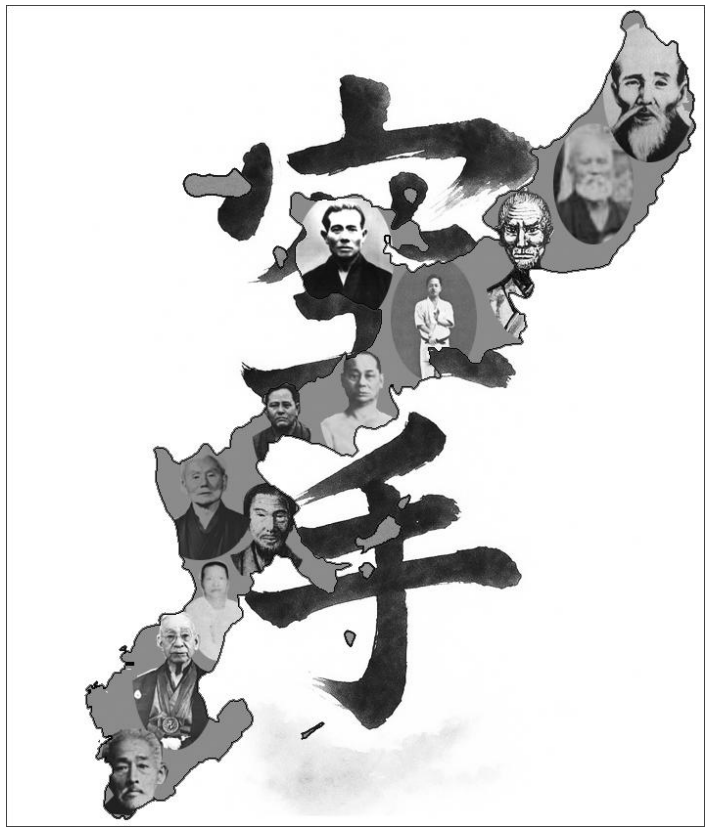


A Compiled History of Karate, Its Masters, and Styles

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Foreword

The intention is to provide information to karate students who wish to know more about the history of karate, its masters, and its various styles. This book is a compilation of information taken from many different sources.

This book is not intended to be a definitive reference guide but the details in the book have been checked against the sources listed later on in the book. In some cases, information was taken from credible online sites such as Wikipedia.

When it is stated that this book is 'compiled' rather than written, this is to acknowledge the following: the author (or rather the person who has compiled this book) has heavily relied on other works rather than primary research.

The author does not wish to take personal credit for the content beyond the time it took to compile, check, structure, and present the book (though this was not a simple task).

The author urges readers who are interested in karate history to refer to the sources and purchase one of the many excellent books listed.

This book is not written for profit or personal gain but an attempt by the author to help other karate students on their journey. No monetary gain will be made from the publication of this book.

It is likely that this book contains errors or contradicts the views of many readers. Verified corrections will be made when presented to the author with reliable sources. However, no attempt to disparage, offend, or contradict other karate historians is intended.

The author hopes this book is of use to some karate students and helps them on their journey.

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Mark Loftus,
Glasgow,
November 2026.

Section 1: Karate History

The history of karate and the local Okinawan martial art known as '*tode'* traces back to ancient indigenous practices on Okinawa Island, which were significantly shaped by centuries of cultural and political interactions, particularly with China. This formative period, extending from early roots up to the 1700s, saw the emergence of unarmed combat techniques, driven by both self-protection and external influences.

Ancient Origins of Okinawan 'Te'

The island of Okinawa, situated between mainland Japan and Taiwan, has a long history of human habitation, with archaeological evidence suggesting settlement as far back as thirty thousand years ago. The Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa, engaged in extensive trade with Southeast Asia even before 1000 AD. Early historical records about Okinawa's fighting methods are scarce due to centuries of secrecy, a lack of written documentation, and the destruction caused by events like the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, meaning much of what is known relies on secondary sources and oral history.

Nevertheless, many martial arts historians agree that karate is an indigenous Okinawan martial art form. The earliest known records referencing an indigenous fighting method in Okinawa, called Ti (or Te), date back to the 18th century, though these are often vague. Some sources suggest Te developed over five hundred years ago, while others claim more than one thousand years. This native Okinawan martial art, meaning "hand" or "technique," was reportedly initially cultivated, practiced, and promoted by the islands' royal government organisation ('*hiki'*) under King Sho Shin (reigned 1477–1526).

Early Chinese Influences (14th – 16th Century)

During the 14th century, Okinawa was divided into three kingdoms (Hokuzan, Chūzan, and Nanzan), which were unified into the Kingdom of Ryukyu in 1429 by King Sho Hashi. Formal diplomatic relations between China and the Ryukyu kingdoms began in 1373, with Chinese emissaries taking permanent residence.

A significant event in the early development of Okinawan martial arts was the arrival of the renowned "thirty-six Chinese families" from Fujian province in 1392 or 1393. These families settled in Kume village near Naha and were responsible for trade and communication between China and Okinawa. They brought with them knowledge of Chinese kempō (拳法, "fist method" or "Chinese boxing"), which they passed on to the local nobility. Okinawan nobility and martial arts experts also travelled to China to study kempō at its source, often staying at the Ryukyu establishment in Fujian province. This influx of Chinese knowledge, alongside indigenous Te, led to the art being called "tode" or "karate" (唐手), meaning "T'ang hand" or "Chinese hand". While some Western scholars suggest karate was initially developed out of Chinese ch'üan fa it is also believed that existing Okinawan martial art experts integrated foreign knowledge and skills as improvements into their system.[1]

Political developments played a crucial role in shaping Okinawan martial arts. Around 1470, after a period of political unrest, King Sho Shin (reigned 1477–1526) enforced a ban on carrying swords and ordered the confiscation of all weapons, storing them in Shuri Castle. He also required all unarmed members of the nobility and their families to live in

[1] The words kempo, kuntao, quanfa, and ch'uan fa are different readings of the same Chinese characters. The common term 'kung fu' is often used interchangeable for these.

the royal capital to keep a watchful eye on potential rebellious warlords.

In 1609, the Satsuma clan from Kyushu, Japan, invaded and conquered Okinawa, making it a Japanese vassal state. The Japanese occupation continued the weapon prohibition, further contributing to the secret development of unarmed combat and kobudo (martial arts using weapons). During this time, martial arts training had to be conducted in utmost secrecy, often at night in secluded places or windowless rooms, primarily by the aristocracy and gentry, for self-defence and personal development, not by peasants to overthrow their overlords. This secrecy (or at least discretion) meant that few written records were kept, contributing to the reliance on oral traditions and legends for much of karate's early history.

This need for decrecy is considered a foundational step for the development of kata, as training in pairs became restricted for common people, leading masters to create solo forms.

Several key figures in the 18th century exemplify this cross-cultural exchange, including Chatan Yara (1668–1756), Pechin Takahara (1683–1760), Kūsankū (Gong Xiangjun, c. 1730-1800), and Kanga Sakugawa(1733–1815). These masters built up reputations for their knowledge of te and over time, they and their students formed the origins of many of the later 'styles' or schools of karate (see later chapters on karate masters).

The 19th century continued under the shadow of the 1609 Satsuma invasion and the subsequent weapon prohibition. During this period, Okinawan tode became more formalised in different localities, leading to distinctions such as Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te. While these were not formalised "styles" until the early 20th century, they represented different regional emphases. Shuri-te was considered the most indigenous, with less Chinese influence, while Naha-te

preserved Chinese kempō most obviously. Tomari-te was geographically and technically positioned between the two. The constant interaction meant that distinctions between Shuri-te and Tomari-te were often tenuous.

More masters emerged, building upon the foundations laid in the previous century and further integrating Chinese and local practices. This include Ankō Itosu (1831–1915), Sōkon "Bushi" Matsumura (1803–1899), Kōsaku Matsumora (1829–1898), Kōkan Oyadomari (1827–1905), Norisato Nakaima (mid-19th century), and Higaonna Kanryō (1853–1915).

The period from 1900 to the end of the 1950s was a transformative era for karate, marking its transition from a secretive Okinawan fighting art to a publicly taught discipline and a global phenomenon. During this time, karate underwent significant changes in its philosophy, practice, and terminology, influenced heavily by educational reforms, Japanese nationalism, and post-World War II internationalisation.

The early 1900s saw the first steps in bringing karate out of secrecy and into public view, largely due to the efforts of Itosu Ankō (1831–1915).. Around 1902, he began teaching karate at Shuri Jinjo Shōgakkō (Shuri Public Elementary School). This marked a significant shift from the previous secretive and selective instruction to a more open, class-based approach.

To facilitate instruction to large groups of schoolchildren, Itosu created five simplified kata, known as Pinan (Heian), by extracting techniques from longer kata like Kūsankū and Chang Nian/Channan. Although, according to Motobu Chōki, the Pinan kata were originally called Channan which possessed slightly different movements. He also reportedly simplified Matsumura's Naihanchi kata and expanded on existing Naihanchi forms to create Naihanchi Sandan.

Training during this period began to emphasise general physical, mental, and spiritual fitness, safety, and philosophical aspects over its purely combative uses. Itosu explicitly stated in his "Ten Articles" on karate training that "karate did not descend from Buddhism or Confucianism," but he still considered karate training for developing general health and fitness as much as for combat.

In October 1908, Itosu wrote a letter to the Japanese Ministry of Education, urging the adoption of karate in Japanese schools. His comment in this letter, noting "too many changes" were already occurring, reveals the evolving nature of karate instruction by this time.

In 1905, an Okinawan karate master named Chomo Hanashiro used the "kara" (空) ideograph (meaning "empty") for his book Karate Soshu Hen, breaking from the traditional writing of "kara" (唐), which meant "Tang" or "Chinese". This was an early precedent to a significant later change in the art's name.

During the 19th century and early 20th century, Okinawan tode (karate) was generally referred to by three methods or schools, named after the places they were associated with: Shuri-te, Naha te, and Tomari-te. These were originally separate towns, now part of the same conurbation on Okinawa Island. Many karate masters of the time studied with teachers from all three cities, indicating much interchange rather than strict separation of styles.

Karate's introduction to mainland Japan was a crucial step in its global spread and further transformation.

Gichin Funakoshi (1868–1957), often called the "father of modern karate," brought Okinawan karate to Japan. He demonstrated the art before large gatherings, notably at the

Butokuden in Kyoto in 1915 and 1922. Initially, he introduced it as Ryukyu Kempo To-te Jutsu.

Other Okinawan karate instructors, such as Chōjun Miyagi (1888–1953), Motobu Chōki (1870–1944), Kanken Tōyama, and Kenwa Mabuni (1889–1952), also journeyed to mainland Japan to teach and promote their art. Miyagi visited mainland Japan several times between 1928 and 1931 to promote his style, Gōjū-ryū, especially in universities.

Initially, Okinawan karate was viewed by Japanese people as primitive and barbarian compared to traditional Japanese martial arts like Kendo and Judo. To gain acceptance and respectability, karate teachers adopted Jigoro Kano's belt system (kyu/dan grades) and judo's training uniform (gi) in the 1920s.

This period saw the formal naming and registration of distinct karate styles. These included Gōjū-ryū, Shitō-ryū, Shotokan, and Wadō-ryū.

The "Japanisation" of Okinawan karate was deeply tied to Japan's nationalistic program, kokutai ("national essence"), from the Meiji Restoration (1867 to 1945). This program promoted cultural uniformity and aimed to instil ideals of the old samurai class into all social classes.

A critical change occurred in the 1930s when the kanji for karate were officially changed from 唐手 (tōde, "T'ang [Chinese] hand"), where the character 唐 could tō or kara, was changed to 空手 (karate, "empty hand"). This was done to avoid any reference to China, with whom Japan was at war, and to imply a lofty philosophical goal of self-perfection. This revisionism also sought to portray Okinawan arts as "pure Japanese culture".

The Dai Nippon Butoku Kai insisted on formalised and systematised curricula, including the award of ranking and titles similar to other classical Japanese budō forms.

In Okinawa, the Okinawa Karate-jutsu Kenkyu Kai (Okinawa Karate Research Club) was established by Miyagi in 1926 to improve and unify karate. Its members, including Miyagi, Funakoshi, Mabuni, and others, regularly met and openly shared their knowledge, suggesting that the concept of strictly separate styles was not rigidly adhered to among these masters.

World War II profoundly impacted karate, leading to a new direction for the art. Several legendary masters died during the war years, and the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai was permanently closed. Formal budō organisations were dissolved and karate was heavily restricted in schools and public institutions immediately after 1945. Civilian training resumed gradually from the late 1940s. By the early 1950s, karate was again being practised openly in Japan and Okinawa, though under new, less militaristic frameworks.

American servicemen stationed in Okinawa and Japan after the war learned karate and brought it back to their home countries, significantly contributing to its worldwide proliferation by the 1960s. This led to the establishment of the first documented commercial karate school in the United States by Robert Trias in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1946, who had studied with Motobu Chōki (although this claim is contested).

In Japan, the post-war era saw karate adopt a more Western sporting attitude, discarding some older martial arts principles. The first rules of sport karate competition were developed in the early 1950s, culminating in the first All Japan Karate-dō Championships in Tokyo in 1957.

For safety in competition, many dangerous techniques like eye gouges, joint dislocations, neck-breaking, and strikes to vital targets (groin, throat, spine) were banned. Acceptable scoring techniques were limited to punches to the front/sides of the body and head, and kicks to the body and head.

Gogen Yamaguchi (1909-1989), appointed by Chōjun Miyagi to promote Gōjū-ryū in Japan, was instrumental in developing and introducing jiyu-kumite (free sparring) into the karate curriculum, making it comparable to judo and kendo. His organisation, Gōjū-Kai, explicitly encouraged competitive sparring, often performing kata slightly differently from traditional Gōjū-ryū.

Many older Okinawan karate masters viewed the Japanese emphasis on sport karate as a mistake, believing it sacrificed the art's deep content and effectiveness for popularity. They believed karate could remain popular without forsaking its traditional, essential past.

After Chōjun Miyagi's death in 1953, Eiichi Miyazato (1922–1999) was accepted by many, including Miyagi's family, as his successor, opening his own dojo, the Jundokan, in Naha City in 1957. Following Kenwa Mabuni's death in 1952, his elder son Mabuni Kenei (1918–2015) claimed succession to Shitō-ryū.

Throughout these transformations, the concept of karate-dō ("the way of empty hand") became central, emphasizing the art as a holistic lifestyle for cultivating personal discipline, respect, and character strength, rather than merely a combat system.

By the end of the 1950s, karate had moved from the shadows of Okinawan secrecy into the international spotlight, codified into various styles and increasingly influenced by the

demands of sport, while grappling with its diverse historical roots and the philosophical underpinnings of its practice.

The unprecedented proliferation in the 1950s led to the worldwide development of karate tournaments.

The International Olympic Committee recognised karate as a sports discipline for the 2020 Olympic Games, marking a culmination of its evolution from a martial art of self-defence to a sporting game over about 100 years.

However, Okinawan karate masters like Nagamine Shoshin expressed concern over Japan's arbitrary standardisation and alteration of Okinawan kata, arguing that Okinawa, as the birthplace of karate, had the responsibility to maintain pure traditional kata.

Many teachers today are described as capable of little more than mimicking and handing on what they were taught, rationalising this lack of creativity with the doctrine that nothing must change, turning "traditional" karate into a rigid practice. The development of karate from the mid-twentieth century onwards has involved the loss of much that is valuable and the introduction of much that is not.

Despite the global spread and changes, some figures like Shoshin Nagamine emphasised the need to preserve kata. He articulated concerns about the "miserable condition" of shitei kata designated by the Japan Karate Federation (JKF), arguing that Okinawa must maintain its pure traditional kata and pass them down to posterity. Efforts by researchers aim to understand the original and pragmatic approach to karate, arguing that changes made after its arrival on mainland Japan in the 1920s transformed it to the point where it no longer reflected its original functionality. The "Never Changing Kata

Principle" is critical to the effectiveness of genuine Okinawan karate.

There are still many ongoing debates regarding karate and the various ways it is taught and practiced. The contemporary culture of karate is seen by some as having deteriorated, losing valuable aspects and adopting superficial ones.

There's a constant political squabbling that "infects the culture of modern karate," making it difficult to discern truth, for example, regarding Chōjun Miyagi's true inheritor.

The history of karate as a whole is described as "more than ordinarily difficult" due to complex origins and historiography. The core argument is that Okinawan karate, with its clear intention of self-protection, integrated foreign knowledge as an improvement, without sacrificing its essence. However, modern sports karate derivations are sometimes seen as not qualifying as a martial art due to their changed purpose and form.

Some believe that the true spirit of karate, if it is to be kept alive, is believed to reside in humility and obscurity, practised by anonymous minorities and individuals with imagination, creativity, and commitment, away from commercial temptations.

For others, they accept that karate brings purpose, focus, meaning, and joy to many people, however they practice it. To them, everyone has their own path ('do') and imposing a purist version of karate breaks from the true original intent of many old masters – that karate is a journey for self-improvement.

Section 2: Overview of Karate Masters

The history of modern karate, particularly in its formative stages, is largely built upon the biographies of its prominent teachers. The figures examined in the following sections represent the influential Okinawan pioneers who transitioned this secretive tradition (tode or ti) into the foundational art known globally today. From about 1750 onwards, there is substantial information regarding these prominent teachers. These masters were frequently members of the Okinawan nobility (shizoku) or government officials who held positions of significance, and they often required prospective students to be of good moral character, sometimes requiring a guarantor, as art was considered potentially lethal and intended for self-defence or protecting one's master, not for misuse. Their teaching and research paved the way for the major styles of the modern era.

Lineage Trees:

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Fang Zhonggong (Fang Shiyu)
└─ Fang Qīniáng (mid-1600s) [Fujian White Crane]
   └─ Ryū Ryū Ko (Xie Zhongxiang) [Ch'uan Fa / Fujian White Crane]
      └─ Higaonna Kanryō (1853–1915) [Naha-te / Fujian White Crane]
         ├─ Kyoda Juhatsu (1887–1968) [Tō'on Ryū / Naha-te]
         │  └─ [influence continues in Okinawa schools]
         ├─ Chōjun Miyagi (1888–1953) [Gōjū-ryū / Naha-te]
         │  ├─ Tatsuo Shimabuku (1908–1975) [Isshin-ryū]
         │  ├─ Gōgen Yamaguchi (1909–1989) [Gōjū-ryū / Japanese Gōjū]
         │  │  └─ Masutatsu Ōyama (1923–1994) [Kyokushin-kai]
         │  └─ Masutatsu Ōyama (1923–1994) [Kyokushin-kai]
         ├─ Kenwa Mabuni (1889–1952) [Shitō-ryū]
         │  ├─ Hironori Ōtsuka (1892–1982) [Wadō-ryū / Shindō Yōshin-ryū]
         │  └─ Yasuhiro Konishi (1893–1983) [Shindō Jinen Ryū]
         └─ Tsuyoshi Chitose (1898–1984) [Chitō-ryū]
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Wang Ji (1621–1689) [Ch'uan Fa]
 └ Kūsankū (mid-18th century) [Chinese Martial Arts / Kumiai-jutsu]
     ├ Chatan Yara (1668–1756) [Kumiai-jutsu / Kobudō]
         └ Peichin Takahara (1683–1760) [Tōde / Ch'uan Fa]
             └ Kanga Sakugawa (1786–1867) [Tōde / Shuri-te]
                 └ Sōkon Matsumura (1809–1899) [Shuri-te / Shōrin-ryū]
                     ├ Ankō Azato (1827–1906) [Shuri-te]
                     |   └ Gichin Funakoshi (1868–1957) [Shotokan / Shōrei-ryū / Shōrin-ryū]
                     |       └ Funakoshi (Gigō) Yoshitaka (1906–1945) [Shotokan]
                     |           └ Masutatsu Ōyama (1923–1994) [Kyokushin-kai]
                     ├ Itosu Ankō (1831–1915) [Shuri-te / Shōrin-ryū lineage]
                     |   ├ Gichin Funakoshi (1868–1957) [Shotokan]
                     |   ├ Motobu Chōki (1870–1944) [Motobu-ryū / Shuri-te / Tomari-te]
                     |   ├ Chōtoku Kyan (1870–1945) [Shōrin-ryū / Tomari-te]
                     |   ├ Chōshin Chibana (1885–1969) [Shōrin-ryū (Kobayashi-ryū)]
                     |   └ Kenwa Mabuni (1889–1952) [Shitō-ryū]
                     ├ Motobu Chōki (1870–1944) [Motobu-ryū / Shuri-te / Tomari-te]
                     |   ├ Hironori Ōtsuka (1892–1982) [Wadō-ryū / Shindō Yōshin-ryū]
                     |   ├ Yasuhiro Konishi (1893–1983) [Shindō Jinen Ryū]
                     |   └ Tatsuo Shimabuku (1908–1975) [Isshin-ryū]
                     ├ Chōtoku Kyan (1870–1945) [Shōrin-ryū / Tomari-te]
                     |   ├ Tatsuo Shimabuku (1908–1975) [Isshin-ryū]
                     |   └ Tsuyoshi Chitose (1898–1984) [Chitō-ryū]
                     └ Aragaki Seishō (1840–1918) [Tōde]
                         ├ Higaonna Kanryō (1853–1915) [Naha-te]
                         ├ Gichin Funakoshi (1868–1957) [Shotokan]
                         ├ Kenwa Mabuni (1889–1952) [Shitō-ryū]
                         ├ Kanbun Uechi (1877–1948) [Uechi-ryū / Pangainoon]
                         └ Tsuyoshi Chitose (1898–1984) [Chitō-ryū]

Annan (mid-1800s) [Chinese Boxing / Tomari-te influence]
 ├ Kokan Oyadomari (1827–1905) [Tomari-te]
 |   └ Chōtoku Kyan (1870–1945) [Shōrin-ryū / Tomari-te]
 |       ├ Tatsuo Shimabuku (1908–1975) [Isshin-ryū]
 |       └ Tsuyoshi Chitose (1898–1984) [Chitō-ryū]
 └ Kōsaku Matsumora (1829–1898) [Matsumora-type Tomari-te]
     ├ Motobu Chōki (1870–1944) [Motobu-ryū / Shuri-te / Tomari-te]
     └ Chōtoku Kyan (1870–1945) [Shōrin-ryū / Tomari-te]

Kishin Teruya (1804–1864) [Tomari-te]
 ├ Kokan Oyadomari (1827–1905) [Tomari-te]
 └ Kōsaku Matsumora (1829–1898) [Matsumora-type Tomari-te]

Go Kenki (1886–1940) [Chinese White Crane Boxing]
 ├ Kyoda Juhatsu (1887–1968) [Tō'on Ryū / Naha-te]
 ├ Chōjun Miyagi (1888–1953) [Gōjū-ryū]
 └ Kenwa Mabuni (1889–1952) [Shitō-ryū]
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Fang Qīniáng



Fang Qīniáng (方七娘), also known as Fang Jiniang or Fang Quiniang, was a pivotal figure in the history of Chinese martial arts, specifically credited as the creator of the Fujian White Crane Gonfu (kung fu) style. Her innovations and philosophical insights profoundly influenced the development of various martial arts, including what would later become Okinawan karate.

Fang Qīniáng lived in the prefecture of Quanzhou in the Fujian province of China during the reign of the Jiajing Emperor (1521–1566) of the Ming Dynasty. This places her in the 16th century.

Her path into martial arts was spurred by a deeply personal tragedy. Her father, Fang Zhonggong (also known as Fang Shiyu), was murdered by a gang. In response to this profound loss, Fang Qīniáng created the Fujian White Crane system, including the Hakutsuru (White Crane) kata, with the explicit goal of avenging her father's death by destroying the responsible gang.

She learned her initial martial system from her father, and after his murder, she was further trained by Lin Shixian, a Master of Black Crane and Eighteen Fist Monk Boxing, who assisted her in her quest for revenge.

Her unique style was significantly inspired by her observation of nature. It is said that she watched a crane fighting and subsequently incorporated these principles into the martial system she developed. This anecdote highlights the fluid and powerful, yet often deceptively soft, movements characteristic of White Crane.

Beyond its technical aspects, Fang Qīniáng's style was imbued with profound philosophical dimensions. She articulated that "True power and wisdom come from within and are reflected without". This core belief underpinned her teachings, emphasizing the internal development of the practitioner. She further stated that "This is the way to transcend ego-related distractions" and that "People who truly understand the fighting traditions are never arrogant or unscrupulous, and never use their skill unjustly". These words, as quoted in the Bubishi, underscore a strong ethical foundation for her martial art, advocating humility and righteous application of skill.

Fang Qīniáng's creation of the White Crane style had a significant impact on kata development, influencing many forms that became central to Okinawan karate:

It is considered not unlikely that she created or influenced the Niipaipo kata (also known as Nepai, or 28 beats), which is part of the southern Chinese White Crane style. However, is generally thought to be an Arhat Fist form and some sources state that this was likely transmitted or popularised by Lín Dáchóng.

The Hakutsuru kata, which contains elements of the Fujian White Crane system, was created by her. The sources indicate that many kata forms known today did not exist before her time. Some researchers see the types of techniques seen on kata such as Wanshū and Kūsankū as being consistent with

southern Chinese boxing, possibly including White Crane, but the exact technical links and lineages remain speculative.

Her position as the founder of the White Crane style is recognised in its genealogy, with her name engraved on the wall of a White Crane temple in Yong Chun, Fujian.

Her emphasis on internal power, ethical conduct, and the integration of natural observation into martial technique provided a rich theoretical and practical framework that resonated through subsequent generations of martial artists. The persistence of kata attributed to or influenced by her in modern karate styles, such as Niipaipo, serves as a testament to her enduring impact as a martial arts innovator.

Wang Ji

Wang Ji (汪楫) was a significant Chinese diplomat and martial artist from the 17th century, whose influence is deeply intertwined with the early development of karate, particularly through the creation of a foundational kata.

Born in 1621, Wang Ji's life spanned the period until 1689. He led a substantial ambassadorial mission from the Qing government. This mission arrived in the village of Tomari, Okinawa, in 1683. Beyond his diplomatic duties, Wang Ji was a multifaceted individual, recognised as a poet and a calligrapher, in addition to being a skilled martial artist. In modern Japanese, he is known as Ōshū (汪楫).

Wang Ji practised martial arts within the Shaolin tradition of Fujian White Crane. He is often credited with teaching quanfa to the gentry of Tomari during his time in Okinawa.

His most notable and lasting impact on karate is his credit as the creator of the Wanshū kata. The name "Wanshū" itself carries a dual meaning that links directly to him. One interpretation of the name, written as Wanshū (汪輯), means "Wang's Series (or Form)," directly referring to him. Another interpretation, using the characters Wanshū (腕 秀), translates to "Excellent Wrist" and highlights a characteristic technique of this form.

The Wanshū kata became a widely adopted form and is practised in numerous karate systems today. These include prominent styles such as Isshin-Ryū, Shotokan (where it is known as Empi), and Wadō-ryū. The kata's continued practice in diverse karate styles underscores his foundational contribution to martial arts history.

Chatan Yara

Chatan Yara (北谷 屋良) was born in 1668 and passed away in 1756. He held the position of a public official within the Ryūkyū Kingdom. His duties included being dispatched by the Sho administration to Nakagami-Yomitan to manage their private riding stables in Makihara. He was also known as the superintendent in charge of the King's riding stable in Makibaru.

While specific teachers for Chatan Yara are not explicitly named in the sources, he is recognised as a master of several combative traditions. His expertise included Jigen-ryū jojutsu, which he taught.

Chatan Yara was highly regarded and accounts describe his remarkable physical abilities, especially in his youth. Kyan Sensei, a later master, often spoke about Chatan Yara to his student Arakaki Ankichi. Arakaki Sensei recalled that Chan Mi-Gwa stated, "When Yara was young, he developed remarkable agility and had really powerful legs".

An anecdote highlights his youthful athleticism: "One story maintained that in his youth he once jumped off one end of the Hijabashi (Hija bridge) and then leaped back up the other side like a bird in flight". Despite his earlier prowess, by the time Kyan learned from him, Yara's strength had considerably declined, and he required a stick for walking.

Chatan Yara's influence on Okinawan karate is primarily seen through his students, who became significant figures themselves. He was the primary sensei of Pechin Takahara (1683–1760). Takahara himself went on to become the first teacher of Sakugawa Kanga, often called the "father of Okinawan karate". This connection places Chatan Yara as an early and foundational link in the lineage of Shuri-te and subsequent karate styles.

Chōtoku Kyan (1870–1945) is also listed as a student of Yomitan Yara, linking him to Chatan Yara.

While no specific kata are attributed to Chatan Yara as their creator, his role as a teacher of prominent martial artists means his techniques and principles likely contributed to the development and evolution of kata taught by his students, such as those passed down through Pechin Takahara and Kōsaku Matsumora. His instruction of Pechin Takahara also occurred during a period when bushidō was already well-established among the samurai of mainland Japan and the bushi (warrior class) and shizoku (upper class) of Okinawa.

Chatan Yara is remembered as one of the earliest known karateka and a pioneer whose unique contributions to kobudo have a lasting place in the tradition's history.

Peichin Takahara

Peichin Takahara (高原 親雲上) was born in Akata-Chō, Southern Shuri, Ryūkyū Kingdom, in 1683 and passed away in 1760[2].

Peichin Takahara belonged to the Peichin (親雲上) social class of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, which denotes a status similar to that of the samurai in Japan. Peichin Takahara received his martial arts training under Chatan Yara (北谷 屋良).

Peichin Takahara is most prominently known as the teacher of Kanga Sakugawa (佐久川 寛賀) (1733–1815), often referred to as the "father" of Okinawan karate.

However, there is some conflicting information regarding the exact teacher-student relationship:

While multiple sources directly state Peichin Takahara taught Kanga Sakugawa, another source indicates that Peichin Takahara was the first teacher of Kangi Sakugawa, who is identified as the father of Kanga Sakugawa. This account suggests that Kangi Sakugawa then trained under Kusanku and Kaizoku Ahman before teaching his son, Kanga Sakugawa.

While the sources do not credit Peichin Takahara with creating specific kata, his impact on karate lies significantly in his philosophical contributions and the ethical principles he instilled in his students. He emphasised fundamental tenets for the practice of dō ("way"):

- Ijō: This principle encompasses compassion, humility, and love.
- Katsu: This refers to the complete understanding of all techniques and forms of karate.

[2] There is a slight variation in some records which list his death year as 1755.

- Fo (Dedication): This highlights the seriousness of karate that must be understood not only in practice, but in actual combat.

The collective translation of these principles, as explained by Peichin Takahara, is: "*One's duty to himself and his fellow man".* This emphasis on character formation and moral virtue, alongside physical prowess, was a hallmark of early karate masters like Takahara and Sōkon Matsumura. It reflects the careful selection of students and the devotion to character development, which was as important as physical training.

Peichin Takahara's legacy is primarily that of a foundational teacher who transmitted important martial arts knowledge and, crucially, a strong ethical framework that influenced succeeding generations of Okinawan karate masters. His principles of ijō, katsu, and fo emphasise a holistic approach to martial arts, blending physical technique with moral responsibility and deep dedication.

Kūsankū

Kūsankū (クーサンクー), also known as Kōshōkun (公相君), Kanku or Kushanku, was a Chinese martial artist who is said to have visited Okinawa during the mid-18th century Ryukyu Kingdom.

Kūsankū was dispatched to Okinawa as a diplomat from Fujian province around 1750. He arrived in Okinawa around 1756 and is believed to have died around 1762.

It is said that Kūsankū studied quanfa with a monk of the southern Shaolin Temple in Fujian province, though this particular piece of folklore is considered to be of dubious validity.

Kūsankū's most significant impact on Okinawan martial arts is through the karate kata named after him, Kūsankū/kanku. While it is widely believed that he taught this kata, there are no primary historical documents to definitively prove this as the evidence relies solely on the kata's name and oral tradition.

During his time in Ryukyu, Kūsankū performed a martial art called kumiai-jutsu (組合術), which is believed to have contributed to the later development of karate.

The Kūsankū kata is considered a cornerstone of many karate styles. It is characterised by flowing techniques that resemble those found in White Crane Kung Fu as well as a wide variety of open-handed techniques.

The original Kūsankū kata practiced by many styles today was likely invented by Kanga Sakugawa, one of Kūsankū's notable students.Variations of the Kūsankū kata exist across different traditions:

- In Matsubayashi-ryū karate, the kata is known for its flying kick and a "cheating" stance called ura-gamae. This stance involves extending one leg along the ground and

squatting as low as possible on the other, allowing a practitioner to escape a bear hug from behind by twisting and dropping, while simultaneously blocking the head and striking the groin, knee, or foot. Due to its technical complexity, Kūsankū is the highest ranking and most complex kata in Matsubayashi-ryū, with mastery reportedly taking more than ten years.

- In Shotokan karate, the kata is known as Kankū-dai and consists of 65 movements. Its equivalent minor form is Kankū-shō. Kankū-dai was Gichin Funakoshi's favourite kata and is considered representative of the Shotokan system. Funakoshi performed Kankū-dai during his demonstration for Crowned Prince Hirohito in 1922.
- Kūsankū-dai is also a part of Shitō-ryū, with its founder, Kenwa Mabuni, having learned the kata from Itosu.
- Chōtoku Kyan's favourite kata included Kūsankū, which he modified to suit his smaller physical stature and evasive training methods, giving them a unique style. Chōtoku Kyan learned Kūsankū kata from Sōkon Matsumura's student.
- The "Tachimura no Kusanku" version, preserved in the Kishimoto Di tradition, was passed on by Bushi Tachimura, a student of Kanga Sakugawa, and remains unaltered by Ankō Itosu. This version contains many techniques not found in modern systems.

Kūsankū's notable students include Kanga Sakugawa and Chatan Yara. Kanga Sakugawa, a pivotal figure in Okinawan karate, studied with Kūsankū for about six years. Kūsankū's name is universally linked to Sakugawa's lineage.

Kūsankū's legacy is primarily sustained through the eponymous kata, and its derivatives (including the Heian/pinan kata), which continue to be a fundamental and are practiced in numerous karate styles worldwide.

Annan

Annan (安南), also known as Ahnan or Wang, was a Chinese sailor or possibly a pirate whose presence in Okinawa significantly influenced early martial arts development.

Annan was a castaway from a shipwreck along the coast of Okinawa Island. He took refuge in a cemetery in the mountains near Tomari. One source identifies him as a diplomat Wang but this is likely to be confusing Annan with Wang Ji, likely a different master. Another hypothesis suggests he was a man from Fukushu in China who taught Kempo after landing in Okinawa.

Annan is primarily known for the karate kata named after him, "Annan". The origin and creator of this kata are unknown, but its preservation and appearance in Okinawa are credited to Nakaima Norisato.

Legend also indicates that Annan was the master who taught the kata Chinto to Sōkon Matsumura.

Annan is credited with teaching chu'an fa to the gentry of Tomari. His disciples included:

- Kokan Oyadomari (1827–1905), a prominent Ryūkyūan karate master of the Tomari-te style.
- Kishin Teruya (1804–1864).
- Karyu Uku (also known as Giko Uku, 1800–1850). Both Teruya and Uku are said to have been students of Annan, and they in turn taught Kōsaku Matsumora.

While specific historical documents proving Annan's direct teaching are scarce, and much of the information about him is based on legend and oral tradition, his name is inextricably linked to the martial arts traditions of Okinawa, particularly through the kata that bear his name and the prominent figures who are believed to have descended from his lineage.

Kanga Sakugawa



Kanga Sakugawa (佐久川 寛賀), often referred to as the "father" of Okinawan karate, holds a paramount place in the annals of karate history as one of its earliest pioneers. He was born into the noble class of Okinawa, though his exact birth and death dates vary in historical accounts, frequently cited as 1733–1815, but also appearing as 1782–1862 or 1786–1867.

Similarly, his birthplace is recorded as the Yamakawa district of Shuri, Akata village in Shuri, or specifically between Torihori and Akata in Shuri. The challenge in pinpointing consistent facts about his early life is acknowledged by researchers, with Gichin Funakoshi likening the effort to "trying to catch hold of clouds".

Sakugawa's martial arts journey began around 1750, when he started training with Pechin Takahara. After approximately six years with Takahara, Sakugawa was advised to continue his studies at Kumemura with Kūsankū.

Sakugawa studied with Kūsankū for about six years. Some sources also indicate that Kūsankū introduced Sakugawa to Kaizoku Ahman (Annan), with whom Sakugawa trained for

ten years. Notably, some prominent figures like Gichin Funakoshi and Shoshin Nagamine, however, contend that Sakugawa's knowledge of Chinese martial arts came from his own travels and studies in China, rather than solely from Kūsankū in Okinawa. Some historians even suggest he may have died in Beijing while furthering his studies. Regardless of the exact pathway, it is universally agreed that his nickname "Tode" (唐手), meaning "Chinese hand," was well-deserved, reflecting his profound understanding of Chinese martial arts.

As a member of Okinawa's nobility, Sakugawa held the title of Pechin, and was later an official in Yaeyama by order of the Ryukyu Kingdom. He was also a scholar who diligently studied in China and was believed to be a teacher of kokugaku (ancient Japanese language, thought, and culture).

Sakugawa's influence on karate is extensive. He is credited with several fundamental innovations that shaped the art. He was the first person to name the Okinawan unarmed fighting system "karate". He is also recognised for establishing the dojo system of teaching and composing the first set of dojo kun (rules of behaviour). These rules, which are still recited today, emphasise that the principles of conduct and attitude cultivated in training should extend into everyday life.

In terms of kata development, Sakugawa composed the kata Kūsankū in honour of his teacher, a form predominantly practiced in the Shuri-te lineage. The bō kata, Sakugawa no kun, is also attributed to him.

One of Sakugawa Kanga's most distinguished students was Sōkon Matsumura. Despite Sakugawa's initial reluctance to take on another student in his late seventies, he accepted the young Matsumura, who sought to become the greatest fist fighter in Okinawa. Matsumura trained under Sakugawa for approximately four years. Sakugawa also taught his son,

Kangi Sakugawa, and possibly Bushi Tachimura, whose unique Shuri-te forms are still preserved today.

His enduring legacy lies in his pivotal role in proclaiming that the essence of bu (karate-dō) in Okinawa involved cultivating virtues, values, and principles, blending physical mastery with ethical conduct. His contributions continue to resonate throughout the history and practice of karate-dō.

Kishin Teruya

Kishin Teruya (照屋 規心) was born in 1804 and passed away in 1864. He was a central figure in the development of the Tomari-te style of karate.

While the sources do not specify Teruya's own teachers, he is consistently referred to as a master and educator. He held strong beliefs regarding the character of his students, adhering to an "unwritten law" that dictated karate should never be taught to individuals who were rude, arrogant, or disrespectful, a principle that even extended to members of the master's own family. This strong emphasis on morality and character (shingitai – spirit, technique, body) was fundamental to his approach to martial arts.

Teruya's teachings greatly influenced several key figures in Okinawan karate including, Kōsaku Matsumora, Kokan Oyadomari, and Kishin Teruya.

He taught Kokan Oyadomari the kata Passai, Rohai, and Wanshu. Through his influence on Kōsaku Matsumora, he indirectly contributed to the propagation of kata such as Naihanchi (which Matsumora learned from Uku Giko) and Chinto (which Matsumora taught to Chōtoku Kyan). His profound understanding of martial principles undoubtedly shaped the "Matsumora-type Tomari-te".

Kishin Teruya's legacy rests on his foundational role in the Tomari-te tradition and his unwavering commitment to the moral and ethical development of his students. His insistence on teaching only those with noble character ensured that the martial art was passed down with a strong ethical core.

Sokon Matsumura



In the grand tapestry of Okinawan martial arts, few figures stand as tall and influential as Sōkon Matsumura (松村宗棍), often revered as the "Miyamoto Musashi of Okinawa". He is a foundational pillar, deemed the central historical figure in the evolution of Shuri-style karate. While the precise dates of his life are subject to historical variations, with some sources citing 1809–1901 or 1798–1890, the family plaque at his tomb definitively records his birth in 1809 and his death in 1899, making him approximately 90 years old at his passing.

Matsumura's early life laid the groundwork for his extraordinary career. He was born into a well-known noble family (shizoku) in Yamakawa village, Shuri, Okinawa. Beyond his martial inclinations, he was a gifted scholar and a renowned calligrapher, having diligently studied and embraced Confucianism. From a young age, he immersed himself in the basics of te, demonstrating an early passion for martial arts.

His martial education was extensive and varied. Matsumura began his formal training under Kanga Sakugawa. Though Sakugawa, in his late seventies, was initially hesitant to take on the young Matsumura, who had a reputation as a "troublemaker," he honoured a promise to Matsumura's father, Kaiyo Sōfuku, and accepted him. Matsumura devoted five years to studying under Sakugawa, a period that

historians consider a seminal moment in the history of karate. His studies extended beyond Okinawa and he travelled to China, where his karate was profoundly influenced by Chinese martial traditions. He trained in chuan fa and is believed to have learned from Chinese military attaches such as Iwah and Ason.

Matsumura also journeyed to Satsuma in Japan, where he mastered Jigen-ryū swordsmanship under Yashichiro Ijuin, even earning a menkyo kaiden, a certificate signifying absolute mastery.

As a member of Okinawa's nobility, Matsumura's occupation was deeply intertwined with the royal court. In 1836, he was recruited into the service of the Shō family, the ruling royal family of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, receiving the prestigious gentry rank of Shikudon (Chikudun Pechin). For approximately 50 years, until 1879, Matsumura served as the chief martial arts instructor and bodyguard for three successive Okinawan kings: Shō Kō, Shō Iku, and Shō Tai. He also undertook diplomatic missions as a government envoy, traveling to Fuzhou, China, and Satsuma, Japan. Following the abdication of the king and the dissolution of the kingdom in 1879, Matsumura retired from public service, choosing a reclusive life dedicated to the continued development and teaching of karate-dō.

Matsumura's character was as formidable as his martial skill. He was described as having a "terrifying presence" and was famously never defeated in a duel, despite engaging in many. His student, Itosu Ankō, recalled Matsumura as being "blindingly fast and deceptively strong". He was a "driven man" who pursued martial arts with "fanatical devotion". By age 14, he aimed to be the kingdom's greatest fist fighter, a goal he achieved by 25. Anecdotes from his life reflect his cunning and power. One widely recounted story tells of a bullfighting contest where Matsumura ingeniously devised a

strategy to defeat a bull. He secretly visited the bull for over a week, repeatedly banging it on the forehead with a heavy stick until it was subdued. Though some, like Shoshin Nagamine, characterised this as a "brutish story," it cemented his fearsome reputation. His personal life also held unique aspects, such as his courtship with his accomplished wife, Tsuru, whom he viewed as the ideal woman.

Matsumura's impact on karate was nothing short of revolutionary. He is recognised as a "prime mover" in the development of the "linear power technique". It is widely believed that linear karate, as we know it, did not exist before him, and he is credited with developing or inventing most of the high-impact techniques used in modern Shotokan karate.

His contributions were not merely physical as he was a profound philosopher who championed the principle of bun bu ryo do, balancing physical training with metaphysical study. He famously proclaimed that the essence of bu (karate-dō) in Okinawa involved "cultivating virtues, values, and principles". This holistic approach is encapsulated in the saying "shingitai ichinyo" (spirit and technique are one). His makimono, an ancient scroll containing his precepts, is considered the oldest document in Okinawan karate-dō and outlines his "Seven Virtues of Bu," which served as guidelines for the kings and promoted peace in the Ryukyu Kingdom.

His teachings became the bedrock of what is known as Shuri-te, and he is unequivocally regarded as the progenitor of many contemporary karate styles, including Shōrin-ryū, Shotokan, and Shitō-ryū. Indeed, "*all modern styles of karate that evolved from the Shuri-te lineage can be traced back to the teachings of Bushi Matsumura*".

In terms of kata development, Matsumura's influence is extensive. He is credited as the original author (or at least documenter) of foundational kata such as Kūsankū, Passai/Bassai, and Gankaku/Chinto. The bō kata, Sakugawa

no kun, is also attributed to him. His kata eventually formed the very core of Shotokan. He was also a master of kobudo (ancient weaponry), renowned for his skill with the bō staff, the sai, and the ekubo (oar), for which he created specific kata.

Matsumura's most distinguished students include Itosu Anko and Ankō Azato, both of whom Funakoshi studied under and who were pivotal in the art's subsequent development. Other notable students included Motobu Chōyū and Motobu Chōki. Motobu Chōki, in particular, unequivocally stated that Matsumura was "the greatest martial artist who instructed" him. Matsumura's grandson, Matsumura Nabe, and other significant figures like Kentsu Yabu, Hanashiro Chomo, Chōtoku Kyan, and Gichin Funakoshi also benefited from his teachings, directly or indirectly.

The legacy of Bushi Matsumura is immense and enduring. His profound impact stemmed from his unwavering commitment to blending physical prowess with ethical conduct, emphasizing bun bu ryo do. His teachings and the knowledge he cultivated have trickled down into nearly every branch of modern karate, influencing countless practitioners and shaping the art as we know it today. Even the name "Shotokan" indirectly honours him, as the "Shoto" (松涛) in Gichin Funakoshi's pen name shares the same kanji character as "Matsu" (松) in Matsumura's name. His makimono, oldest document in the annals of Okinawan karate-do, remains an invaluable message for anyone seeking to grasp the true essence of karate-dō.

Kokan Oyadomari

Kokan Oyadomari (親泊 興寛; 1827–1905) was was a prominent practitioner and teacher of the Tomari-te style of karate.

Born in 1827 in the Ryūkyū Kingdom, Kokan Oyadomari passed away in 1905 in Okinawa, Japan, at the age of 77 or 78. He held the title of "Pechin", indicating that he held some kind of position at Shuri, the historical capital of the Ryūkyū Kingdom.

Oyadomari studied under several martial arts masters including Kishin Teruya, Karyu Uku, Ason and Annan.

Oyadomari's training in Shuri meant that his karate possessed a "Shuri flavour". During his extensive training, he also studied Jigen-ryū.

Kokan Oyadomari is considered a patriarch of Tomari-te karate. He taught a variety of kata, which are now referred to as Oyadomari-type Tomari-te katas. These include:

- Naihanchi Shodan
- Naihanchi Nidan
- Passai
- Wanshu
- Rohai
- Wankan
- Kusanku Sho
- Kusanku Dai

Beyond empty-hand forms, there are also references to Oyadomari kata for sai, wa (a weapon), and bo.

Among Oyadomari's most notable students were Chōtoku Kyan and Motobu Chōki. When Chōtoku Kyan was eight years old, his father asked Oyadomari, along with Matsumura and

Itosu, to be Kyan's first instructors, indicating Oyadomari's familiarity with the king's steward. Through these influential students, Oyadomari's teachings spread and contributed to new generations of martial artists.

While Oyadomari is regarded as a respected and legendary master, the Tomari-te style as a distinct entity has not survived to the present day, primarily because it bore a strong resemblance to Shuri-te. Despite this, his influence on the kata he taught and the prominent students he instructed ensures his place in the history of Okinawan karate.

Ankō Azato

Ankō Azato (安里 安恒), also known as Azato Yasutsune in Japanese, stands as one of the two principal karate masters, alongside Ankō Itosu, who profoundly shaped the understanding of Gichin Funakoshi, the visionary founder of Shotokan karate. Funakoshi himself held Azato in immense regard, declaring him "one of Okinawa's greatest experts in the art of karate" and even "the greatest karate expert of his time". Despite this towering reputation, much of what is known about Azato today comes directly from Funakoshi's personal accounts, leaving much of his life in historical obscurity.

Ankō Azato was born in 1827, though some sources state 1828, and he passed away in 1906. This means he lived to be approximately 78 or 79 years old. He originated from a noble family in the village of Azato, strategically located halfway between Shuri and Naha. His lineage belonged to the Tunchi (殿内) class, which signified his family's role as hereditary town and village chiefs, endowing them with considerable local authority. Physically, Azato was described as tall and broad-shouldered, a commanding presence that surely complemented his formidable skills.

Azato was not merely a martial artist, he was an accomplished scholar and embodied the ideal of a "*Confucian gentleman skilled in the six arts*". These six arts encompassed karate, horsemanship, archery, Jigen-ryu ken-jutsu (swordsmanship), Chinese literature, and politics. Furthermore, he demonstrated his political astuteness by readily complying with the government's order to cut off the traditional men's topknot, a politically sensitive issue of the era.

Azato's professional life was deeply interwoven with the highest echelons of Okinawan society. He served as the king's

most trusted military officer and ultimately rose to the distinguished position of privy councillor. Within the Shuri government, he held the specific roles of military attaché and foreign affairs advisor to the Shō kings.

Azato's martial arts foundation was laid under the tutelage of Sōkon Matsumura, a prominent figure under whom both Azato and his close friend Ankō Itosu studied karate.

However, his most notable student, and indeed his only known student during the period was Gichin Funakoshi. Funakoshi's training under Azato was rigorous and often secretive, taking place after midnight in Azato's courtyard. Funakoshi vividly recounts being drilled extensively in the Naihanchi (Tekki Shodan) kata for a span of three years. During these sessions, Azato would typically observe, calmly sipping tea, and would simply utter, "Do it again," rarely offering a "Good". Azato's high standards meant he was not easily impressed, and it often took months before Funakoshi was permitted to progress to a new kata.

Azato's philosophy of karate extended far beyond mere physical technique. He unequivocally emphasised that the first and foremost purpose of karate training was to cultivate one's character. He believed that proper demenour and dignified manners were as crucial as technical skill.

His approach to combat was characterised by a "*highly developed sense of timing coupled with an instant response,"* which rendered him a "*deadly fighter.*" He famously advised applying karate techniques in a fight by instructing his students to "*think of your arms and legs as swords.*" Azato's mastery was such that he was revered as the greatest Okinawan swordsman of his era, once remarking, "*I doubt very much that I would lose to anyone in the country if it came to a duel to the death.*" He was also known for demonstrating a single-point punch (ippon-ken).

One particular anecdote highlights his philosophy. It seemed some young men in Azato village would exploit those returning from an evening's revelry, provoking them into fights. One night, Azato, in disguise, allowed himself to be drawn into a fight by a young karate student named Jiro. The following morning, Azato, asserting his authority as the village lord, assembled all the young men in the village square. Jiro arrived, visibly beaten and in pain. Azato, with a smile, then directed the young men to abandon their rowdy behaviour and dedicate themselves to developing their characters, reinforcing the importance of virtue over mere fighting prowess.

His unmatched skill was further demonstrated in an unarmed match against Kanna Yasumori, a well-known swordsman armed with a sharpened blade. Azato effortlessly threw Yasumori each time he attacked. Azato later explained his strategy to Funakoshi: "*As soon as Kanna faces an opponent, his mind is filled with nothing but the idea of attacking. If an opponent shows the slightest opening, Kanna arrogantly charges in, not caring whether he is being baited or not. Consequently, he is easily trapped.*"

Regarding his impact on kata development, Azato's rigorous, multi-year instruction of Funakoshi in the Naihanchi kata was foundational to Funakoshi's early training and, by extension, to Shotokan karate. There is also a suggestion among some researchers that Azato's specific form of karate may have been passed on to Gichin Funakoshi's son, Yoshitaka Funakoshi, thereby influencing the development of Shotokan karate through a separate lineage from the Itosu-based methods.

Despite his significant influence and esteemed position, Ankō Azato has been somewhat neglected by history. He had few documented students apart from Funakoshi himself, and consequently, left little direct heritage in terms of an

established lineage. His perceived pro-Japanese sentiments might have contributed to his unpopularity among his Okinawan peers, potentially leading to his reputed relocation to Tokyo later in life, where he is said to have served as an ambassador.

Nevertheless, Azato's contributions, particularly through his rigorous mentorship of Gichin Funakoshi, laid crucial groundwork for the evolution of modern karate-dō, enduringly embodying the principle that the true essence of martial arts lies in the cultivation of character and virtue. Funakoshi's famous saying, "*If you know yourself and know your opponents well, you will never lose,*" is attributed to Azato, a testament to his profound insight into strategy and human nature.

Kōsaku Matsumora

Kōsaku Matsumora (松茂良 興作), was born in 1829 in Tomari village, Ryūkyū Kingdom, specifically on the west side of Tomari near the school in Zukeyama district, he passed away in November 1898 at the age of 70 (or 68-69).

Matsumora was born into the Yuji clan, being the first son of Matsumora Koten and an indirect descendant of the first Sho king. He had two brothers and four sisters. As a child, he was known by the name Tarukane, and in Chinese, he was called Yuikan. Physically, Matsumora was described as rather short in height, yet possessing wide shoulders and a massive chest, indicative of a muscular build. His upbringing as a youth entailed a comprehensive education in both social etiquette and the combative skills expected of a bushi.

Matsumora's martial arts training began in his childhood under distinguished masters:

Matsumora studied under Uku Giko for three years in the master's courtyard. This early training focused on building a strong foundation, emphasizing leg mobility and the generation of power from the hips. Uku taught him the three kata known in Tomari as Naihanchi.

Kishin Teruya (1804-1864) was another principal teacher. Matsumora's training with Master Teruya often took place at the family tomb, a setting chosen due to Matsumora's talent, modesty, and genuine character, and his deep understanding of the principles of shingitai (spirit, technique, body). It was at this sacred site that master and disciple sincerely exchanged vows, reinforcing Matsumora's commitment and enthusiasm for his training. An anecdote describes a recluse, nicknamed Furuherin, who lived in a nearby cave and secretly observed their training. One day, after Matsumora executed a

kick with a sharp kiai during solo practice, he made eye contact with the recluse, who, surprisingly nonchalant given the secrecy of martial arts practice, merely turned and stepped back into his cave. Matsumora, sensing something special about the recluse, reported the incident to Teruya, who advised him to visit the mysterious man himself.

Matsumora also studied Jigen-ryū jujutsu. This period of study deepened Matsumora's understanding of various fighting traditions.

While some sources suggest he was also a student of Anan (or Ason), most sources consistently credit Uku Giko and Kishin Teruya as his main teachers.

Kōsaku Matsumora's impact on karate was significant, particularly for his role in shaping the Tomari-te style. He is recognised for his emphasis on morality within martial arts. His direct contributions to kata include teaching the three Naihanchi kata, which he learned from Uku Giko. He also Transmited his unique version of the kata Chinto to his student Chōtoku Kyan, distinguishing it from Sōkon Matsumura's version. He also taught the Passai kata to Motobu Chōki.

Matsumora's teachings produced several influential students who went on to become prominent masters themselves including, Motobu Chōki, Chōtoku, Toguchi Kodatsu, Iha Kama, Higa Maeda Pechin, Chojin Kuba, Seiyu Nakasone, and Gisei Maeda. Chojin Kuba, in particular, became the first teacher of Shoshin Nagamine, the founder of Matsubayashi-ryū.

Kōsaku Matsumora is remembered for several remarkable events that underscore his prowess and character:

The most famous anecdote is the "Wet Towel" incident. At the age of 20, Matsumora gained widespread fame by disarming

an angry Satsuma overlord. He used a moist Japanese towel, which he habitually carried concealed, to hit the astonished samurai. He then grabbed the sword but lost a thumb in the process, throwing both the thumb and the sword into the nearby Asato River. This act instantly made him an Okinawan folk hero.

In 1879, coinciding with the abdication of King Shotai and the dissolution of the Ryukyu Kingdom, Matsumora, then 51, demonstrated his unwavering power and skills. He notably protected specific village property and a communal endowment known as the Neewagumuchi, named after Governor Yamazato Choken, from confiscation by the Meiji Government. His efforts thwarted Japanese officials, becoming a classic example of Tomari honour and tradition.

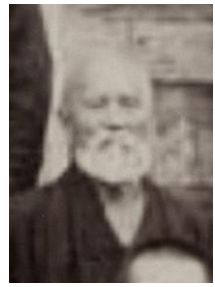
Kōsaku Matsumora's enduring legacy is deeply embedded in the history of Okinawan karate. He is celebrated as a great bujin (martial artist) who consistently demonstrated dedication to the virtues, values, and principles of martial arts (karate-dō) throughout his life, both before and after the political changes in Okinawa. His life stands as a testament to loyalty, unselfishness, and true honour for the Okinawan people (Uchinanchu).

To commemorate his life and contributions, a monument (kenshohi) was erected in his honour on May 8, 1983, in Tomari's Arayashiki park. The epitaph, written by Shoshin Nagamine, summarizes his life: "*Kōsaku Matsumora (1829-98) was born in Tomari village. Remarkably talented, the bushi from Tomari was a man who took full advantage of his small but powerful body. As a youth, Matsumora studied the fighting traditions of Tomari village under Uku Giko and Teruya Kishin. Under the astute tutelage of teachers like Uku and Teruya, so too did Matsumora ultimately distinguish himself as a brave bujin. He became well known for his chivalry and vibrant spirit, and was well remembered for once preventing a sword-*

wielding Satsuma samurai from harming Tomari villagers. Then, in an effort to avoid any subsequent repercussions, he confined himself to obscurity in a remote part of Nago. Matsumora is also remembered for his efforts to protect specific village property and a special communal endowment in the name of Governor Yamazato Choken, known as the Neewagumuchi. By 1879, both the property and legal tender of this sizable contribution were in danger of being confiscated by the Meiji Government after the King abdicated and the kingdom was abolished. However, the efforts of Japanese officials to confiscate the special assets of Tomari village were thwarted thanks in large part to the efforts of Bushi Matsumora and his diligence".

His profound influence ensures that his contributions will live on forever within the martial arts community.

Itosu Ankō



Itosu Ankō (糸洲 安恒), also known as Itosu Yasutsune or Ichiji Ankō in Okinawan, is widely regarded as "the father of modern karate". Born in 1831 in Gibo Village, Shuri, Ryūkyū Kingdom, he passed away on 11 March 1915 at the age of 84 in Yamagawa village, Shuri, Okinawa, Japan. His posthumous Buddhist name is Kenmyooin Kooen Sootoku Shinshi, signifying virtue, values, and principles.

Itosu was born into the minor aristocracy, a keimochi or family of position, in the Yamagawa district of Shuri. As a child, he was described as small, unhealthy, shy, and introverted, but was raised in a strict home. He received an extensive education, being well-versed in both Chinese and Japanese classics and the art of calligraphy. Physically, Itosu was noted for his immense hidden strength, a barrel-chested physique, and a long beard.

Stories recount his dedication to physical training, such as hitting a makiwara (rice straw bound to a wooden post or board) hundreds of times daily until his fists resembled black stones. One anecdote describes him destroying a stone wall while attempting to build a better makiwara by repeatedly striking a leather sandal tied to it. He was also said to always walk in the Naihanchi stance. Conversely, Master Chōshin Chibana reportedly described Itosu as having a very gentle manner of moving and speaking, like a woman.

Service Itosu served as a secretary (or scribe) to the last Ryukyuan king, Shō Tai, until the Ryukyu Kingdom's monarchy was dissolved in 1879, following the prefectural system replacing feudal domains. After this political upheaval, Itosu retired from his government position to devote himself to practising and teaching to-te (karate) from his home. Later in his life, he also became a school teacher at the Shuri Dai Ichi Elementary School, where he incorporated karate into the curriculum.

Itosu's martial arts journey began under Nagahama Chikudun Pechin. He then became a personal protégé and was considered the foremost disciple of the distinguished Bushi Sōkon Matsumura. Most sources affirm his training under Matsumura. While some accounts, such as one from Motobu Chōki, suggest that Matsumura did not give Itosu the same in-depth training as other students like Azato, believing Itosu lacked the inherent abilities for Matsumura's specific type of karate.

Furthermore, during a period of vague information regarding two decades of his life, it is believed that Itosu also learned karate from Shiroma (Gusukuma) of Tomari and an unnamed Chinese individual residing in Tomari.

Yabu Kentsu stated, '*The venerable (Itosu) first studied from the venerable Matsumura, but it was Nagahama from Naha who influenced him most during his later years. The method of the venerable (Itosu) is (therefore) said to be 60% of Naha, and 40% of Shuri.*'

Itosu is widely recognised as the single most influential figure in transforming karate from a secretive, pragmatic, and lethal form of combat into karate-dō, a system focused on physical, mental, and spiritual development. He championed the introduction of karate into the Okinawan public school system, initially in middle schools and later in teacher training colleges. This monumental step, which included

sponsoring its integration into schools and encouraging the Ministry of Education to do the same in mainland Japan, marked the end of centuries of secrecy surrounding the art. He also pioneered the concept of the karate "class," enabling mass training. His efforts modernised karate and made it accessible to the common person. His influence on linear karate styles is foundational, with many modern forms tracing their lineage back to his teachings.

Itosu's contributions to kata are profound. He is credited with simplifying Matsumura's kata, Naihanchi, and possibly expanding it to create the third form, Naihanchi Sandan. He also refined the Chinese corkscrew punch into its contemporary form. His most significant contribution to kata development, however, is the creation of the Pinan (Heian) kata (Shodan, Nidan, Sandan, Yondan, and Godan). These forms were designed as standardised learning steps for schoolchildren, as he felt the older, more complex forms were too difficult for them. The Pinan kata were likely derived from the older 'Kusanku' form. Before the Pinan kata were created, Naihanchi was traditionally taught first in Tomari-te and Shuri-te schools, underscoring its historical importance.

Itosu's teaching produced an impressive roster of students who became foundational figures in their own right, shaping various karate styles that exist today, including, Kenwa Mabuni, Gichin Funakoshi, Chōshin Chibana, Kentsu Yabu, Motobu Chōki, Chōyū Motobu, Chōmo Hanashiro, Moden Yabiku, Kanken Tōyama, Shinpan Shiroma, and Anbun Tokuda.

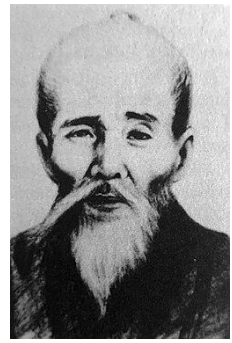
Itosu's profound impact led to his system being recognised as Itosu-ryū. His legacy is encapsulated in his philosophical writings and the enduring influence on subsequent generations. In October 1908, at the age of 77, Itosu penned his influential "Ten Lessons of To-te" (Tode Jukun), a document outlining the gitai (physical and technical) value of

karate. This document, along with Bushi Matsumura's "Seven Virtues of Bu," is considered a cornerstone of the shingitai (mind, technique, body) principle in Okinawan karate-dō.

One of his most notable and often debated statements from the "Ten Lessons" is: "*Karate did not descend from Buddhism or Confucianism*". While some scholars find this "extraordinary" given the obvious connections between karate and Chinese philosophical traditions, it's suggested that Itosu might have intended to downplay Chinese influence during a period of Japanese hostility towards China. He employed Confucian and Buddhist concepts in his expressions to convey Japanese thinking and spirituality, rather than asserting direct origins. His philosophy also strongly emphasised ethical conduct and non-aggression. He stated, "*Never use your fists and legs without sufficient reason and by no means for fighting in the streets*," and "*One does not harden the body for private quarrel.*"

Itosu believed in the principle of "Tatakawa zushite katsu" (to win without fighting), frequently articulated as "*Karate ni sente nashi*" (There is no first strike in karate). This profound principle was famously adopted by his student Gichin Funakoshi and inscribed on Funakoshi's gravestone. The Itosu family continues to honour his spirit, with his great-grandson, Itosu Ango, preserving a private altar nearly a century after his death. Itosu Anko remains a towering figure whose vision laid the groundwork for modern karate-dō's global spread and its emphasis on character development and ethical conduct alongside physical mastery.

Aragaki Seishō



Aragaki Seishō (新垣 世璋), also known by names such as Arakaki Ou, Mayā Arakaki, and Aragaki Tsuji Pechin Seisho, was a highly influential Okinawan martial artist. He was born in 1840 in either Kumemura on Okinawa Island or the nearby island of Sesoko, and he passed away in 1918 in Naha, Okinawa, Japan, at the age of 77 or 78. He was also famously referred to as “Aragaki the Cat”.

Aragaki Seishō held a significant position in Okinawan society. He was an official in the royal court of Ryūkyū. His official title was Chikudon Peichin, a status comparable to that of a samurai in Japan. Beyond his martial prowess, Aragaki was also a Chinese language interpreter and travelled to Beijing in September 1870. His connection to the Kume nobility is suggested by the fact that he taught kempō (Chinese boxing) to Higaonna Kanryō, an art typically reserved for that noble class.

The only documented martial arts instructor for Aragaki Seishō was Wai Xinxian, who hailed from Fuzhou in China's Fujian province. This connection highlights Aragaki's deep roots in Chinese martial arts. He also reportedly served as a conduit for other Okinawan martial artists, as he gave Higaonna Kanryō an introduction to martial arts master Kojo Taitei in Fuzhou.

Aragaki Seishō was notably involved in early public demonstrations of Okinawan martial arts. On 24 March 1867, he showcased Okinawan martial arts in Shuri, then the capital of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, before a visiting Chinese ambassador. This event was particularly significant as it occurred during a period when other prominent masters like Ankō Asato, Itosu Ankō, and Sōkon Matsumura were still active.

Aragaki Seishō's primary impact on karate lay in his profound influence on kata development. While he is mentioned as the founder of "Aragakiryu", sources clarify that he did not develop any specific named styles himself. Instead, his techniques and kata permeated and shaped numerous subsequent martial arts traditions. He was known for teaching a comprehensive set of empty-hand kata, including:

- Unshu
- Seisan
- Shihohai
- Sōchin (also spelled Shisochin)
- Niseishi
- Shisōchin
- Sanchin

It is noted that Aragaki was certainly teaching Sanchin in Okinawa during the 1860s, and it is possible that Higaonna Kanryō learned Sanchin and Seisan kata from him.

Beyond empty-hand forms, Aragaki Seishō was also an expert in weapons, particularly the sai and the bo. He taught specific weapon kata, including:

- Arakaki-no-kun
- Arakaki-no-sai
- Sesoku-no-kun

Aragaki Seishō is considered one of the "greatest martial arts masters," and his techniques and teachings were fundamental to many of the most important figures in karate history. His students went on to found or significantly influence major modern karate styles, ensuring his legacy reached millions of practitioners worldwide. His notable students included, Higaonna Kanryō, Chōjun Miyagi, Kenwa Mabuni, Gichin Funakoshi, Kanbun Uechi, Kanken Tōyama, and Tsuyoshi Chitose.

While Aragaki Seishō did not establish a formally named modern style, his techniques and kata are clearly evident throughout many contemporary karate and kobudo styles. Some martial arts historians consider Chitō-ryū to be the closest existing style to Aragaki's original martial arts. It is also noted that his descendants are primarily involved with Gōjū-ryū. Through the direct lineage of these martial arts pioneers, Aragaki Seishō's influence continues to resonate in the practice of karate today.

Higaonna Kanryō



Higaonna Kanryō (東恩納 寛量), also sometimes known as Higashionna Kanryo, was born on 10 March 1853 in Nishimura, Naha, Ryūkyū Kingdom, and passed away in October 1915, at the age of 62 or 63.

Higaonna Kanryō was the fourth son of Kanyo Higaonna, who was the ninth-generation successor of the Shin family line. While his family was of the shi-zoku (noble) class, they were not prosperous. His father earned a living transporting firewood from the Kerama Islands in a small vessel. This work, which Kanryō began assisting with at around ten years old due to his younger brothers' early deaths and his elder brother's physical inability for manual labour, reportedly gave him strong legs and hips from steering the ship.

At the age of fourteen or fifteen, or about seventeen according to some accounts, Higaonna began studying martial arts. A popular legend states that in 1867, at the age of fourteen, his father was killed in a fight, and Kanryō resolved to travel to China to learn deadly martial arts to avenge his father's death. However, a more likely explanation, according to one source, is that he left to avoid conscription by the Japanese army. Regardless of his motivation, he was greatly driven to learn martial arts and made swift progress.

Higaonna's initial training in Okinawa was possibly in Okinawan te basics. Some sources suggest he may have

practiced under Mayaa Aragaki (Aragaki Seishō) as a teenager. In March 1873, Higaonna migrated to Fuzhou, China, possibly with a letter of introduction to Wai Xinxian from Aragaki.

In Fuzhou, Higaonna sought out a martial arts teacher. He was introduced to Ryū Ryū Ko (劉龍公), who owned a furniture-making shop. Some sources identify Ryū Ryū Ko as Xie Zhongxiang, founder of Whooping Crane Kung Fu. However, there is a conflict in the sources as Chōjun Miyagi visited Fuzhou in 1915 after Higaonna's death (October 1915) to seek Ryū Ryū Ko, only to find he had died, whereas Xie Zhongxiang died in 1930, suggesting they were not the same person. Other names mentioned as his teachers in China include Wai Xinxian and Wan Shin Zan, or simply Ru Ru.

Higaonna Kanryō was accepted as a student by Ryū Ryū Ko after being judged as possessing the proper character to learn martial arts. As a condition, he was required to swear an oath of allegiance and promised to adhere to Ryū Ryū Ko's principles and never misuse the knowledge. He spent about fourteen years in Fuzhou. During the day, he laboured diligently in his teacher's workshop, making wicker baskets.

In the evenings, he received martial arts instruction. His training included:

- Ashi-sabaki (stepping) and breathing techniques for four to five hours daily.
- Traditional training aids such as chiishi (weighted stick), nigiri game (gripping jars), tan (conditioning log), makiwara (striking post), kami (heavy earthen jars), and ishi-geta (stone clogs).
- Learning nine empty-hand kata: Sanchin, Saifa, Seiyunchin, Sanseiryu, Shisochin, Seipai, Seisan, Kururunfa, and Suparinpei (Pecchurin).

- Weapon forms such as daito (long sword), shuto (small sword), sai, and bo (staff). He also learned herbal medicine.

Higaonna trained so intensely that he often injured himself and even "passed blood with his urine". Through his diligent study, his body underwent a complete transformation, and he became incredibly strong, looking "like a statue chiselled out of rock". He eventually became Ryū Ryū Ko's top student and an assistant teacher. Although he had no formal schooling in Okinawa, he diligently studied Confucianism and the tactics of Sun Tsu in connection with the chuan fa he learned, believing that "physical training without spiritual study does not make genuine martial arts—the two are inseparable". His favourite book was the Wubeizhi (Bubishi), particularly the section about the eight sayings of the fist.

Higaonna returned to Okinawa at either age 32 or 40. With Okinawa undergoing "Japanisation," his limited education from China was of little use. He returned to his parents' firewood business but reportedly became despondent and engaged in popular habits like drinking and womanising. However, a surge in karate's popularity, partly due to the Japanese army's interest, led him to take on students.

He began teaching the sons of wealthy Naha families in his parents' courtyard. Higaonna was known for his strict ethical standards, reputedly refusing to teach "ruffians" and expelling any student who showed "bad character traits". His teaching style involved arduous practice, with the first three or four years often dedicated solely to Sanchin kata, which led many students to drop out due to boredom. He called his style Shōrei-ryū (Enlightened Spirit Style), but it became commonly known as Naha-te.

Higaonna also taught martial arts in two different ways, depending on the student type. At home, he taught Naha-te as a martial art whose ultimate goal was to be able to kill the

opponent. At Naha Commercial High School, he taught karate as a form of physical, intellectual, and moral education.

He consistently cited passages from the Wubeizhi (Bubishi) and stressed that physical training without moral philosophy was not to-te. He also believed that "karate needs technique and karate needs a purpose," and that "*in the martial arts spiritual improvement is important; so remember that if anything in life blocks your way, turn aside and go around it.*"

Among Higaonna's most prominent students included Chōjun Miyagi, Kyoda Juhatsu, Kenwa Mabuni, Koki Shiroma, Higa Seiko, and Shiroma Shinpan.

Higaonna Kanryō's impact on karate was immense, primarily through the Naha-te style. He systematically taught the nine empty-hand kata he learned in China: Sanchin, Saifa, Seiyunchin, Sanseiryu, Shisochin, Seipai, Seisan, Kururunfa, and Suparinpei. His kata compilations heavily influenced Gōjū-ryū. He was renowned for his powerful Sanchin kata, with students noting that "the wooden floor would be hot from the gripping of his feet".

His teachings emphasised the integration of gō-no (hard) and jū-no (soft) techniques into a single system. This "hard-soft" approach would later define the Gōjū-ryū style, named by Chōjun Miyagi based on Higaonna's frequent references to a passage in the Bubishi. A journalist, impressed by Higaonna's students performing Sanchin, composed a haiku: "A roll of thunder, seizing the first bolt of lightning with the empty hands".

While he learned weapon kata in China, Higaonna did not teach them in Okinawa, and these weapon arts are considered forever lost. Higaonna Kanryō is regarded as one of the "superstars of Okinawan karate". He is credited with breathing life back into the chuan fa tradition in Naha.

His commitment to character development and teaching only those with noble dispositions ensured that the art maintained a strong ethical foundation. His teachings continue to reach millions of karate practitioners in the twenty-first century.

Gichin Funakoshi



Gichin Funakoshi, widely revered as the "father of modern karate" and its primary propagator, was born on November 10, 1868, in the Yamakawa district of Shuri, Okinawa. While some records indicate his birth year as 1870, Funakoshi himself stated this was an alteration made to allow him to sit for a medical school examination. He was born prematurely and was a small and sickly child, a frailty he would overcome through rigorous training, leading him to live a long life free of illness. His family, originally named Tominakoshi, belonged to the aristocratic shizoku class, with lineage tracing back to Ryukyu Dynasty nobles. His grandfather, Gifuku, a renowned Confucian scholar, tutored the royal family and profoundly influenced Funakoshi's early education in the Confucian classics, which became the bedrock of his later moral teachings in martial arts. Funakoshi also diligently studied calligraphy.

Funakoshi began his martial arts journey at the age of eleven, studying tode (an early form of karate) under Ankō Asato , whose son was a classmate. He also trained under Ankō Itosu, who, along with Azato, had studied under Sōkon Matsumura.

Funakoshi was noted as an enthusiastic and determined student. His dedication was such that he declined multiple promotions in his initial career as a public school teacher to

avoid leaving Shuri and interrupting his karate training. He pursued this teaching profession for thirty years, starting in 1891 at the age of 21. A notable anecdote from this period is his decision to cut off his traditional topknot, a contentious political act following the Meiji Restoration, in order to secure a teaching position, a choice that "stunned and scorned his family".

Funakoshi only began teaching karate publicly in 1901, at the age of 33. By 1906, he was instrumental in establishing the Okinawa Shubokai (Okinawa Martial Arts Association), becoming its chairman in 1913.

Funakoshi's reputation as a karate master steadily grew. In 1917, he was invited to represent Okinawa at a demonstration at the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai in Kyoto, Japan's official martial arts centre. In 1921, he performed for Crown Prince Hirohito in Okinawa, leaving the future emperor "much impressed". The pivotal moment for karate's wider acceptance came in May 1922, when Funakoshi demonstrated the art in Tokyo at the first Exhibition on the Education in Traditional Budō, organised by the Japanese Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

Though he intended to return to Okinawa, Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo, was so impressed that he requested Funakoshi extend his stay. Funakoshi, recognizing his "responsibility to karate and our nation," made the "fateful decision to stay indefinitely" in Tokyo to introduce karate to Japan. This was a challenging period as he faced prejudice against Okinawan karate, lived in abject poverty, working as a janitor and handyman, and sometimes went without food. To explain and promote karate, he published Ryukyu Kenpo To-te in 1922, followed by a revised edition in 1925. His perseverance gradually paid off, attracting students from educated circles and universities. In 1938, with funds raised by his students, he built the Shotokan dojo ("Shoto's hall") in

Tokyo, the nation's first professional karate dojo. Sadly, this dream was destroyed when the Shotokan was burned to the ground during the 1945 Tokyo attack, leaving Funakoshi "bitterly disappointed".

Funakoshi's greatest impact was his role in reinventing Okinawan karate as a Japanese art and laying the groundwork for its worldwide spread. He was initially resistant to the idea of separate styles, believing karate should be unified. However, his students named his school "Shotokan," which became one of the most widely practiced karate styles globally.

Funakoshi, or subsequent generations under his influence, adapted the art for mainland Japan, leading to the elimination of many classical lethal Okinawan techniques such as throws, sweeps, groundwork, and joint locks. Shotokan stances became notably deeper and wider, while kicks, initially mid-level, became higher.

He emphasised karate as a peaceful, meditative art, promoting the principle "Karate ni sente nashi" (There is no first attack in karate), which is inscribed on his gravestone. He believed that kata movements, beginning and ending with blocking, inherently convey this maxim.

A cornerstone of his teaching, reflected in his statement: "*The ultimate aim of karate lies not in victory or defeat but in the perfection of the character of its participants*". This philosophy was deeply rooted in his Confucian upbringing. He stressed that true martial arts training cultivated "a strong character and an indomitable spirit". He would often assess a student's character before granting in-depth instruction, believing that *"only those students who had good moral characters were given the opportunity to learn the secrets possessed by their teacher*".

In 1935, building upon the precedent set by masters like Chōmo Hanashiro in 1905, he changed the Chinese characters for karate from 唐手 ("China hand") to 空手 ("empty hand"), a change that became standardised in 1936. This was partly to downplay its Chinese origins, given the political climate, but also to imbue it with a deeper philosophical meaning of being "empty of selfish and evil thoughts" and "empty of self-being".

Funakoshi introduced the kyu/dan ranking system, borrowed from Jigoro Kano's Judo, into karate.

Funakoshi envisioned karate as both a formidable martial art and a sport, believing it could develop a sporting component without sacrificing its core values. He approved of sport competition as long as "the virtue of courtesy prevailed".

Regarding kata development, Funakoshi maintained that kata forms were designed for a weaker person's self-defence against a stronger assailant. He strongly believed that kata must be performed with the entire body and spirit, not merely memorised, to develop true physical energy. He famously said, *"Once a form has been learned, it must be practiced repeatedly until it can be applied in an emergency, for knowledge of just the sequence of a form in karate is useless".*

Funakoshi also took the liberty of changing the names of many Okinawan kata to make them more pronounceable for Japanese speakers or because he felt they "simply did not fit into Japanese [martial arts] culture". Examples include: Pinan became Heian, Naihanchi became Tekki, Passai became Bassai, Wanshu became Enpi, Chinto became Gankaku, Kusanku became Kanku, Useishi became Gōjūshiho, and Seisan became Hangetsu. It is noteworthy that the Shotokan kata curriculum, while excluding overtly Naha-te forms (like Sanchin or Suparinpei), includes Hangetsu (the name Funakoshi gave to the Okinawan kata Seisan), which

represents a genealogical and technical link to the Naha-te tradition.

Notable Students Funakoshi taught a remarkable array of students who became significant figures in their own right, including, his son Funakoshi Yoshitaka (Gigo), Hironori Otsuka, Kenwa Mabuni, Masutatsu Oyama, Shinken Taira, Yasuhiro Konishi, Hidetaka Nishiyama, Hirokazu Kanazawa, Masatoshi Nakayama and Shigeru Egami.

Funakoshi passed away on April 26, 1957, at the age of 88, from colon cancer. Despite his physical frailty as a child, he never suffered a day of sickness in his long life, attributing his longevity to karate practice and a disciplined lifestyle that included no smoking and rare drinking. He was described as emotionally steady, always striving for excellence, and maintaining a humble, polite, and kind demeanour.

His final written words, penned shortly before his death, encapsulated his philosophy: "*To love the fists and apply techniques is a process shaping the human character and teaching what is right and just. This is the true aim of budo. The fist and Zen are one (ken Zen ichi). To master the way of karate, we must strive for the utmost and even go into religion. So, devote yourself to the faith (kenkyo tare)! This is the way we fellows talk to each other".*

Funakoshi's immense contributions are commemorated by two stone monuments erected by his loyal students on December 1, 1968, at the Engaku-ji temple in Kita-Kamakura. One bears his famous maxim, "Karate ni sente nashi," while the other, inscribed by Ohama Nobuhide, includes details of his life and the phrase "Kenzen ichi" (the fist and Zen are one).

His enduring legacy lies in his indefatigable efforts to popularize karate in Japan and, by extension, globally, laying a robust foundation for modern karate-dō. He authored several influential books, including Karate-dō Kyohan: The

Master Text and Karate-dō: My Way of Life. His most significant philosophical contribution, The Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate (Niju Kun), remains fundamental to Shotokan practitioners, emphasizing virtues such as humility, respect, compassion, and patience, guiding students to "become better human beings".

He famously stated that, after over sixty years of practice, he had "finally got the hang of it" with a certain karate movement, and it is said he was still mentally refining kata on his deathbed. He also observed that "Karate is like boiling water; if you do not keep the flame high, it turns tepid," stressing constant effort. His life exemplified the virtues of Shotokan karate: "courage, courtesy, integrity, humility, and self-control".

Motobu Chōki



Motobu Chōki was born on 5 April 1870, in Akahira Village, Shuri, Ryūkyū Kingdom. He was the third son of Motobu Chomo Udon, a high-ranking Anji (quasi-nobility), and belonged to a branch of the Ryukyuan royal family known as the Motobu Udun ("Motobu Palace"), one of the most prominent families in Okinawa.

In contrast to his elder brother, Motobu Choyu, who received a proper education in Confucian classics and the Japanese language and was taught the family's ti system, Chōki's education was neglected. This disparity is attributed to the custom of the era, where formal education and privilege were primarily reserved for the firstborn son. It is believed that Motobu resented his upbringing and developed a fierce temper in childhood, growing up without academic ambition. However, he considered himself physically talented and aspired to be the strongest man in Okinawa.

Without formal instruction, Motobu Chōki largely trained himself, relentlessly striking the makiwara punching board. His aptitude and determination compensated for the lack of formal training. He gained a reputation for being rather aggressive and was known for challenging strong young men in Tsuji, the red-light district, rarely being defeated.

His martial arts journey included studying under several masters. At the age of 12, he and his older brother Chōyū were invited to be taught karate by Itosu Ankō. Other teachers included Sōkon Matsumura, Sakuma Pechin, and Kōsaku

Matsumora. However, it is noted that he was "no one's disciple" in the words of Higa Yuchoku, suggesting his independent learning approach. Similarly, there are questions about the depth of instruction Motobu received from the great masters, as they were reportedly suspicious of his aggressive behaviour. Motobu even entered Itosu's dojo but was soon expelled because of his attitude of always wanting to prove himself.

A significant turning point occurred when Motobu was defeated by a man named Itarashiki, who was older and famous for his kakedameshi (fighting). This defeat led Motobu to devote himself to karate with unprecedented intensity, meticulously reassessing his opponent's technique and strategy. Eventually, he sought formal instruction from Kōsaku Matsumora, developing his technique to a high standard and mastering kata, despite initially disliking it. Matsumora taught him the Naihanchi and Passai kata. Motobu also studied Jigen-ryū.

Due to his social position and wealth, Motobu Chōki did not have to work in his youth or as an adult, which allowed him to spend extensive time learning and practicing karate. However, he was reportedly unable to save money or efficiently run a business. He was not the "ruffian" he was often portrayed as, but rather a gentleman befitting his social background, whose speech was polite, authoritative, and masculine. He emphasised good manners to his students. Despite this, his Japanese language skills were lacking, and he often relied on Okinawan interpreters when teaching on the mainland. Some accusations of illiteracy stemmed from his family's use of Uchinaguchi (Okinawan) as a form of social protest against the Japanese rule, and he found Japanese difficult to master as an adult. He did author two books on karate, Ryukyu Kempo Karate Jutsu: Kumite Hen and Okinawa Kenpo Tode-jutsu, Kumite Edition, discrediting claims of illiteracy.

Physical Prowess and Fighting Style Motobu Chōki became known for his agility, earning him the nickname Motobu no Saru ("Motobu the Monkey"). His fighting style was characterised by fast hand techniques and direct kicks to the opponent's knees and groin, controlling the opponent's hands or body during counterattacks. He carried his hands relatively high when blocking and striking, indicative of southern Chinese boxing, and chambered his fists high (around nipple level) for better defence and attitude. His favourite technique was the keikoken-zuki (forefinger-knuckle punch), which he developed through intensive makiwara training from childhood. He believed that a posture that is too wide is impractical and that mobility is essential for effective response, stressing free, instinctive, and intelligent movement without telegraphing intentions. Motobu famously stated, "When you fight, you must do so fiercely, otherwise the opponent could seriously hurt you ... once it's been established that a fight is about to ensue, the most important thing is to win. There is no other alternative to survive in a desperate situation".

Motobu moved to Osaka, Japan, in search of employment. In November 1922, he famously participated in a "boxing vs judo" match in Kyoto, where he defeated a tall, burly foreign boxer. This spectacular victory was initially misattributed to Gichin Funakoshi in the press, supposedly to support Funakoshi's role in spreading his Japanised version of Shotokan karate. Motobu's victory instantly made his name known throughout Japan. Subsequently, he opened dojos in both Osaka and Tokyo and taught at various universities. In 1926, he published Ryukyu Kempo Karate Jutsu: Kumite Hen, a book focused on sparring, to differentiate it from Funakoshi's book, which emphasised kata.

In late 1926 and 1927, Motobu briefly returned to Okinawa. On 7 January 1927, he demonstrated wood-board breaking and kumite for Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo, who was

visiting Okinawa. Kano was greatly impressed, and Motobu was introduced as "Okinawa's Number One" in kumite.

Motobu was often considered Gichin Funakoshi's "diametric opposite in character and karate style," and the two men never seemed to get along. Motobu publicly insulted Funakoshi multiple times, comparing his karate to a guitar, ‘beautiful on the outside but hollow within’. He also suggested Funakoshi was deceitful. Motobu did not think highly of Itosu's abilities, whose new-style approach was passed to Funakoshi and then used in Japan. Motobu's training was based on kumite (practical fighting experience), whereas Funakoshi's was more focused on kata techniques. Despite their personal differences, their collective impact on karate's growth and direction remains significant.

Motobu famously emphasised the Naihanchi kata, though he also taught Seisan, Passai, Shirokuma, Wanshū, and Jitte. He taught his own interpretation of Naihanchi, which included ti-like grappling and throwing techniques. He credited Naihanchi with containing all the knowledge needed to become a proficient fighter. In the early days of karate training, it was common for students to spend two to three years practicing only Naihanchi/Tekki under strict observation. Motobu firmly believed that the principles of kata never changed, regardless of street encounters. His 1926 Kumite Drills, important to his legacy, are seen as applications of the Naihanchi Shodan kata.

Motobu Chōki taught many students who became noteworthy practitioners in their own right, including: Chōsei Motobu (his son), Hironori Ōtsuka, Shōshin Nagamine, Yasuhiro Konishi, Tatsuo Shimabuku, Katsuya Miyahira, Shigeru Nakamura, Tatsuo Yamada, Sannosuke Ueshima, and Kōsei Kokuba (Yukimori Kuniba).

Motobu returned to Okinawa in the autumn of 1936, visiting colleagues to discuss the state of karate-dō on the mainland.

He spent considerable time researching ancient kata and kobudo before returning to Tokyo. He made another return trip to Okinawa in the spring of 1939, remaining there until his death. Motobu Chōki passed away peacefully on 15 April 1944, at the age of 74, in a rented home in Naha's Sogenji district.

Motobu Chōki's legacy is immense. He is regarded as one of Okinawa's greatest masters of practical karate techniques. His contributions included providing ample evidence that karate was a practical and effective self-defence tool. The Motobu-ryū is based on the "secret" Motobu family ti system and has a depth that cannot be easily grasped. Its secret principles are simple: "Relax the body and throw your opponent with softness," meaning to neutralise an aggressor by utilising their own hardness and force. It also includes practice with traditional Okinawan bladed weapons like katana, naginata, and yari, employed in a unique Okinawan fashion. The Motobu Udun Tomb in Ganeko, Ginowan, is a cultural property and historical site that is a spot for karate tourists.

Chōtoku Kyan



Chōtoku Kyan was born in December 1870 in Gibo village, Shuri, Ryūkyū Kingdom. He was the third son of Kyan Chofu, who served as the steward to the last Ryukyuan King, Sho Tai. His family was descended from Shoen and was related to Shoshi-0, the fourth king of the old Ryukyu kingdom. Kyan Chofu, born in 1839, was the eldest son of Motonaga Chōyō and belonged to the royal Motobu Udun clan. He was adopted into the Kyan family at age 17 to become the head of his grandmother Manabe's household, and he himself studied karate under Sōkon Matsumura. Later, Chōtoku was adopted back into the Motonaga family to continue his father's lineage.

Kyan Chofu accompanied King Sho Tai into exile in Tokyo following the country's annexation by Japan in 1879, and the young Chōtoku also journeyed to Tokyo. While in Tokyo, Kyan received a significant part of his academic education. The Kyan family continued to live a life of privilege in Japan, residing in a house provided by the king on the Sho family's property. Chōtoku studied the Chinese classics (of Confucius) with Nakasu Mishima sensei at Nimatsu School in Fujimicho Town.

Chōtoku Kyan was described as small and thin, earning him the nickname Chan Mi-gwa ("Small-eyed Kyan") due to a permanent squint. He was also reportedly asthmatic and often bedridden. Despite his physical limitations, his father encouraged him, stating that he could develop effective

technique through diligent training and become "second to none". Kyan was known for his competitive spirit and colourful personal life. However, some accounts suggest a more challenging personality, with Richard Kim describing his life as not easily lending itself to a heroic image, and Bruce D. Clayton suggesting Kyan had "deep emotional and mental problems".

Chōtoku Kyan and his older brother Chohitsu began their karate training at the age of fifteen, after undergoing their "rights of manhood". His father believed that a true Okinawan of high birth was infused with a martial spirit upon becoming a man. Kyan's father arranged for him to undergo rigorous martial training, hoping to strengthen the youngster's failing health. From the age of eight, Kyan received private lessons from many accomplished martial artists in Shuri and Tomari, learning various kata and weapons from at least a dozen sensei.

His notable teachers included:

- Sōkon Matsumura: Kyan began training under Matsumura, the karate instructor for the royal household, at age 16 for two years. Matsumura, then 80 years old, was described as tough, strong, healthy, and active with a physique better than much younger men.
- Sakuma Pechin.
- Itosu Ankō.
- Kōsaku Matsumora: From Matsumora, Kyan learned free-fighting and the kata Naihanchi.
- Kokan Oyadomari: From Oyadomari, Kyan learned Passai, Rohai, Wanshu, and Naifanchi.
- Maeda Pechin.
- Tokumine Pechin: Kyan learned the bo kata Tokumine no Kun from Tokumine's landlord, after Tokumine himself had passed away.

Kyan firmly believed that inner-stability was essential for embracing karate throughout one's life. He advised students to "*Find an occupation suitable for your character, and one which will provide you with the opportunity to pursue karate".*

Kyan was renowned for his fighting skills and his willingness to accept challenge fights, similar to his contemporary Motobu Chōki. Due to his small size, he specialised in rapid sidestepping and vital-point strikes. His fighting accounts depict Shuri-te's commitment to single-blow victories, turning vital-point techniques into a lethal art, often targeting eyes and throat.

At age 60, Kyan accepted a challenge from Shinzo Ishida, a judo 6th dan in Taipei. Kyan stripped to the waist to prevent throws, while Ishida maintained distance to avoid kicks. The two men stood staring at each other for some time, though the outcome is not detailed in the source.

In another instance, Kyan scolded a large man named Matsuda for his aggressive behaviour. Matsuda challenged Kyan, claiming that Kyan, despite his physical talent, "knew nothing about real confrontations, as kata and actual fighting were completely different." Matsuda offered to demonstrate his point, but the outcome of this encounter is also not specified.

While his prowess was significant, some sources suggest his approach differed from others. Bruce D. Clayton remarked that Kyan was an "incredible fighter, perhaps the most formidable ever trained at Shuri," but contrasted him with Itosu, who "was a grim and sober veteran of the Shuri Crucible," implying Kyan was a "bitter amateur who didn't understand the problem" of the time.

Despite his high birth, Kyan's adult life was described as "miserably poverty-stricken". Katsumi Murakami, citing

Chōshin Chibana, stated that Kyan frequented the Tsuji brothels and enjoyed traveling. To finance these activities, he would sell piglets from his wife's pig, deceiving her by keeping a portion of the earnings for himself. As a civilian, he dedicated his life to promoting karate, building his own house despite poverty, and teaching students in his yard. He also taught karate at the Kadena police station and the College of Agriculture and Forestry.

Kyan had a significant influence on the development of Shorin-ryū and related styles. He strongly emphasised kata training, and his interpretations of kata included movements that set them apart from those of other masters. His favourite kata were Passai, Chinto, and Kūsankū, which he modified to suit his small physique and evasive fighting methods, giving them a unique flavour. Kyan spent his life modifying Shuri kata, sometimes unconventionally, combining Chinese vital-point striking with the Shuri philosophy of ichigeki hissatsu ("one strike, sudden death"). He was among the Okinawan masters who participated in the 1936 meeting where the term "karate" was standardised.

Chōtoku Kyan taught a number of students who went on to become prominent karate masters themselves:

- Zenryo Shimabukuro (Chubu Shōrin-ryū): Shimabukuro studied with Kyan for over 10 years, from age 24 until 1944. He learned kata such as Naihanchi Shodan, Wanshu, Passai, Gōjūshiho, Chinto, Sesan, Kusanku, and Ananku. His first students were nephews and his eldest son, Zenpo, and he taught US Army paratroopers who introduced Kyan's karate to the United States.
- Joen Nakazato (Shorinji-ryū): Nakazato studied under Kyan from ages 13 to 20 while attending the Okinawa Prefectural Agricultural School and Kadena Teachers' Training College. He aimed to pass on Kyan's style in its entirety, teaching Kyan's nine unaltered kata, which are

performed with powerful movements and contain "disguised" techniques.

- Tatsuo Shimabuku (Isshin-ryū): Shimabuku began training with Kyan around 1927 at Kyan's home, studying until 1939. He learned Passai, Useishi (Gōjūshiho), Seisan, Naihanchi, Wansu, Chinto, Kusanku, Tokumine nu kun, and basic Sai. He also started his study of Ki (Chinkuchi) with Kyan.
- Ankichi Arakaki: He was a young disciple of Kyan. Nagamine studied under Arakaki first before training directly with Kyan, noting Arakaki's modern, scientific teaching approach.
- Shōshin Nagamine (Matsubayashi-ryū): Nagamine learned karate from Kyan's young disciples, Taro Shimabuku and Ankichi Arakaki. He also trained under Kodatsu Iha of Tomari-te.
- Tsuyoshi Chitose (Chitō-ryū)
- Kori Hisataka: Kudaka Kori, who headed a Shorinji-ryū dojo in Tokyo, was a childhood acquaintance of Nagamine and shared stories about Kyan.
- Taro Shimabuku.

Chōtoku Kyan passed away on 20 September 1945, at the age of 74. He survived the devastating Battle of Okinawa but died shortly after from fatigue and malnutrition in Ishikawa, in the north of the island. His last official demonstration occurred in Taipei in August 1930, where his sharp, powerful movements and indomitable spirit impressed the audience.

Kyan's enduring legacy lies in his significant influence on the development of Shorin-ryū and related styles, and his contributions to the practical application of karate.

Kanbun Uechi



Kanbun Uechi was born on 5 May 1877, in the Deikusaku section, growing up in the Takintō section of Izumi, a mountain farming village on the Motobu Peninsula of Okinawa. His family were daikon radish farmers. He was the eldest son of Kantoku Uechi, who belonged to the shizoku class and had moved from Shuri to Izumi to become a pioneer farmer.

In his youth, there are claims that Uechi studied bōjutsu and basic Chinese techniques from Motobu experts who had lived in China. However, a more recent Okinawan government-sanctioned publication states that no record exists of him learning "any kind of martial art" prior to his move to China. Uechi was reportedly mocked, nicknamed "Uechi Watabugwa" ("big belly" or "good-for-nothing Uechi"), due to a speech impediment and appearing "slow minded". These experiences strengthened his resolve to learn Chinese martial arts and seek training elsewhere.

At the age of 20, in 1897, Uechi travelled to Fuzhou, China, where he began to learn a Kung Fu system he identified as "Pangai-noon" (or Pangainun). This style, which means "hard-soft," was based on the principle of hard attacks and soft blocks. He studied under a Chinese master known as Zhou Zihe (called Shu Shiwa in Japanese, or Shu Shabu by Kanbun). However, research conducted by the Uechi Family and the local Wushu association in 1984 found that Zhou Zihe might

not have been Uechi's actual teacher, but possibly an assistant instructor, with Huzunquan (Fujian Tiger Boxing) lineage charts suggesting Zheng Xianji as his true teacher. More recent research provides no detailed answer on this matter.

From this training, Uechi learned three kata: Sanchin, Sesan, and Sanseryu. The Uechi Ryū Kihon claims that Kanbun Uechi never modified Zhou Zihe's teachings and strictly passed on only what he learned. Conversely, a review of current Uechi-ryū practice with styles in Fuzhou suggests that Kanbun made his own modifications to create what he called "Pangai-noon".

Uechi received a teaching licence from Zhou Zihe in 1904 and opened his own dojo in Nanjing in 1906. He continued periodic training under Zhou Zihe for three more years, totalling 13 years of study in China.

After his training in China, Uechi returned to Okinawa in 1909. He was determined never to teach martial arts again. One rumour suggests this decision stemmed from an incident in Nansoye, where one of his Chinese students reportedly killed a neighbour with an open-hand technique in a dispute over land irrigation.

Despite his initial refusal, word of his skill spread through figures like Go Kenki, a White Crane Kung Fu master and tea merchant who had met Uechi in Fuzhou and Nansoye and settled in Okinawa in 1912. Go Kenki would often tell interested customers about Uechi.

Due to the economic situation in Okinawa, Uechi, at the age of 47, left for Wakayama City, Japan, in 1924 to find employment. He worked as a security guard in a cotton spinning mill. In 1925, at the request of two Okinawan co-workers, he started teaching privately in the evenings after demonstrating self-defence techniques. By 1926, he agreed to teach a group of 30 men for 5 yen each per month, a significant income compared to his 15 yen monthly salary. He

taught in small rooms in the company dormitory until 1932, when he opened a general store and the "Pangai-noon Karate Academy" to the public in Tebira, Wakayama Prefecture.

In 1934, Kenwa Mabuni, the founder of Shitō-ryū, interviewed Uechi for his article "The Story of Chinese Kempō". It was Mabuni who suggested changing the style's name to "Uechi-Ryū" ("style of Uechi"). The style was officially renamed in 1940 in Uechi's honour.

Kanbun Uechi continued teaching in Wakayama until November 1946, when he turned his school over to his student, Ryuyu Tomoyose, and returned to Okinawa, settling on the island of Iejima. He met other prominent masters like Chōtoku Kyan, Kentsu Yabu, and Shigeru Nakamura during his time in Okinawa.

Kanbun Uechi passed away on 25 November 1948, at the age of 71, from kidney disease. There is an anecdote that he was told by a fortune teller he would live to be 88, which might have led him to not seek medical attention for his illness.

Kanbun Uechi is recognised as the founder of Uechi-Ryū, one of the primary Okinawan karate styles. His teachings, particularly the three kata (Sanchin, Sesan, Sanseryu), laid the foundation for the style. He was a firm believer in the power and strength gained from a well-balanced stance and firm posture, and promoted correct breathing, speed, and split-second timing, aiming to unite the mind and body in harmony.

After his death, his style was formalised by his eldest son, Kanei Uechi, and his senior students. Kanei was instrumental in Uechi-ryū's global growth. He understood that modern students needed more structured learning than the original three kata. Therefore, Kanei, with other senior instructors, added five "bridging" kata between the original three. He also added warm-up exercises (junbi undō) and standardised yakusoku kumite (prearranged partner exercises).

Kanbun Uechi's style did not adhere to the Japanese Dan (rank) system during his lifetime. Out of respect, he is posthumously considered a 10th dan and referred to as "grandmaster". His son, Kanei, described his father's teaching manner as gentle, contrasting with other accounts that indicate he practiced body hardening techniques as a "street-side medicine hawker" to attract crowds, a more down-to-earth account preferred by some sources over more mythological histories.

Chōshin Chibana



Chōshin Chibana was born on 5 June 1885, in the village of Shuri, Okinawa. He was the second son of Chibana Chohaku and his wife Nabi. The Chibana family had a distinguished lineage, tracing their ancestry to a branch of the Katsuren Court and to Choharu, the fifth son of King Shoshitsu (Tei). However, their noble titles and status were lost after the Meiji Emperor abolished the caste system in Japan, leading the family to turn to Awamori brewing for their livelihood.

In his youth, Chibana was described as having a notably gentle demeanour, both in movement and speech, to the point where his teacher, Itosu Ankō, would reportedly refer to him with his boyhood name and use gentle, almost "female" phrases, such as "And don't hang around. Go straight home!" This anecdote suggests Chibana possessed a well-balanced character. Despite his slight build, measuring approximately 1.62m (5ft 3in) in height, his physical size belied a profound strength that stemmed from "martial power" or "spiritual strength," originating from the tanden (lower abdomen).

Chibana began his formal martial arts training under Itosu Ankō in 1899, at the age of fifteen. He was accepted as a suitable student and remained Itosu remained his sole teacher for thirteen years, continuing his training until he was 28. After Itosu's passing at the age of 85, Chibana continued his practice independently for another five years before opening his first dojo. Yuchoku Higa, a later student of

Chibana's, deeply respected his teacher, adhering to the principle that "the teacher is more important than the style," and remained Chibana's disciple until his death.

Chōshin Chibana was a firm believer that karate, as a martial art, should not be taught merely as a sport or a form of physical exercise. He articulated that during practice, one should "*forget everything and gather one's spiritual energy together so that the head, eyes, hands and feet become united; the fingers and toes should become like spears so that a single kick or a single punch can kill*". He emphasised that achieving this demanding goal required "long, constant and careful practice," and warned against the dangers of overdoing things.

He also taught that practitioners should adapt and develop forms to suit their own body and temperament. His philosophy of doriyoku, or "total commitment in each movement," aimed for "one technique, total destruction". He was also known for his strict ethical standards, refusing to accept any prospective student with a "bad character".

Chibana opened his first public dojo in the Tori-hori district when he was 34. Over the years, he relocated his dojo multiple times, including to the Kumoji district of Naha City, and in 1929, to Baron Nakijin's courtyard in Gibo village, Shuri, renaming it "The Tode Kenkyu Sho (Tode Research Club)". His teaching locations extended to both Naha and Shuri.

A significant contribution to karate nomenclature came in 1929 when Chibana became the first to officially name an Okinawan karate style with a Japanese ryu name, calling Itosu's karate "Shorin-ryū" (小林流, "the small forest school"). This name later distinguished his lineage as the Kobayashi branch of Shorin-ryū karate-dō.

During the tumultuous period of World War II's Battle of Okinawa, Chibana endured immense personal loss, losing his

family, livelihood, dojo, and many students, narrowly escaping with his life. After the war, he returned to Shuri from Chinen Village and resumed teaching, opening new clubs across Naha and Shuri. From February 1954 to December 1958, he served as the Karate Advisor and Senior Instructor for the Shuri Police Precinct, also teaching Gōjū-ryū to the local police in Yonabaru. He collaborated with other masters like Chōtoku Kyan, performing demonstrations to promote the Shorin-ryū style.

Chibana played a pivotal role in the formalisation of Okinawan karate organisations. In May 1956, upon the formation of the Okinawa Karate Federation, he was elected as its first president. Two years later, he resigned from this role to form and preside over the Okinawa Shorin-ryū Karate-dō Association. By 1957, he received the esteemed title of Hanshi (High Master) from the Dai Nippon Butokukai. His dedication was further recognised in 1960 with the Physical Culture Distinguished Services Award from the Okinawa Times newspaper, and in 1968, he was bestowed the Kunyonto Order of the Sacred Treasure, 4th Class, by the Emperor of Japan.

While Chibana primarily passed on Itosu's style without alteration in its initial form, his student Shugoro Nakazato later incorporated Kihon and Fukyu kata into the Shorin-ryū curriculum. Chibana's teachings emphasised "disguised" techniques within kata, such as transforming a standard middle block into a backfist. He instructed Sesan as a fundamental kata, practiced with dynamic tension akin to Gōjū-ryū's Sanchin, incorporating natural abdominal breathing synchronised with slow, powerful movements. He assured that this breathing method, mirroring natural human exertion (like stone masons breaking rocks), was safe as long as breath was not held during tension.

His "secret principles" for kata practice highlighted three key aspects: understanding kata to significantly enhance physical strength, recognising speed as essential in martial arts, and using kata practice to sharpen perception and develop powerful strikes. Even at 80 years old, Chibana humbly believed he still had "a long way to go" in his martial journey.

In 1964, Chibana was diagnosed with terminal throat cancer. Despite his illness, he continued to teach, even undergoing radiation treatment in Tokyo in 1966, after which he briefly improved and resumed teaching with the assistance of his grandson, Nakazato Akira. His condition worsened by late 1968, and he passed away on 26 February 1969, at the age of 83, at Ohama Hospital.

Chōshin Chibana is remembered as the "Last Warrior of Shuri" and one of the most important pre-World War karate masters. As the sole surviving personal disciple of Itosu Anko in post-war Okinawa, he took it upon himself to honour his teacher's legacy by leading the construction of a commemorative stone monument for Itosu in 1964. This selfless act not only brought him recognition but also played a crucial role in revitalising the Okinawan karate community and restoring a sense of pride devastated by the war. His lineage remains a significant branch of modern karate.

Go Kenki



Go Kenki, also known as Wu Xiangui (吳賢貴), Wu Hian Gui, or Wu Xianhui, was born in China in 1886 and passed away in 1940. He originated from Fuzhou, China. He emigrated to Okinawa, where he adopted Japanese nationality and was known locally as Go Kenki. He also used the Japanese name Yoshikawa. By profession, Go Kenki was a tea importer and merchant, running a successful trade business between China and Okinawa.

Go Kenki was an exponent of Fujian White Crane quanfa and belonged to the Hakkaku ken school. According to sources, he trained under his father, Go Koki.

Go Kenki taught the Southern Shaolin form of White Crane Boxing to a small group of four or five young students at his tea store in Naha, reportedly charging no tuition but expecting them to provide raw eggs for consumption during lessons. His teachings significantly influenced several pivotal figures in Okinawan karate, such as Chōjun Miyagi, Kenwa Mabuni, Juhatsu Kyoda, Shinko Matayoshi, and Shinpo Matayoshi, (Shinko Matayoshi's son).

Go Kenki's presence and knowledge had a profound impact on the development of karate in Okinawa. His expertise in Fujian White Crane quanfa, which he taught in Naha, played a crucial role in shaping Okinawan martial arts, particularly the Shuri-ryu (Naha-te) lineage, into what became Gōjū-ryū.

He was an important member of the Association for Karate Studies (Karate Kenkyukai), a group founded by Kenwa Mabuni dedicated to perpetuating and disseminating Okinawan karate. Go Kenki was instrumental in Chōjun Miyagi's second trip to China in 1936, accompanying him as an interpreter. During this trip, Go Kenki introduced Miyagi to Miao Xing, a Monk Fist Boxing expert, an encounter that some researchers believe inspired Miyagi to develop the Gekisai kata, though this theory is disputed.

His teachings contributed significantly to Kenwa Mabuni's Shitō-ryū, Juhatsu Kyoda's To'on Ryu, and Chōjun Miyagi's Gōjū-ryū. It is also suggested that Go Kenki might have been the one to introduce the Bubishi, an important Chinese martial arts treatise, to the Okinawans, further influencing karate-do.

Go Kenki is credited with introducing and influencing several kata that became part of Okinawan and Japanese karate-do:

• The kata Nipai or Nipaipo (meaning "28 steps") is a well-known example of a kata he brought from China. Kenwa Mabuni learned this kata, which originates from the Chinese White Crane style, directly from Go Kenki.

• The kata Kakufa is believed to have been taught or created by Go Kenki.

• The kata Yantsu, while mainly practised within Kyokushinkai, is said to have been brought back from China by Go Kenki and shows clear signs of being related to the Chinese Crane tradition.

• He also contributed the kata Papurian from his Hakutsuru Ken Kenpo (White Crane Fist Kempo).

Go Kenki's legacy is that of an instrumental figure who bridged Chinese and Okinawan martial arts traditions. His role as a teacher and cultural intermediary was crucial in

shaping the diverse styles of Okinawan karate. By teaching the White Crane boxing style and sharing his knowledge with key Okinawan masters, Go Kenki ensured that Chinese martial arts forms and principles were integrated into the developing Okinawan karate systems. His influence is clearly seen in the lineages of Gōjū-ryū , Shitō-ryū, and To'on Ryu, which continue to incorporate elements and kata traced back to his teachings.

Kyoda Juhatsu

Kyoda Juhatsu was born on 5 December 1887. He embarked on his martial arts journey at an early age, becoming a dedicated student of Higaonna Kanryō in 1901. Kyoda was one year older than Chōjun Miyagi and commenced his training with Higaonna a year earlier, a fact that made him Miyagi's sempai, or senior student, in both age and time spent under Higaonna's tutelage. He continued to train diligently with Higaonna until his esteemed teacher's passing in 1916.

Kyoda pursued a career in education, attending the Okinawa Prefecture Teachers' College, eventually becoming a teacher and later a school principal. His role as an educator extended into his martial arts philosophy, as he believed that qualities like a strong character and an indomitable spirit could and should be imparted to school-age children through karate-dō.

He actively promoted this aspect of kokutai (national essence) by establishing several karate-dō clubs in the elementary and junior high schools where he worked before World War II.

Kyoda was deeply involved in the program aimed at systemising and standardising karate-dō across Okinawa and Japan. His style, To'on-ryū karate-dō, received official recognition from the Dai Nippon Butokukai in 1933. The following year, in 1934, he was awarded his kyoshi certification by the same organisation. He was a strong advocate for the renshi-kyoshi-hanshi system of licensing, promoting it throughout Okinawa and mainland Japan. Furthermore, he served as the chief director and head instructor for the Naha branch of the Butokukai.

During his training with Higaonna, Kyoda learned a comprehensive set of empty-hand kata, which he later incorporated into his own style, To'on-ryū. Notably, he

learned the Sanseiryu kata directly from Higaonna sensei when Miyagi was serving in the Japanese military. This acquisition of knowledge was a point of considerable pride for Kyoda, as Miyagi had not learned Sanseiryu directly from their master. Over time, Sanseiryu became his favourite kata. However, he chose to include none of the weapons kata he might have learned in his To'on-ryū curriculum.

Kyoda Juhatsu maintained significant connections within the Okinawan karate community. He was part of several karate study groups in the 1920s that included other prominent masters such as Chōjun Miyagi, Kenwa Mabuni, and Shinko Matayoshi. These groups were influenced by the teachings of Wu Xiangui's Fujian White Crane boxing, which also impacted the development of To'on-ryū.

His profound knowledge of Gōjū-ryū was acknowledged by Chōjun Miyagi and his senior students. Towards the end of Miyagi's life, when he was gravely ill and unable to teach effectively, he would direct his students with questions about Gōjū-ryū kata to Kyoda Juhatsu for his expert input. Following Miyagi's death in 1953, several senior Gōjū-ryū students approached Kyoda, asking him to become Miyagi's successor and take on the stewardship of Gōjū-ryū. They saw him as the most logical choice due to his direct discipleship under Higaonna and his seniority to Miyagi. Kyoda reluctantly agreed, but on one condition: he insisted that the style be renamed To'on Gōjū-ryū to honour Higaonna Kanryō. This condition was not accepted by the Okinawan Gōjū-ryū officials, leading Kyoda to decline the succession.

After retiring as a school principal, Kyoda moved to the island of Kyushu in southern Japan. During this period, he did not maintain a permanent dojo, instead teaching out of his home in Oita Prefecture. His training methods were known to be "extremely demanding," to the extent that "modern karate-ka could scarcely imagine learning in such a manner".

Kyoda named his style To'on-ryū, using the Chinese pronunciation of the kanji characters (東恩流) that make up his teacher Higaonna's name. Although some inaccurately simplify To'on-ryū as merely another branch of Gōjū-ryū, it is a distinct system. Despite Kyoda's immense knowledge and influence among his peers, To'on-ryū remained relatively obscure compared to Gōjū-ryū. This obscurity is often attributed to his lack of a permanent dojo, the absence of a stable student body, and his severe training methods during his later years in Kyushu.

Nevertheless, Kyoda Juhatsu is recognised as one of karate-dō's great masters, largely due to his instrumental role in introducing karate-dō to public schools and his significant contributions to the standardisation and systematisation of karate-dō in both Okinawa and Japan. His direct student, Kanzaki, continued to advocate for studying traditional karate while also researching other styles.

Chōjun Miyagi



Chōjun Miyagi was born on 25 April 1888, in the Higashimachi district of Naha, Okinawa. His original given name was Matsu. This was later changed to Chōjun in 1893, after his father's death, when he was adopted into his uncle's prosperous business family. His family was involved in foreign trade with Fuzhou, China, and was among the wealthiest in Naha. Miyagi was described as physically strong and fond of sports, earning a reputation as an "unruly youth". Despite his later wealth, the war led to the destruction of his assets and fortune.

Miyagi's martial arts journey began at a young age. When he was ten or eleven, he started training with a Tomari-te practitioner named Aragaki Ryuko, who, in 1902, introduced the promising young student to Higaonna Kanryō, who became his principal teacher. Miyagi continued to train diligently under Higaonna Sensei until his teacher's death in 1915. It is worth noting that Kyoda Juhatsu, a fellow student, was a year older than Miyagi and began training with Higaonna a year earlier, making him Miyagi's "sempai" (senior student).

Miyagi's training with Higaonna was interrupted for a two-year period (1910-1912) while he completed his military service in Miyakonojō, Miyazaki. During this time, as a non-commissioned officer in the army medical corps, he studied judo and acquired knowledge of anatomy and physiology,

which he later incorporated into his unique warm-up or conditioning exercises, junbi undo.

Following Higaonna's passing, Miyagi travelled to Fuzhou, China, in May 1915, to deepen his understanding of martial arts, just as his teacher had done. During this first trip, he visited the grave of Ryū Ryū Ko, Higaonna's teacher, and trained for two months with one of Ryū Ryū Ko's students, an elderly gentleman who had been a junior student alongside Higaonna.

Through these sessions, Miyagi confirmed that the nine kata he learned from Higaonna were indeed the same ones taught by Ryū Ryū Ko. He also learned the Chinese characters for these kata. Miyagi made a second trip to Fuzhou in 1916 with his Chinese friend, Go Kenki, an exponent of Fujian White Crane quanfa, during which he studied local Chinese martial arts. It was during this second trip that he observed the Rokkishu (a set of hand exercises), which he adapted into the Tensho kata.

Miyagi was born into a wealthy merchant family and worked in their family business, which engaged in foreign trade with Fuzhou. However, he dedicated most of his time and passion to karate, often neglecting sleep and food in his pursuit of knowledge.

Miyagi played a crucial role in standardising and popularising karate-dō. His greatest achievements were in the popularisation and organisation of karate teaching methods. He began teaching karate in public institutions, becoming an instructor at the Prefectural Police School dojo in 1929 and later teaching at the Naha Courthouse, the Prefectural Physical Culture Association, and the Prefectural Teachers' Training College.

He also lectured and demonstrated karate at various Japanese universities on the mainland. In 1938, he was nominated as

the Karate Instructor for the Okinawa Prefecture Teachers College. After World War II, despite personal losses and a "smashed homeland," he continued teaching, notably to the Ryukyu police.

In 1930, Miyagi officially named his style Gōjū-ryū, drawing inspiration from a passage in the Bubishi text: "*The way of inhaling and exhaling is hardness and softness*" (Ho go ju donto). This name was chosen to reflect the blend of hard and soft techniques, with an emphasis on breathing, making it "an ideal name". This official naming was vital for karate's acceptance within the larger Japanese society, especially by the Dai Nippon Butokukai, a martial arts regulatory body. In 1933, Gōjū-ryū was officially recognised by the Butokukai, and in 1936, Miyagi was granted the Kyoshi title, the first karate teacher to receive such an honour, elevating karate's status alongside judo and kendo.

Miyagi believed that karate should extend beyond mere fighting techniques. He stated that "*training the body and mind in karate results in the cultivation of a strong character and an indomitable spirit*". His curriculum included character development and a broader education, inviting guests to the dojo to lecture on calligraphy, music, literature, poetry, and medicine. He famously advocated for the principle "karate ni sente nashi" ("in karate, there is no first attack" or "no aggression"), advising students to avoid confrontations altogether and emphasising a "humble attitude coupled with hard practice".

Miyagi's contributions to kata development were profound. He synthesised what he learned from Higaonna and his research in China. He developed junbi undo (warm-up exercises) and structured the Gōjū-ryū syllabus to include hojo undo, kihongata (fundamental kata like Sanchin and Tensho), kaishugata (eight other Gōjū-ryū kata), and kumite renshu (sparring training). The popular Geki Sai Ichi and Geki

Sai Ni kata were not developed until 1941. While some sources suggest his experience with Miao Xing inspired Geki Sai kata, this is disputed. Miyagi was "obsessed with Sanchin kata," believing it to be "the core of all martial teaching". He taught sanchin as a moving meditation, emphasizing precise control, forceful breathing, and full-body tensing at impact. He also revised and further developed Sanchin and created Tensho, considering them the essence of Gōjū-ryū. At the end of his life, Shisochin was his favourite kata.

Miyagi taught a total of twelve kata that form the basis of modern Gōjū-ryū: Sanchin, Gekisai-ichi, Gekisai-ni, Saifa, Seiyonchin, Shisouchin, Sanseiru, Sepai, Kururunfua, Sesan, Suparinpe, and Tensho. Notably, his senior, Kyoda Juhatsu, learned the Sanseiryu kata directly from Higaonna when Miyagi was serving in the military, a fact Kyoda held with considerable pride.

Chōjun Miyagi attracted many dedicated students who would go on to become prominent masters themselves. These included Eiichi Miyazato, Meitoku Yagi, Seiko Higa, Jinan Shinzato, Gogen Yamaguchi, Anichi Miyagi, Shuichi Aragaki, Seikichi Toguchi, Keiyo Matanbashi, Jinsei Kamiya, Genkai Nakaima, Tatsuo Shimabuku, and Koshin Iha.

Miyagi's teaching methodology was unique; he individualised instruction based on each student's needs and abilities, believing that "no two students were exactly alike". He was reluctant to award ranks during his lifetime. The first Gōjū-ryū black belts were awarded only after his death in 1953.

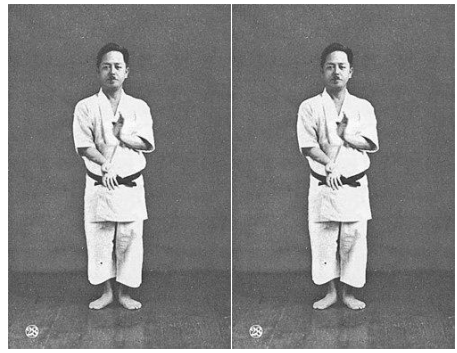
In his final years, Chōjun Miyagi suffered from grave illness, which limited his ability to teach effectively. After World War II, he faced immense personal tragedy, including the loss of three of his children, and his homeland was left devastated under US military rule.

Chōjun Miyagi passed away on 8 October 1953, at the age of 65, from a cerebral haemorrhage, having had his first heart attack in 1951.

His passing left a void in the Gōjū-ryū community, as he had not officially named a successor. Several senior students claimed succession, but the Miyagi family recognised Eiichi Miyazato, who continued to teach in Miyagi's garden dojo and later established the Jundokan. The prominence of Kyoda Juhatsu as Higaonna's direct disciple led some senior Gōjū-ryū students to ask him to succeed Miyagi; however, his condition to rename the style "To'on Gōjū-ryū" to honour Higaonna was rejected.

Chōjun Miyagi's enduring legacy is evident in his instrumental role in transforming karate from a secretive combat art into a systematised martial way accessible to the public and recognised worldwide. His "staggering" life and legacy continue to shape Gōjū-ryū practitioners globally, with his emphasis on character development, modesty, and hard training remaining core tenets. The enduring popularity of his style and the widespread recognition of his principles stand as a testament to his profound impact on the martial arts world, even inspiring fictional characters like Mr. Miyagi in The Karate Kid.

Kenwa Mabuni



Kenwa Mabuni (摩文仁 賢和) was best known as the founder of the Shitō-Ryū school of karate. Born on 14 November 1889, in Shuri, Okinawa, he was a 17th-generation descendant of the renowned Okinawan warrior, Uni Ufugusuku Kenyu, also known as "Oni" ("Demon") Ufugushuku.

He was a frail child and his family sought to improve his frail and sickly constitution, leading him to begin martial arts training at a young age. At the age of thirteen in 1902, he commenced his instruction in Shuri-te under the tutelage of the legendary Itosu Ankō. Mabuni trained diligently with Itosu for several years, learning many kata from him. Itosu, a pivotal figure in modern karate development, was responsible for creating the Pinan kata. Mabuni remained Itosu's student until the latter's death.

In 1908, Mabuni's close friend, Chōjun Miyagi, introduced him to Higaonna Kanryō. Higaonna was the leading proponent of Naha-te, the other major form of karate in the early 20th century. Mabuni trained with Higaonna, thus developing a deep understanding of both the Shuri-te (hard, linear techniques) and Naha-te (circular, close-range methods) styles. His style, Shitō-Ryū, fundamentally combines these two lineages.

Mabuni's dedication to martial arts led him to seek instruction from a wide array of other teachers beyond Itosu and Higaonna. He learned from Aragaki Seishō, acquiring kata such as Unsu, Sōchin, and Niseishi, as well as Aragaki Sāi and Aragaki Bō kata. He also studied with Chōtoku Kyan, Tawada Shimboku, and Sueyoshi Jino. Through his Chinese friend, Gō Kenki, Mabuni learned Hakutsuru Ken Kempō, from which kata like Nipaipo, Paipuren, and Hakutsuru were incorporated into Shitō-Ryū.

Gō Kenki's teachings profoundly influenced the development of this lineage of karate. This extensive learning earned Mabuni a reputation for his "encyclopaedic knowledge of kata and their bunkai applications". By the 1920s, he was considered the foremost authority on Okinawan kata and their history.

Mabuni served as an Okinawan policeman. In this role, he taught local law enforcement officers and, at Itosu's request, began instructing in various grammar schools in Shuri and Naha.

Mabuni was one of the first Okinawan teachers to introduce karate to mainland Japan. He made several trips to Tokyo in 1917 and 1928 to popularise the art. In 1927, he met Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, who was favourably impressed and encouraged Mabuni and Chōjun Miyagi to teach karate on the mainland. In 1928 or 1929, Mabuni relocated to Ōsaka, Japan, taking up permanent residence. He began teaching in various dōjō, including the Sei Shi Kan Dojo of Kokuba Kosei. Despite facing poverty in his early years on the mainland, he managed to open a small dōjō and publish pamphlets on his style by 1934.

Mabuni was instrumental in the establishment of the Karate Kenkyū-Kai ("Karate Research Association") in 1918. This group, which included prominent Okinawan karateka like Chōjun Miyagi, Gichin Funakoshi, and Kyoda Juhatsu, met

regularly to exchange theories and techniques. In 1925, Mabuni opened his garden at home for the association's use as a meeting and training facility. This collaborative environment further broadened his knowledge of Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te, a knowledge considered unequalled by his peers.

Mabuni officially founded his style, initially naming it Hankō-Ryū ("half-hard style") to reflect its blend of hard and soft techniques. However, to honour his two primary teachers, Itosu and Higaonna, he soon changed the name to Shitō-Ryū. The name "Shitō" is derived by concatenating the first kanji of each of their names: "ito" (糸) from Itosu and "higa" (東) from Higaonna, which together (糸東) are pronounced "shitō". This was his way of paying respect to his mentors.

The official recognition of martial arts by bodies like the Dai Nippon Butokukai was crucial for karate's acceptance in Japan. Shitō-Ryū was officially registered with the Butokukai in 1939. Mabuni, along with other masters like Gichin Funakoshi and Chōjun Miyagi, was involved in the 1936 meeting where the term "karate" was standardised. He founded the precursor to the modern Shitōkai organisation in 1939.

Mabuni's contribution to kata development was profound. He knew over ninety different kata, although he did not teach all of them publicly. His curriculum included fifty-three empty-hand kata and also integrated kobudō kata (bo, sai, and other Okinawan weapons), regarding karate and kobudō as a single art. He was likely the first to introduce Okinawan weapons arts to Japan. He also created at least ten kata himself between 1915 and 1940. For example, he developed new formal kata such as Aoyagi/Seiryu (Green Willow), with the assistance of Yasuhiro Konishi and Morihei Ueshiba, which were specifically designed for women's self-defence.

Mabuni was a strong proponent of focusing deeply on a few kata rather than superficially learning many. He advocated for the principle of "hito kata sansen", meaning a student should spend three years and three months learning a single kata and its bunkai (self-defence application) before moving to another. He believed that "If you practiced correctly, two or three kata are sufficient as 'your' kata. All others should be studied as an additional source of knowledge. Breadth, no matter how great, means little without depth". He insisted that kata must be taught and practiced with a proper understanding of their bunkai, stating that "Kata movement is meant to be used in a real encounter". His explanations of bunkai were remarkably detailed, covering striking, receiving, kicking, throwing, joint manipulation, and countering techniques.

Mabuni believed that karate was not just a system of physical techniques (taijutsu) but also rich in mental techniques (shinjutsu). He famously described karate-dō as "kunshi no ken" ("the fists of a gentleman"), implying that every karateka should strive to be a person of nobility, strong character, wisdom, and sophistication. His training included character development, emphasising values such as politeness, charity, respect, and grace, while warning against mistrust, laziness, pride, and envy. He stressed the importance of continuous self-improvement, encapsulated in the motto: "*Try to improve, become better today than you were yesterday, and tomorrow become better than today".*

Regarding the principle "karate ni sente nashi" ("in karate, there is no first attack"), Mabuni offered a nuanced interpretation. He cautioned against rigid adherence that might preclude pre-emptive action when facing someone who disrupts peace or intends harm, asserting that it is reasonable to "forestall the enemy's actions" in such cases. For him, the true meaning was to stop conflict and maintain peace.

Kenwa Mabuni died on 23 May 1952, at the age of 62. His passing led to a period of rivalry between his sons, Kenei Mabuni (1918–2015) and Kenzo Mabuni (1927–2005), both of whom claimed succession to Shitō-Ryū. Kenei, the elder son, was traditionally considered the rightful successor, but had not trained extensively in the art, while Kenzo had trained consistently with his father.

Mabuni's legacy is profound. He transformed karate into a systematised martial way, making it accessible to a broader audience. His meticulous documentation and preservation of a vast number of kata, including his own creations and those from diverse lineages, safeguarded a significant part of Okinawa's cultural heritage that might have otherwise been lost. His emphasis on character development, combined with a comprehensive understanding of both armed and unarmed combat, continues to influence Shitō-Ryū practitioners worldwide. Despite receiving little public fame or monetary rewards during his lifetime, he left a "great gift" to humanity, a style of karate that remains one of the four major styles of Japanese karate.

Hironori Ōtsuka



Hironori Ōtsuka (大塚 博紀) (1892–1982) was renowned as the founder of the Wadō-ryū (和道流) style of karate. His contributions were instrumental in integrating Okinawan karate with traditional Japanese martial arts, notably jujutsu, and shaping the modern competitive aspects of karate.

Ōtsuka was born on June 1, 1892, in Shimodate City, Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan, one of four children to Tokujiro Ōtsuka, a medical doctor. His martial arts journey began at a very young age. At five years old, he commenced training in jujutsu under his great-uncle, Chojiro Ebashi, a samurai. At the age of thirteen, he became a student of Tatsusaburo Nakayama in Shindō Yōshin-ryū jujutsu. His father took over his martial arts education in 1897.

He continued his studies through school and university, eventually receiving the menkyo kaiden (certificate of mastery and license to teach) in Shindō Yōshin-ryū jujutsu from Nakayama on June 1, 1921. By 1928, at the age of thirty, he was awarded the title of grandmaster in jujutsu. It is a common misconception that he became the "4th grandmaster" of Shindō Yōshin-ryū, but the 3rd grandmaster, Tatsuo Matsuoka, outlived Ōtsuka by nearly eight years.

Ōtsuka initially worked as a clerk at the Kawasaki Bank because his father's death prevented him from completing his studies and pursuing a full-time instructor career out of respect for his mother's wishes. In 1927, he established a medical practice, specialising in treating martial arts training

injuries. He was also known as a professional bonesetter. Later, he left his medical practice to dedicate himself entirely to martial arts. In 1944, he was appointed Japan's Chief Karate Instructor.

While jujutsu was his primary art, Ōtsuka began training in karate in 1922 under Gichin Funakoshi, who had recently arrived in Japan. He quickly became an assistant instructor in Funakoshi's Meishojuko dojo by 1928. His background in jujutsu, including kicking and striking techniques, meant he was already "on familiar ground" with Funakoshi's teachings. He became proficient in the fifteen kata Funakoshi was teaching at the time.

Ōtsuka sought to broaden his karate knowledge beyond Funakoshi's instruction, leading him to also train under Motobu Chōki, Kenwa Mabuni, and Yasuhiro Konishi.

Ōtsuka developed philosophical disagreements with Funakoshi, and they eventually parted ways in the early 1930s. Funakoshi's karate primarily emphasised kata, and he did not believe sparring was necessary for realistic training. In contrast, Ōtsuka believed there was a need for a "more dynamic and fluid type of karate".

On April 1, 1934, Ōtsuka opened his own school in Tokyo, named the Dai Nippon Karate Shinko-Kai (All Japan Karate Promotion Association). His new style, Wadō-ryū, which means "way of peace," was officially registered around 1939 and officially recognised as an independent style in 1934.

After the ban on martial arts in Japan following World War II was lifted, Ōtsuka actively promoted karate through competitions in the 1950s.

Ōtsuka cultivated a number of significant students who went on to make their own marks in the martial arts world:

- Masaru Shintani.

- Tatsuo Suzuki (1928–2011), who later founded the Wadō Kokusai (Wadō International Karate-dō Federation) in 1989 due to dissatisfaction with the leadership of Ōtsuka's son, Ōtsuka Jiro.
- Toru Arakawa.
- Hajime Takashima.
- His son, Ōtsuka Jiro, succeeded him and took the name Hironori Ōtsuka II.

On April 29, 1966, Emperor Hirohito awarded Ōtsuka the Order of the Rising Sun, Fifth Class, in recognition of his significant contributions to karate.

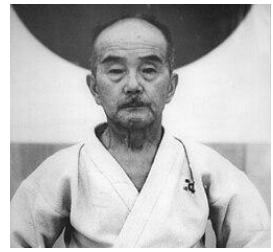
He authored two books on karate: Karate-dō, Volume 1 (1967), which focused on kata, and Karate-dō, Volume 2 (1970), which focused on kumite.

On October 9, 1972, the Kokusai Budoin International Martial Arts Federation (IMAF Japan) bestowed upon him the title of Shodai Karate-dō Meijin Judan (first-generation karate master 10th dan). This marked the first time such an honour had been given to a karate practitioner.

Ōtsuka is counted among the "early progenitors of karate" and his contributions were pivotal in the transition of Okinawan karate to its modern, more dynamic form, especially by integrating sparring techniques. He is often contrasted with Gichin Funakoshi, who reportedly never received official titles and honours, suggesting Ōtsuka's greater acceptance within the Japanese martial arts establishment of his time.

Hironori Ōtsuka passed away on January 29, 1982, leaving behind a transformative legacy that continues to influence karate practitioners worldwide.

Yasuhiro Konishi



Yasuhiro Konishi (小西康裕, Konishi Yasuhiro) (1893–1983) was a profoundly influential Japanese master, credited as the founder of the Shindō Jinen-ryū (神道自然流) style of karate. He played a crucial role in the development and acceptance of modern karate on mainland Japan.

Konishi was born in 1893 in Takamatsu, Kagawa, Japan. His martial arts journey began at a young age, starting with Muso Ryu jujutsu in 1899. By the age of thirteen, he began training in kendo and later expanded his studies to include Takenouchi-ryū jujutsu and judo. In 1915, he enrolled at Keio University in Tokyo.

Konishi's first exposure to "te" (the precursor to karate) came through Tsuneshige Arakaki, an individual from Okinawa. After leaving his job in 1923, Konishi dedicated himself fully to martial arts by opening his own training facility, the Ryobu-Kan ("The House of Martial Arts Excellence"), where he initially provided instruction in kendo and jujutsu.

His pursuit of karate led him to train with many of the era's most esteemed masters, giving him an incredibly diverse foundation. He studied under Gichin Funakoshi, Motobu Chōki, Kenwa Mabuni, and Chōjun Miyagi, the founder of Gōjū-ryū, and Chōshin Chibana.

He also notably studied under Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido. Ueshiba provided feedback on Konishi's own kata creations, once remarking on his Tai Sabaki kata, "The

demonstration you did just now was satisfactory to me and that kata is worth mastering".

Among his notable students was Hironori Ōtsuka, the founder of Wadō-ryū karate, who also studied under Konishi, Funakoshi, and Motobu. Other students included Kiyoshi Yamazaki, Sho Kosugi, and Shoji Nishio.

Yasuhiro Konishi was among the first Okinawan karateka to introduce and teach karate on mainland Japan. He was instrumental in shaping modern karate and ensuring its acceptance within Japan. He was known for his comprehensive knowledge of kata. He collaborated with Kenwa Mabuni to develop the kata Seiryu.

Konishi himself created new forms, including a kata named Tai Sabaki ("body movement"), which was unique for being an unbroken sequence of actions. He later developed two additional forms based on the same principles, naming them Tai Sabaki Shodan, Tai Sabaki Nidan, and Tai Sabaki Sandan.

Konishi's philosophy extended beyond mere physical technique. He believed that Budō training was a means to build character and foster harmony between the body, mind, and art. He saw karate and Zen as different facets of the same core principle, expressing this conviction in a poignant poem: "Karate is not to hit someone. Nor to be defeated. It is to avoid trouble."

Despite being less famous internationally than some of his contemporaries, Konishi is recognised as one of history's most significant Budō masters. He was a successful businessman, a dedicated teacher, and an active political figure who tirelessly worked to bring respectability to martial arts. His enduring efforts are a major reason why karate holds the esteemed position it does today. Konishi passed away in 1983.

Tsuyoshi Chitose



Tsuyoshi Chitose (千歳 强直) (Okinawan: Chinen Gua) was born on 18 October 1898, in the town of Kumochi, Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture. He died in 1984. Chitose is the founder of the Chitō-ryū (千唐流) style of karate, a name which translates as "1,000 year old Chinese style," referring to the Tang dynasty of China.

Chitose came from a martial arts lineage; his maternal grandfather was Sōkon Matsumura (松村 宗棍). While in Okinawa, he grew up studying karate well as kobudō. In 1921, he moved to mainland Japan to study medicine.

Chitose began his training in 1905 under Aragaki Seishō. He was seven years old at the time and continued to train with Aragaki until 1913 or 1914. There is some debate regarding his first kata, but his book Kempō Karate-dō states that he learned Sanchin from Aragaki for seven years before being taught another kata. Other kata attributed to his training with Aragaki Seishō include Unshu, Seisan, Niseishi, and possibly Shihōhai.

Aragaki was also a renowned weapons master, teaching several bo and sai kata, such as Aragaki-no-kun, Aragaki-no-sai, and Sesoku-no-kun. Higaonna Kanryō was also one of

Aragaki's most famous students and one of Chitose's primary teachers.

Chitose formulated and founded Chitō-ryū primarily while living in Kumamoto, Japan, officially establishing the style in 1946. He created Chitō-ryū by combining the strength techniques from Shuri-te (also known as Shōrin-ryū and Shōrei-ryū) with those of Naha-te. The influence of Tomari-te is also present in his style, though less evident than the other two foundation styles. His system is said to have integrated approximately 70% hard techniques and 30% softer techniques.

Chitō-ryū kata feature "signature techniques" pointing to its Okinawan Tō-te roots, including an emphasis on shime (tightening/focus), the use of shibori (wringing/twisting), rapid rotational movements, and frequent use of movement off the line of attack (tai sabaki) at advanced levels.

The Shihōhai (四方拝, "four-direction salute") kata is unique to Chitō-ryū. While some sources claim he learned it from Aragaki Seishō, Chitose's own book indicates he learned it from Hanashiro Chōmo at Sōgen-ji. Historically, it is said that this kata was used in the royal ceremonies of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, with the "salutation to all four sides" holding great significance during these ceremonies. Some Chitō-ryū groups practice an extended dai (大) version of Shihōhai.

Tsuyoshi Chitose's contributions were formally recognised by the Zen Okinawa Karate Kobudo Rengo Kai (All Okinawa Union of Karate-dō and Kobu-do), which awarded him the rank of Judan (10th Dan) in 1958, and then the rank of Hanshi (Grand Master) in 1968. The Hanshi rank is described as the highest degree of martial arts recognition.

Chitose first visited Canada in 1967, accompanied by Mamoru Yamamoto, presiding over events at the Canadian National Karate Tournament in Toronto and conducting clinics across

Canada. His son continued this practice, conducting clinics for Chitō-ryū practitioners in Canada approximately every other year.

His seminal textbook, Kempō Karate-dō — Universal Art of Self-Defence, remains a key publication for his style. His efforts established Chitō-ryū as one of the four major styles of Okinawan Karate. Ryūsei Karate-dō, a style derived from Chito-ryū, was founded by Ken Sakamoto, a student of Chitō-ryū.

Chitose's teachings extended beyond physical techniques. The Chitō-ryū Showa (school song/poem) expresses a philosophical core: "*We who study Karate-dō must never forget the warrior's spirit. In peace, perseverance, and work, we will undoubtedly reach our goal*."

Chitose died at the age of 85 in 1984. The cause of death is thought to have been natural causes, associated with old age and declining health.

Despite the style being primarily founded in Japan, its strong grounding in traditional Okinawan Tōde techniques means many practitioners categorize it as an Okinawan style.

Gigō Funakoshi



Yoshitaka Funakoshi (船越義豪, also known as Gigō Funakoshi) was the third son of Gichin Funakoshi. He is credited with playing a pivotal role in shaping the modern technical aspects of the Shotokan style.

Born in 1906, Yoshitaka's life was significantly impacted by his health. He suffered from tuberculosis since childhood and frequently had to pause training to cough up blood, eventually succumbing to the illness at the young age of thirty-nine in 1945. Despite this, he was described as an exceptionally talented karateka. Physically, he was noted to be a few inches taller than his father and about fifteen pounds heavier, possessing remarkable power.

Yoshitaka served as his father's chief assistant at the Shotokan dojo in Tokyo, which was established in 1938. This role was partly intended to ease the burden on his father. Beyond the Shotokan dojo, he also held positions as a karate teacher at prestigious institutions such as Takushoku University and Waseda University.

While his father was his primary teacher, Yoshitaka actively sought to broaden his martial arts knowledge. To that end, he was sent by his father to study kata under Kenwa Mabuni. This move highlights a deliberate effort to expand the technical depth of the Funakoshi lineage by incorporating knowledge from other leading masters.

Masutatsu Ōyama notably trained under Yoshitaka Funakoshi.

Yoshitaka is widely regarded as the driving force behind much of the technical evolution of modern Shotokan karate. His innovations included:

- Developing and emphasising long-range attacks.
- Introducing and refining deep-rooted stances.
- Advancing kicking techniques within the style.
- Promoting fluid and upright postures for increased speed of attack.
- Incorporating full extension kicks, which were valuable in free-style competition.

A significant aspect of Yoshitaka's influence was the discernible "clash between generations" regarding the direction of karate. While Gichin Funakoshi, often referred to as the "Old Master," prioritised kata training, practical self-defence, and character development, adhering to the principle that "*Technique does not make the man; the man makes the technique!*", Yoshitaka, the "Young Master," held a "less idealistic" view. He believed that karate "needed to formulate a competitive element".

Yoshitaka would enthusiastically praise students who produced powerful techniques that would "crack floorboards with their stomp kicks," exclaiming, "Good! Good!". In contrast, his father would scold such actions, stating, "*What is the matter with you? That is too much force, too much force!*".

While Gichin permitted free-sparring "only after the basics of karate had been thoroughly understood," Yoshitaka's classes incorporated elements directly applicable to free-style competition.

Beyond introducing new technical methodologies, Yoshitaka is also widely believed to have played a crucial role in kata

development. He is rumoured to have invented many, if not most of the methods we have today. Furthermore, he is thought to be responsible for importing many of our more popular kata and converting them to the Shotokan method, with Unsu and Sochin specifically mentioned as examples. His study of kata under Kenwa Mabuni also indicates his direct involvement in enriching Shotokan's kata repertoire.

Yoshitaka's contributions were profound, especially in the technical and competitive evolution of Shotokan. He helped transform the style into a more dynamic form, laying the groundwork for its global proliferation as a martial art and a sport. His legendary power was evident in his ability to "constantly shatter makiwara punching boards with his blows". His life ended tragically in 1945, the same year the Shotokan dojo was destroyed by an attack on Tokyo. Despite his early death, the technical advancements he spearheaded remain a fundamental part of Shotokan karate worldwide.

Tatsuo Shimabuku



Tatsuo Shimabuku (島袋 龍夫) (1908–1975) was known as the founder of the Isshin-ryū ("One Heart Style" or "One Heart Way") style of karate. His life was dedicated to synthesizing and evolving martial arts, leading to the creation of a unique and widely practiced style.

Shimabuku was born as Shinkichi Shimabuku on September 19, 1908, in Gushikawa village, Okinawa, as the first of ten children in a farming family. His martial arts journey began at the young age of thirteen, when he started studying karate under his uncle, Ganiku Shinko, who lived a few miles away in Agena Village. Initially, his uncle sent him home, but witnessing his nephew's dedication, he took him on as a pupil. Recognizing that Tatsuo's training was incomplete, his uncle later sent him to continue his studies with Chōtoku Kyan.

Tatsuo Shimabuku was notable for his eclectic studies under several prominent Okinawan masters, absorbing diverse influences to develop his unique style.

Around 1927, at age 19, Shimabuku began studying Shorin-ryū karate under Kyan at his home in Yomitan. Kyan also taught at the Okinawa Prefectural Agricultural School where Shimabuku was studying. He quickly became one of Kyan's best students, learning numerous kata including Passai, Useishi (Gōjūshiho), Seisan, Naihanchi, Wansu, Chinto, and Kusanku. From Kyan, he also acquired proficiency in the

weapons kata Tokumine nu Kun and basic Sai techniques. He remained with Kyan, whom he considered his principal teacher, until 1939. Kyan also taught him about "Ki" (or "Chinkuchi" in Okinawan dialect).

In 1919, at age 13, Shimabuku enrolled at Chōjun Miyagi's dojo, continuing until Miyagi's death in 1953. He studied Seiunchin and Sanchin kata under Miyagi. From Miyagi, he also learned Tensho kata. His studies with Miyagi were interrupted by World War II but resumed after the war.

In 1942, Shimabuku sought out Motobu Chōki, a renowned Shorin-ryū instructor known for his practical fighting skills and street fights. Shimabuku trained with Motobu for approximately one year.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Shimabuku Taira furthered his kobudō studies with Taira, who was a top student of Moden Yabiku. This training took place in Shimabuku's dojo in Agena. He learned several bo and sai kata from Taira, including Hama Higa nu Tuifa, Shishi nu Kun, Chatan Yara nu Sai, and Urashi Bo.

Shimabuku was not entirely satisfied that either Shorin-ryū or Gōjū-ryū offered the "completeness" he sought in a martial art. Driven by this belief, he decided to combine what he considered the best aspects of both his teachers' styles. In 1956, he officially formed the Isshin-ryū Karate-dō Association. The name Isshin-ryū, meaning "One Heart Style," was adopted in 1954.

The emblem for Isshin-ryū, the Mizugami deity, was chosen by Tatsuo Shimabuku after he reportedly saw her in a vision. This deity, depicted as a half-sea-snake, half-woman, symbolises the strength of a snake and the quiet character of a woman, thus expressing the essence of his style.

Shimabuku introduced several modifications and unique elements to his style. These included:

- Sunsu Kata: A kata exclusive to Isshin-ryū, which he created by incorporating techniques he found useful and important from other kata.
- Naihanchi Kata: He modified this kata by reversing the initial movement to the left first, rather than the customary right. It is noted that the Tomari Naihanchi already starts this way.
- Kicking Techniques: Isshin-ryū features the practice of fast snap-kicks.
- Punching Techniques: The style incorporates the standing-fist punch, which Shimabuku believed to be faster than the corkscrew punch. His son, Kichiro Shimabuku, reportedly alternated between the two punches after Tatsuo's death, unable to permanently decide which to adopt.
- Weapons Kata: Beyond the Tokumine no Kun and basic Sai learned from Kyan, he became a master of bo and sai weapons. He also created Chōtoku Kyan nu Sai and Kusanku Sai from Kyan's sai techniques, naming the former in honour of his teacher. However, Kyan nu Sai was replaced by Kusanku Sai by 1960. His syllabus also included Urashi Bo, Shishi nu Kun, Chatan Yara nu Sai, and Hama Higa no Tuifa (the only tonfa kata in Isshin-ryū, which appears related to Uechi-ryū's Seisan kata).
- "Thirty Basic Exercises": This is a distinctive peculiarity of Isshin-ryū.

Beyond his martial arts pursuits, Tatsuo Shimabuku came from a farming family. He later moved to Chatan village, where he started a bakery and subsequently a tatami-mat workshop. His personal name was Shinkichi, but he adopted the professional karate name "Tatsuo," meaning "Dragon Man," after the launch of Isshin-ryū. He also earned the

nickname "Sun nu su" from the mayor of Kyan village, a name derived from a dance created by his grandfather.

Shimabuku's influence spread significantly, particularly in the United States. He made two trips to the United States to visit his many military students.

His first trip was to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from September to late November 1964. His second trip in 1966 involved visits to Tacoma (Washington), Knoxville (Tennessee), Jersey City (New Jersey), and Cleveland (Ohio). During this second trip, he promoted Steve Armstrong, Harold Long, and Donald Nagle to Hachi-Dan (8th Degree), individuals who became instrumental in promoting and spreading Isshin-ryū karate in the United States. Shimabuku himself did not enjoy traveling far from home, so further visits representing him were carried out by his student and son-in-law, Angi Uezu.

His son, Kichiro Shimabuku, who started training under his father in elementary school, taught karate near the Camp Hansen Marine Base at Kin. Kichiro later became the president of the Isshin-ryū World Karate Association.

Tatsuo Shimabuku died from a stroke at his home in Agena village on May 30, 1975, at the age of 66. His death prompted his son, Kichiro, to close the old dojo and open a new one, changing the organisation's name.

Despite his passing, Shimabuku left a distinct and widespread mark on the martial arts. Isshin-ryū has grown considerably, with approximately 336 branches worldwide, predominantly concentrated in the USA. In 1980, he was posthumously recognised as the first person inducted into the International Isshin-ryū Karate Association's Isshin-ryū Hall of Fame.

Gōgen Yamaguchi



Gōgen Yamaguchi (山口剛玄; 20 January 1909 – 20 May 1989), also known by his birth name Jitsumi Yamaguchi, was often referred to as "The Cat" due to his distinctive movement style.

Gōgen Yamaguchi was born on 20 January 1909, in Miyakonojō, Miyazaki Prefecture, Japan, near Kagoshima City on the island of Kyūshū. He was one of ten children born to Tokutarō, a merchant and later a schoolteacher and superintendent, and Yoshimatsu. Jitsumi was their third son, and all six Yamaguchi boys practiced martial arts.

From an early age, Yamaguchi showed exceptional interest and talent in martial ways, including Japanese fencing and karate-dō. He often reflected on his intense early training, stating, "I believe that I trained myself in the fundamental alertness of a cat in these early days". This intense training and a deep spiritual longing characterised his youth, as he recalled longing for "unseen and mysterious things" and trying to "talk to the Supernatural God". He legally changed his given name from Yoshimi to Gogen after World War II, a change he attributed to Chōjun Miyagi's desire.

Throughout his life, Yamaguchi held diverse occupations and pursuits. He was a lawyer, an undercover agent during World War II, a prisoner of war in a Soviet Gulag for two years after the war, and a karate master. His spiritual inclinations led him

to become a Shinto priest and a practitioner of yoga, establishing him as a profound mystic. After his release from Soviet captivity in 1945, a period during which he suffered inhumane conditions, he contemplated seppuku (ritual self-disembowelment) but instead had a revelation to dedicate his life to spreading Japanese martial arts.

Yamaguchi's initial karate-dō training began in his fifth year of primary school under Takeo Maruta, a carpenter and Gōjū-ryū practitioner from Okinawa, after his family moved to Kyoto. He later studied directly with Chōjun Miyagi in 1929, after he and his friend Jitsuei Yogi invited Miyagi to Japan.

His relationship with Miyagi and his claims of succession have been a subject of debate. Yamaguchi asserted that Miyagi named him as his successor in Gōjū-ryū, specifically telling him, "*Yamaguchi, you are well qualified to become the successor of Gōjū School Karate.... I have nothing more to teach you.... Thus ... you must make a diligent effort to develop karate in Japan*". However, this claim is disputed by many of Miyagi's senior Okinawan students, who point out that Miyagi was only in Japan for short periods and that his name was conspicuously missing from a list of Miyagi's students in 1936.

Eiichi Miyazato, another prominent student, claimed Miyagi named him as successor and was appointed by Miyagi's widow to teach at the Miyagi family home.

Yamaguchi was given the responsibility by Chōjun Miyagi to spread Gōjū-ryū in mainland Japan, a task he undertook with great zeal.

In 1934, after graduating from Ritsumeikan University, he designed and introduced jiyu-kumite, which became known as sport and tournament fighting kumite. This innovation transformed Gōjū-ryū into a martial art comparable to judo and kendo, achieving something Miyagi himself had not. A

public demonstration of his jiyu-kumite in Tokyo in 1940 was so realistic that spectators believed it was an actual fight. Yamaguchi added the Taikyoku kata forms to the Gōjū system as foundational training for beginners.

In 1935, he officially formed the All Japan Karate-dō Gōjū-kai Association (which later split). In 1964, alongside other founders like Hironori Ōtsuka and Masatoshi Nakayama, he unified all karate dojo in Japan to form the All Japan Karate-dō Federation (F.A.J.K.O., now JKF).

Yamaguchi trained many significant figures in karate, including Mas Oyama, Kenji Kurosaki. Paul Starling, Peter Urban and many others.

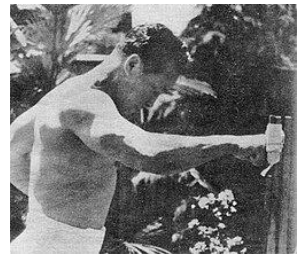
Gōgen Yamaguchi's legacy is vast and continues to influence modern karate. He is widely credited with the worldwide dissemination of the Gōjū system. His charismatic personality and unique public persona, often appearing in traditional Japanese attire with long hair like a yamabushi (mountain warrior), attracted significant media attention and greatly promoted Gōjū around the world. Paul Starling, his most senior foreign student, noted that Yamaguchi's name was "a household word in Karate circles".

His immense contributions were formally recognised when he was decorated by the Emperor of Japan in 1968 with the Ranjū-Hōshō (Blue Ribbon Medal of the fifth order of merit) for his efforts in spreading Japanese martial arts globally. For many years, he was listed in the Guinness Book of Records for his rank and achievements. By 1966, his International Karate-dō Gōjū-kai Association (IKGA) boasted over 200 dojos and clubs with 60,000 members. By 2008, his principles and training methods were taught in approximately 60-70 countries.

Despite his widespread influence, Yamaguchi remains an "enigmatic master," with debates persisting about the

accuracy of some stories surrounding his superhuman powers and his true relationship with Chōjun Miyagi. Nevertheless, his determination and innovations, particularly in developing jiyu-kumite and making karate acceptable in Japan and the Western world, solidify his place as one of the most significant figures in the history of modern karate-dō.

Masutatsu Ōyama



Masutatsu Ōyama (Mas Ōyama), originally Choi Yeong-eui (also known as Choi Bae-dal), was a Zainichi Korean karate master who established Kyokushin Karate, a style widely regarded as the first and most influential full-contact karate.

Born on 27 July 1923 in Kintei, Korea (present-day Gimje, South Korea), Ōyama passed away on 26 April 1994, aged 70, due to lung cancer.

Ōyama's early life saw him sent to Manchukuo, where he lived on his sister's farm. At the age of nine, he began his martial arts journey studying Chinese martial arts under a Chinese farmer named Lee, whom he credited as his first teacher. His family belonged to the landed-gentry class, and his father, Choi Seung-hyun, was a notable composer of classical Chinese poetry. Much of what is known about his early life comes from his own accounts in his books.

After World War II ended in 1945, Ōyama moved to Tokyo, where he met his future wife, Chiyako, whose mother managed a university student dormitory. In 1946, he enrolled in Waseda University's School of Education to pursue sports science.

Ōyama's initial instruction came from a Chinese farmer named Lee when he was nine years old. Seeking top-tier instruction, he contacted the Shotokan dojo operated by Gigō Funakoshi. Ōyama trained under Gichin Funakoshi for two years in Tokyo, earning a 4th Dan black belt by the age of 24.

He famously stated that "Master Funakoshi straightened me out," and "He showed me the true meaning of karate".

He studied Gōjū-ryū for several years under Nei-chu So (also spelled Sō Nei Chu), a Korean master and senior student of Chōjun Miyagi. Between 1946 and 1950, Ōyama also trained at Kanbukan, a dojo known for its Zainichi Korean members, where Nei-chu So was active and likely continued his Gōjū-ryū instruction.

Ōyama also trained in boxing and judo. He is also listed as a student of Gogen Yamaguchi.

In 1946, Ōyama met Japanese historical novelist Yoshikawa Eiji, author of Musashi, a work that apparently enlightened Ōyama to the true meaning of Bushido, the warrior code of feudal Japan. Yearning for perfection, Ōyama resolved to spend three years in harsh, self-imposed solitude to train his body and mind. After winning the 1947 Japanese National Martial Arts Championships, he again retreated to Mount Kiyosumi in Chiba Prefecture, training with "fanatical dedication" for another eighteen months, after which he felt he had "finally conquered himself". His indefatigable self-promotion and the myths perpetuated by his followers and himself sometimes make it challenging to separate fact from embellishment regarding his life.

Ōyama initially aimed to become a military pilot, enrolling in aviation school and serving in the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II and it is said he nearly became a kamikaze pilot.

Ōyama's formal creation of Kyokushin karate is generally dated to 1964, though the name itself had been in use for several years prior. He opened his own dojo, initially called Oyama Dojo (a form of Gōjū-ryū), in Tokyo in 1953. In 1956, he officially named his combat method Kyokushinkai,

meaning "the ultimate truth style," with a formal ceremony in 1957.

His dojo's location evolved, moving from an empty lot to a ballet school in 1956, and eventually to the permanent Kyokushinkai hombu dojo in Tokyo in 1964. This same year, he formally established the International Karate Organisation Kyokushin Kaikan (IKO or IKOK) to unify the growing number of schools teaching his style.

Ōyama believed his style to be the most combat-oriented and effective of all martial arts. His teaching style was renowned for being tough, intense, hard-hitting, and practical, with gruelling sessions where student injuries were common. He emphasised breaking objects like boards, tiles, or bricks to gauge offensive capability, famously stating that "ignoring 'breaking practice is no more useful than a fruit tree that bears no fruit'".

He built a formidable reputation as a courageous fighter, impressing observers with his combat skills. He was particularly known for his fights with bulls, having killed three with his punches and severed horns from several others with his "sword-hand" since 1951. This practice may have been influenced by an anecdote involving Kenwa Mabuni, where Ōyama, being Korean, might have sought to earn respect in nationalist Japan through similar displays of force.

Regarding kata, Ōyama's style placed significant emphasis on them in its early stages. The Kyokushinkai kata are largely derived from Gōjū-ryū and Shotokan, reflecting his own training background. He also introduced Taikyoku kata forms into the Gōjū system as foundational training for beginner students.

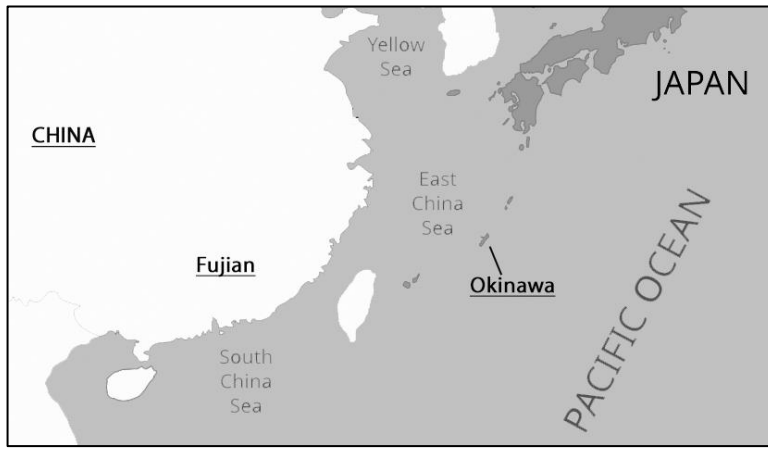
Ōyama's marketing prowess and leadership led to the rapid global expansion of Kyokushin, establishing branches in over 100 countries and attracting over 12 million registered

members. He actively sent instructors worldwide to spread the style. He also pioneered full-contact karate tournaments, staging the first All-Japan Full Contact Karate Open Championships in 1969 and the World Full Contact Karate Open Championships every four years since 1975.

Ōyama's legacy is immense, despite his controversial self-promotion. He earned the nickname "the Cat" from American GIs due to his gliding walk and flowing hair and cultivated an aura reminiscent of the samurai era despite his small stature. The name "Ōyama," meaning "Great Mountain," is said to be typical of his chosen persona.

Late in his life, Ōyama suffered from osteoarthritis, but his dedication never wavered; he continued training and performing breaking demonstrations. He authored over 80 books in Japanese, some of which were translated into other languages, including the best-selling What is Karate. His colourful life and achievements have been immortalised in various media, including feature-length films and the popular manga series Karate Baka Ichidai. He also inspired iconic characters in pop culture, such as Ryu from Street Fighter and Takuma Sakazaki (a.k.a. "Mr. Karate") from King of Fighters, solidifying his enduring impact beyond the martial arts world.

Section 3: Karate styles



The concept of distinct karate "styles" (ryū) is a relatively recent phenomenon, challenged by historical evidence suggesting that the art's evolution was primarily driven by individual masters and their specific lineages rather than rigidly defined schools. Many prominent masters, including Funakoshi Gichin and Miyagi Chōjun, were initially resistant to the idea of separate styles, insisting that karate should ideally be a single, unified art.

Before the early twentieth century, karate did not exist as formal, separated styles. Instead, it represented the unique teachings and individual practices of prominent experts. The notion of having distinct styles was not yet in use; there was only karate or tode.

The earliest classification system, identifying three historical Okinawan methods by their geographical areas [Shuri-te (首里手), Naha-te (那覇手), and Tomari-te (泊手)] was popularized much later, around 1926 or 1927. These terms were introduced for political and social reasons, primarily to

associate the art with Okinawan cities rather than its Chinese origins, especially during the rise of Japanese nationalism.

Shuri, Naha, and Tomari were located only a few kilometres apart, leading some researchers to argue that the divisions were arbitrary and primarily a matter of human social consequence rather than functional differences. In particular, the distinction, particularly between Shuri-te and Tomari-te, was often so tenuous as to be "practically meaningless". Many martial artists practiced together, learning from different groups and blending teachings, demonstrating that nothing resembled three separate styles.

It can be said that the styles were less styles but the result of the teaching lineages of masters. Some of these masters may have been more influenced by Chinese martial arts or more influenced by traditional Okinawan martial arts. Others may have added or changed techniques that were then passed down.

Masters like Eiichi Miyazato suggested that the concept of karate styles was "*silly and should be abandoned in favour of the old, pre-war system when all karate was just simply tode*". Similarly, Zenryo Shimabuku firmly believed there was "no difference between Shuri-te and Tomari-te.

The formal naming and registration of the modern major styles, such as Gōjū-ryū, Shōtōkan, Shitō-ryū, and Wadō-ryū, were relatively recent developments, occurring primarily in the early 1930s. These styles are generally less than 100 years old.

This institutionalisation was not an organic evolution of combat techniques but a response to political pressure from mainland Japan. For karate to gain acceptance as a recognised martial art discipline (budō) under Japan’s governing body (the Dai Nippon Butokukai), masters needed to adopt specific

style names, implement standardized curricula, and adopt ranking systems similar to judo and kendo.

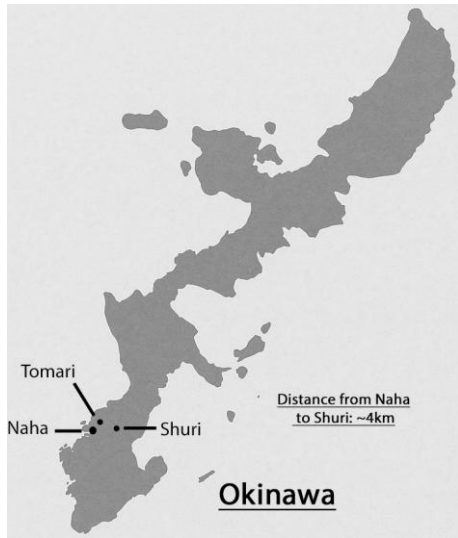
Before standardisation, kata (prearranged forms) were something bespoke. Masters often acquired, modified, and made kata their own, and their students, in turn, often modified them further. Because an instructor's curriculum was constantly changing, there was no such thing as an unalterable style in early karate.

The great masters, far from being isolated within distinct styles, actively trained together and shared their knowledge in groups like the Karate Kenkyūkai (Study Group), which included founders of styles like Gōjū-ryū, Shotokan, and Shitō-ryū. Their actions demonstrate that they never intended for students of various "styles" to be restricted from training together or sharing techniques.

Highly respected figures have argued that true karate-dō ultimately transcends the concept of a style. Hidetaka Nishiyama stated, "I do not teach Shotokan... I teach karate-do. There is no such thing as a style in karate-do," explaining that the goal of karate is personal development and improving character, which transcends the concept of style. The leadership of the traditional Gōjū-ryū group, the Jundokan, also asserted that "There are no styles in karate".

The enduring popularity of the style concept stems largely from its utility for organizing sporting events and creating administrative structure, rather than reflecting the art's historical transmission or philosophical foundation. The view maintained by many traditionalists today is that karate-dō is highly personal and that the goal of the art is continuous progress in improving one's knowledge and character, a pursuit that inherently transcends fixed stylistic boundaries.

Traditional Okinawan Tode



Much of what is called 'tode' is simply just the history of karate/martial arts and therefore the history of Tode is simply the history of karate before distinct styles arose. As such, much of what is stated here is a recap of what has been discussed in the history of karate section previously.

The Okinawan martial art of Tode (also written as tōde or tode, and pronounced "toe-day"), or simply Te (手, meaning "hand" or "technique," and pronounced "tee" or "ti" in the Okinawan dialect), represents the indigenous fighting method of Okinawa Island, which serves as the historical birthplace of karate. This art developed over centuries, influenced by various cultures due to Okinawa's location between mainland Japan, China, and Southeast Asia.

The history of karate, rooted in Tode, began on Okinawa Island, particularly in the population centres at the southern end, including Shuri, Naha, and Tomari. These places, originally separate, are now part of the same conurbation.

While written records about Tode's origin are scarce due to centuries of secrecy and destruction, especially from the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, much of its history relies on secondary sources and oral traditions from karate authorities and contemporary witnesses.

Some historians suggest Te developed over five hundred years ago, possibly even more than 1000 years ago. It is believed to have been initially cultivated, practiced, and promoted by the islands' royal government organisation, hiki, under King Sho Shin (1477–1526). The earliest known records of a karate-like art trace back to the 18th century. Another account mentions bo-jutsu being used by the Ajil around 1314, as described in Okinawa's 1000 Year History (April 1923).

A significant period influencing Tode's development was the century following the Japanese Satsuma daimyo invasion and occupation of the Ryukyu Islands in 1609. This occupation, combined with a ban on weapons for Okinawan natives, created a fertile environment for the blossoming of Okinawan martial arts within the Ryukyus' gentry, honing Te further as a unique self-fighting method and a predecessor of karate.

After the 1609 Satsuma invasion, weapons controls and political pressures meant that training in Tōde and kobudō was often practised discreetly, particularly among the pechin class. Later oral traditions describe this period as one of secrecy, though surviving documents show more nuance than a simple ‘full ban’.

This ‘secrecy’ led the three leading te schools, Shuri, Naha, and Tomari, to go "underground" to avoid detection. As a result, te took on two distinctive characteristics: it became an esoteric art due to its secretive teaching and practice, and it became extremely violent, with the sole purpose of its practitioners being to maim or kill. This period of secrecy also halted written chronicling, making oral traditions the primary

source of historical information. Techniques were passed from master to student through oral tradition, with little written down, partly to maintain confidentiality and partly due to limited literacy outside the nobility. Training often occurred at night, in hidden places, or windowless rooms, shielded from prying eyes.

It should be noted that the theory that the weapons ban introduced by the Japanese fostered the need to develop unarmed combat is disputed. The many old masters were often part of high social classes. Whilst it is clear that militaristic combat training schools would not have been tolerated, there is conflicting evidence that tode was practiced wholly in secret, rather it was practiced discretely, in individual or small groups.

The general theory is that an indigenous Okinawan fighting method called Ti (hand) merged with selected self-defence concepts from China and elsewhere to become Okinawan karate. It is believed that Okinawan martial arts experts, versed in Chinese boxing, "altered the existing martial art, called Okinawan-Te, weeding out its bad points and adding good points to it, thus working it into an elegant art".

As the Chinese methods had been in existing in various forms for hundred of years, it is likely that the success components of these methods were adopted, and often modified by local Okinawan teachers.

This suggests that Te, with its core purpose of self-protection, integrated foreign knowledge and skills as improvements rather than being completely replaced by Chinese arts. The influence was particularly strong prior to 1600.

Some scholars note strong similarities between White Crane Fist from the Fujian region and some styles of Okinawan karate. The term kempō (拳法, the Japanese reading of chuan

fa) was likely introduced during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).

Despite the clear influence, some Western sensei and authors claimed karate was initially developed out of Chinese ch'üan fa. However, the general consensus among many Japanese historians and Okinawan karate masters is that Chinese ch'uan fa is only partly responsible for the birth of present-day Okinawan karate, and that the indigenous Okinawan form of fighting with fists (tode) was combined with other Asian fighting styles.

This is possible due to the wider interaction that the port region had with Asian traders and sailors.

The history of modern karate in its formative stages largely consists of the biographies of prominent teachers of Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te. The biographies of these masters is covered elsewhere, but include the following

- Pechin Takahara: The earliest Shuri-te teacher of whom there is knowledge.
- Kanga Sakugawa: Often referred to as the "father" of Okinawan karate.
- Sōkon Matsumura: An incomparable master of the fist who perfected Shuri-te and is considered the progenitor of Shuri-te. His teacher was Kanga Sakugawa.
- Higaonna Kanryō: The leading proponent of Naha-te in the early twentieth century.
- Kokan Oyadomari: An important Okinawan master of Tomari-te.

(See Section on Karate Master)

As discussed previously, during the nineteenth century, Tode was customarily referred to by the names of the places with which they were most associated: Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te. While these are often presented as distinct styles,

there was significant interchange between practitioners from these cities, with masters often studying with teachers from all three locations.

In 1927, the Okinawa Prefecture officially divided Ryukyu Kempō into these three currents (Naha, Shuri, and Tomari-te). This division served administrative purposes and allowed karate to be utilised for official undertakings.

The ancestor styles of Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te produced numerous offspring, leading to what are recognised as "modern" karate schools.

Key figures in this transition and their contributions include: Itosu Ankō, Gichin Funakoshi, Chōjun Miyagi, Kenwa Mabuni, Kanbun Uechi, and Ohtsuka Hironori.

Tode and its subsequent developments are now recognised as Okinawan cultural heritage. However, the art has undergone significant "Japanisation," with mainland Japan claiming karate as a Japanese martial art, often without crediting Okinawa as its birthplace. This led to traditional Okinawan karate being altered to fit Japanese budo philosophy, emphasizing self-perfection and meditative athletics over Okinawa's original self-protection purpose. Japanised versions implemented white training uniforms, belt and rank systems, and structured group training.

Despite these transformations, the "principle of never changing kata" is a core aspect of genuine Okinawan karate. Okinawan masters, like Nagamine Shoshin, have articulated concerns about changes to traditional kata and the development of sports karate without Okinawan input, stressing the responsibility of Okinawans to maintain pure traditional kata.

Shuri-te

Shuri-te (首里手), also known as Suidii in Okinawan, is a pre-World War II term referring to a type of indigenous martial art practiced in and around Shuri, the old capital city of the Ryukyu Kingdom.

Shuri-te was considered the most indigenous style of Te, with less influence from Chinese martial arts compared to other styles. However, the art form that became Shuri-te was a hybrid with complex origins that are not fully detailed.

Shuri-te was taught as secret knowledge among the Shuri nobility. Its development was profoundly marked by the fact that its masters took up the idea of a "deadly first strike," contrasting with the Chinese kempō principle of "searching for the hands and legs" (tanshu tantai), which involved testing an opponent's abilities and gradually closing distance. This philosophy was heavily influenced by the Jigen sword technique, the favored style of the Satsuma samurai who occupied Okinawa from 1609. The masters of Shuri-te shaped karate with the basic principle of killing an enemy with the first punch or kick, keeping the Satsuma samurai in mind as their adversaries.

Founders and Key Teachers

Several pivotal figures shaped Shuri-te:

- Kanga Sakugawa: Often referred to as the "father" of Okinawan karate.
- Sōkon Matsumura: A student of Sakugawa Shungo (Sakugawa Kanga), perfected Shuri-te.
- Itosu Ankō: Itosu Ankō was the single most influential person in transforming karate from a pragmatic and lethal combat form into karate-dō as a lifestyle of physical, mental, and spiritual development.

- Ankō Asato

(See Section on Karate Master)

Distinguishing Characteristics and Differences from Other Styles

Shuri-te, in its classical form, emphasises hard-style short movements, anchored stances, and minimal controlled hip torque. It is characterised by quick and linear techniques. The central concept in Shuri-te is the "deadly first strike" (ichigeki hissatsu), a principle that was adopted by its masters and stands in contrast to the "searching for the hands and legs" approach of Chinese kempō. This emphasis means that in a real fight, the first strike is decisive for victory or defeat, leaving no second chance. The "borrowing power from the earth" and "falling tree" principles are also kernel to Shuri-te, which beginners in the Itosu ryū always start their studies with.

In Shuri-te (and Tomari-te), power is generated from the legs/stance through the hips into the technique. This contrasts with classical Naha-te, which uses breathing from the tanden (lower abdomen) to make techniques powerful, and emphasises arm usage, with foot techniques limited to belt height.

While Shuri-te was considered less influenced by Chinese martial arts, its foundational figures like Kanga Sakugawa did study Chinese kempō. The notion of city-specific "styles" like Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te was a later introduction, partly to avoid political offense to mainland Japan and obscure Chinese influences. However, these traditional labels often misrepresented the reality of karate's development, as masters from different areas frequently trained and exchanged knowledge.

Growth and Spread

Shuri-te's influence spread primarily through its key teachers. Itosu Anko was instrumental in introducing karate to the Okinawan school system and advocating for its adoption in mainland Japan. When karate was introduced to mainland Japan, it was often framed to appear as if it had evolved from Japanese martial arts rather than solely from China, to align with nationalistic sentiments.

While Gichin Funakoshi is widely recognised for introducing karate to Japan, his specific "Ryukyu kempo to-te jutsu" was not always officially recognised, and he faced skepticism from some Okinawan masters who viewed his introduced karate as a "failed attempt". Nevertheless, Funakoshi, whose Shotokan style was mostly derived from Shuri-te and Tomari-te, played a significant role in bringing Okinawan karate to mainland Japan.

Branches and Official Organisations

The Shuri-te lineage is foundational to many modern karate styles. Successor styles include:

- Shotokan
- Shitō-ryū
- Shōrin-ryū (including its substyles: Matsubayashi-ryū, Kobayashi-ryū, Shobayashi Ryu, Matsumura Orthodox Ryu, and Seibukan)
- Shūdōkan
- Shuri-ryū
- Shōrinji-ryū
- Isshin-ryū (a style that also overlaps with Gōjū-ryū elements)
- Gensei-ryū
- Motobu-ryū
- Wadō-ryū (to some degree)

- Chitō-ryū (which combines 70% of Shuri-te's strength techniques with 30% softer techniques, and whose versions of Seisan, Bassai, and Chinto are nearly identical to the original Shōrin-ryū forms taught by Chōtoku Kyan).

In Okinawa today, Shōrin-ryū, originating from Shuri-te, is one of the three major currents, along with Okinawan Gōjū-ryū (based on Naha-te) and Uechi-ryū (derived from southern Chinese kempō).

Katas Associated with Shuri-te

Many katas are deeply associated with Shuri-te and its lineage:

- Naihanchi (Tekki in Japan). It was one of the original forms of Te. Traditionally taught first in Tomari-te and Shuri-te schools before Itosu created Pinan kata. Motobu Choki stated it was imported from China but no longer practiced there; he learned it from Sōkon Matsumura, Sakuma Pechin, Ankō Itosu, and Kōsaku Matsumora. Motobu credited Naihanchi with containing all that is needed to be a proficient fighter. Itosu simplified Matsumura's Naihanchi. Some researchers believe Itosu created Nidan and Sandan versions, while others think it was originally one kata broken into three parts, evidenced by only Naihanchi Shodan having a formal opening. In Shorin-ryū and Matsubayashi-ryū, Naihanchi Shodan is a brown belt kata, sometimes taught to green belts. It is also the first Shorin-ryū and Shindō Jinen-ryū kata to start with a technique to the right.
- Kushanku (Kosukun). Believed to represent defensive principles taught by a Chinese martial artist named Kusanku who visited Okinawa, with proof in the 1761 publication Oshima Hikki. Chatan Yara Pechin taught it to Kyan.

- Pinan (Heian) #1-5. Created by Itosu Anko in 1905 to be introduced in schools. Extracted by Itosu from longer Kūsankū and Chang Nian/Channan kata. Heian Nidan was originally Heian Shodan, and vice versa; Gichin Funakoshi transposed their names in the 1930s. Wadō-ryū and Shitō-ryū maintain the original Okinawan ordering.
- Passai (Bassai). An ancient kata whose origins, like Chinto, have been lost. There were originally two types, Dai and Sho, but many variations exist today. Funakoshi changed Passai Dai to Bassai Shodan in 1935 to reflect Japanese pronunciation and Kanji. Tomari no Passai, Matsumura no Passai, and Shimpaku no Passai exist, with Matsumura no Passai likely closest to the historical original. Matsumura-no-Seisan features Shiko-Dachi (common in Tomari-te kata). Bushi Tachimura passed on his version of Passai to Kishimoto Soko.
- Chinto (Gankaku in Shotokan). An ancient kata popular in the Tomari district. Sōkon Matsumura is said to have taught this kata. Some associations practice a Gankaku Sho kata alongside the standard Gankaku kata.
- Wankan.
- Rohai (Meikyo in Shotokan). Originated from the Tomari-te school, named Matsumora Rohai after Kōsaku Matsumora. Itosu later developed three kata from it: Rohai shodan, nidan, and sandan. Shotokan's Meikyo is very distinct, believed to be a version Itosu taught to older students like Funakoshi. Shitō-ryū teaches all three Itosu Rohai kata as well as Matsumora Rohai.
- Wanshu (Empi/Enpi in Shotokan). The name means "Excellent Wrist" or "Wang's Series," referring to the diplomat Wang Ji (1621–1689), who taught chu'an fa to the gentry of Tomari.
- Jion, Jutte/Jitte, Ji'in. In ancient times, Jion, Jin, and Jutte were one kata, but it's unknown when or why they were separated.

- Gojūshiho (Uesheishi). Means "54 steps" or "54 methods". Developed by Sōkon Matsumura. Some styles have two versions (Sho and Dai) to master difficult techniques.
- Ananku.
- Seisan (Sesan, Seishan, Jusan, Hangetsu). Means "13". Matsumura developed Seisan as part of Okinawan Shuri-te. It was passed from Matsumura to Chōtoku Kyan, then to Tatsuo Shimabuku. Tatsuo Shimabuku learned it from Chōtoku Kyan. Seisan is taught as a basic kata in Shorinji-ryū and practiced with dynamic tension similar to Gōjū-ryū's Sanchin. The Seibukan Shorin-Ryū version traces back to Sōkon 'Bushi' Matsumura. Higa learned Seisan from Arakaki no Tanmei of Naha and Kyochoku Chitose of Chito-ryū.
- Nijushiho (Niseishi).
- Matsukaze. This kata is unique to Shitō-ryū and may have been composed by Mabuni.
- Taikyoku. Japanese rendering of Chinese "taiji," representing elementary or training kata. Performed in Kyokushinkai with backward spinning turns ("ura").
- Sanchin (Shuri-te version).
- Kyan no Ananku, Matsumura no Seisan, Matsumura no Naihunchi, Maeda no Wansu, Oyadomari no Patsai, Matsumura no Gōjūshiho, Matsumura no Chintou, Yara no Kūsankū (Shorinji Ryu).
- Fukyu Ichi, Fukyu Ni (or Gekisai Ichi) (Matsubayashi-ryū). Nagamine Shoshin, a student of Arakaki Ankichi and Chōtoku Kyan, created Fukyugata Ichi.
- Ryukyu Kobudo Taikan.
- Tokumine no Kun (bo kata). Tatsuo Shimabuku learned it under Chōtoku Kyan's supervision.
- Chatan Yara no Sai. Learned by Tatsuo Shimabuku from Taira Shinken.

- Kyan no Sai. Either learned from Chōtoku Kyan or devised by Shimabuku and named in his honour; Shimabuku later discarded it for Kūsankū Sai.

Tomari-te

Tomari-te (泊手), meaning "Tomari hand" or "Tomari-technique," is one of the three historical methods of Okinawan tode, alongside Shuri-te and Naha-te, from which almost all of what is recognised as modern karate developed. Tomari was originally a separate village, but it is now part of the same urban area at the southern end of Okinawa Island.

Geographically and technically, Tomari-te is situated between Shuri-te and Naha-te. However, the distinction between Shuri-te and Tomari-te is often considered tenuous, arguably to the point of being practically meaningless. Today, Tomari-te is not commercially taught as a separate style, but its katas and some techniques are preserved and found within most Shorin styles.

Founding and Early History

The earliest history of Tomari-te is not documented in written records. Oral traditions suggest that the art was brought to the Ryūkyū Islands by a monk from the Chinese Shandong province named Anan. Anan, who may be identical with Master Shionja from Fuzhou, China, was possibly a Chinese sailor or pirate who became a castaway on Okinawa Island and took refuge in a mountain cemetery near Tomari. Legend claims that Anan taught the kata Chinto to Sōkon Matsumura.

The modern form of Tomari-te was founded by Kōsaku Matsumora (1829–1898). He is reported to have learned the art from Kishin Teruya (1804–1868) and Karyu Uku (1800–1850), both of whom were said to be students of Anan. Tomari-te also drew influence from the northern line of Hoko Ha Kempō, which contributed to both Shuri-te and Tomari-te.

Key Teachers Throughout History

- Kōsaku Matsumora: Regarded as the founder of modern Tomari-te.
- Kokan Oyadomari: A prominent practitioner and teacher of the Tomari-te style.
- Chōtoku Kyan: Studied under both Kokan Oyadomari and Kōsaku Matsumora.
- Motobu Chōki: A student of Kōsaku Matsumora and other masters.

(See Section on karate masters)

Characteristics and Differences from Other Styles

Tomari-te is often considered to share common ground with Shuri-te, with their distinction being tenuous. While Naha-te often employs tanden (lower abdomen) breathing for power, Shuri-te and Tomari-te derive power from the legs and stance, transferring it through the hips into the technique. Tomari-te characteristically uses Zenkutsu Dachi (Front-Bent Stance) and Naihanchi Dachi (straddled legs or horse riding stance) prominently, combined with light steps and numerous Keri-Waza (foot techniques). Unlike Naha-te's "circular" and "synchronised breath" movements, Tomari-te, like Shuri-te, is described as having "quick and linear" movements.

Kafu Kojo, a head of the Kojo family, famously referred to Tomari-te as "a hatch porch of various Shaolin katas".

Growth and Spread

The influence of Tomari-te spread primarily through the incorporation of its katas and techniques into other Okinawan karate styles, especially the Shorin styles and their various sub-styles. Rather than establishing itself as a distinct commercial style, its legacy is evident in the foundational elements adopted by many successor styles. For instance, many Shorin-ryū styles contain a blend of Naha-te and

Tomari-te elements. The official naming of "Tomari-te" by prefectural administrators in 1927 was part of a broader effort to present Okinawan martial arts to Japan as indigenous and locally cultivated, rather than overtly foreign-influenced, aiding its administrative and official integration.

Katas Associated with Tomari-te:

Many katas associated with Tomari-te are also found in Shuri-te and various Shorin styles, highlighting a history of shared knowledge and varied interpretations among masters.

Below is a list of katas associated with Tomari-te and its lineage, with details on their uniqueness and similarities:

- Naihanchi (Shodan, Nidan, Sandan)
- Passai (Dai, Sho)
- Kūsankū/Kushanku/Kanku (Dai, Sho)
- Rohai
- Wanshu
- Wankan
- Chinto
- Pinan (Shodan, Nidan, Sandan, Yondan, Godan)
- Seisan
- Other Tomari-te Kata listed: Eunibu, Chinsu, Chinpu, Jumu, Nichin, Juma, Ananku. Ananku is also found in Shobayashi Ryu.
- Jion, Jitte,
- Rohai (Meikyo)
- Empi (Wanshu)

Branches and Official Organisations

As Tomari-te is not taught as a standalone commercial style today, its influence is primarily seen in the successor styles that incorporated its techniques and principles. These include:

- Wadō-ryū: Founded by Hironori Ohtsuka, who blended Shotokan karate with his knowledge of Shindō Yōshin-ryū jujutsu. Ohtsuka practiced Shotokan Karate under Funakoshi, and his Wadō-ryū style retains the original ordering of the Heian (Pinan) kata, unlike modern Shotokan.
- Motobu-ryū: Founded by Motobu Chōki, a student of Kōsaku Matsumora. Motobu-ryū is described as having a depth not easily grasped, with principles like "relax the body and throw your opponent with softness," utilising the opponent's force against themselves.
- Matsubayashi-ryū: Named by Shoshin Nagamine in 1947 in honour of Kōsaku Matsumora and Sōkon Matsumura, whose teachings heavily influenced the style. It contains 18 katas, including many that originated from the Tomari-te lineage.
- Shōrinji-ryū: This style also lists katas connected to the Tomari-te tradition, such as Oyadomari no Patsai.
- Shōrin-ryū: Many styles within the Shorin group are mixtures of Tomari-te and Shuri-te elements. The "Okinawan Shorinji Ryu" (part of the Shorin-ryū group) lists kata like Oyadomari no Patsai, indicating direct lineage from Tomari masters.

While no specific official organisations are exclusively dedicated to "Tomari-te" as a distinct style today, the Ryukyu Kobudo Hozon Shinkokai (Association for the Research, Preservation and Promotion of Ancient Ryukyuan Martial Arts), established by Taira Shinken, preserves classical kobudo forms that may have historical ties to Tomari, given its emphasis on traditional Okinawan weaponry.

Legacy

Tomari-te's legacy is substantial, primarily through its profound influence on the development of many modern karate styles, particularly within the Shorin lineages. The

katas originating from or heavily influenced by Tomari-te masters, such as Matsumora and Oyadomari, continue to be practised and studied globally. The Pinan katas, foundational to modern karate-dō, trace their creation by Itosu to earlier, longer katas like Channan, which is named after a figure associated with Tomari. The distinctive characteristics of Tomari-te, such as its stance work and foot techniques, are preserved within its descendant styles. Tomari-te stands as a testament to the period of secret martial arts development in Okinawa, where practical and lethal self-defence techniques were honed under oppressive conditions.

Naha-te

Naha-te (那覇手, "Naha hand") is one of the three historical methods or schools of Okinawan tode from which almost all of what is recognised as "modern" karate developed. Although originally a separate locality, Naha is now part of the same conurbation at the southern end of Okinawa Island. The Naha-te style is considered to preserve Chinese kempō most obviously.

Historical Context and Origins

The Naha-te style is said to originate from a village called Kume, also known as Kumemura, located near the city of Naha. It was founded by Chinese individuals who arrived in the Ryūkyū islands from the Fukien province in 1393, during the Ming empire. Many of their descendants were involved in the China trade and passed on kempō knowledge from their home province to the Kume nobility. What was taught was likely not pure Chinese kempō but a style influenced by Shuri-te and adapted to Ryūkyūan conditions.

In 1867, a festive program for the Chinese delegation's coronation ceremony in Shuri included a demonstration of martial arts. Historical records indicate that villages around Kumemura had learned Nam Pa Kempō. The guests at this celebration subsequently "Ryukyuised" the Nam Pa Rakan Kempō and decided to call it Naha-te, though this was officially much later.

Before the late eighteenth century, there is limited historical source material, but from about 1750 onwards, there is a good deal of information about prominent teachers of these methods, although some details are confused or of doubtful reliability.

Founders and Key Teachers

- Higaonna Kanryō: regarded as the first exponent of a distinct Naha-te style.
- Chōjun Miyagi: Higaonna's most prominent and prolific disciple, starting his training under Higaonna at the age of 14.
- Kenwa Mabuni also studied Naha-te under Higaonna Kanryō, being introduced by his friend Chōjun Miyagi.
- Other teachers who contributed to the Naha-te lineage include Aragaki Seishō and the Kojo family style.

(See Section on karate masters)

Characteristics and Differences from Other Styles

Naha-te is characterised by its distinctive power development. In classical Naha-te, the breath from the tanden (energetic center below the navel) is used to make techniques powerful. This contrasts with Shuri-te and Tomari-te, where power is generated from the legs/stance through the hips into the technique. The concepts of kata in both directions are designed around this difference.

Naha-te places significant emphasis on the use of the arms, with arm movements being compared to the "many arms of the octopus". Foot techniques (kicks) in Naha-te typically extend only up to belt height, as high kicks are generally considered unsuitable for real combat. The Ibuki breathing technique, which involves muscle tension to make one insensitive to vital point strikes, may be an origin of Naha-te's approach. If the body is insensitive, then the remaining hard-to-protect areas, like the leg joints, are attacked.

It is argued that Naha-te, as a closed and perfect school from China, remained relatively uninfluenced by Shuri-te and Tomari-te. The distinction between Shuri-te and Tomari-te, however, is often considered tenuous or practically meaningless.

Naha-te's lineage traces directly back to Chinese kempō, particularly through Higaonna Kanryō's studies in Fuzhou.

This influence is still visibly strong in styles like Uechi-ryū, which is even closer to original Chinese kempō patterns than Naha-te, and features many open-hand techniques. Conversely, Shuri-te was regarded as the most indigenous style of Te, less influenced by Chinese martial arts.

Growth and Spread

Naha-te styles, particularly Gōjū-ryū, spread across Okinawa, Japan, and worldwide through the efforts of its masters:

- Okinawa: Higaonna Kanryō taught Naha-te privately, keeping the art alive during periods of secrecy.
- Mainland Japan: Chōjun Miyagi played a crucial role in popularising karate in Japan. He was invited to be a karate instructor in the Judo Department of Kyoto University in October 1928 and coached karate at Kansai University in Osaka in June 1932. He also lectured and gave demonstrations in Tokyo at the earnest request of karate and boxing clubs. Chōjun Miyagi appointed Yamaguchi Gogen Sensei to promote Gōjū-ryū on mainland Japan, leading to the rapid growth and popularity of a Gōjū-ryū derivative there. This mainland derivative encouraged competitive sparring, which the traditional Gōjū-ryū curriculum does not, and performed traditional Gōjū-ryū kata slightly differently.
- Worldwide: Chōjun Miyagi made karate known in Hawaii, teaching there from April 1934 to February 1935. After his death in 1953, Okinawa was under American

occupation, a circumstance that played a decisive role in the spread of karate. From the USA, karate reached all parts of the world. Many American GIs stationed in Okinawa were instrumental in spreading the art globally, leading the USA to have a very large traditional karate community outside of Japan.

Associated Kata

The Naha-te lineage primarily through Higaonna Kanryō encompasses a significant number of kata, many with Chinese origins. The kata taught by Higaonna and subsequently integrated into descendant styles include:

- Sanchin. In Higaonna's dojo, students spent the first three to four years solely practicing Sanchin. Chōjun Miyagi further developed Sanchin as the "hard" aspect of Gōjū-ryū. The Shotokan kata Hangetsu shares strong similarities with Seisan, leading Funakoshi to substitute Hangetsu for Sanchin in the Shotokan curriculum due to shared principles of expansion and contraction. Uechi-ryū Seisan has obvious foundations in Sanchin. Sanchin involves controlled dynamic-tension breathing, which Nagamine believed Miyagi introduced into Gōjū-ryū.
- Saifa.
- Seiyunchin (Seiunchin).
- Sanseiryu (Sanseru).
- Shisochin. It is said that Shisochin was introduced to Okinawa by Higaonna, who learned it from Ryū Ryū Ko in Fujian province, although a version might have already existed, taught by Aragaki Seishō. Shisochin was Miyagi's favourite kata at the end of his life.
- Seipai.
- Seisan. Higa describes Seisan as an old Naha-te kata based on a Chinese prototype. Uechi-ryū's Seisan is very different from other versions, serving as the fifth kata learned and tested for the first "black belt" (shodan)

grade in modern Uechi-ryū. It introduces knee strikes, the one-knuckle punch (shōken zuki), spearhand (nukite), and the front kick (shōmen geri).

- Kururunfa.
- Suparinpei. This kata is said by some to contain the full syllabus of Gōjū-ryū, though this is disputed. Suparinpei is 108 techniques long, almost twice as long as Shotokan's Kanku-Dai. Shotokan enthusiasts sometimes refer to it as Hyakuhachiho (108 steps).
- Gekisai Dai Ichi and Gekisai Dai Ni: Chōjun Miyagi added these two kata, along with Tensho, to the Naha-te curriculum he learned from Higaonna. Nagamine also attributes the development of Fukyugata Ichi in 1940 to Shoshin Nagamine, at the request of the Japanese military governor, General Hayakawa. Fukyugata Ichi is sometimes also called Gekisai Ichi.
- Tensho: Chōjun Miyagi created this kata based on his observations of the Rokkishu hand exercises in China. He developed it as the "soft" aspect of Gōjū-ryū.

Kata from other Naha-te lineages or related styles:

- To'on-ryū: Kyoda Juhatsu, a student of Higaonna, established To'on-ryū, which includes kata like Sanchin, Rokkishu, Seisan, Sanseru, Pechurrin, and Nepai. Nepai (28 beats) originates from the southern Chinese White Crane style and was introduced to Okinawa by Go Kenki. Kenwa Mabuni modified it into Niipaipo for Shitō-ryū, while Kyoda Kohatsu adopted it in its original form for To'on-ryū.
- Ryuei-ryū: Norisato Nakaima learned another group of Naha-te kata from Ryuru Ko in the Kojo Dojo in Fukushu, including Ohan, Pachu, Anan, Paiku, Haiku, and Paiho. These were long passed down as family kata (from father to son) and only recently taught publicly. Annan is a Ryuei-ryū kata with palm heel strikes and evasive footwork, indicating roots in Chinese kung fu.

- Uechi-ryū: Founded by Kanbun Uechi after his studies in Fukien province, this style is based on southern Chinese kempō and is very close to original Chinese patterns, featuring many open-hand techniques. Uechi-ryū kata include Sanchin, Konshu, Seichin, Seiru, Seisan, Kanchin, Sanseiryu, and others.
- Hakutsuru Ken Kempō: From Go Genki, the kata Papurian (also Paipuren or Hakutsuru) came into Naha-te and subsequently into styles like Shitō-ryū.

Kata similarities and differences:

- Hangetsu (Shotokan) is the old Okinawan version of Seisan. Funakoshi's Hangetsu could have synthesised the best from various contrasting styles he learned from (Matsumura, Iha, Aragaki). It contains many slow movements under tension, common in Naha-te schools like Gōjū-ryū, but rare in Shotokan and Shuri-te-influenced styles.
- The Gōjū-ryū kata are performed slightly differently by Yamaguchi Gogen's Gōjū-Kai organisation compared to traditional Gōjū-ryū.
- Higaonna Kanryō learned nine empty-hand kata from Ryū Ryū Ko and taught them to his students in Okinawa. He also learned bo (wooden staff), long sword, short sword, and other weapons kata from his teacher in China, but his motives for not teaching them in Okinawa are unclear, and these weapon arts are now lost.

Branches and Official Organisations

The Naha-te tradition evolved into several modern karate-dō styles and is represented by various official organisations:

- Gōjū-ryū: Founded by Chōjun Miyagi, it is an officially recognised umbrella karate style in Okinawa. It is also one of the four major styles of Japanese karate. The International Okinawan Gōjū-ryū Karate-dō Federation

(IOGKF) is the official representative organisation of Gōjū-ryū in the Nippon Kobudo Kyokai (NKK), being the first karate style recognised as Koryu Bujutsu by the NKK. Gōjū-ryū (as the Yamaguchi offshoot) has branches in sixty countries. Yamaguchi Gogen's eldest son, Yamaguchi Gosei Norimi, heads his own organisation in the United States called Gōjū-Kai Karate-dō USA.

- To'on-ryū: Founded by Kyoda Juhatsu, a student of Higaonna Kanryō, it is a relatively little-known version of Naha-te.
- Shitō-ryū: Kenwa Mabuni (1889-1952), a student of both Higaonna Kanryō and Itosu Ankō, founded Shitō-ryū. He synthesised the Sakugawa-Matsumura lineage (Shuri-te) and the Ryu-ryū-Ko–Higaonna lineage (Naha-te) into a single style. The name "Shito" combines "Shi" from Itosu and "To" from Higaonna, honouring his teachers. Shitō-ryū incorporates kata learned from many sources beyond Itosu and Higaonna, including Aragaki Seishō, Chōtoku Kyan, Gō Kenki, and Aragaki Ankichi, and Mabuni created at least ten of his own kata. Mabuni initially called his style Hankō-ryū ("half-hard style") before changing it to Shitō-ryū around 1937. His school was officially registered in the Dai Nippon Butokukai in 1939, and he founded the predecessor of the modern Shitokai. The largest concentration of Shitō-ryū practitioners in Japan is in the Osaka area, where Mabuni moved in 1929.
- Uechi-ryū: Founded by Kanbun Uechi, it is one of the three officially recognised umbrella karate styles in Okinawa. It was officially renamed in 1940 in his honour and is one of the four major styles of Okinawan Karate.
- Ryuei-ryū: This family style, with kata passed down only within the Nakaima family until the late 1960s, is now taught publicly. It has gained recognition due to the fame of practitioners like Tsuguo Sakumoto. Ryuei-ryū also includes the practice of 15 classical Chinese weapons. Kenko Nakaima, who informally taught the family style,

believed that kata should grow more pliant with age and was wary of unprotected competition.

Legacy

Naha-te holds a profoundly significant legacy in the history of karate-dō, serving as one of the fundamental pillars from which modern karate evolved. It is an integral part of Okinawa's cultural heritage, officially promoted as such by the Okinawan Prefectural Government.

Higaonna Kanryō's extensive study of Chinese martial arts in Fuzhou and his subsequent teachings in Okinawa laid the foundation for the second major lineage of Okinawan karate. His influence reached millions globally, with styles traceable to him spreading to every continent in the 20th century. Chōjun Miyagi further systematised and propagated this lineage, giving it the widely recognised name Gōjū-ryū and championing its introduction to mainland Japan and beyond.

Naha-te, and its direct descendants like Gōjū-ryū, are distinguished by their emphasis on the harmonious balance of "hard" and "soft" techniques (gō jū), breath control (Tanden breathing), and strong arm techniques. This focus is embedded in its kata, which are viewed as the essence and foundation of karate, accumulating over a thousand years of knowledge. Masters like Morio Higaonna believed these kata should never be changed or tampered with, serving as an unalterable map to guide practitioners.

Naha-te's legacy also includes its contribution to the ethical and philosophical framework of karate-dō. Chōjun Miyagi believed that "the ultimate aim of karate-dō was to build character, conquer human misery, and find spiritual freedom". The principles derived from Naha-te, combined with other Okinawan and Chinese influences, continue to inspire practitioners to pursue personal development and self-mastery. The emphasis on disciplined practice of kata,

even if only a few for many years, underscores the depth of understanding sought by its early masters.

Shotokan

Shotokan karate is one of the most widely practised and influential forms of karate-dō in the world. It is considered a modern Japanese martial art, although its roots are firmly planted in the indigenous Okinawan fighting methods. The name "Shotokan" itself is derived from the pen name of its founder, Gichin Funakoshi, "Shoto" (meaning "pine-waves"), combined with "kan," which means "house" or "hall," referring to Funakoshi's first official dojo in Tokyo.

Founding and Key Figures

The foundation of Shotokan karate is primarily attributed to Gichin Funakoshi, often referred to as the "father of modern karate". (See Section on karate masters)

Funakoshi was one of the main pioneers who transported Okinawan unarmed methods to mainland Japan in the early 1920s. He first demonstrated the art in Tokyo in 1922. He initially introduced his approach as Ryukyu Kempo to-te jutsu. He later became a professional teacher of karate-dō in Tokyo. Funakoshi strongly disapproved of jiyu kumite (free sparring) and the competitiveness it involves. He devoted his entire life to the development, preservation, and promotion of karate-dō, establishing a strong foundation despite initial opposition.

As part of the "Japanisation" of karate during the kokutai (national essence) program in Japan, Funakoshi vigorously cultivated the new term "karate-dō" ("empty-hand way") to distance it from its Chinese origins. He also used Japanese pronunciations for many kata names instead of their original Okinawan dialect or Chinese pronunciations, for example, changing Pinan to Heian, Naihanchi to Tekki, Passai to Bassai, and Kusanku to Kanku. His famous guiding principle, "Karate

ni sente nashi" (There is no first attack in Karate), emphasised the art's defensive nature. Funakoshi believed the ultimate aim of karate-dō was character building and conquering human misery.

Gichin Funakoshi's son played an essential role in the development of modern Shotokan karate. He is widely credited with developing the foundation of the modern Shotokan style and is rumoured to have invented many of the methods practiced today, as well as importing and converting many popular kata to the Shotokan method, such as Unsu and Sochin. Yoshitaka also developed the Taikyoku Shodan, Nidan, and Sandan kata as a basic introduction to karate.

Influences and Development

Shotokan karate developed from the historical methods of Okinawan tode (hand). Shotokan, specifically, is primarily derived from the Shuri-te tradition. Shuri-te was considered the most indigenous Okinawan style, less influenced by Chinese martial arts. It originated from the teachings of Sōkon Matsumura and his teacher Kanga Sakugawa in the 1800s. Funakoshi, though trained in Shuri-te, also supposedly learned some Naha-te, indicating cross-training was common.

The actual style names like Shotokan, Gōjū-ryū, and Shitō-ryū were adopted around the 1930s to gain acceptance within the Japanese martial arts establishment.

Characteristics and Philosophy

Shotokan is known for its deep, long stances that provide stability, enable powerful movements, and strengthen the legs. Training emphasises anaerobic, powerful techniques and speed development. Modern Shotokan practice is divided more or less equally between three elements:

- Kihon (基本) ("fundamentals"): Practice of basic techniques, including stances, blocks, punches, kicks, and displacements.
- Kata (型): Forms or patterns of moves, considered fundamental to karate.
- Kumite (組手): Sparring, practiced from basic to advanced levels with an opponent.

Initially, Shotokan emphasises strength and power over slower, more flowing motions. However, those who progress to brown and black belt levels develop a much more fluid style that incorporates grappling, throwing, and some standing joint locking techniques, which can be found even in basic kata.

Funakoshi's philosophy focused on karate as a defensive art that should never serve offensive purposes. He believed in the importance of character building through karate-dō. The ethical development of the practitioner (dō) is a core aspect of karate-dō, stemming from the Bushidō code of the samurai. Karate-dō, in this sense, is more than just a sport or a fighting method; it's a way of life.

Growth Across Okinawa, Japan, and Worldwide

Gichin Funakoshi was instrumental in bringing Okinawan karate to mainland Japan. His public demonstrations, such as the one for Crown Prince Hirohito in 1922, helped popularize the art. Shotokan became solidly established in Japanese universities. Funakoshi's relentless efforts, despite opposition, led to the development of modern karate-dō in Japan.

After World War II, karate spread rapidly to the United States and Europe, primarily through American GIs and Allied troops stationed in Okinawa. High unemployment in Okinawa at the time led many budo masters to teach Westerners as a means to earn a living, though true secrets were often

withheld due to cultural norms and language barriers. This global dissemination led to the rapid growth of Shotokan, making it one of the most widely recognised and practiced styles worldwide.

Associated Kata

Shotokan's kata curriculum emphasises a narrow curriculum with a very deep practice level. The typical Japanese corporate association Shotokan canon comprises approximately twenty-six kata. However, the Shōtōkai, a more conservative group, endorses only fifteen kata, based on Funakoshi's master text Karate-dō Kyohan.

Here is a comprehensive list of kata associated with Shotokan, including those in its various curricula and those influenced by its founders' original teachings:

- Taikyoku (1–3): Developed by Yoshitaka Funakoshi as a basic introduction to karate kata. In Shotokan, these follow an "H" pattern. The Taikyoku series means "First course". These are not practices in all Shotokan associations.
- Heian (1–5): These five kata (Heian Shodan, Heian Nidan, Heian Sandan, Heian Yondan, Heian Godan) are also known as Pinan in other styles. Funakoshi changed the name from Pinan to Heian and also transposed the order of Heian Shodan and Heian Nidan at some point in the 1930s, meaning that what Shotokan calls Heian Nidan was originally Pinan Shodan in Okinawan styles like Shitō-ryū and Wadō-ryū. These kata were devised by Itosu Anko from longer kata like Kūsankū and Channan. In Kyokushinkai, Pinan kata are performed with a unique "ura" (reverse) technique involving backward spinning turns.
- Tekki (1–3): These three kata (Tekki Shodan, Tekki Nidan, Tekki Sandan) were originally known as Naihanchi in Okinawan karate. Naihanchi was one of the first forms

taught to karateka in Okinawa, characterised by anchored stances, minimal hip torque, and hard-style short movements. Motobu Choki, an influential Okinawan master, heavily emphasised Naihanchi and credited it with containing all that one needs to know to be a proficient fighter. Funakoshi renamed it Tekki ("Iron Horse").

- Bassai Dai (披塞大) and Bassai Sho (披塞小): Originally known as Passai. Passai was one of the most practiced kata in Okinawa. Funakoshi changed the name to Bassai (meaning "to penetrate a fortress") to reflect Japanese pronunciation and Kanji. Passai has many variants across different schools.
- Kanku Dai (観空大) and Kanku Sho (観空小): Originally known as Kusanku (Kosokun). Kusanku is a cornerstone kata in many karate styles, known for flowing techniques resembling White Crane Kung Fu and a variety of open-handed techniques. Kanku-Dai was reportedly Funakoshi's favorite kata. Kanku-Sho is a smaller, more energy-intensive version.
- Hangetsu (半月): Originally known as Seisan ("Thirteen Hands"). This kata originated from the Naha-te school, emphasizing strong breathing and the development of hara (energy field), with similarities to the Sanchin kata. Its Shotokan version is unique due to Funakoshi's synthesis of contrasting styles.
- Jion (慈恩): Considered part of a group with Ji'in and Jitte, characterised by a specific opening posture. Its origin is thought to be from the Tomari-te school, or possibly devised at the Jionji temple.
- Jitte (十手): Part of the Jion kata group, characterised by the same unique starting posture.
- Ji'in (慈陰): Also part of the Jion kata group. Some Shotokan enthusiasts acknowledge that Jion, Ji'in, and Jitte are different versions of the same kata, even though Funakoshi classified them as different styles.

- Empi (燕飛): Originally known as Wansu.
- Gankaku (岩鶴): Originally known as Chinto. Chinto is characterised by single-leg stances and quick jumps, resembling a crane. In some schools a version of Gankaku called Gankaku Sho is also taught, though it is not part of the typical Shotokan canon.
- Nijushiho (二十四歩): Meaning "24 steps".
- Sochin (壮鎮): Meaning "strength and tranquility" or "great quietness". The kata is characterised by its powerful stances and movements.
- Meikyo (明鏡): Originally known as Rohai ("Vision of a Crane"). The Shotokan version is very distinct from others.
- Unsu (雲手): Meaning "cloud hands," it is a highly advanced kata known for its complex techniques, including a flying kick.
- Gōjūshiho Dai (五十四歩大) and Gōjūshiho Sho (五十四歩小): Originally known as Useishi or Sushiho ("54 steps"). This kata was developed by Sōkon Matsumura. It focuses on advanced open-handed techniques. In some Shotokan circles, the Gōjū-ryū kata Suparinpei (108 techniques) is sometimes learned and called "Hyakuhachiho" (108 steps), though it is not part of the typical Shotokan canon.
- Chinte (珍手): Meaning "rare hands" or "unusual hands".
- Wankan (王冠): Meaning "king's crown" or "pine branch".

Shotokan versions of kata have been "heavily edited by experts to create multiple kata, or to simplify them, or to change some of the moves so that the entire kata seemed to flow better". For instance, Shotokan's Pinan (Heian) kata differs from some Shorin styles by incorporating block and punch techniques in one action rather than two. Shotokan kata generally feature deeper, longer stances compared to the more anchored and compact stances in Okinawan Gōjū-ryū. The "ura" (reverse) technique found in Kyokushinkai's

Taikyoku and Pinan kata, involving backward spinning turns, is unique to that style and not typically found in Shotokan.

Branches and Official Organisations

After Gichin Funakoshi's death in 1957, internecine strife began almost immediately within the Shotokan community. The Japan Karate Association (JKA) was established in May 1949, with Funakoshi as its formal head and Masatoshi Nakayama (1913–1987) appointed as Chief Instructor. Nakayama was instrumental in restructuring the Shotokan training program to incorporate both traditional karate and modern sports sciences. He established kata and kumite as tournament disciplines, leading to significant tournament success for JKA students in the 1950s and 60s.

After Nakayama's death in 1987, the JKA divided into two main factions, which further splintered into numerous independent organisations. Many senior JKA instructors left to form their own associations, leading to the creation of various Shotokan branches worldwide. These include:

- International Shotokan Karate Federation (ISKF): Founded by Teruyuki Okazaki.
- Japan Karate Shōtōkai: Associated with Tetsuhiko Asai.
- Japan Shotokan Karate Association: Founded by Keigo Abe.
- Shotokan Karate International Federation (SKIF): Founded by Hirokazu Kanazawa (1931–2019). Kanazawa was one of the last living karateka to have trained under Gichin Funakoshi himself. He held a 10th Dan in Shotokan.
- Japan Karate Association / World Federation America: Associated with Shojiro Koyama.
- Karatenomichi World Federation: Associated with Mikio Yahara.
- Shōtōkai: A more conservative, loosely arranged group of karate experts in Japan, which adheres strictly to

Funakoshi's original teachings, endorsing only fifteen kata.

Other styles that trace their lineage, in part, to Shotokan's founders or early teachers include:

- Wadō-ryū (和道流): Founded by Hironori Ōtsuka, it is a fusion of Shotokan karate with Shindō Yoshin Ryu ju-jutsu.
- Shitō-ryū (糸東流): Founded by Kenwa Mabuni, it is a fusion style intentionally combining Shuri-te/Tomari-te and Naha-te elements.
- Chitō-ryū (千唐流): Founded by Tsuyoshi Chitose, who assisted Gichin Funakoshi in the early introduction of karate in Japan.
- Shindō Jinen-ryū(神道自然流): Founded by Yasuhiro Konishi, who was also a student of Funakoshi.
- Kyokushin (極真会): While distinct, its founder, Oyama Masutatsu, initially studied Shotokan under Funakoshi before creating his own style.
- Taekwondo (태권도): Shotokan served as the basis for several styles practiced by a number of the original Korean Kwans, which eventually united to form Taekwondo.

Legacy

Shotokan karate, through the efforts of Gichin Funakoshi and his successors, has become the most widely recognizable of all Asian martial arts globally. Funakoshi's overall impact on the advent and subsequent development of modern karate-dō is profound. His work helped transform karate from a secretive Okinawan combat art into a public budo (martial way) in Japan, emphasizing physical, mental, and spiritual development.

The style's emphasis on strong fundamentals, disciplined kata practice, and practical kumite has ensured its enduring popularity. Despite the proliferation of various branches and interpretations, Shotokan continues to be a dominant force in the karate world, serving as a foundation for many other styles and influencing martial arts practice across continents. The legacy of Funakoshi and Shotokan is one of spreading karate's principles and techniques to a global audience, making it a truly international martial art.

Kyokushin

Kyokushinkai, meaning 'the ultimate truth style', is a major karate school established by Oyama Masutatsu. Its formal beginning is typically dated to 1964, though the name Kyokushin had been in use for several years prior. Oyama's intention was not to inaugurate a new "style" (ryu) but rather to bring together the most effective elements of other martial arts, which is suggested by its name ending in "kai" (association) instead of "ryu" (school).

Oyama Masutatsu was the creator of Kyokushin karate. He was known for his indefatigable self-promotion and the myths fostered by him and his followers, which make his history difficult to ascertain. Born in 1923, Oyama opened his own karate dojo, named Oyama Dojo, in Tokyo in 1953. Initially, the dojo was located in an empty lot and later moved to a ballet school in 1956.

Oyama's background included studying Shotokan karate in Gichin Funakoshi's dojo and later Gōjū-ryū karate with So Neishu. His own curriculum rapidly developed a reputation as a tough, intense, hard-hitting, and practical style. Oyama became famous for his fights with bulls, having killed three with his bare hands and deprived several others of their horns with his "sword-hand" since 1951. He also gained a reputation for being 'rough' with his students due to gruelling training sessions where injuries from practice fighting (kumite) were common.
(See Section on Karate Masters for more details on his life)

Influences and Distinguishing Characteristics

Kyokushinkai is described as the youngest of the major karate schools and is considered by some to be the most widely practised style in the world. It is notably the most challenging

in terms of its training regime. Oyama adapted characteristics from his chosen methods to create what he believed to be the most combat-oriented and effective martial art.

The style emphasises the practical application of karate, with Oyama famously stating that ignoring 'breaking practice is no more useful than a fruit tree that bears no fruit'. A trademark of Kyokushin is its emphasis on breaking objects such as boards, tiles, or bricks to measure offensive ability. This practice fighting, or kumite, also distinguished Oyama's teaching style from other karate schools.

The Kyokushinkai kata are largely of Gōjū-ryū and Shotokan descent. The style incorporates elements from these previous influences, but also introduces unique aspects, such as the "ura" (裏, "reverse") performance of certain kata.

Growth and Official Organisations

The reputation of Oyama's dojo attracted students from within and outside Japan, leading to significant growth. In 1964, Oyama moved the dojo into what would become the Kyokushin home dojo and world headquarters. Concurrently, he formally founded the International Karate Organisation Kyokushin kaikan (IKO or IKOK) to organise the many schools teaching the Kyokushin style worldwide.

Katas Associated with the Style

The Kyokushinkai style incorporates a variety of kata, drawing from its Shotokan and Gōjū-ryū influences, while also developing unique adaptations. The sources list the following kata as being part of the Kyokushinkai curriculum:

- Taikyoku (太極) #1-3: These are elementary or training kata. The term "Taikyoku" is the Japanese rendering of the Chinese "taiji," signifying that within their simplicity, they

contain the ultimate principles of karate. Oyama Masutatsu developed the original Taikyoku series.

- Pinan (平安) #1-5: These are also elementary or training kata. They were extracted by Itosu Anko from the longer Kūsankū and Chang Nian/Channan kata taught by Sōkon Matsumura.
- Gekisai (撃砕)
- Seisai
- Sanchin (三戦)
- Sesan
- Seyonchin
- Sepai
- Suparinpa
- Passai Dai (披塞大)
- Passai Sho (披塞小)
- Chinto (鎮東)
- Kusanku (観空)
- Gōjūshiho (五十四歩)

Note: The Taikyoku kata are performed within the Kyokushinkai in a way unique to it, called "ura" (裏, "reverse"), featuring backward spinning turns between each technique. Similar to Taikyoku, the Pinan kata are performed within the Kyokushinkai in a unique "ura" version, involving backward spinning turns between each technique.

Many of these kata, such as Pinan, Passai, Chinto, Kusanku, and Gōjūshiho, are also found in other karate styles like Shotokan and Shitō-ryū, reflecting their shared Okinawan origins and historical influences. The key difference in Kyokushinkai for some of these, particularly Taikyoku and Pinan, lies in the specific "ura" execution, which involves distinct backward spinning turns. This adaptation alters the

flow and application compared to how these kata might be performed in other organisations.

Legacy

Kyokushinkai is referred to as the "ultimate truth style" and has gathered many thousands of pupils throughout the world due to the high standards set and the reputation of its founder. Its strong emphasis on practical, full-contact fighting and physical conditioning has left a significant impact on the martial arts world, influencing many subsequent full-contact styles.

Gōjū-ryū

Gōjū-ryū (剛柔流), meaning "hard-soft style," is one of the main traditional Okinawan styles of karate, featuring a combination of hard and soft techniques. It is considered the youngest of the major karate schools and is said by some to be the most widely practised style in the world, known for being the most challenging in its training regime.

Founding and Early Influences

Gōjū-ryū's foundations were laid by Higaonna Kanryō, who is regarded as the first exponent of a distinct Naha-te style. Higaonna learned martial arts in Fuzhou, China, studying under Ryū Ryū Ko. He trained with Ryū Ryū Ko for about fourteen years, learning nine empty-hand kata and various weapon kata (bo, long sword, short sword) before returning to Okinawa to establish his lineage.

The official naming of the Gōjū-ryū style occurred around 1929 or 1930, or was officially recognised in 1933 by its formulator, Chōjun Miyagi. Miyagi selected the name "Gōjū" from a passage in the Bubishi martial arts text, which reads: "Ho go ju donto" (The way of inhaling and exhaling is hardness and softness). This name perfectly reflected Miyagi's style, which emphasised both hard and soft techniques and focused heavily on breathing.

(See Section on Karate Masters for more details on his life)

Miyagi was prophetic about the future of karate, stating in a 1936 speech in Osaka that the days of secret teaching were over and karate-dō would become international. He outlined a five-part Gōjū-ryū syllabus: junbi undo (stretching/strengthening), hojo undo (strength/power development), kihongata (fundamental kata: Sanchin, Tensho), kaishugata (eight other Gōjū-ryū kata), and kumite renshu (sparring training). Miyagi believed the ultimate aim

of karate-dō was to build character, conquer human misery, and find spiritual freedom. Notably, Miyagi never awarded a black belt or any other rank to his students, fearing they would be recognised by their belt rather than their abilities.

Key Teachers and Style Growth

Gōjū-ryū's growth was significantly shaped by Miyagi's senior students and their subsequent efforts:

- Gogen Yamaguchi (1909-1989): Yamaguchi was Miyagi's personal representative in Japan. He was instrumental in promoting Gōjū-ryū on mainland Japan, leading to its rapid growth and official recognition as one of the "ancient martial arts" by the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai. Yamaguchi is often credited for the worldwide dissemination of the Gōjū system, establishing the Gōjū-Kai organisation. His charismatic public image, traditional Japanese dress, and long hair earned him the nickname "The Cat" and attracted significant media attention, promoting Gōjū globally. Yamaguchi also played a crucial role in developing and introducing jiyu-kumite (free sparring) into the karate-dō curriculum in Japan, making Gōjū-ryū comparable to judo and kendo. His jiyu-kumite featured close-quarter fighting with low kicks, throws, and circular striking techniques, appearing so realistic that a 1940 public debut was mistaken for a real fight.
- Eiichi Miyazato (1922–1999): Accepted as Miyagi's successor by many in the Gōjū community, including Miyagi's family. He continued to teach in Miyagi's garden dojo after his death and opened his own dojo, the Jundokan, in Naha City in 1957. Miyazato is well-known for his tireless efforts to develop and expand Okinawan Gōjū-ryū karate-dō worldwide.
- Meitoku Yagi (1912–2003): Opened his own Meibukan dojo.

- Seiko Higa (1898-1966): Went on to devise the Kokusai Karate-Kobudo Remnei.
- Seikichi Toguchi (1917–1998): Developed the Shorei Kan.

The reputation of Oyama's dojo, initially opened in Tokyo in 1953 and named Oyama Dojo (a form of Gōjū-ryū), attracted students globally due to its tough and practical style. This style was formally named Kyokushinkai in 1957, meaning 'the ultimate truth'. In 1964, Oyama established the International Karate Organisation Kyokushin kaikan (IKO or IKOK) to manage the growing number of Kyokushin schools worldwide. Kyokushin is considered a descendant style of Gōjū-ryū.

The migration of Okinawan karate masters to mainland Japan, starting with Gichin Funakoshi in 1915, formalised its presence there. The Dai Nippon Butoku Kai (Great Japan Martial Arts Association), established in 1895 to promote and standardize martial disciplines, officially recognised Gōjū-ryū as a budō in 1933. Furthermore, in 1998, the semi-governmental Nippon Kobudo Kyokai recognised Gōjū-ryū Karate-dō as an ancient form of traditional martial art (koryū) and bujutsu, making it the first karate style to receive such recognition from the NKK. This spread was aided by American servicemen stationed in Okinawa after World War II, who, upon returning home, introduced karate to the West.

Distinguishing Characteristics

Gōjū-ryū is often contrasted with other styles. While styles like Shotokan primarily derive from Shuri-te, Gōjū-ryū is based on Naha-te. Gōjū-ryū places much emphasis on the perfection of its core stances, 'sanchin' (hourglass stance) and 'neko-ashi-dachi' (cat stance), taught to pupils from an early stage as they form the art's foundation. The style promotes improvement of technique through traditional training and conditioning implements.

In terms of strategy, Gōjū-ryū focuses on closing distance, unbalancing the opponent, and using physiological damage to incapacitate them. It is fundamentally a striking art, with its core kata consisting of approximately 70 percent hand techniques, 20 percent foot techniques, 5 percent throws, and 5 percent groundwork. Miyagi's own success against judo practitioners during his military service highlighted that his physical conditioning and the directness of karate could overcome other arts, rather than one art being inherently "better".

Katas Associated with the Style

Gōjū-ryū has a core curriculum of twelve classical kata that form the basis of most traditional Gōjū-ryū organisations today. These kata are:

- Sanchin (三戦): A foundational kata focusing on proper posture, breathing, and body conditioning. It is practiced with dynamic tension and deep, natural breathing.
- Gekisai Dai Ichi (撃砕第一) and Gekisai Dai Ni (撃砕第二): Meaning "attack and smash, destruction". These beginner's kata were created by Chōjun Miyagi in 1940 and introduce the fundamentals of Gōjū-ryū. Dai Ni introduces open-hand techniques and additional stances compared to Dai Ichi. Gekisai Dai Ichi was also incorporated into the Okinawan Karate tradition as Fukyugata Dai Ni and is practiced by other schools like Kobayashi Shorin-ryū and Matsubayashi Shorin-ryū.
- Saifa (砕破): Meaning "smash and tear".
- Seiyunchin (制引鎮). It explores themes like five techniques against cross-hand grabs and pushes.
- Shisochin (四向鎮).
- Sanseiru (三十六): Meaning "36 hands". It features themes like double-arm receiving techniques.
- Sepai (十八): Meaning "18 hands".

- Kururunfa (久留頓破).
- Sesan (十三): Meaning "13 hands".
- Suparinpei (壱百零八手): Meaning "108 hands". Some believe it contains the full syllabus of Gōjū-ryū, although this is disputed. It is noted as being 108 techniques long, almost twice as long as Shotokan's Kanku-Dai.
- Tensho (転掌): Meaning "revolving hands" or "rotating palms". This kata was adapted by Chōjun Miyagi from the Rokkishu exercises he observed in China, representing the soft aspect of Gōjū-ryū.

Other Kata (sometimes practiced or unique to certain branches):

- Hookiyu (普及型): Universal or unified kata, created by Seikichi Toguchi, introducing basics of Gōjū-ryū stances and defensive postures. Sometimes considered a simplified form of Gekisai kata.
- Taikyoku (太極): While originally created by Yoshitaka Funakoshi (Shotokan), Gōjū-ryū versions have been modified to reflect elements within the Gōjū-ryū style, such as zenkutsu dachi stances, and follow the basic H pattern.

Similarities and Differences with other styles' kata:

- Sanchin: Present in other styles like Uechi-ryū and Shorinji-ryū, but their execution differs. Uechi-ryū's Sanchin relies primarily on the "Sanchin stance" and is very different compared to other versions.
- Seisan: Found in Isshin-ryū, Uechi-ryū (though it looks very little like Gōjū-ryū's, it's genealogically related), and some Shorin-ryū branches. In Chito-ryū, Seisan is nearly identical to the original Shorin-ryū forms as taught by Chōtoku Kyan.

- Suparinpei: Its length of 108 techniques is notable compared to other styles' longer kata, like Shotokan's Kanku-Dai.
- Gōjūshiho, Passai, Chinto, Kusanku: These kata are also found in various other karate styles (e.g., Shorin-ryū, Shotokan, Shitō-ryū, Isshin-ryū), reflecting their common Okinawan origins and Chinese influences. The interpretation and performance of these kata can vary significantly between schools and organisations, with different masters adding their own interpretations or mixes of variants.

Legacy

Gōjū-ryū has left a significant mark on the martial arts world. It is referred to as one of the major karate methods in existence today and is considered the "ultimate truth style" that has gathered many thousands of pupils throughout the world due to the high standards set and the reputation of its founder. Its emphasis on combining hard and soft techniques, strong stances, and practical application has influenced many subsequent styles and continues to be practiced globally.

Shitō-ryū

Shitō-ryū (糸東流) is a major traditional Okinawan style of karate, which combines a mix of hard and soft techniques and is considered one of the four principal styles of Japanese karate.

Founding of Shitō-ryū

Shitō-ryū was founded by Kenwa Mabuni around 1931 in Osaka, Japan. The style was initially called Hanko-ryū ("half-hard style"), chosen to imply its use of both hard and soft techniques. However, Mabuni later changed the name to Shitō-ryū in honour of his two primary teachers: Ankō Itosu (糸, shi) and Higaonna Kanryō (東, to). This naming convention was Mabuni's way of paying respect and giving credit to his mentors. The style was officially registered with the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai in 1939, though Gōjū-ryū seems to have received this distinction first.

(See Section on Karate Masters for more details on his life).

Mabuni was one of the first Okinawan karateka to teach karate in mainland Japan, making several trips to Tokyo in 1917 and 1928 to popularise the art. He held the view that karate, despite its traditionally secret transmission, should be taught with honesty and integrity to anyone seeking knowledge. In 1929, he moved to Osaka to become a full-time karate instructor. Mabuni died on 23 May 1952, at the age of 63.

Shitō-ryū is a fusion style that intentionally combines elements from the three historical Okinawan methods or schools: Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te.

The Itosu-kei/Higaonna-kei (lineage) divide is fundamental to Shitō-ryū, as Kenwa Mabuni, deliberately synthesized the teachings of his two primary masters. Shuri-te lineage known

for fast, straight, long-distance techniques, exemplified by kata like Pinan and Naha-te lineage, characterized by close-distance, heavy, circular movements with special breathing, as seen in Sanchin and Seisan. This deliberate fusion of distinct approaches forms Shitō-ryū's comprehensive curriculum.

Key Teachers and Lineage

After Kenwa Mabuni's death on 23 May 1952, his sons, Mabuni Kenei and Mabuni Kenzo , both claimed succession to Shitō-ryū.

- Mabuni Kenei, as the elder son, was traditionally considered the rightful successor. However, he had not trained extensively in the art, so one of Kenwa Mabuni's most senior students, Iwata Manzo, served as the chief instructor and technical adviser for Kenei until he was sufficiently trained. Kenei went on to lead the Union Shitoryu Europe and was known for teaching authentic karatedo in seminars worldwide.
- Mabuni Kenzo, the younger son, had trained consistently with his father and travelled with him, leading his mother to ensure he assumed leadership of the Honbu Dojo in Osaka and his father's complete syllabus.

Despite rivalry between their affiliated dojos for decades, both factions now acknowledge and respect each other's legitimacy as successors to the Shitō-ryū legacy. Shitō-ryū is seen as an accumulated body of knowledge, research, analysis, wisdom, and experience from all its past and present sensei and members.

Other notable martial artists who studied under Kenwa Mabuni include Ohtsuka Hironori (founder of Wadō-ryū) and Yasuhiro Konishi (founder of Shindō Jinen-ryū), both of whom were also students of Funakoshi. Shimabukuro Masayuki Hanshi, a significant figure in Shitō-ryū, initially

studied Shorinji Kempo, then became a direct student of Hayashi Teruo, who founded the Hayashi-Ha branch of Shitō-ryū. Shimabukuro later aligned with Mabuni Kenzo, blending Hayashi-Ha and Mabuni Kenzo's Seito Shitō-ryū with his own research.

Growth and Spread

Kenwa Mabuni's efforts to popularise karate in mainland Japan involved several trips to Tokyo in 1917 and 1928. He moved to Osaka in 1929 to teach karate full-time. With support from Sakagami Ryusho, Mabuni opened several Shitō-ryū dojos in the Osaka area, including at Kansai University and the Japan Karate-dō Kai dojo. Today, the largest concentration of Shitō-ryū practitioners in Japan is centred in the Osaka area. His contemporary, Shinpan Shiroma, remained in Shuri, Okinawa, and established Okinawan Shitō-ryū.

Shitō-ryū encourages competitive sparring, a departure from traditional Gōjū-ryū, where kata are performed slightly differently by Gōjū-Kai karateka, but these differences are not significant enough to create a new style. The style is understood as a "Japanified" interpretation of Gōjū-ryū developed from its Okinawan roots.

Characteristics and Differences from Other Styles

- Fusion Nature: Shitō-ryū's most distinguishing feature is its large number of kata, intentionally combining Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te elements. This stands in contrast to Shotokan, which has a narrower curriculum, and Gōjū-ryū, which focuses primarily on Naha-te.
- Fighting Distance: Shitō-ryū incorporates both the long-distance fighting techniques of Shuri-te and the close-distance fighting with heavy movements and special breathing techniques of Naha-te, derived from Chinese Fukien kempō.

- Number of Kata: Depending on the school, between 50-60 kata are taught. This is a significant number compared to the twelve of Gōjū-ryū and the twenty-six of Shotokan, including all kata from these two styles plus fifteen additional ones. This vast repository makes Shitō-ryū a comprehensive representation of Okinawa-te.
- Authenticity and Purpose: Kenwa Mabuni emphasised the "spirit of the fist of the noble men" (kunshi no ken) passed from Matsumura via Itosu, highlighting that karate was originally not an attack technique but prioritised blocking with sufficient energy.

Katas Associated with Shitō-ryū

Shitō-ryū has a diverse and extensive kata curriculum, drawing from various sources and Mabuni's own creations. The curriculum includes many classical kata and some that Mabuni Sensei himself created.

List of Kata (from sources, combining various mentions):

From Shuri-te/Shorin-ryū influence:

- Pinan (平安) # 1–5: These elementary kata were extracted by Itosu Anko from longer Kūsankū and Chang Nian/Channan kata. In Shitō-ryū, the original ordering of Pinan Shodan and Nidan is maintained, unlike modern Shotokan where they were transposed.
- Kūsankū (Kosukun) (公相君): Originally composed by Sōkon Matsumura, Shitō-ryū practices "sho" and "dai" versions.
- Passai (Bassai) (披塞): Shitō-ryū includes versions like Matsumura no Passai, Shimpaku no Passai, and Tomari no Passai.
- Chinto (鎮東): This kata contains many palm heel strikes and evasive footwork, possibly rooted in Chinese kung fu. Itosu is said to have learned it from a Chinese man in Tomari.

- Wanshu (腕秀)
- Rohai (鷺牌): Shitō-ryū teaches all three of Itosu's Rohai kata, as well as Matsumora Rohai.
- Gōjūshiho (五十四歩): Developed by Sōkon Matsumura and originally named "Uesheishi," meaning 54 methods in Chinese. Shitō-ryū includes Gōjūshiho Shō and Gōjūshiho Dai.
- Naihanchi(n) (内歩進): A fundamental kata passed down from Sōkon Matsumura and Itosu Anko.

From Naha-te/Shorei-ryū influence:

- Sanchin (三戦): Shitō-ryū may favour the shorter (Miyagi) version.
- Saifa (砕破)
- Seienchin (征遠鎮_)
- Sanseiryu (三十六)
- Shisochin (四向戦)
- Seipai (十八)
- Seisan (十三): Many versions exist, and Shitō-ryū has its own.
- Kururunfa (久留頓破)
- Suparinpei (壱百零八): Also known as "108 steps"
- Kata learned from Aragaki Seishō: Unshu (雲手), Sochin (壮鎮), Niseishi (二十四歩), Aragaki Sai, and Aragaki Bo Kata.
- From Go Kenki (Hakutsuru Ken Kempo): Nipaipo (弐八方), Paipuren, and Hakutsuru. Niipaipo (or Nepai) is a southern Chinese White Crane style kata, modified by Kenwa Mabuni for Shitō-ryū.

Unique to Shitō-ryū:

- Matsukaze (松風): Means "wind in the pines" and may be named after a Noh play. Its origin is unclear, potentially composed by Mabuni himself.

- Aoyagi (青柳) (Green/Blue/Fresh Willows).
- Juroku (十六) (16).
- Myojo (明浄) (Bright Clarity).
- Shinpa (新破) (New Breakaway): Based on Uechi's Karate.
- Happo Sho (八方掌) (Eight Directions).
- Shinsei (2) (新生) (New Life).
- Shiho Kosokun (四方公相君) (Four Directions Kosokun).
- Kenshu (拳秀) (Fist Genius).
- Kensho (賢掌) (Talented Palms).
- Kenpaku (拳伯) (Kenpaku Paramount Fist)

Kata with Similarities/Differences to other styles:

- Heian/Pinan: In Shitō-ryū, the original Okinawan ordering of Pinan Shodan and Nidan is maintained (Pinan Nidan was originally the first Pinan kata), unlike modern Shotokan where Gichin Funakoshi transposed their names in the 1930s. Shitō-ryū versions of Heian Sandan may have no foot lift, with the performer merely stepping through each technique, in contrast to some Western interpretations with high crescent kicks.
- Seisan: The Shitō-ryū version of Seisan shares features with Gōjū-ryū, including tension and breathing techniques, but also reflects Shorin-ryū origin. The Seibukan Shorin-ryū Seisan features Shiko-Dachi and strong pivots, stemming from Sōkon Matsumura. The Uechi-ryū Seisan is very different, relying on the Sanchin stance and introducing knee strikes, one-knuckle punches, spearhands, and front kicks.
- Jion, Jitte/Jutte, Ji'in: These three kata are considered by some to be different versions of the same kata, despite Funakoshi classifying them as different styles. In ancient times, they may have been a single kata.
- Kūsankū (Kosukun) (公相君): Originally composed by Sōkon Matsumura, Shitō-ryū practices "sho" and "dai" versions.

- Naihanchi(n) (内歩進): A fundamental kata passed down from Sōkon Matsumura and Itosu Anko.

Branches and Official Organisations

After Kenwa Mabuni's passing, Shitō-ryū branched into several lines of transmission, not always amicably. His two sons, Mabuni Kenei and Mabuni Kenzo, both led factions. Mabuni Kenei became the head of Shitō-ryū, and his statements are still considered true in 2009. Mabuni Kenei leads the Union Shitō-ryū Europe. Mabuni Kenzo took leadership of the Honbu Dojo in Osaka.

Another significant branch is Hayashi-Ha Shitō-ryū, founded by Hayashi Teruo, who was a strong proponent of tournament competition. Shimabukuro Masayuki Hanshi trained with Hayashi Teruo for thirty years and later with Mabuni Kenzo, resulting in his teaching being a blend of Hayashi-Ha Shitō-ryū and Mabuni Kenzo's Seito Shitō-ryū.

Shitō-ryū organisations claim with pride that it was the first karate school to be recognised by the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai, though this distinction seems to belong to Gōjū-ryū. In 1939, Mabuni established the forerunner of the current umbrella organisation, Shitokai.

Legacy

Shitō-ryū, through Kenwa Mabuni's dedication, has played a crucial role in preserving a vast array of Okinawan kata. It stands as a style that deliberately sought to integrate the diverse martial traditions of Okinawa into a single, comprehensive system. This commitment to preserving the breadth of Okinawan karate is one of its most enduring legacies.

The style's evolution from a secret fighting art to a more open discipline, influenced by Japanese nationalism and the desire

for official recognition, mirrors the broader history of karate-dō. Shitō-ryū represents an actual attempt at combining both the Shorin and Gōjū styles of Okinawa, and as such, offers a unique comprehensive approach to karate. Mabuni's work helped to put the techniques and spirit of karate into words, making it more accessible and understandable to the general public, and contributed to karate's acceptance as a true Japanese martial art.

Wadō-ryū

Wadō-ryū, meaning "Harmony Way School", is one of the major styles of modern karate, officially recognised on mainland Japan. It is considered one of the four major styles of Japanese karate, alongside Shotokan, Gōjū-ryū, and Shitō-ryū.

The style was founded by Hironori Ōtsuka (大塚 博紀), who was born on 1 June 1892, in Shimodate City, Ibaraki, Japan. His father, Tokujiro Ōtsuka, was a medical doctor. Ōtsuka began his martial arts journey at the young age of five, training in jujutsu under his great-uncle, Chojiro Ebashi, who was a samurai.

(See Section on Karate Masters for more details on his life)

Founding and Early Development

Ōtsuka's vision for a new martial art came from blending the practical and useful elements of Okinawan karate with the techniques found in jujutsu and kendo. This blend notably led to the early formation of kumite (sparring) in karate, as he believed there was a need for a more dynamic and fluid type of karate.

On 1 April 1934, Ōtsuka opened his own karate school, the Dai Nippon Karate Shinko-Kai, located at 63 Banchi Suehiro-Cho, Kanda, Tokyo. It was during this time that he formulated what would become Wadō-ryū. The style was officially recognised as an independent karate style in 1934. The name Wadō-ryū, meaning "Harmony Way School" or "Way of Peace", came into being in 1938 when it was registered with the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai under the more elaborate name Shinshu Wadō-ryū Karate Ju Jutsu (神州和道流空手柔術). It was again registered at the Butokukai, Kyoto, in 1940, for the

demonstration of various martial arts, alongside Shotokan, Shitō-ryū, and Gōjū-ryū.

Influences and Distinguishing Characteristics

Wadō-ryū is a fusion style, drawing heavily from multiple martial arts traditions:

- Shindō Yōshin-ryū Jujutsu: This jujutsu style, which Ōtsuka studied under Tatsusaburo Nakayama, was fundamental to Wadō-ryū's creation. Ōtsuka incorporated the grace and natural movement of Shindō Yōshin-ryū, as well as its focus on body-shifting and avoidance.
- Okinawan Karate (specifically Shotokan and Shuri-te elements): Ōtsuka's training under Gichin Funakoshi (Shotokan's founder) provided the karate foundation. The Wadō style is said to partly include Shuri-te, but rearranged as jujutsu.
- Other masters: He also trained under Motobu Chōki and Kenwa Mabuni, indicating a broad exposure to different Okinawan karate methods.

Wadō-ryū distinguishes itself from other styles in several ways:

- Emphasis on Body-Shifting and Avoidance: The core objective in Wadō-ryū is to cause pain and injury to the opponent while simultaneously restricting any possible injury to the karateka through agile body movement and evasive tactics.
- Atemi-jutsu: Ōtsuka's background as a professional bonesetter gave him exceptional knowledge of striking points on the human anatomy. Wadō-ryū leverages this knowledge, using body-striking techniques aimed at the more than three hundred regions that can inflict damage or immobilise an adversary.

- Kata Differences from Shotokan: The Wadō-ryū versions of kata lack the changes introduced into Shotokan kata by Gichin Funakoshi and Gigō Yoshitaka, particularly those affecting kicking techniques. These Shotokan modifications were implemented after Ōtsuka's separation from Funakoshi.

Growth and Worldwide Spread

Wadō-ryū has grown significantly, becoming one of the major karate styles with thousands of adherents throughout the world. Many great masters have developed from its original teachings. The style is recognised as one of the traditional Japanese martial arts.

Katas Associated with Wadō-ryū

Ōtsuka incorporated nine traditional kata into Wadō-ryū.

- Pinan (Heian): The Wadō-ryū style practices the Heian kata, but refers to them by their Okinawan name, Pinan. Notably, the first and second Pinan kata in Wadō-ryū are reversed in order compared to the modern Shotokan ordering, which is closer to the original Okinawan Toh-te tradition.
- Seisan: This kata is practiced within Wadō-ryū. The Wadō-ryū version of Seisan is derived from the precursor of Shotokan that Funakoshi was teaching, and it is strikingly similar to the Shorin-ryū Seisan versions practiced on Okinawa, suggesting it underwent minimal alteration.
- Rohai: A family of kata found in various karate styles, Rohai is also practiced in Wadō-ryū. This kata originated from the Tomari-te school of Okinawan martial arts.
- Wanshū (Wansu): This kata is included in Wadō-ryū. The name refers to "Excellent Wrist" or "Wang's Series," believed to be named after the diplomat Wang Ji (Ōshū in modern Japanese) who taught chu'an fa to the gentry of

Tomari in the 17th century. In Shotokan, this kata is known as Empi.

- Kushanku
- Naihanchi
- Seishan
- Chintō
- Jion

Branches and Official Organisations

Ōtsuka founded Wadō-ryū and later led major Wadō organisations such as Wadōkai. In 1964 Wadō was recognised as one of the four main styles within the new all-style national federation (FAJKO, later the Japan Karate Federation). The main international organisation for Wadō-ryū is the International Federation of Wadō-ryū Karate-dō Organisations.

Legacy

Hironori Ōtsuka's Wadō-ryū holds a significant place in karate history, not only as one of the four major Japanese styles but also for its distinctive approach. By integrating the evasive movements and joint manipulations of jujutsu with the striking techniques of Okinawan karate, Ōtsuka created a dynamic system emphasizing harmony and efficient self-defence. His contributions include the early development of kumite in karate, transforming it into a more practical and fluid martial art. This blend of hard and soft techniques, coupled with a deep understanding of human anatomy, ensures Wadō-ryū's enduring legacy in the global martial arts community.

Uechi-ryū

Uechi-ryū (上地流), meaning "Uechi's Style" or "Uechi's School," is a prominent traditional Okinawan karate style. It is recognised as one of the three officially recognised umbrella karate styles in Okinawa, alongside Shorin-ryū and Gōjū-ryū. It is also one of the four major styles of Okinawan karate.

The style was founded by Kanbun Uechi. In 1897, at the age of 20, Kanbun Uechi travelled to Fuzhou in China's Fujian Province. There, he studied Chinese martial arts under Zhou Zihe. Zhou Zihe was a master of the Crane, Dragon, and Tiger boxing styles. Uechi dedicated himself to understanding these Chinese forms, spending over a decade in China to gain a deeper understanding and practical approach to fighting.

(See Section on Karate Masters for more details on his life)

Founding and Early Development

Kanbun Uechi's original style was named Pangainun Ryu (半硬軟流), meaning "half-hard-soft style". He introduced this style to Okinawa and Japan in the early 1920s. In the early 1920s, he opened a karate club in the Wakayama Prefecture of mainland Japan, where his style was practised.

In 1934, Kanbun Uechi met Kenwa Mabuni, the founder of Shitō-ryū, who interviewed Uechi for an article titled "The Story of Chinese Kempō". Mabuni suggested that Kanbun change the name of his style to "Uechi-Ryū" (上地流). The style was officially renamed Uechi-Ryū in 1940 in his honour. This renaming occurred during a period (the Chinese-Japanese war) when references to Chinese influences were not welcome in Japanese martial arts. Kanbun Uechi continued teaching in Wakayama until 1946. In November

1946, he handed over his school to Ryuyu Tomoyose and returned to Okinawa, settling on the island of Iejima. He passed away in 1948 from kidney disease.

After Kanbun Uechi's death, his eldest son, Kanei Uechi (上地完英), was instrumental in formalising and expanding Uechi-Ryū. Kanei Uechi (born 26 June 1911 in Okinawa, died 23 February 1991) assumed leadership of the style. He had begun training with his father in Wakayama at the age of 16, receiving a certificate of full proficiency in Pangainun Toudi Jutsu in 1937. He opened his own dōjō in Osaka in 1937 but returned to Okinawa in 1942. In 1949, with Ryuko Tomoyose, Kanei Uechi established the Nodake and Kanzatobaru dōjōs, which merged into the Futenma dōjō in 1957.

Kanei Uechi effectively created Uechi-Ryū in its present form by establishing a systematic curriculum and adding five "bridging" kata to the original three taught by his father. These added kata are considered unique to Uechi-Ryū and are derived from or inspired by the style's foundational kata. Kanei Uechi was president of the Uechi-Ryū Karate-dō Association, a worldwide organisation.

Influences and Distinguishing Characteristics

Uechi-Ryū is heavily influenced by the Chinese martial arts, specifically the Crane, Dragon, and Tiger boxing styles, which Kanbun Uechi studied in Fuzhou, China. It is often classified as a Naha-te school, but this classification is not entirely accurate, as Uechi reportedly had little to no direct contact with Naha or Naha-te masters. Kanbun Uechi was resolved not to add to or change the system he learned from Zhou Zihe, adhering to the original patterns of Chinese kempō.

The style is known for its distinctive approach:

- Open-hand techniques: Uechi-Ryū commonly uses many techniques with an open hand.

- Stances: It features unique stances such as Uechi-Hachiji-Dachi (inward natural stance).
- Body conditioning: Uechi-Ryū training is physically demanding, focusing on conditioning the body, particularly the limbs, for impact.
- Avoidance of high kicks: Historically, Uechi-ryū, similar to Naha-te, primarily uses foot techniques up to belt height, considering high kicks unsuitable for real combat.

Growth and Worldwide Spread

Kanbun Uechi's style began spreading in Japan in the Wakayama Prefecture. After his death, Kanei Uechi continued his father's work, opening Uechi-Ryū to the public, including American G.I.'s, making it one of the first styles to teach karate to foreigners. This contributed significantly to its global expansion. Uechi-Ryū organisations and schools now exist worldwide, including in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Yugoslavia, France, Argentina, and Mexico.

Uechi-Ryū has achieved significant recognition. It was the first karate style to be recognised as Koryu Bujutsu (classical martial art) by the Nippon Kobudo Kyokai (NKK).

Katas Associated with Uechi-Ryū

The kata of Uechi-Ryū trace back to Kanbun Uechi's training in China and the subsequent developments by his son, Kanei Uechi.

Original Kata (from Kanbun Uechi): Kanbun Uechi's original Pangainun/Uechi-Ryū had only three kata, which he learned from Zhou Zihe in China and brought back to Okinawa. These are:

- Sanchin
- Seisan
- Sanseiryu

It is said that there was a fourth kata, Suparinpe, but Kanbun did not have enough time to learn it fully.

Kanei Uechi added five "bridging" kata, which are unique to Uechi-Ryū and were derived from or inspired by the foundational kata. The commonly taught kata in the Uechi-Ryū curriculum, combining the original and added forms, include:

- Sanchin (Original)
- Kanshū (also spelled Konshu)
- Seichin
- Seisan (Original)
- Seiryu (also spelled Seiru)
- Kanchin
- Sanseiryu (Original)

Therefore, a full list of kata generally associated with Uechi-Ryū includes: Sanchin, Kanshū, Seichin, Seisan, Seiryu, Kanchin, and Sanseiryu. Some sources mention others, depending on the instructor.

Unique Kata to Uechi-Ryū: The kata added by Kanei Uechi are considered unique to Uechi-Ryū. These include Kanshū and Kanchin.

Kata Similar to, and Different from, Other Styles:

- Sanchin, Seisan, and Sanseiryu: These kata are also found in other styles, notably Gōjū-Ryū, indicating a "genealogical" relationship. However, the Uechi-Ryū versions "look very different" from their Gōjū-Ryū namesakes.

  Seisan (Uechi-Ryū): It looks very little like the Gōjū-ryū kata of the same name. It has obvious foundations in Sanchin, relying primarily on the Sanchin stance (sanchin dachi). It introduces basic techniques such as knee strikes,

the one-knuckle punch (shōken zuki), spearhand (nukite), and the front kick (shōmen geri). It is the second of the three kata learned and taught by Kanbun Uechi and is the fifth kata learned in modern Uechi-Ryū, often tested for shodan (first black belt).

- Kanchin: Kanei Uechi intended this kata to be an introduction to Sanseiryu.
- Seiryu: This is described as another "dragon" kata.
- Seisan (Uechi-Ryū): It looks very little like the Gōjū-ryū kata of the same name. It has obvious foundations in Sanchin, relying primarily on the Sanchin stance (sanchin dachi). It introduces basic techniques such as knee strikes, the one-knuckle punch (shōken zuki), spearhand (nukite), and the front kick (shōmen geri). It is the second of the three kata learned and taught by Kanbun Uechi and is the fifth kata learned in modern Uechi-Ryū, often tested for shodan (first black belt).

Branches and Official Organisations

The primary official organisation for the style is the Uechi-Ryū Karate-dō Association, which Kanei Uechi presided over. Uechi-Ryū, initially named Pangainun Ryu (or Pangai-noon), was officially recognised and renamed in 1940. It is one of the four major styles of Okinawan Karate and the first karate style recognised as Koryu Bujutsu by the Nippon Kobudo Kyokai (NKK).

The sources mention that Uechi Kanei believes that sport competition helped to popularise karate. However, there is also a note about how Chogi Kishaba, who teaches a version of Yamane Ryu (a different style), is "pretty disgusted with 'what some Western teachers are doing with the style'" and that his student Toshihiro Oshiro "has promulgated a popular version of Yamane Ryu that has been modified for tournament competition". While this describes a different

style, it highlights a broader martial arts concern about competition potentially altering traditional forms.

Legacy

The legacy of Uechi-Ryū is firmly rooted in its direct transmission from Chinese martial arts to Okinawa and its subsequent development into a distinct system. Kanbun Uechi's dedication to learning and preserving a pure form of Chinese boxing, and Kanei Uechi's efforts to formalise and spread the style globally, have ensured its enduring presence. Uechi-Ryū stands as a unique synthesis of hard and soft techniques, with an emphasis on natural body movement, strong conditioning, and open-hand striking. Its historical recognition as a Koryu Bujutsu in Japan underscores its authenticity and traditional value, making it a significant contributor to the rich tapestry of Okinawan and Japanese martial arts.

Isshin-ryū

Isshin-ryū (一心流), meaning "One Heart Style" or "One Mind School", is a traditional Okinawan karate style that synthesises elements from several older martial arts. Its unique approach and distinct characteristics have left a significant mark on the martial arts world, particularly in its widespread adoption outside of Okinawa.

The style was founded by Tatsuo Shimabuku. (See Section on Karate Masters for more details on his life)

Founding of Isshin-ryū

Shimabuku opened his first dōjō in 1946 in the village of Konbu, near Tengan on Okinawa's east coast. It was at this point that he began to form the idea of combining the best elements of Okinawan karate.

The style now known as Isshin-ryū formally came into existence on 15 January 1956. Before this date, Shimabuku had called his synthesis by other names, including Chanmigua te (チャンミーグヮー手) and Sunsu (スンスウ). The name "Isshin-ryū" translates to "One Heart School" or "One Mind School". The emblem for Isshin-ryū, chosen by Tatsuo Shimabuku, is a half-sea-snake half-woman deity called Mizugami, which he reportedly saw in a vision. This emblem represents the strength of a snake and the quiet character of a woman, expressing the essence of the style.

Influences and Distinguishing Characteristics

Isshin-ryū is a fusion style, intentionally combining elements of Shorin-ryū and Gōjū-ryū. Shimabuku researched what he believed to be the strengths of karate and added his own innovations.

The style is known for several distinguishing features:

- Vertical Fist Punching: Isshin-ryū employs a vertical fist in its punching techniques, rather than the horizontal method commonly found in most other schools of karate. Shimabuku believed this to be a more natural and faster technique. While not entirely unique, it is quite possible he adopted this method from his early studies in China, where the vertical punch is more common.
- Body Shifting and Avoidance: Similar to Wadō-ryū, Isshin-ryū techniques emphasise body-shifting and avoidance.
- Focus on Speed and Focus: The techniques taught in Isshin-ryū are based on the need for speed and focus.
- Stance and Breathing: Significance is given to stance and breathing, taught to a high tier of knowledge.
- Inclusion of Kobudō: Isshin-ryū is unusual among well-known karate schools for including the study of three weapons traditionally associated with Okinawan kobudō: the bō (棒), sai (釵), and tonfa (トンファー). Weapon-orientated drills like 'bō-sai-kumite' (staff-trident-fighting) are a distinctive feature.
- Thirty Basic Exercises: The style's special peculiarity is its Thirty Basic Exercises.
- Fast Snap-Kicks: Fast snap-kicks are also practised.

Katas Associated with Isshin-ryū

The Isshin-ryū syllabus initially consisted of eight kata. Seven of these were derived from already established prearranged sequences, while Shimabuku also created some. Each kata offers a deeper insight into the origin of this form.

The kata of Isshin-ryū are:

- Seiunchin
- Seisan

- Naihanchi
- Wanshu
- Sanchin
- Chinto
- Kusanku
- Sunsu

In addition to these empty-hand kata, Isshin-ryū includes the following weapon kata:

- Tokumine no Kun (for the bō)
- Chatan Yara no Sai (for the sai, learned from Taira Shinken)
- Kyan no Sai (either learned from Chōtoku Kyan or devised by Shimabuku and named in his honour; Shimabuku later discarded this kata in favour of Kūsankū Sai)
- Hama Higa no Tuifa (Isshin-ryū's only tonfa kata)

Unique and Similar Katas, and their Differences:

- Seisan: This kata is traditionally taught as the first kata to be learned in the Isshin-ryū curriculum, unlike many other styles. Shimabuku learned his version from Chōtoku Kyan. While it shares features with Gōjū-ryū, including tension and breathing, all punches are performed with a vertical fist. The Isshin-ryū Seisan has Chinese and Shorin-ryū origins, passed from Matsumura to Kyan, and then to Tatsuo Shimabuku. It teaches how to fight multiple opponents directly in front and how to turn to face opponents from different directions, emphasizing the "Seisan Stance" (shortened front stance – sho zenkutsu-dachi or extended sanchin-dachi). In comparison, the Uechi-Ryū Seisan looks very different from other versions, having obvious foundations in Sanchin, relying on the Sanchin stance and introducing techniques like knee strikes, the one-knuckle punch (shōken zuki), spearhand (nukite), and the front kick (shōmen geri).

- Sanchin: Isshin-ryū favors the shorter, Miyagi version of Sanchin. Shimabuku regarded the practice of Sanchin as essential to health. Tragically, he suffered a fatal stroke shortly after performing it in his dōjō on 30 May 1975.
- Naihanchi: Shimabuku studied this kata with both Chōtoku Kyan and Motobu Choki. Isshin-ryū's Naihanchi is a version of what is elsewhere called Naihanchi/Tekki shodan, and there is no nidan or sandan in Isshin-ryū. It is also unusual (though not unique) in that it begins by moving to the left rather than the right.
- Wanshu: The adaptation of this Tomari-te kata taught in Isshin-ryū schools, with its two side kicks, was devised by Tatsuo Shimabuku.
- Hama Higa no Tuifa: Isshin-ryū's only tonfa kata, it appears to be closely related to the Uechi-Ryū version of Seisan kata.

Key Teachers and Succession

- Tatsuo Shimabuku: As the founder, his teachings are the bedrock of Isshin-ryū.
- Kichiro Shimabuku: Tatsuo Shimabuku's son, Kichiro, continued the style after his father's death around 1976. He closed the old dōjō at Agena and built a new one at Kyan, changing the organisation's name to the Isshin-ryū World Karate Association. Kichiro also made his own technical alterations, alternating between the standing-fist punch and the corkscrew punch.
- Angi Uezu: A notable student and son-in-law of Tatsuo Shimabuku.
- Don Nagle, Frank Van Lenten, Harold Mitchum, Arsenio Advincula, Harold G. Long, Denny Shaffer, Harry G. Smith, Ed Johnson: Other notable students of Tatsuo Shimabuku.

Isshin-ryū, like many other twentieth-century karate styles, suffered from succession crises after the founder's death, perhaps more so than others. The sources mention that Uechi

Tsuyoshi (not to be confused with Kanbun Uechi) set up another organisation, the Isshin-ryū Okinawa Traditional Karate Association.

Growth and Worldwide Spread

Tatsuo Shimabuku's dōjō became significant as he began teaching karate near the Camp Hansen Marine Base at Kin, opening it to American G.I.'s. This accessibility contributed significantly to the style's global expansion. As a result, approximately 336 branches of Isshin-ryū exist throughout the world, with most of them concentrated in the USA.

Official Organisations and Branches

- Isshin-ryū World Karate Association: This organisation is led by Kichiro Shimabuku, Tatsuo Shimabuku's son.
- Isshin-ryū Okinawa Traditional Karate Association: Founded by Uechi Tsuyoshi, this organisation represents a separate branch of the style, highlighting the fragmentation that occurred after the founder's passing.

Legacy

Tatsuo Shimabuku left a distinct mark on the martial arts. His creation of Isshin-ryū represents a unique synthesis of traditional Okinawan karate styles, characterised by its distinctive vertical fist, comprehensive kobudō curriculum, and emphasis on practical application. While the style experienced fragmentation following its founder's death, its core philosophy and techniques continue to be developed by numerous instructors worldwide. Isshin-ryū's rapid expansion, particularly in the USA, ensures its enduring legacy as a significant and influential karate style, carrying forward the combined wisdom of its diverse martial arts heritage.

Kobayashi-ryū

Kobayashi-ryū (小林流), often translated as "Small Forest Style" or "Shaolin Style," is a significant traditional Okinawan karate style. It stands as a prominent branch within the broader Shorin-ryū lineage, founded on the foundational teachings of influential Okinawan martial arts masters.

The Kobayashi-ryū style was founded by Chōshin Chibana. (See Section on Karate Masters for more details on his life)

Historical Influences and Development

Kobayashi-ryū is categorised as a sub-style of Shorin-ryū. Shorin-ryū itself originated from Shuri-te.

The broader "Shorin" group of styles, to which Kobayashi-ryū belongs, represents a mixture of what were known as Tomari-te and Shuri-te, sometimes with a mixture of Naha-te.

Key Teachers and Succession

- Chōshin Chibana (1885-1969): The founder of Kobayashi-ryū, he dedicated his life to teaching and refining the style. His profound influence shaped the core principles and curriculum.
- Katsuya Miyahira (b. 1918): A direct student of Chōshin Chibana, Miyahira continued to propagate the style. In 1956, he established his dōjō, the Shidokan, behind his house in Tsuboya, where he taught karate.
- Shugoro Nakazato Sensei: Prominent students such as Genka Noritsune Sensei (10th Dan Shōrin-ryū, Shorinkan) and Asato Sezaburo Sensei (9th Dan Shōrin-ryū, Shorinkan) initially trained under Chōshin Chibana and later continued their training under Nakazato Shugoro

Sensei. Other notable students who trained under Nakazato Shugoro Sensei include Noel Smith and Yamashita Tadashi.

- Minoru Nakazato Hanshi: He currently presides over the International Shorinkan association, a major branch of Kobayashi Shōrin-ryū, signifying the continuation of the style through its organisational structure.
- Noel Smith, Kyoshi: An 8th Dan Shōrin-ryū, Shorinkan, Sensei Smith holds a direct lineage to Nakazato Shugoro Sensei. He also served as the head coach for the US karate team from 1973 to 1978 and is an inductee of the USA Karate Hall of Fame. His training with Yamashita Tadashi under Nakazato Shugoro Sensei emphasised realistic combat scenarios.
- Yamashita Tadashi, Sensei: A 10th Dan Shōrin-ryū, Shorinkan, Yamashita Sensei later developed his own fighting approach called "Suikendo" ("fists flowing like water"), which he spread worldwide through the Yamashita International Budo Association. His system combines iterative fighting tactics with traditional karate-dō, featuring explosive open-hand techniques that allow for rapid, powerful, multi-strike sequences.

Distinguishing Characteristics

Kobayashi-ryū is known as a "fast style", which is a characteristic of Shorin-ryū styles generally based on Shuri-te and Tomari-te. A core emphasis in Kobayashi-ryū is on "breathing from the tanden", which is the energetic centre of the human body located below the navel.

The training methodology in Kobayashi-ryū, particularly for beginners, involves a unique approach to kata practice. Students are taught to perform the initial kata, such as Naihanchi Shodan, by emptying all their strength from the body and relaxing completely, practising the kata "as if

dancing". This method helps students' physiques adapt naturally to karate and allows their intrinsic energy to "sink to his lower abdomen." After achieving this, students are then instructed on the correct points at which to focus their energy, developing a state of "relaxed tension". This paradoxical concept is explained using the analogy of a solid rubber ball that, when squeezed and released, returns to its original rounded shape.

Other factual characteristics include the prominent use of Zenkutsu Dachi (front-bent stance) and Naihanchi Dachi (straddled legs or 'horse-riding' stance), along with light steps and many Keri-Waza (kicking techniques). The Shorinkan branch of Kobayashi Shōrin-ryū, for instance, focuses on the systematic development of fighting skills, incorporating realistic combat scenarios, partner drills, free fighting without predetermined techniques, and the conditioning of limbs, bones, hands, and the upper and lower body.

Growth and Worldwide Spread

The accessibility of Okinawan karate to American G.I.'s stationed at bases like Camp Hansen near Kin, Okinawa, following World War II, played a crucial role in its global dissemination. Many servicemen, upon returning home, became the first Westerners to teach the martial art they had learned in Okinawa. This led to a significant spread of Okinawan karate, including Kobayashi-ryū and its branches, with the USA becoming a major hub for traditional karate outside of Japan.

The establishment of international organisations, such as the International Shorinkan association presided over by Nakazato Minoru Hanshi, further facilitated the worldwide growth of the Kobayashi-ryū lineage. Instructors like Noel Smith and Yamashita Tadashi, who trained in this lineage,

have contributed to its international presence. Yamashita Tadashi's development and global spread of his Suikendo system, which draws from his traditional karate-dō background, also reflects the broader influence of this lineage.

Katas Associated with the Style

The Kobayashi-ryū curriculum, particularly within the Shorinkan branch, is described as a "curriculum-based kata system" with a defined "closed curriculum system" comprising fourteen karate katas and thirteen kobudo kata. Additionally, there are basic technique drill-katas taught to new students, which include three Kihon katas, three Fukyu No katas, and Chi No kata. These kata collectively provide an "encyclopaedia of moves and concepts for all possible fighting challenges".

While a definitive single list of the 14 karate kata for Kobayashi-ryū (Shorinkan) is not provided, the teachings of Katsuya Miyahira, a direct student of Chōshin Chibana, offer a strong representation of the core empty-hand kata in this lineage. These include:

Empty-Hand Katas:

- Naihanchi Shodan
- Naihanchi Nidan
- Naihanchi Sandan
- Pinan Shodan
- Pinan Nidan
- Pinan Sandan
- Pinan Yondan
- Pinan Godan
- Passai Dai
- Passai Sho
- Kusanku Dai

- Kusanku Sho
- Chinto
- Okan (Wankan)
- Wanshu
- Seisan
- Jion
- Gōjūshiho

Note: The source states 14 karate katas for Shorinkan, while Miyahira's list contains 18. This suggests that some of these kata might be considered advanced or specific to Miyahira's interpretation within the broader Kobayashi-ryū teachings, or the count of 14 refers to a foundational subset.

Basic Technique Drill-Katas:

- Three Kihon katas
- Three Fukyu No katas
- Chi No kata

Kobudo Katas:

- Thirteen kobudo kata (Specific names are not provided in the sources for Kobayashi-ryū/Shorinkan, but generally in Shorin-ryū kobudo, weapons like the bō, nunchaku, tonfa, sai, and kama are studied.)

Unique, Similar, and Differentiated Katas:

- Naihanchi Shodan: This kata holds significant importance in Kobayashi-ryū, typically being the first kata taught to beginners. Its practice in Kobayashi-ryū is distinctive due to the emphasis on "emptying all strength... relaxing completely... as if dancing" to develop intrinsic energy and "relaxed tension". This approach to developing body dynamics and internal energy makes its execution unique even when compared to similar Naihanchi (or Tekki) kata in other styles like Shotokan.

- Seisan: While commonly found across many karate styles, including Gōjū-ryū and Uechi-ryū, the execution within Shorin-ryū branches like Shorinji-ryū (a Kyan lineage) for example, involves practising it with dynamic tension similar to Gōjū-ryū's Sanchin kata. This includes natural lower abdomen breathing in conjunction with slow, forceful movements. However, unlike some Gōjū-ryū variations, care is taken not to hold the breath during tension to avoid health risks. The Uechi-ryū version of Seisan is notably different, built upon the Sanchin stance and introducing specific techniques like knee strikes and the one-knuckle punch.
- Pinan Katas: The series of five Pinan (Heian) kata (Shodan-Godan) were created by Ankō Itosu around 1905 specifically for the introduction of karate into Okinawan schools, serving as a preparatory tool for military service. They are considered foundational for all Shorin-ryū and derived schools. In some contexts, the Pinan katas are distinguished by combining a block and a punch into a single action, differing from many other Shorin styles that perform them as two separate movements.
- Fukyu No Katas: These "universal or unified kata" were intended to introduce basic movements of a style. For example, "Fukyugata Ichi" was created by Shoshin Nagamine (founder of Matsubayashi-ryū, a Shorin-ryū sub-style) in 1941. They are sometimes considered simplified forms of Gekisai kata. These were later additions aimed at broader accessibility and standardisation within the Shorin-ryū family.
- Wanshu: The Tomari-te kata adaptation taught in Isshin-ryū (another Shorin-ryū sub-style) was explicitly devised by Tatsuo Shimabuku and is distinct for its inclusion of two side kicks. This highlights how founders often adapt existing kata to fit their own interpretations or emphasise specific techniques.

- Kusanku: This kata is a cornerstone of many karate styles, including Shorin-ryū, and is known for its flowing techniques reminiscent of White Crane Kung Fu and its wide variety of open-handed techniques. There are many interpretations, such as Chatanyara no Kusanku.

Branches of the Style

- Shorin-ryū Shorinkan (小林流小林館): This is the most explicitly named branch of Kobayashi Shōrin-ryū in the sources. It is an international association led by Nakazato Minoru Hanshi. Shorinkan follows a rigorous curriculum, encompassing its defined set of karate and kobudo kata, as well as specific basic drills. It focuses on the systematic development of practical fighting skills and conditioning.

Official Organisations Associated with the Style:

- International Shorinkan Association: This is the primary official organisation directly associated with the Kobayashi-ryū lineage (specifically the Shorinkan branch). This organisation maintains and propagates the curriculum and principles of Kobayashi Shōrin-ryū globally.
- The broader Okinawan karate landscape includes bodies like the Okinawan Prefecture Karate Rengokai, which serve to recognise and provide official standing to various styles and their leaders within Okinawa.

Legacy

Chōshin Chibana's creation of Kobayashi-ryū, and his subsequent recognition with the Emperor's Order of the Fourth Class, underscores his significant contribution to Okinawan culture and martial arts. The legacy of Kobayashi-ryū is deeply intertwined with the preservation and evolution of traditional Okinawan karate.

As a branch of Shorin-ryū, Kobayashi-ryū continues the lineage tracing back to Sakugawa and Matsumura, ensuring the transmission of ancient Okinawan martial traditions. Its emphasis on unique training methods, such as the "relaxed tension" and "dancing-like" approach to kata, highlights a holistic development of the practitioner, integrating physical technique with internal energy and body dynamics.

Kobayashi-ryū, through its enduring presence and international spread, particularly in the USA, ensures that its unique blend of traditional influences and distinctive training methodologies continues to thrive and impact the global martial arts community.

Matsubayashi-ryū

Matsubayashi-ryū is a traditional Okinawan karate style with a rich history and distinct characteristics, tracing its roots back to prominent Okinawan martial arts masters. It is one of the sub-styles derived from Shōrin-ryū, itself originating from Shuri-Te.

Founding and Origins

Matsubayashi-ryū was founded by Shoshin Nagamine (1908-1997) and was formally named in 1947, after the Second World War. The name "Matsubayashi-ryū" is derived from the kanji of two influential Shuri-te and Tomari-te masters: Kōsaku Matsumora and Sōkon Matsumura, whose teachings profoundly shaped the style. While sometimes confusingly pronounced "Shorin-ryū," Matsubayashi-ryū stands as a distinct system.

Shoshin Nagamine was born the son of a farmer. In his youth, he suffered from poor health, which led him to begin karate training at the age of 17. This initial training was under Chojin Kuba of Tomari-te, and his health reportedly improved as a result. He later studied karate under Taro Shimabuku and Ankichi Arakaki, who were disciples of Chōtoku Kyan. Nagamine also trained under Kodatsu Iha of Tomari-te while serving as the captain of his school's karate club. From Master Iha, Nagamine learned and preserved kata such as Tomari Passai, Chinto, Wankan, Rohai, and Wanshu.

Nagamine's dedication to karate led him to study under several other legendary masters. He became a direct student of Ankichi Arakaki by the age of 19, and from 26, he studied under Chōtoku Kyan. At 31, he also trained directly with the renowned Motobu Choki.

Nagamine was one of the few Okinawan masters who extensively documented his knowledge, writing "The Essence

of Okinawan Karate-dō" and "Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters." These books offer thorough historical and technical insights into the style, as well as Nagamine's perspectives on karate and the tournament system.

Official Recognition and Contributions

Shoshin Nagamine played a significant role in the formalisation and spread of karate.

- In 1940, at the age of 35, he received his teacher's license from Japan's prestigious Dai Nippon Butokukai.
- In 1941, as a principal member of a special karate-dō committee in Okinawa, he was instrumental in creating the Fukyugata Ichi kata. This kata later became a standard for large-scale karate demonstrations.
- He was elected the first vice-president of the Okinawan Karate-dō Association upon its establishment in 1956.
- From 1961 to 1969, he served four terms as the association's president, earning the karate-dō Hanshi title. After his presidency, he remained a permanent adviser.
- In 1969, Nagamine experienced satori (enlightenment) and became a Zen disciple, subsequently organizing and presiding over the Myoshinjiha Rengein Hanazono-kai.
- He founded the World Shorin-ryū Karate-dō Association in 1977.
- In November 1981, he reorganised the Okinawa Prefectural Karate-dō Association, integrating it into the All Japan Karate-dō Association, and served as its first president.
- In April 1996, he was appointed a lifetime member of the Board of Advisers for the Institute of Zen Studies. Later that year, the Daihonzan Chozen-ji/International Zen Dojo recognised his "Ken Zen Ichinyo" (oneness of fist and

Zen) realisation, granting him the dharma name Kenzan, or "Fist Mountain".

Nagamine passed away in 1997 at the age of 90, leaving behind a significant legacy. He was admired in Okinawa for his contributions to karate, dance, and Zen Buddhism, and internationally regarded as one of the 20th century's great grandmasters. He emphasised the spiritual dimension of martial arts, aiming to train the mind to foster life rather than destruction. He also caution against works on "eminent masters" being overly influenced by mythical or poetic fantasy rather than objective facts.

Growth and International Spread

Matsubayashi-ryū experienced significant growth under Shoshin Nagamine's leadership. He established 30 branch dojos in Japan and 40 in the USA, along with others in Canada and Argentina. He claimed to have over 10,000 students worldwide.

Katas of Matsubayashi-ryū

Matsubayashi-ryū includes 18 empty-hand kata and training in five weapons.

Empty-Hand Katas:

- Fukyu Ichi: This kata was developed by Shoshin Nagamine himself in 1940 at the request of the Japanese military governor of Okinawa, General Hayakawa. It remains a standard for popular mass karate demonstrations.
- Fukyu Ni (also known as Gekisai Ichi).
- Pinan Shodan.

- Pinan Nidan.
- Pinan Sandan.
- Pinan Yondan.
- Pinan Godan.
- Naihanchi Shodan.
- Naihanchi Nidan.
- Naihanchi Sandan.
- Ananku.
- Wankan. (Nagamine learned this directly from Master Iha).
- Rohai. (Nagamine learned this directly from Master Iha).
- Wanshu. (Nagamine learned this directly from Master Iha).
- Passai. (Nagamine learned the Tomari Passai directly from Master Iha).
- Gōjūshiho.
- Chinto. (Nagamine learned this directly from Master Iha).
- Kusanku: In Matsubayashi-ryū, it is notable for its flying kick and a "cheating" stance known as ura-gamae. This stance involves extending one leg along the ground and squatting low on the other, which is designed to rob an opponent of attack opportunities. A possible application (bunkai) for this technique is to escape a bear hug from behind by twisting and dropping, while hand techniques simultaneously block the head and strike vulnerable points like the groin, knee, or foot. Due to its technical complexity, Kusanku is considered the highest-ranking and most complex kata in Matsubayashi-ryū, requiring more than ten years to master.

Weapons Katas: Matsubayashi-ryū also includes proficiency in traditional Okinawan weapons, with corresponding kata:

- Bo (staff).
- Nunchaku.
- Tuifa.

- Sai.
- Kama (sickle): This weapon is taught exclusively to black-belt (Dan-holders) practitioners, likely due to its inherent danger.

Nagamine's emphasis on preserving the forms learned from his Tomari-te teachers implies a lineage-specific interpretation of these common kata.

Chitō-ryū

Chitō-ryū is a distinct style of Okinawan karate, founded in the mid-20th century by Dr. Tsuyoshi Chitose, blending elements from the traditional Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te lineages of Okinawa. Its name, meaning "1,000 year old Chinese style," reflects its deep roots in Chinese martial arts and its founder's extensive research into karate's origins.

Founding and Origins

Chitō-ryū was officially founded in 1946 by Dr. Tsuyoshi Chitose (See Section on Karate Masters for more details on his life). The name "Chitō-ryū" translates as "chi" (千) for 1,000, "tō" (唐) for China (referring to the Tang dynasty), and "ryū" (流) for style or school, collectively meaning "1,000 year old Chinese style".

The style is generally classified as a Japanese karate style because Dr. Chitose primarily formulated and founded it while living in Kumamoto, Japan. However, many modern practitioners advocate for its categorisation as an Okinawan style due to its foundational techniques and principles being firmly rooted in traditional Okinawan Tōde (唐手).

Style Characteristics and Differences

Chitō-ryū is characterised by very concise kata that reflect the unique and diverse training experiences of its founder. A key distinguishing feature is that many Chitō-ryū kata, while bearing the same names as other traditional Okinawan kata, are typically very different from the original or standard version. Some may share only one or two signature moves that relate it to the original while others are completely different except in name.

The style's higher-level kata show a decisively strong Chinese influence. Specific technical characteristics of Chitō-ryū include:

- An emphasis on "shime" (tightening or contraction).
- The use of "shibori" (twisting or wringing action).
- Rapid rotational movements.
- Frequent use of tai sabaki (movement off the line of attack) at advanced levels.

An important exception to the general difference in kata performance is that Chitō-ryū versions of Seisan, Bassai, and Chintō are "nearly identical to the original Shōrin-ryū forms as taught by Chōtoku Kyan".

Growth and International Spread

Chitō-ryū has seen significant growth, particularly in Canada. The style's founder, Dr. Tsuyoshi Chitose, first visited Canada in 1967, accompanied by his protégé Mamoru Yamamoto (who later founded Yōshūkai Karate-dō). This trip was organised by Masami Tsuruoka, who is recognised as the father of Canadian karate. During this visit, Dr. Chitose presided over events at the Canadian National Karate Tournament in Toronto and conducted clinics at dojo across Canada. The current head of the Chitō-ryū style, Dr. Chitose's son, has continued this practice, conducting clinics in Canada approximately every other year. Consequently, Chitō-ryū is a popular mainstream karate style in Canada, with approximately 60 Chitō-ryū dojo across 8 of Canada's 10 provinces.

Katas of Chitō-ryū

Chitō-ryū incorporates a range of kata, some of which are unique to the style or show particular interpretations:

Empty-Hand Katas:

- Sanchin: Learned by Dr. Chitose from Aragaki Seishō, and notably practiced for seven years before any other kata. This kata has foundations in the White Crane style and is sometimes connected to Bodidharma.
- Unshu: Attributed to Dr. Chitose's training with Aragaki Seishō. This is a fluid and complex kata, showing strong Chinese martial arts influence.
- Seisan: Attributed to Dr. Chitose's training with Aragaki Seishō. The Chitō-ryū version is nearly identical to the original Shōrin-ryū forms as taught by Chōtoku Kyan. This kata literally means '13' and has various interpretations in different styles such as '13 Hands' or '13 Techniques'. It has roots in Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te streams. Isshin-ryū teaches Seisan as its first kata, with vertical fists and incorporating tension/breathing techniques similar to Gōjū-ryū.
- Niseishi: Attributed to Dr. Chitose's training with Aragaki Seishō.
- Shihōhai (四方拝, "four-direction salute"): This kata is peculiar to Chitō-ryū. Its origin is disputed, with some sources claiming Dr. Chitose learned it from Aragaki Seishō, and others stating he learned it from Hanashiro Chōmo at Sōgen-ji. Historically, it was used in royal ceremonies of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, with the "salutation to all four sides" being of great significance. Some Chitō-ryū groups practice an extended "dai" (大) version that includes additional techniques.
- Bassai: The Chitō-ryū version is nearly identical to the original Shōrin-ryū forms as taught by Chōtoku Kyan. Passai (also Bassai) was one of the three most practiced

kata in Okinawa, along with Naihanchi and Kūsankū, and has many variations depending on the school.

- Chintō: The Chitō-ryū version is nearly identical to the original Shōrin-ryū forms as taught by Chōtoku Kyan. Chintō was known in early Tomari-te and Shuri-te schools. Gichin Funakoshi renamed Chintō to Gankaku ("crane on a rock") in Shotokan, possibly to avoid anti-Chinese sentiment, and modified its movements and stance.
- Hoen: A fluid and complex kata, showing strong Chinese martial arts influence.

Weapons Katas: The sources mention that Aragaki Seishō, one of Dr. Chitose's primary teachers, was a famous weapons master, teaching kata such as Aragaki-no-kun (bo kata), Aragaki-no-sai, and Sesoku-no-kun. It is reasonable to infer that these kobudō forms would have influenced the style, though explicit Chitō-ryū kobudō kata lists are not provided in these sources.

Branches and Official Organisations

Several organisations and branches are associated with Chitō-ryū:

- The Chitō-ryū Sohonbu Office.
- The International Chito-ryū Karate-dō Federation is a parent organisation from which some branches have emerged.
- Canadian Chito-ryū Karate-dō Association: This association experienced a rift with the Japanese parent organisation in 2008.
- International Chito Ryu Karate-dō Association ICKF Canada.
- Australia Chitokai Karate Association Inc.

- Ryūsei Karate-dō: This is a style derived from Chitō-ryū, founded in 1997 by Ken Sakamoto after he left the International Chito-ryū Karate-dō Federation.

Legacy

Dr. Tsuyoshi Chitose's legacy is significant for his comprehensive approach to karate, combining the major Okinawan martial arts lineages into a single, unified curriculum. His style is recognised globally, with strong communities like those in Canada. His dedication to documenting his teachings through works like "Kempō Karate-dō — Universal Art of Self-Defence" ensures the preservation of his extensive knowledge for future generations. His official recognition as a Judan and Hanshi by the Zen Okinawa Karate Kobudo Rengo Kai highlights his profound impact and respected position within the broader Okinawan martial arts world. The continuous practice and adaptation of Chitō-ryū, even through organisational shifts and derivative styles like Ryūsei Karate-dō, demonstrate its enduring influence and the ongoing evolution of its teachings.

Shūdōkan

Shūdōkan, meaning "the hall for the study of the way" or, more figuratively, "the institution for cultivating the way", is a Japanese karate style founded in the 1930s by Kanken Tōyama (豊山 貫賢). It is officially classified as a Japanese karate style.

Founding and Origins

Shūdōkan was created by Kanken Tōyama in the 1930s. The core philosophy behind its founding was Kanken Tōyama's belief that there are no distinct "styles" in karate, akin to how there are no styles in sumo wrestling or boxing. Instead, he viewed karate as a unified art, and Shūdōkan was intended to be a setting or institution for the practice and study of all forms of karate, aiming to include all karate developments. This philosophical stance distinguishes Shūdōkan from many other karate systems that emphasise a specific lineage or set of techniques.

Shūdōkan is also recognised as a successor style to Shuri-te lineage. The influence of Shuri-te, with its roots in Matsumura Soken and Kanga Sakugawa's teachings, indicates Shūdōkan's connection to the older Okinawan traditions.

Kanken Tōyama was a pivotal figure in the early 20th-century development of karate, known for bringing Okinawan unarmed methods to the Japanese mainland in the early 1920s. His vision for Shūdōkan was centered on the idea that karate should not be compartmentalised into rigid "styles," but rather seen as a universal martial art. He articulated this belief in his book, "Karate Do Daiho Kan," published in 1963. Toyama's intent was to foster an environment where

practitioners could explore and integrate a wide spectrum of karate techniques and concepts.

In 1940, Kanken Tōyama conducted a demonstration on the Japanese mainland at Kawasaki alongside Seitoku Higa, a significant figure in the Okinawan karate world, whom he later promoted to the grade of Shihan. This collaboration highlights Toyama's active role in promoting and legitimizing karate beyond Okinawa.

Key Teachers Throughout its History

Ichikawa Isao emerged as a central figure in the lineage of Shūdōkan, serving as Kanken Tōyama's uchi deshi (internal disciple). Following Toyama Sensei's passing in the late 1960s, Ichikawa Isao perpetuated his master's expansive vision. He established Doshinkan Karatedo in the Shūdōkan tradition in Europe, with its administrative headquarters and central training hall (honbu dojo) located in Vienna, Austria. This demonstrates the early international expansion of the Shūdōkan tradition.

Upon Ichikawa Isao's death in 1996, his brother, Ichikawa Nobuo, assumed leadership of the Doshinkan organisation, continuing to guide it until his own passing in 2019.

Style Characteristics and Differences

Shūdōkan is notably distinct due to its founder's "open system of katas" philosophy. Unlike "curriculum-based kata systems" that feature a defined, closed curriculum of kata designed to progressively train specific muscle groups and techniques, Kanken Tōyama regarded Shūdōkan not as a "style" but as a flexible framework for practicing all forms of karate. This approach meant that the style aimed to

incorporate and adapt various karate developments rather than adhering to a fixed set of forms.

Within the Doshinkan Karatedo branch, for instance, the emphasis is placed on an individual path of personal growth and character development, where the execution of techniques for maximal impact in the most efficient way is not the primary purpose of training. This differs significantly from styles that prioritize combat effectiveness and destructive power in every move.

A notable aspect of kata within the Shūdōkan tradition is its interpretation of the Pinan (Heian) kata series. The Shūdōkan style is considered closer to the original Okinawan Tōde, and therefore maintains an older ordering of these kata, where Pinan Nidan was taught before Pinan Shodan. This contrasts with modern Shotokan, where these two kata have had their names transposed, resulting in a reversed learning order. This difference points to a direct link with earlier Okinawan pedagogical practices.

Growth Across Okinawa, Japan, and Worldwide

Kanken Tōyama's initial efforts helped bring Okinawan karate to mainland Japan, laying the groundwork for Shūdōkan's establishment and growth there. The style's international expansion is most clearly evident through the establishment of Doshinkan Karatedo in Europe by Ichikawa Isao, with its honbu dojo in Vienna, Austria. This demonstrates that the Shūdōkan tradition found a significant foothold outside of Japan, particularly in the European martial arts community.

Katas Associated with the Style

Given Kanken Tōyama's philosophy of an "open kata system" designed to include all karate developments, Shūdōkan generally embraces a wide range of kata.

Katas practiced within the Doshinkan Karatedo branch include:

- Many classical kata: These encompass traditional forms that have been passed down through generations.
- Some kata that have been lost over time: These are unique to Doshinkan today, implying a significant role in preserving historical forms.
- Kata that Ichikawa Sensei developed after Toyama Sensei's death: These represent the style's continued evolution under its subsequent leadership.
- Kata that Ichikawa Sensei modified from their classical format: These reflect unique interpretations and adaptations within Doshinkan.

While some sources mention Yasuhiro Konishi (founder of Shindō Jinen-ryū) created Tai Sabaki Shodan, Tai Sabaki Nidan, and Tai Sabaki Sandan—kata notable for being "unbroken sequence[s] of actions"—Konishi trained under several masters including Gichin Funakoshi, Motobu Choki, Kenwa Mabuni, Morihei Ueshiba, and Chōjun Miyagi. Although Shūdōkan is listed as a recognised style, the provided sources do not explicitly state that these Tai Sabaki kata are formally part of the Shūdōkan curriculum.

Unique and Similar Katas

The Doshinkan Karatedo branch is noted for preserving classical kata, including some that have been lost over time and are today only taught in Karatedo Doshinkan. This

implies that some kata within this branch are unique in their continued practice.

Furthermore, Ichikawa Isao of Doshinkan modified classical kata. The effectiveness of such modifications is a point of debate, with some arguing that altering kata can detract from their original combat merit, transforming them into mere "competition showmanship". This suggests that Doshinkan's modified kata may differ significantly in technique and intent from their original forms or from versions practiced in other traditional organisations.

Branches and Official Organisations

The primary branch of Shūdōkan is Doshinkan Karatedo. It was founded by Ichikawa Isao, who was Kanken Tōyama's uchi deshi. Doshinkan operates with its honbu dojo (administrative headquarters and central training hall) in Vienna, Austria. This organisation was led by Ichikawa Isao and, after his passing in 1996, by his brother Ichikawa Nobuo until 2019. Doshinkan Karatedo is described as an "open kata system" following the Shūdōkan tradition.

Legacy

The legacy of Shūdōkan, primarily through its founder Kanken Tōyama, lies in its philosophical challenge to the concept of rigid "styles" in karate. Kanken Tōyama advocated for karate as a holistic martial art, a "hall for the study of the way" that encompasses all developments in karate rather than limiting itself to a fixed curriculum. This inclusive perspective has been carried forward by his successors, particularly within the Doshinkan Karatedo branch, which prides itself on preserving classical and even "lost" kata, while

also evolving through modifications and new kata development.

As a successor to the Shuri-te lineage, Shūdōkan represents a continuation of ancient Okinawan martial traditions, adapted and transmitted through its unique interpretative framework. The dedication of its teachers, such as Ichikawa Isao and Ichikawa Nobuo, to bringing the Shūdōkan tradition to Europe, further solidifies its enduring international legacy in the martial arts world.

Shōtōkai

Shōtōkai is a traditionalist Japanese karate association that emerged from the broader Shotokan lineage. It is characterised by its adherence to the original teachings and philosophy of its founder, Gichin Funakoshi, and maintains a conservative approach to the practice and curriculum of karate, distinguishing itself from other more modernised or sport-oriented branches of Shotokan.

Founding and Origins

The Shōtōkai association was established as a more traditionalist Shotokan group under the leadership of Funakoshi Yoshihide, who was succeeded almost immediately by Egami Shigeru. This development occurred in the context of a significant splintering within the Japan Karate Association, which split into at least eight distinct groups, each giving rise to a plethora of smaller organisations claiming to teach Funakoshi's authentic karate. Shōtōkai represents one of these conservative groups of Karate experts in Japan, standing apart from the more "corporate" associations.

The foundation of Shōtōkai is deeply rooted in the philosophical and technical principles laid down by Gichin Funakoshi.

Philosophically, Funakoshi strongly disapproved of jiyu kumite (free sparring) and the competitiveness it entailed, a stance that aligns with Shōtōkai's traditional approach. He emphasised kata training and was an advocate for "Karate-dō" (空手道, "empty-hand way"), promoting it as a way of life rather than merely a fighting method. His seminal work,

Karate-dō Kyohan, serves as the master text for Shotokan karate and forms the basis of Shōtōkai's kata curriculum.

Following Gichin Funakoshi's passing, Gigō Funakoshi initially led the Shōtōkai association, though he was succeeded almost immediately by Egami Shigeru.

JKA Shotokan and Shōtōkai diverged partly over attitudes to competition and technique emphasis, but both sit within the broader Funakoshi line.

Key Teachers Throughout its History

Egami Shigeru (1912–1981) became a central figure in Shōtōkai, leading the association after Funakoshi Yoshihide. His group was dedicated to perpetuating what they believed to be Gichin Funakoshi's authentic karate. Egami Shigeru also contributed significantly to the literary aspect of karate, authoring influential works such as The Way of Karate: Beyond Technique and The Heart of Karate-dō.

While not a direct leader of the main Shōtōkai association, Asai Tetsuhiko is mentioned as the founder of the Japan Karate Shoto-Kai Renmei. This organisation, bearing a similar name, highlights a broader spectrum of traditionalist Shotokan practitioners, although his group and its specific kata creations are distinct from the typical Shōtōkai canon.

Style Characteristics and Differences

Shōtōkai is distinguished by its traditionalist and conservative philosophy. It prioritizes adherence to Gichin Funakoshi's original teachings, particularly in its approach to kata and its philosophical underpinnings.

Key characteristics that differentiate Shōtōkai from other styles, especially mainstream Shotokan organisations:

- Emphasis on Kata Purity: The Shōtōkai's kata list is derived directly from Funakoshi's Karate-dō Kyohan, comprising fifteen kata, along with one unique staff kata by Gigo Funakoshi. This contrasts sharply with the typical Japanese corporate Shotokan canon, which includes around twenty-six to twenty-seven kata. Shōtōkai's "reductionism philosophy" emphasises a narrow curriculum with a very deep practice level.
- Disapproval of Competition: Reflecting Gichin Funakoshi's strong disapproval of jiyu kumite and its associated competitiveness, Shōtōkai generally downplays or omits competitive aspects of karate, focusing instead on personal growth and martial efficacy rooted in traditional forms.
- Authenticity: Shōtōkai aims to teach Funakoshi's "authentic karate," often viewing later developments in other Shotokan groups as deviations from the founder's original vision.
- Stance on Kata Modification: While the Japan Karate Shōtōkai Renmei (led by Asai Tetsuhiko) created many new kata, the main Shōtōkai tradition tends to be more conservative, adhering to the established forms from Karate-dō Kyohan. Generally, within traditional karate, there's a strong belief in the "Principle of Never-Changing Kata," which holds that altering kata can "defuse original techniques".

Growth Across Okinawa, Japan, and Worldwide

Shōtōkai originated in Japan as a result of the splintering of the Japan Karate Association. Its primary base of operations and influence remains within Japan, particularly among those

who seek to preserve a more traditional interpretation of Gichin Funakoshi's karate.

As an offshoot of Shotokan, one of the most widely practiced styles in the world, it would implicitly have a presence where traditional Shotokan is valued.

Katas Associated with the Style

The core of the Shōtōkai kata syllabus is precisely that established in Gichin Funakoshi's Karate-dō Kyohan. This curriculum contains fifteen kata.

The commonly accepted Shotokan kata (many of which are in Karate-dō Kyohan) include:

- Taikyoku Shodan (some lines also include Taikyoku Nidan & Sandan, but Shōtōkai usually keeps only Shodan)
- Heian Shodan
- Heian Nidan
- Heian Sandan
- Heian Yondan
- Heian Godan
- Tekki Series
- Tekki Shodan
- Tekki Nidan
- Tekki Sandan
- Bassai Dai
- Kanku Dai
- Jion
- Empi (Enpi)
- Hangetsu
- Gankaku

Unique Kata to Shōtōkai (or its associated lineage)

- Matsukaze No Kon: This is a staff kata developed by Gigo Funakoshi.

While the Japan Karate Shoto-Kai Renmei is a distinct organisation from the primary Shōtōkai, it is associated with a "Shōtōkai" name. Asai Tetsuhiko created a number of kata that are unique to his organisation:

- Gyaku zuki no kata, Mawari no kata, Kyakusen-shodan, Shinken, Junro-shodan, Junro-nidan, Junro-sandan, Junro-yondan, Junro-godan, Kihoken-issei, Kihoken-nisei, Kihoken-sansei, Meikyo-nidan, Meikyo-sandan, Jurokupo, Joko-issei, Joko-nisei, Joko-sansei, Hachimon, Senka, Rakuyo, Seiryu, Kakuyoku-shodan, Kakuyoku-nidan, Kakuyoku-sandan, Suishu (Mizu no te), Kashu (Hi no te), Roshu (Nami no te), Hushu (Kaze no te), Shoto.

Branches and Official Organisations

The primary organisation referred to as "Shōtōkai" in the sources is the traditionalist association under Egami Shigeru's leadership, which emerged from the split of the Japan Karate Association. This group continues to teach what they claim is Funakoshi's authentic karate. The "Official Homepage of Dai Nihon Karate-dō Shōtōkai" is mentioned, indicating a formal organisational structure.

Another organisation, the Japan Karate Shōtōkai (JKS), was founded by Tetsuhiko Asai after the death of Masatoshi Nakayama (a key figure in the Japan Karate Association). While it carries the "Shōtōkai" name, it represents a distinct lineage within the broader Shotokan family, particularly known for Asai's numerous kata creations.

Legacy

The legacy of Shōtōkai is deeply intertwined with its commitment to preserving the original vision and teachings of Gichin Funakoshi. By adhering to a narrower kata curriculum as outlined in Karate-dō Kyohan and emphasizing

a "deep practice level", Shōtōkai aims to transmit karate as a holistic martial art (Karate-dō) focused on character development, rather than a sport-oriented discipline.

Its traditionalist stance has allowed it to resist the trend of constant kata modification and the emphasis on competition that became prevalent in other karate organisations. In doing so, Shōtōkai serves as a custodian of a specific historical interpretation of Shotokan, offering an alternative path for practitioners seeking to follow Funakoshi's philosophy of karate as a "way of life" that transcends mere physical technique and competitive success. This dedication ensures that the deeper philosophical and practical aspects, which Funakoshi advocated for, are maintained for future generations.

Conclusion

The history of karate-dō is a tapestry, interwoven with centuries of secretive tradition, the biographies of pioneering masters, and periods of radical social and political transformation. Reflecting on this complex journey reveals several fundamental principles regarding the art's origin, nature, and future trajectory.

Because reliable written records from the period before the late eighteenth century are scarce, the early history relies heavily on oral tradition and secondary sources. This history is therefore largely traced through the lineages and biographies of prominent teachers, most of whom were Okinawan aristocracy or government officials who trained in the art.

The historical existence of rigid, separate "styles" in early karate is widely questioned. Before the 1900s, there were no formal styles, only karate or tode, representing the specific teachings of individual masters. The foundational geographical classifications, Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te, were labels formalized around 1926 or 1927, largely for social and political purposes to assert an Okinawan identity during rising Japanese nationalism (kokutai).

The great pioneers of the art, such as Miyagi Chōjun and Funakoshi Gichin, actively trained together in groups like the Karate Kenkyūkai, demonstrating that they viewed the art as fundamentally unified, not splintered by styles. Modern masters have contended that true karate-dō transcends the concept of style.

Kata constitute the core, essence, and foundation of karate, preserving techniques and knowledge across generations. The enduring debate concerns their function. While many modern interpretations treat kata as aesthetic exercises,

spiritual training, or merely movements for physical conditioning, traditionalists maintain that they are the original syllabi, containing lethal, obscured applications (bunkai). Historically, kata movements were designed and tested in life-or-death combat to maim or kill an attacker, often including throws, joint locks, and attacks to vital points.

Karate's evolution continues today, driven primarily by external pressures. The conversion of karate into a Japanese budō necessitated the standardization of curriculum, the adoption of formal style names (in the early 1930s), and the implementation of ranking systems (like dan and kyū).

Following World War II, karate rapidly developed a strong competitive sporting component. This development led to a philosophical schism, as competitive sport often entails discarding dangerous techniques, fostering competitiveness, and prioritizing victory over the ethical goal of character perfection. Traditional Okinawan masters often viewed this transformation as abandoning the art’s martial foundation, sacrificing content for popularity. This process has led to the categorization of karate into three distinct entities today: classical, self-protecting Okinawan karate-jutsu; traditional, form-only self-perfecting Japanese karatedo; and modern sports karate.

Despite the need to preserve the art's lethal essence, embodied by the Principle of Never-Changing Kata (which emphasizes adherence to battle-proven forms to maintain combat efficacy), masters must still ensure the art remains vital. A central Okinawan martial arts saying compares karate to a pond that requires a continuous "infusion of new ideas" (fresh water) to prevent stagnation and death. Karate-dō is thus seen as a living organism that must adapt and change as it flows from one generation to the next; if it ceases to grow, it stagnates.

The history of karate reminds practitioners that the goal of training is relentless effort toward self-mastery and the perfection of character. Technical skills, while essential, are viewed as merely the means to this ethical and spiritual end. Whether practiced as a sport or a means of self-defense, the discipline's true value is the personal development achieved along the path.

Ultimately, the most important word in karate is 'do'. The way or path that students choose to follow differs from person to person. Each person will study or practice karate for different reasons. Each person will have their own battles to fight on that journey – inside and outside the dojo. What is certain, is that looking across the history of karate through its masters, the perfection of one's own character was often as important or even more important then perfection of fighting techniques.

"*The true purpose of the art of karate lies not in victory or defeat, but in the perfection of the practitioner's character*" - Funakoshi Gichin

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3 – Teacher of Chōjun Miyagi, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
4 – His curriculum strongly influenced modern Gōjū-ryū, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
5 – Regarded as a principal in Naha's late-19th-century lines, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Gichin Funakoshi

1 – Popularised Okinawan karate on mainland Japan, Karate-Dō Kyohan, Gichin Funakoshi
2 – Presented the Heian (from Pinan) set for foundational training, Karate-Dō Kyohan, Gichin Funakoshi
3 – Advocated dō-centric character cultivation, Karate-Dō Kyohan, Gichin Funakoshi
4 – Early adoption by university circles aided spread, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook
5 – Standardised kata names and pedagogy for broader acceptance, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook

Motobu Chōki

1 – Emphasised practical kumite and Naihanchi-based training, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
2 – Writings discuss Channan/Pinan relationships, Karate My Art, Motobu Chōki
3 – Critiqued overly formalised practice, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – Maintained Shuri/Ti combative orientation, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine
5 – His approach influenced pragmatic branches of Shōrin lines, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Chōtoku Kyan

1 – Transmitted Shuri/Tomari kata (e.g., Passai, Kūsankū, Chintō), Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine
2 – Known for quick, agile Shōrin expression, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
3 – Teacher of Tatsuo Shimabuku and others, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
4 – Helped shape 20th-century Okinawan curriculum continuity, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
5 – Preserved Tomari nuances within his lines, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine

Kanbun Uechi

1 – Brought Pangai-noon from Fujian; later gave rise to Uechi-ryū, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
2 – Early curriculum stressed Sanchin and close-range methods, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
3 – Transmission continued through Uechi family and senior students, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – Preserved Southern Chinese attributes in Okinawan context, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
5 – Post-return teaching re-established after initial reluctance, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

Chōshin Chibana

1 – Founder of Kobayashi-ryū (Shōrin), Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

2 – Preserved Shuri/Tomari kata such as Naihanchi and Passai, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine
3 – Emphasised natural stances and fast, light tactics, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – His branch influenced later Shōrin derivatives, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine
5 – Leadership role in preserving Shuri heritage in 20th century, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Go Kenki

1 – Fujian White Crane practitioner living in Okinawa, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
2 – Interacted with Naha circles; influenced breathing/hand methods, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
3 – Example of direct Chinese influence in early 20th century Okinawa, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – Helped preserve Crane concepts within Okinawan training, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
5 – Known within records of Naha-based teachers and students, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

Kyōda Jūhatsu

1 – Student within Uechi-related circles; transmitter of Pangai-noon/Uechi methods, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
2 – Organisational leadership roles in post-war era, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
3 – Preserved conditioning and close-range emphases, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – Continued family-linked lines into modern practice, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
5 – Representative of continuity from Fujian influence, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

Chōjun Miyagi

1 – Systematised Naha-te into Gōjū-ryū, Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato
2 – Emphasised Sanchin and later Tenshō as complementary methods, Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato
3 – Student of Higaonna Kanryō, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
4 – Post-war re-establishment led to Jundokan under Eiichi Miyazato, Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato
5 – His system spread internationally in the 1950s, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

Kenwa Mabuni

1 – Founder of Shitō-ryū blending Shuri and Naha lines, Empty Hand: The Essence of Budō Karate, Kenei Mabuni

2 – Name “Shi-Tō” honours teachers Itosu and Higaonna, Empty Hand: The Essence of Budō Karate, Kenei Mabuni
3 – Preserved extensive kata syllabus from both traditions, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – His lines spread widely in Japan pre- and post-war, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
5 – Emphasised precise kata preservation and application, Empty Hand: The Essence of Budō Karate, Kenei Mabuni

Hironori Ōtsuka

1 – Founder of Wadō-ryū integrating jūjutsu principles, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines
2 – Emphasised taisabaki and evasion over collision, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines
3 – Classical jūjutsu context documented (e.g., Shindō Yōshin-ryū), Classical Fighting Arts of Japan, Serge Mol
4 – Developed kumite frameworks distinct from other styles, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines
5 – Aligned pedagogy to budō ideals for broader acceptance, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

Tsuyoshi Chitose

1 – Founder of Chitō-ryū drawing on Shuri/Naha experiences, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
2 – Emphasised balanced kihon-kata-kumite training, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines
3 – Preserved classical kata while adapting pedagogy, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
4 – Post-war organisation helped formalise the school, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
5 – Documented within modern histories of Japanese karate, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

Gigō Funakoshi

1 – Key technical moderniser within Shotokan, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook
2 – Influenced stances, hip action and advanced kihon, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook
3 – Shaped early JKA era pedagogy, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook
4 – Extended kicking repertoire and training intensity, Shotokan’s Secret, Bruce D. Clayton
5 – Legacy reflected in later Shotokan transmission, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook

Tatsuo Shimabuku

1 – Founder of Isshin-ryū combining Shōrin and Gōjū elements, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

2 – Student of Chōtoku Kyan; preserved compact kata delivery, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine
3 – Post-war spread via teaching U.S. servicemen, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
4 – Technical signatures include vertical-fist tsuki, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
5 – Represents pragmatic Okinawan synthesis in mid-20th century, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Gōgen Yamaguchi

1 – Prominent Gōjū-kai leader promoting free sparring, Wandering Along the Way of Okinawan Karate, Giles Hopkins
2 – Organisational leadership helped international spread, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
3 – Advocated jiyū-kumite while retaining kata core, Wandering Along the Way of Okinawan Karate, Giles Hopkins
4 – Influenced post-war competitive frameworks, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
5 – Noted for strong public profile in mid-20th century karate, Wandering Along the Way of Okinawan Karate, Giles Hopkins

Eiichi Miyazato

1 – Founder of the Jundokan and successor within Miyagi's line, Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato
2 – Preserved Gōjū-ryū curriculum (Sanchin/Tenshō and associated kata), Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato
3 – Organisational leadership documented post-1950s, Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato
4 – Role referenced in modern Goju histories, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
5 – Helped define post-war standards for the style, Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato

Traditional Okinawan Tode

1 – Early unarmed methods on Okinawa were known collectively as "Te/Ti" and later "Tōde", Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
2 – Okinawa's position between Japan and China shaped Tōde via sustained diplomatic and trade contact, Okinawa: The History of an Island People, George H. Kerr
3 – Exchanges with Ming/Fujian China (incl. Kume settlement) introduced Chinese boxing methods that informed Tōde, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – Weapon prohibitions and centralisation from Shō Shin's reign encouraged clandestine practice of Tōde, Okinawa: The History of an Island People, George H. Kerr

5 – Sparse written records and strong oral tradition complicate precise reconstruction of early Tōde, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines
6 – Regional flavours of Tōde later differentiated into Shuri-te, Tomari-te and Naha-te, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Shuri-te

1 – Court-associated stream centred in Shuri among pechin families, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
2 – Sōkon "Bushi" Matsumura is a pivotal transmitter within Shuri-te, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine
3 – Ankō Itosu's reforms (incl. school adoption) shaped Shuri-te transmission, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine
4 – Kata families include Naihanchi and Kūsankū/Passai lines, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine
5 – Tactical flavour emphasises quick linear entries and angular footwork, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
6 – Shuri-te provided major foundations for later Shōrin-ryū and Shotokan, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Tomari-te

1 – Distinct local stream associated with Tomari village practitioners, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
2 – Key figures include Kōsaku Matsumora and Kōkan Oyadomari, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine
3 – Known for kata lines such as Rōhai and Wanshū, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – Shares overlap with Shuri-te while keeping unique emphases in stepping/tempo, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
5 – Influences carried into Shōrin-ryū branches, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine

Naha-te

1 – Lineage crystallised through Higaonna Kanryō after training in Southern China, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
2 – Characteristic methods: Sanchin, breath power and isometric tension, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
3 – Chōjun Miyagi systematised this stream into modern Gōjū-ryū, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
4 – Rooted stances and close-range tactics typify Naha-te, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
5 – Chinese influence evident in kata repertoire and training apparatus, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Shotokan

1 – Introduced and popularised on mainland Japan by Gichin Funakoshi, Karate-Dō Kyohan, Gichin Funakoshi

2 – “Shōtōkan” name derives from Funakoshi’s pen name “Shōtō”, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook
3 – Early acceptance aided by adoption of gi and kyū/dan ranking, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines
4 – Hallmarks include long-range linear striking and kihon–kata–kumite pedagogy, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook
5 – Heian (from Pinan) set forms the foundational curriculum, Karate-Dō Kyohan, Gichin Funakoshi
6 – JKA era further standardised technique, instruction and competition, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook

Kyokushin

1 – Founded by Masutatsu Ōyama as a full-contact, conditioning-intensive style, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines
2 – Emphasises heavy body conditioning and rigorous kumite testing, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
3 – Curriculum adapted for knockdown competition with restricted techniques for safety, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines
4 – Influenced many later full-contact and knockdown organisations worldwide, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
5 – Retains kata framework while prioritising pressure-tested sparring, Karate’s History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

Gōjū-ryū

1 – Miyagi Chōjun formalised the system in Okinawa, Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato
2 – Lineage traces to Higaonna Kanryō’s Naha-te, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
3 – “Gō” (hard) and “jū” (soft) reflect integrated tension–relaxation methods, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – Core training centres on Sanchin kata and breathing (ibuki), Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato
5 – Tenshō complements Sanchin with softer hand methods, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer
6 – Post-war organisation and Jundokan leadership documented in detail, Okinawa Den Goju Ryu Karate-Do, Eiichi Miyazato

Shitō-ryū

1 – Founded by Kenwa Mabuni, blending Shuri-te and Naha-te, Empty Hand: The Essence of Budō Karate, Kenei Mabuni
2 – Name reflects “Shi-Tō” (Itosu + Higaonna) lineage integration, Empty Hand: The Essence of Budō Karate, Kenei Mabuni
3 – Broad syllabus preserves Itosu (Shuri/Tomari) and Higaonna (Naha) kata families, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop
4 – Balances speed of Shuri lines with rooted power of Naha lines, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

5 – Post-founder leadership maintained family continuity, Empty Hand: The Essence of Budō Karate, Kenei Mabuni

Wadō-ryū

1 – Founded by Hironori Ōtsuka integrating karate with jūjutsu principles, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

2 – Technical core emphasises taisabaki, displacement and evasion, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

3 – Lineage context linked to classical jūjutsu (e.g., Shindō Yōshin-ryū), Classical Fighting Arts of Japan, Serge Mol

4 – Kumite approach prioritises timing and distance over collision, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

5 – Curriculum adapts karate kata within a jūjutsu-inflected pedagogy, Classical Fighting Arts of Japan, Serge Mol

Uechi-ryū

1 – Derived from Pangai-noon brought back by Kanbun Uechi, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

2 – Core kata set: Sanchin, Seisan, Sanseiryu, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

3 – Southern Chinese animal principles preserved in method, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

4 – Emphasis on close-range tactics and conditioning drills, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

5 – Transmission maintained within the Uechi family in early decades, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Isshin-ryū

1 – Founded by Tatsuo Shimabuku combining Shōrin and Gōjū elements, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

2 – Vertical-fist tsuki and snapping kicks are characteristic choices, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

3 – Compact kata execution adapted from source lines, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

4 – Post-war spread via instruction to U.S. servicemen, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

5 – Curriculum reflects Okinawan pragmatism with simplified delivery, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Kobayashi-ryū

1 – Shōrin-ryū branch established by Chibana Chōshin, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

2 – Preserves Shuri/Tomari kata lines (e.g., Naihanchi, Passai), Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine

3 – Emphasis on natural stances and mobility, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

4 – Transmission influenced subsequent Shōrin-ryū branches, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine

5 – Maintains classical kata nomenclature from Shuri heritage, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Matsubayashi-ryū

1 – Shōrin-ryū branch founded by Shoshin Nagamine (Matsubayashi), Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine

2 – Consolidates Tomari/Shuri kata (e.g., Naihanchi, Passai, Kūsankū), Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine

3 – Emphasises relaxed power, natural stepping and speed, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

4 – Pedagogy and lineage documented by founder, Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters, Shoshin Nagamine

5 – Contrasts with Naha-derived methods in tension and stance expression, Okinawan Karate, Mark Bishop

Chitō-ryū

1 – Founded by Tsuyoshi (Chitose) drawing on Shuri and Naha influences, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

2 – Training integrates speed (Shuri) with rooted power (Naha), Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

3 – Post-war organisation and spread documented in modern histories, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

4 – Preserves classical kata while adapting pedagogy, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

5 – Emphasises balanced kihon-kata-kumite, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

Shūdōkan

1 – Founded by Kanken Tōyama after extensive study in Okinawa and Japan, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

2 – Syllabus reflects eclectic integration from Shuri/Naha streams, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

3 – Pedagogical stance favoured broad budō alignment over narrow labels, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

4 – Post-war development influenced several offshoot groups, The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It, Mark I. Cramer

5 – Retains classical kata while encouraging adaptable application, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

Shōtōkai

1 – Association that continued Funakoshi's karate under leaders such as Shigeru Egami, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

2 – Emphasises relaxed, flowing movement and de-emphasises competition, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook

3 – Maintains Shotokan lineage while differing from JKA models in training expression, Shotokan Karate – A Precise History, Harry Cook

4 – Prioritises budō character development consistent with Funakoshi's writings, Karate-Dō Kyohan, Gichin Funakoshi

5 – Historical evolution documented in post-war mainland histories, Karate's History and Traditions, Bruce A. Haines

Appendix B: A timeline of Karate

Before 1400 – Early roots
Indigenous fighting methods (“ti/te”) develop in the Ryukyus. Local grappling and striking traditions form the earliest layer of what will later become karate.

c. 1000 AD: Extensive trade begins in the Ryukyu Islands. However, Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa, engaged in extensive trade with Southeast Asia before this period.

1372-1373: Formal diplomatic relations established with China China's Ming Dynasty
Relations with the Ryukyuan kingdoms, increasing intimate cultural exchanges.

c. 1393: Chinese families settle in Okinawa, introducing kempō.
Tradition states that the renowned "thirty-six Chinese families" from Fujian province settled in Kume village near Naha. They brought knowledge of Chinese kempō ("fist method" or "Chinese boxing").

1429: The Ryukyu Kingdom is unified.
Sho Hashi unified the three Okinawan principalities (Hokuzan, Chūzan, and Nanzan) into a single kingdom.

c. 1470–1526: King Sho Shin bans most weapons.
Fostering unarmed arts King Sho Shin enforced a ban on carrying swords and ordered the confiscation of all weapons, storing them in Shuri Castle.

c. 1733–1815: Sakugawa Kanga, the "father" of Okinawan karate.
Sakugawa, often referred to as the "father" of Okinawan karate, is associated with the term karate (then written as 唐手, tōde) for the art he passed on.

1879: Japan abolishes the Okinawan monarchy The Ryukyu Kingdom was dissolved by Japan.
The island became Okinawa Prefecture. This shift marked the end of the traditional enemy (armored samurai).

c. 1901-1905: Ankō Itosu begins teaching karate in public schools Itosu.
The master of Shuri-te, was instrumental in getting karate introduced into Okinawa's schools and began teaching publicly at Shuri Public Elementary School.

1902–1906: The Pinan (Heian) kata are created.
Ankō Itosu created five simplified training kata, Pinan (later Heian). This innovation facilitated the instruction of large groups of schoolchildren.

1905: The kanji for "Empty Hand" is first used in print.
Hanashiro Chomo used the kanji 空手 (kara meaning "empty hand") for karate in his book Karate Soshu Hen. This was an early precedent for abandoning the older term 唐手 ("Chinese hand").

1908: The Ten Precepts are written.
Itosu wrote the influential "Ten Precepts (Tode Jukun) of Karate," promoting its spread. Karate was officially introduced into Okinawan schools as part of the curriculum.

1915-1916 Gichin Funakoshi introduces karate to mainland Japan.
Funakoshi demonstrated Okinawan karate (known then as Ryukyu Kempo To-te Jutsu) at the Butokuden (Martial Virtues Temple) in Kyoto. This event formally introduced the Okinawan art to the official centre of Japanese martial arts.

1922: Funakoshi published Ryukyu Kempo To-te Jutsu
Published following a demonstration in Tokyo, which is considered the first widespread published work on karate.

c. 1926: Traditional Okinawan schools are named (Shuri-te, Naha-te, Tomari-te).
The names Naha-te, Shuri-te, and Tomari-te, based on city origins, were established in Okinawa.

c. 1930: Gōjū-ryū is formally established Chōjun Miyagi.
He established the name Gōjū-ryū ("hard-soft style") after being required to register his systematized fighting tradition with the Dai Nippon Butokukai in Kyoto.

October 25, 1936: Okinawan masters standardise the term Karate-dō
Leading Okinawan sensei met at the Showa Kaikan in Naha City and agreed to formally adopt the kanji 空手 ("empty hand") instead of 唐手 ("Chinese hand"). They also established the art as a philosophical path, or Karate-dō ("way of empty hand").

1939–1945: World War II causes massive destruction and dislocation World War II severely impacted karate; masters were killed or reduced to destitution, and training centres were destroyed, particularly during the Battle of Okinawa.

1949 (May): Japan Karate Association (JKA) is founded The Japan Karate Association (JKA) was established by Nakayama Masatoshi, Isao Obata, and others. Funakoshi Gichin was the formal head.

c. 1957: Kyokushinkai is formally named Mas Oyama named his intense, hard-hitting style Kyokushinkai (meaning 'the ultimate truth').

2017: Okinawa Karate Kaikan opens The Okinawa Karate Kaikan (training hall and information centre) opened, officially affirming Okinawa as the birthplace of karate.

Appendix C: Sources

List of sources used for historical texts on this site:

- **A Short History of Karate**, Lulu Press 2011, Michael Cowie, Robert Dyson - (highly recommended)
- **Karate's History and Traditions**, Tuttle Pub 1995, Bruce A. Haines (highly recommended)
- **The History of Karate and the Masters Who Made It: Development, Lineages, and Philosophies of Traditional Okinawan and Japanese Karate-do**, Blue Snake Books 2018, Mark I. Cramer (highly recommended)
- **Karate-Do Kyohan The Master Text**, Kodansha International 1973, Gichin Funakoshi [translated by Tsutomu Ohshima] (highly recommended)
- **Empty Hand The Essence of Budo Karate**, Palisander Verlag 2012, Mabuni Kenei (highly recommended)
- **Karate My Art**, published in 1932, Motobu Choki (highly recommended)
- **Okinawan Karate**, Tuttle Publishing / A & C Black 1999, Mark Bishop (highly recommended)
- **Busishi - The Classic Manual of Combat**, Patrick McCarty (highly recommended)
- **The Way of Kata: A Comprehensive Guide to Deciphering Martial Applications**, YMAA Publication Center 2005, Lawrence A. Kane (recommended)
- **Shotokan Karate - A precise history**, Harry Cook (recommended, but please research information on the author before purchasing)
- **Kata: The Folk Dances of Shotokan**, Rob Redmond (recommended)
- **Analysis of Genuine Karate: Misconceptions, Origins, Development, and True Purpose**, Hermann Bayer, Ph.D.
- **Ryukyu Kobudo Taikan: An Encyclopedia of Ancient Ryukyuan Martial Arts**, Taira Shinken (translated and introduced by Patrick McCarthy)

- **Classical Fighting Arts of Japan: A Complete Guide to Koryū Jūjutsu**, Serge Mol
- **Japanese Martial Arts**, Neil Horton,
- **Karate As the Art of Killing: A Study of Its Deadly Origins, Ideology of Peace, and the Techniques of Shitō-Ryū**, Masayuki Shimabukuro and Leonard J. Pellman
- **Koryu Bujutsu Classical Warrior Traditions of Japan**, Diane Skoss
- **Okinawan Den Goju Ryu Karate-do**, Eiichi Miyazato, Jitsugyo no Sekai Sha
- **Okinawa Karate Kata**, Dirk Ludwig
- **Okinawa: The History of an Island People**, George H. Kerr
- **Okinawan Kobudo The History, Tools, and Techniques of the Ancient Martial Art**, Andrea Guarelli
- **The Purpose of Kata: When, Why, and for Whom Kata Forms Have Occurred in Okinawa**, Edvard Sefer
- **Shotokans Secret The Hidden Truth Behind Karates Fighting Origins**, Bruce D. Clayton
- **Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters**, Shoshin Nagamine (translated by Patrick McCarthy)
- **Three Budo Masters**, John Stevens
- **Wandering Along the Way of Okinawan Karate**, Giles Hopkins