

CONSTRUCTING A MARTIAL TRADITION: RETHINKING A POPULAR HISTORY OF KARATE-DOU

Kevin S. Y. Tan

This article seeks to explore and to rethink popular narratives that commonly surround the martial art known as karate. Adopting a dynamic and less exclusive definition of terms such as culture or tradition, I intend to provide a more critical and historically grounded understanding of karate's technical evolution and ideological foundations. In doing so, this will reveal that contemporary and popular perceptions of karate as a "martial tradition" are more historically complex and politically contingent than what has often been widely accepted.

Keywords: *karate; Okinawa; martial arts; Japan; tradition; popular history.*

No, I was wrong when I said all the people of Shuri huddled at home: there was one young man, up on the roof of his house in Yamakawa-cho, who was determinedly battling the typhoon. Anyone observing this solitary figure would surely have concluded that he had lost his wits. Wearing only a loincloth, he stood on the slippery tiles of the roof and held in both hands, as though to protect him from the howling wind, a tatami mat. He must have fallen off the roof to the ground time and again, for his nearly naked body was smeared all over with mud. . . . The stance he took was most impressive, for he stood as if astride a horse. . . . The wind struck the mat and the youth with full force, but he stood his ground and did not flinch.

—Togawa Yukio (quoted in Funakoshi, 1975, pp. 46-47)

This article is an attempt at reconstructing the historical and sociocultural trajectories of the martial art known as karate through a more critical reappraisal of its origins. The central thesis of this article therefore asserts that constitutive elements of culture or tradition, such as in the case of an alleged "martial tradition" such as karate, are never necessarily well bounded or rigidly unchanging constructs, especially in the face of political and historical contingencies. Hence, a major premise of my arguments contends that contemporary and popular conceptions of karate as a "genuine Japanese cultural construct" are more recent historical and political inventions than what is widely accepted. Any scholarly attempt at retracing a

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history of karate must therefore require noninsular and less exclusive definitions of terms such as *Japanese history*, *Japanese culture*, and *martial tradition*. This is because any thorough reconstruction of karate's history must inevitably require, as will be shown in this article, the necessary inclusion of a complex interplay of Okinawan, Japanese, Chinese, and Western colonizing discourses, all which play significant roles in furthering our understanding of karate's historical and technical evolution.

Although it is noted that much work in some scholarly and numerous popular works have also dealt with the history of karate (Funakoshi, 1973, 1975; Haines, 1995; McCarthy, 1995; Nagamine, 1976), this article seeks to inject a deeper analytical insight into our understanding of karate's past via a more dialectical and cultural anthropological perspective. To do so, a major focus of this article is an attempt at reconstructing a social history of Okinawa, which strongly mirrors the historical narratives that surround karate, for much of both their histories have been effectively subsumed as part of a larger hegemonic metanarrative—that of a general history of Japan. Any effort at reconstructing or rethinking the history of karate must therefore be viewed from a more multistranded perspective. This eventually leads to a broader conclusion that the notion of history (Japanese or otherwise) and its cultural components never necessarily follow a discrete and exclusive thread of reality or history making.

EMPTY HANDS

First, some definition and explication is in order with regard to karate. Loosely translated in contemporary times as the “the way of the empty hand” (Funakoshi, 1973, pp. 3-6; Umezawa, 1998, pp. 10-11) or karate-dou (for Kanji translations of Japanese terms, please see appendix), it is one of the most widely practiced and popular Japanese martial arts in the world. It is considered to be a system of physical self-defense or combative skills that predominantly consist of striking techniques that involves the use of one's bare hands, elbows, feet, and knees. Its namesake literally implies an emphasis on techniques in which no use of weapons is required, although this, however, can be extremely misleading if one were to take into account a broader spectrum of its martial practices.¹ On the other hand, the label also appears to allude to more abstract and allegorical pretensions, for the word *empty*, if rationalized from another point of view, possesses rather Zenlike philosophical implications (Draeger, 1996; Haines, 1995). Karate, from this perspective, therefore appears to exhibit certain para-religious and transcendental interests other than existing in a sensual and corporeal universe. Hence, Funakoshi (1973) stated that

just as it is the clear mirror that reflects without distortion, or the quiet valley that echoes a sound, so must one who would study karate-do purge himself of selfish and evil thoughts, for only with a clear mind and conscience can he understand that which he receives. (p. 4)

The practice of karate usually takes place in two broad ways: either in *kata* or *kumite* (Friday, 2001; Nagamine, 1976). The former refers to a highly stylized and formalized mode of practice where the *karateka* (a term denoting a practitioner of karate) practices a set of fixed or choreographed movements that are supposed to emulate actual combat situations. Emphasis is thus placed on posture, balance, symmetry, focus, and a smooth execution of these movements. In essence, kata practice is a pedagogical exercise that encompasses the honing of physical skills and a state of mind in which one is supposed to perform an idealized combative encounter, but only in solitary fashion without engaging in actual combat. One is then expected to mentally project the application of these techniques as if they were being executed against a real attacker. Encoded within a single kata is a series of incorporating practices, where the various techniques of defense and attack are to be gradually and subconsciously embodied by the *karateka* from constant practice.

There are many different kata, and to date, the estimated number stand at roughly 40 to 50 distinct kata² with varying levels of difficulty, although this number may change with the creations of new styles of karate along with subsequent reinventions and reinterpretations over time. This however, does not include the various forms of *kihon kata*, or “basic kata” that each karate style or *ryuu* may emphasize for itself. Kihon kata are the kata that are often taught to new *karateka* as fundamental and elementary movements before proceeding on to more difficult and advanced kata. The number of kihon kata for various karate *ryuu* may range from 20 to even none at all, although once more dependent on emphasis. There are also a number of more recent formulated karate *ryuu* from the latter half of the 20th century that have greatly de-emphasized kata on the whole as part of their core curriculum of practice.³

Kumite on the other hand, refers to the practice of sparring or “contest” between *karateka*. Whereas the practice of kata emphasizes form and structure, kumite stresses application, where movements are no longer fixed or stylized. Instead, it is now a situation when two *karateka* employ their skills against each other within a fighting arena (Frederic, 1991). The practice of kumite can again range from a semistructured form of *ippon kumite*, or better known as one-step sparring, to that of *jiyu kumite*, which is entirely unstructured, giving free rein to the imagination and individual application of one’s techniques and stylistic preferences (Umezawa, 1998). The practice of *jiyu kumite* is then often translated into a competitive framework in karate tournaments and has contributed greatly to its popularity, particularly from the 20th century onward (Nagamine, 1976).⁴ Depending on the particular style that is organizing such an event, specific rules and regulations may apply differently, such as weight or rank divisions, gender differentiations, and even the mandatory use of fist guards and protective facemasks. Competition formats can range from semicontact forms of *jiyu kumite*, which is competition based on a point scoring system, to full contact or “bare knuckle” fighting.

A final note here with regard to a general understanding of karate practice relates to the nontechnical aspect of its practice such as the social-cultural components that accompany the martial art. By this, I am referring to the apparent rootedness that karate practice has embedded itself at present in the context of Japanese discourses of culture. In other words, the practice of karate does not simply entail the practice of bodily techniques of self-defense that are either stylized or unstructured. To simply do this would fail to recognize its present-day popular identification as a part of Japanese (or "Oriental") culture and tradition. Its practice, therefore, consequently requires karateka to incorporate into themselves an entire corpus of bodily, linguistic, and mental dispositions over an extended period of time within a social environment bounded within the practice hall, or *doujou*. This is often expressed or revealed in the requirement for one to be initiated into various Japanese forms of cultural discourse, such as the common wearing of *keikogi* (or *gi* for short) and the application of Japanese terminology in referring to either specific techniques, various kata, or the practice of *doujou* etiquette.⁵ Other aspects include the adoption of arguably Japanese practices of bowing, kneeling, sitting, and even the various forms of bodily posture or physical carriage during the conduct of practice within a *doujou*. To a significant extent then, the practice of karate is also, in varying degrees within different contexts, the practice of a broadly defined "Japaneseness" that is often perceived as a representative continuation of Japanese "tradition and culture" in its popular sense.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

However, as we extend our historical imagination beyond the confines of a mere contemporary apprehension of karate, our understanding of it grows much more complex. For any attempt to trace or reconstruct karate's historical trajectory is often harder than it appears. This becomes increasingly apparent from the lack of any detailed or specifically written records pertaining to its technical evolution. Such a state of affairs is also due to the fact that the learning of martial arts, prior to the 20th century in general, has been largely transmitted orally and through corporeal practice, as opposed to being part of a textual tradition of recording.⁶

Much of what is understood or can be learned therefore seems to stem from only two major sources: the historical and para-mythological accounts linked to the island of Okinawa and its inhabitants, and a series of interconnected but often conflicting set of oral narratives passed down as traditional knowledge among karateka within their own subcultural enclaves, which only of late have attempts at recording and reflecting on such knowledge occurred (Haines, 1995; McCarthy, 1995). One must admit therefore that the history of karate is more shrouded in vagueness than in clarity because of an obvious lack of reliable historical records. Coupled with this, substantive efforts among scholars and other popular writers in critically approaching this topic has been limited. Thus, much of what is deemed as common

knowledge of karate's origins, although not to be prejudicially discarded, must always be apprehended in a more critical and careful manner.

The earliest folklore and para-mythologies that surround the history of karate are arguably linked in a very close way with the history of Okinawa. Around 70 miles in length with an average of 7 miles in width, and covering approximately 866 square miles (McCune, 1975; Tacuber, 1955; Zabilka, 1959), Okinawa is situated some 300 nautical miles from the island of Taiwan to the south, 300 nautical miles from Japan in the north, and some 400 nautical miles from continental East Asia (Nagamine, 1976). Together with the other islands of the *Ryukyuu* Archipelago, Okinawa has been virtually on the crossroads of at least three major civilizations and their political, cultural, and religious influences in the past: that of China, Japan and the Korean Peninsula, and Southeast Asia to a lesser extent (Braibanti, 1954; Glacken, 1955; Kerr, 1965; Lebra, 1966; Robinson, 1969; Sakamaki, 1964; Zabilka, 1959).

During premodern times and even earlier, the geographical uniqueness of Okinawa had often lent itself to be used as either a vital center for trade, or as an important stopover, or "island pathway" for the replenishing of supplies and the gathering of information while en route between major civilizations (Kerr, 1965; McCune, 1975). Two civilizations in particular, China and Japan, were perhaps most closely tied to the history of Okinawa, with the latter overtaking the former in influence over time. With its relatively smaller indigenous population and often-weaker military might, the economic and cultural-political interests of its immediate neighbors often dominated Okinawa's historical development (Sakai, 1964; Tacuber, 1955). Thus Okinawan society has always been subjected to attempts at reinterpreting and reconstructing itself in the face of various influences and even military invasions. From the unsubstantiated ancestral claims of an ancient kingdom alleged to be thousands of years old, to being subjected to the suzerainty of China and the Satsuma *daimyo*, and to its eventual annexation by Japan in the late 19th century, the fate of Okinawan society has seldom been an independent one. Yet it was here in the midst of such conjunctures of culture and history that the conditions for the emergence of what will subsequently be known as karate were laid.

Most historical accounts or narratives usually direct our attention to the early impact of Chinese culture if one seeks to carefully reconstruct karate's origins. Kerr (1965) gave mention to the discovery of knife-shaped coins known as *mei-to-sen* at Naha, one of the major towns of Okinawa. This raises the possibility that Okinawan contact with continental East Asia may have begun as far back as the 3rd century B.C. as similar coins had also been manufactured during the Kingdom of Yen sometime in 265 B.C. Kerr and other scholars (e.g., Glacken, 1955) further noted that by the time of the unification of China during the Ch'in Dynasty (221-210 B.C.), accounts of imperial expeditions sent out into the "Eastern Sea" in search of the secrets of immortality and alchemy had also been recorded.

In another popular account, the “first Emperor of China,” *Ch'in Shih Huang*, was believed to have allegedly sent a mission of 3,000 men and women in search of the “Happy Immortals” who resided in the Eastern Sea (Haines, 1995; Kerr, 1965; Tacuber, 1955). One version of the legend narrates that these vessels never returned and were alleged to have settled among the islands of the Ryuukyu Archipelago, or even upon the island of Taiwan instead. From then on, legends of the Happy Immortals were to reappear and to capture the imagination of varying dynasties in Chinese history, creating an inevitable para-mythological narrative about the inhabitants of the Ryuukyu Archipelago.

A similar account and expedition was alleged to have occurred during the Sui Dynasty under the auspices of the Emperor *Yang Ch'ien* but was believed to have ended in failure. A second expedition in 608 A.D. however, did return and was supposed to have encountered and fought against the inhabitants of an island that was claimed to be located between the islands of Japan and China (Kerr, 1965; McCarthy, 1995). A number of captives were reported to have been brought back to China, and it was noted that these individuals did not speak nor understand Chinese. Although referring to the Pacific islands just east of the Asian continent as Liu Ch'iu (or *Ryuukyu* in Japanese), it seems plausible that the Chinese expeditionary force had encountered either the island of Okinawa or at least another major settlement within the Ryuukyu Archipelago.

In addition, Japanese annals have also claimed knowledge of a “Southern Islands people” sometime during 616 A.D, along with accounts of “barbarians” who came in contact with early Japanese settlements on the islands of Yaku and Tane (Kerr, 1965). Kerr added that there seems to be further evidence during the year 698 A.D. that official Japanese contact with the Southern Islands people, or *Nanto* people had occurred. He notes that the *Shoku Nihonji* (Chronicles of Japan) records that a courtier named Fumi no Imiko was ordered to claim the islands, with the aid of a small military force, during the early years of the Nara period. More interestingly, it was also not until sometime around 753 A.D. that the name *Okinawa* first emerged and was found recorded in a salvaged journal of an ill-fated political mission that was shipwrecked on its way to China from Nara during the reign of Empress Koken (Kerr, 1965).

Hence, it was perhaps toward the end of the first millennium that Okinawan history became increasingly subjected to the influences and incursions by Chinese and Japanese interests. An example of such close political, cultural, and economic ties is noted in the supposed establishment of a Chinese mission⁷ at the port city of Naha during the late 14th century as a result of Okinawa's tributary alliances with its more powerful neighbors (McCarthy, 1995). At the same time, it has also been postulated by Kerr (1965) that subsequent inventions of a mythical “Tenson dynasty” on Okinawa, a dynasty alleged to have ruled for approximately 17,802 years prior to external colonizing interests (Glacken, 1955), were created largely

because of attempts by Okinawans to claim an alternative nativistic historical or cultural legacy that they could call their own.

More accounts of Okinawa's past that are less infused with mythological rhetoric but remain equally vague, however, are linked to a semihistorical narrative that surrounds the life of *Shunten*, the alleged founder of the first Okinawan kingdom around the year 1187 (Kerr, 1965; Lebra, 1966; McCarthy, 1995; McCune, 1975; Steiner, 1947; Tacuber, 1955; Zabilka, 1959). *Shunten's* life, whose birth date according to tradition was believed to be 1166 A.D., was also alleged to have been the son of Minamoto Tametomo, who was the uncle of the more illustrious Minamoto Yoritomo of the Kamakura Shogunate. According to popular legend, Minamoto Tametomo had fled to Okinawa to escape persecution from the hands of the Taira during the *Gempei* War. Popular belief states that Tametomo had sired a child with the daughter of a local chieftain (or *anjin*), thus lending support to subsequent claims of Japanese sovereignty over Okinawa.

Kerr (1965), along with other scholars on the other hand (e.g., Sakamaki, 1967), proposed an alternative interpretation. An educated guess on his part asserts that rather than being descendents of the Minamoto, it was instead remnants of the defeated Taira navy at the hands of the Minamoto that had fled to the islands of the Ryukyuu and settled there. Bonds were forged with the local chieftains between these military forces resulting in the ascendancy of a dominant leader on Okinawa. The claim of a historical lineage to Minamoto Tametomo then, according to Kerr (1965), appears to be a much more recent invention, one that he suggests to have stemmed from later Shogunates such as the Tokugawa (Hall, 1970) who were supposedly descendents of the Minamoto. Such an association between Okinawan nobility and the Shogunate was certainly advantageous in claiming legitimacy of rule over the Archipelago. The myth of *Shunten's* Minamoto lineage therefore more likely arose from a manipulation of history grounded in political interests rather than on something based on concrete and well-established evidence.

Apart from these accounts, other more significant milestones in Okinawa's historical narratives include the emergence of a new dynasty under the kingdom of *Chuzan* (Haines, 1995; Kerr, 1965; McCarthy, 1995; McCune, 1975; Tacuber, 1955). Prior to the 15th century, Okinawa was roughly splintered into three distinct petty kingdoms known as *Nanzan*, *Chuzan*, and *Hokuzan*. What resulted was a century of conflict throughout the 14th century. It was not until around the year 1429 A.D. that a *Chuzan* king known as *Hashi*, or *Sho Hashi*, reunified the island again (Lebra, 1966; Sakamaki, 1964). The term *Sho*, or more specifically *O-Sho* was actually a title which according to Kerr (1965) meant "king's assistant"⁸ and was supposedly first bestowed upon King Satto of the *Chuzan* by the Ming Dynasty. This once more reveals a strong historical relationship the Okinawans shared with the Chinese, dating from *Chuzan's* formal acknowledgement of the Ming Dynasty's suzerainty since 1372. The social-cultural and political

relationships that the Okinawans continually maintained with China, particularly between the 14th and 17th centuries, has usually been viewed as the “golden age” of Okinawa’s premodern history (Glacken, 1955).

Such a close relationship, however, was put to a serious end or at least significantly challenged with the invasion of the Shimazu clan from Satsuma in 1609 (Lebra, 1966; Smits, 1999; Zabilka, 1959). Following the decisive victory of Tokugawa Ieyasu at the Battle of Sekigahara, the Shimazu were rendered *tozama daimyo*, loosely defined as “outer lords,” as they had fought on the losing side against the Tokugawa. Yet it was probably because of their relatively secluded location, at the southernmost part of Kyushu, which allowed them to be spared further persecution. Despite this, the careful and astute political maneuvering of the Shimazu managed to appease and even gain acceptance and favor in the eyes of the Tokugawa Shogunate over time (Glacken, 1955; Kerr, 1965). It was at this juncture that certain ancestral claims by the Shimazu with regard to the Southern Islands were evoked, thus leading to their subsequent invasion of Okinawa.

Hence began a series of events that gradually led to the crumbling of the domain of the Sho Kings and their legacy. Although this was not the first time Okinawa had been forcibly occupied,⁹ one marked difference was the fact that this would not be a temporary occupation. The political and economic interests of the Shimazu seemed to be a longstanding one, which ultimately culminated in a complete and “official” annexation of the Ryukyuu Archipelago along with Okinawa by 1879 (Glacken, 1955; Kerr, 1965; Lebra, 1966; Zabilka, 1959), thereby committing its fate virtually into the hands of the Japanese. Okinawan culture and its history therefore became subsumed as part of a political and ideological monolith that established their domination either through vague mythical claims of ancestral legitimacy (i.e., the legend of Minamoto Tametomo and Shunten’s lineage) or through sheer military aggression. Framed within political rhetoric and colonizing agendas that were thinly disguised as a moral imperative on the part of the Japanese authorities (Kerr, 1965), a direct challenge to Chinese and potential Western interests in the Ryukyuu Archipelago¹⁰ was made, one that has never been successfully answered even till contemporary times.

HANDS, HANDS EVERYWHERE

The history of karate must therefore be contextualized and understood within this social-political backdrop of Okinawa’s historical relations with its larger and more powerful neighbors. Much of its creation and subsequent development along with changing interpretations of its practice, in fact, parallels much of Okinawa’s own historical fate. Throughout a history of intercultural political and military exchanges, the evolution of what we understand as karate in contemporary fashion has never exclusively possessed “pure” Chinese, Japanese, or Okinawan origins *per se* (Smits, 1999). In this regard, the origins and development of karate must be viewed as part of a matrix of intertwining cultural and political dialogues that can never in

a strict sense be understood via a simple and selective history of any single society.

Taken from this perspective, one must accept that the possibility of unearthing objective sources pertaining to karate's origins is extremely difficult and very often anecdotal. In spite of the growing proliferation of self-acclaimed "grandmasters", such as the *soke* or *sensei* of various *ryuu* (even non-Japanese ones) during the second half of the 20th century, few written reliable records can be found. Once more, any contemporary claims to an utterly irrefutable recollection regarding the origins of karate, whether technical or social-cultural, by supposed authorities must always be treated with great caution. It is with such an understanding that one must refrain from any overgeneralization of a historical and political reality that is often more fuzzy than what many popular writers may assert (e.g., McCarthy, 1995).

Much of karate's social memory until the 20th century appears to have been transmitted by the use of loosely structured and rather sketchy oral histories, which have quite effectively entwined themselves within contemporary popular imagination and media (Chan, 2000; Skidmore, 1991) of the 20th century. Regrettably, it is also because of such consequences that perhaps much solid contemporary scholarship into the field of the martial arts has always been lacking, partly because of its unfairly trivialized "pop" image, which ironically has become a nesting ground for other less scrupulous kinds of "scholarship" that only offer shallow insights from an ideological point of view but often adopting a veneer of a scholarly prose that can prove to be somewhat uncritical and sweeping in its conclusions (e.g., DeMarco, 2000).

Perhaps one of the most popularly referenced written records may be the claim of a text of somewhat nebulous origin known as the *Bubishi*, which a number of karateka were alleged to have gained inspiration from in the 19th century (McCarthy, 1995). According to McCarthy (1995) and other researchers (e.g., Barber, 2001; Henning, 2001; Mooney, 2001), more specific claims from this text links karate's origins to "White Crane Fist" and the Shaolin "*Luohan* Fist" from China.¹¹ In spite of this, one again remains cautious, for the act of "remembering karate" in a distinct textualized format did not seem to exist until the late 19th or the early 20th century through the combined efforts of Okinawan karate elites and Japanese policy makers. Much of what is considered to be unproblematically traditional may, at times, be more a result of present-day inferences.

One possible hypothesis for such a situation alludes to the possibility that karate was usually practiced only by either members of the military or individuals that stemmed from nonelite and nonliterate sections of Okinawan society, where a culture of recording or "letters" was seldom accessible nor a necessary part of their cultural logic. McCarthy's (1995) claims appear to support this in his recounting of "pre-Satsuma" Okinawan society, where the lower classes of *chikusaji pechin* (commoner officials) were responsible for maintaining order and thus developed a system of self-

defense. It appears then that the practice of the martial arts in Okinawan society never obtained the same level of cultural respectability or political clout in the same manner that the *bushi* has developed among themselves since the emergence of the *bakufu* during the Kamakura Shogunate in 12th-century Japan.

Nonetheless, what appears to be arguably undisputed lies in the broad impact that the Chinese martial arts have had in the evolution of the karate that we know today. One of the most prevailing and earliest narratives pertaining to such an entrenched relationship is the legend of *Tou-de Sakugawa*, who is attributed to be a pivotal figure in introducing Chinese influences into Okinawa's martial history. More interestingly, we know of Sakugawa by his family name and not his personal name, for "Tou-de" was really a nickname that was used to refer to the martial skills he was believed to be proficient in. McCarthy (1995) has documented his real name as *Teruya Kanga*, but no clear evidence is provided. The term *Tou-de* is the literal Okinawan rendering of the *kanji*,¹² a loosely defined and broad label for Sakugawa's abilities that he picked up in China. More interesting, the character was also the same ideogram used to refer to the Tang Dynasty or China itself, thus possibly hinting to a much older link between Okinawa and Tou-de even earlier than the days of Chuzan's initial political ties to the Ming Dynasty since the late 14th century.

Nonetheless, there are still somewhat conflicting accounts surrounding the narratives pertaining to Sakugawa.¹³ Assumed to be a native of Shuri, the ancient capital of the Sho Kings, Sakugawa was alleged to have journeyed to China during 1724 (Haines, 1995) in search of instruction and expertise in the practice of *ch'uan fa*¹⁴ but was assumed to be lost after there was no word from him for several years. It is claimed that Sakugawa did, however, eventually return to Okinawa, but also with the knowledge of *ch'uan fa*, and was subsequently referred to as *Tou-de Sakugawa* when his reputation grew because of his ability and knowledge as a teacher. Other versions refer to Sakugawa as having been greatly influenced by a Chinese *ch'uan fa* practitioner known as *Kushanku*,¹⁵ who was believed to have been a Chinese sojourner who lived in Okinawa sometime around 1762 (Mottern, 2001b) and taught a kata that was eventually named after him. Being a native of Shuri, the legend of Tou-de Sakugawa further played a strong role in contributing to a distinct style of physical combat and cultural identity that apparently relied less on the use of weapons. His name is often attributed to the founding of an Okinawan fighting technique that was subsequently referred to as "Shuri-te," or literally meaning "Shuri Hands."

Despite such extremely vague accounts that are virtually impossible to substantiate, the period in which this is recounted interestingly parallels a period in history in which Okinawa was constantly under the yoke of the Satsuma daimyo since 1609. The explicit use of the term *te* in describing their martial practice may have particularly gained currency in the wake of a Shuri swordsmithy ban that was first imposed in 1669, followed by a complete ban on all weapons in 1699 (Draeger & Smith, 1969; Haines, 1995;

Kerr, 1965; Nagamine, 1976). Following such developments, a conjuncture between the diaspora of martial knowledge from China and localized forms of martial practice in response to the conditions of its historical epoch were the most likely antecedents of Okinawa Tou-de and its latter manifestations. However, it is again important to note that it is extremely difficult and naïve for any definitive and “clear” description of any so-called intricate development of karate with regard to any specific Okinawan or Chinese origins. There is insufficient textual evidence or information for such claims in the first place, and one’s reading of a lot of contemporary literature that attempts to do so should be treated with caution.¹⁶ Similar to an anthropological understanding of the concept of culture, karate is better seen as the result of a *bricolage* of martial sources with no clearly dominant predecessor. Neither has it been a static and unreflexive cultural form suspended in time.

The emergence of Shuri-te, however, was certainly not an exceptional occurrence of its sort on Okinawa although it may probably have been one of the oldest with a distinct local identity. By the 19th century, there were three major forms of reputedly fiercely competitive *te*—Apart from Shuri-te, two others known as *Naha-te* and *Tomari-te* had also emerged (Frederic, 1991; Haines, 1995; Mitchell, 1997; Nagamine, 1976) Each *te* was reportedly named after each respective Okinawan town where they were commonly practiced. According to most accounts, it seems that *Tomari-te* closely resembled Shuri-te whereas *Naha-te*, which only grew in popularity sometime during the late 1800s, possessed quite significantly differing characteristics (McCarthy, 1995; Nagamine, 1976). Nevertheless, all three forms of *te* were to play a further role in the overall development and creation of the karate that we are more familiar with in contemporary times.

For the sake of elaboration but also at the risk of oversimplifying the practical subtleties of each *te*, it is often believed that Shuri-te possessed a much more linear and physical style of fighting that emphasized power and speed, whereas *Naha-te* distinctly emphasized more circular and leading movements and was believed to be more defensive by nature (Nagamine, 1976). Hence the two were often portrayed as polar opposites due their differing emphases in application. Such differing emphases by each *te* are probably best exemplified in the distinctive kata that were characteristic of each locality. A specific example may be seen in the practice of a set of five Shuri-based kata known as *Pinan*¹⁸ in comparison with the *Naha*-based kata known as *Sanchin*. The former places greater emphasis on linear physical power, mobility, and speed whereas the latter emphasizes circular rising and sinking movements coupled with deep breathing, stability, and the use of open-handed strikes.

Shuri-te and *Tomari-te* during the 18th century were often best represented by individuals such as Matsumura Sokon and Matsumora Kosaku¹⁹ (McCarthy, 1995; Nagamine, 1976). Often regarded as key figures in the development of early karate and the inheritors of Sakugawa’s Tou-de legacy and other Chinese influences, they were the teachers of two other significant

practitioners of Tou-de of the following generation. They were Itosu Yasutsune (1831-1915) and Azato Yasutsune (1828-1906), who became the direct mentors of Gichin Funakoshi (Funakoshi, 1975), the man who subsequently played a large role in the “Japanization” of Tou-de, and eventually laid the foundations for the spread of karate beyond Okinawa.

Naha-te, on the other hand, during the same century, followed a significantly different trajectory. Its development was commonly associated with another individual known as Higashionna Kanryo (1853-1917), whose practice of Tou-de was influenced by a branch of the Chinese martial arts more akin to what has been described as the “internal” martial arts²⁰ (McCarthy, 1995). McCarthy (1995) claimed that Higashionna’s direct influences included Chinese teachers such as *Ryuryu Ko* and *Wai Xinxian*, who taught him “Whooping Crane Fist” after Higashionna travelled to Fuzhou, China, sometime around the year 1873. By the time this occurred though, the practice of Tou-de and Sakugawa’s influence and legacy had long been established on Okinawa for approximately 100 years. Higashionna’s Naha-te therefore appears to have been more a result of a second wave of Chinese influences, although Shuri-te and Tomari-te have largely retained their original influences that many have attributed to the Shaolin martial arts (McCarthy, 1995).

Hence the adoption of the *Sanchin* stance, reputedly the most stable stance in the practice of *te*, which has been the most distinguishing hallmark of Naha-te practice and its modern derivative known as *Goujuu-ryuu* (McCarthy, 1995). All such characteristics point to the possibility that Higashionna was greatly influenced in his learning by the more internal or allegedly “softer styles” of Chinese martial arts characteristic of *Taichi Ch’uan* or *Bagua Zhang*, which place a strong emphasis in the development of “ki” or “chi”,²¹ and the ability to effectively redirect the force of an attacker’s blow as opposed to meeting force with force. Coined by Chojun Miyagi who was Higashionna’s most accomplished student, the name *Goujuu-ryuu* was reflective of Higashionna’s softer influences together with the harder forms of *te* that already had been in practice by Shuri-te and Tomari-te.

All being said, one must clarify that I am not attempting to create a false dichotomy regarding the historical and practical developments between Naha-te vis-à-vis Shuri/Tomari-te. For despite certain subtle differences in emphasis, their technical evolution have always remained closely entwined with each other in the same way the overall spread of Tou-de remains inseparable with the influences of Chinese ch’uan fa by and large. One must emphasize that such definitions are never rigid ones but rather “ideal-typical” categories that are simply conceptual tools used as important reference points for the sake of comparing, contrasting, and analyzing each of the intricacies embedded within them. The use of the terms *hard* or *soft* in the martial arts are also often vague and ill-defined labels and are never easily distinguishable from each other nor to be taken literally in practical application. Much has always depended on the individual

practitioner's interpretation and application of *te*, for the same kind of softness found in Naha-*te* can also be often found in Shuri/Tomari-*te* and vice versa.

THE EMPTYING OF "CHINA HANDS"

Nearing the end of the 19th century, the codification and politicization of the practice of *te* had taken an additional step. Moving beyond mere identification with the geographical location where it was practiced (i.e., Shuri, Naha, and Tomari), the various *te* began to be segregated and delineated via the conception of *ryuu*. The two most prominent forms of *ryuu* that emerged were known as the *Shourin-ryuu* and the *Shourei-ryuu*. The former had presumably emerged from the *te* styles that had developed around the districts of Shuri and Tomari, whereas the latter stemmed from the Naha locality (Funakoshi, 1973; Nagamine, 1976). With the usage of *ryuu* growing in importance, the older names of Shuri-*te*, Tomari-*te*, and Naha-*te* gradually become less common. It was also during this time when it was noted that an alternate reading of the kanji of Tou-*de* began to emerge in Okinawa, which became "Kara-*te*" (Funakoshi, 1975).²²

Such changes were significant in a number of ways, for it seemed to reflect a move toward attempts at institutionalizing and hence formalizing the practice of *te* within a growing awareness and need for organizational structure and complexity. The emerging use of the term *ryuu* was also highly revealing of the impact that Japanese martial systems have had on Okinawan martial practices, where a sense of familial identity and lineage pervaded among the various *kenjutsu* and *jujutsu ryuu* that traced their genealogies to premodern feudal Japan. This also probably played a part in the growing popularity of the Japanese rendition of the kanji as "Kara" as opposed to the older reading of "Tou." All these developments inevitably ushered the history of Okinawa and its *te* traditions toward a new awareness of themselves and their relationship with Japan. It was a relationship that was unbalanced and one-sided in terms of political and cultural authority, however, with Okinawan society usually perceived as marginal to the overall imagining of an emerging Japanese nation-state (Lebra, 1966).

A new generation of *te* practitioners therefore grew up in the years following annexation with a social and political experience quite unlike their predecessors. Under a new political climate since 1879 when Okinawa officially came to be regarded as part of Japan, new identities, allegiances, and expectations were inevitably and gradually forged. At the same time, it also coexisted in tandem with a pre-existing awareness and sensitivity of a historical legacy that was also never necessarily Japanese at the same time.

Framing the history of karate within such a context, the actions of Gichin Funakoshi (1870-1957)²³ played one of the most pivotal roles in reinventing and popularizing the practice of *te*. Born just before the annexation of Okinawa, Funakoshi similarly experienced a life that combined an enforced Japanese political identity along with an Okinawan ethnicity that was often marginal to the concerns of the "mainland." Raised in a highly

traditional Shuri family that was part of the ruling classes on Okinawa known as *shizoku* (Funakoshi, 1975), the marginality and liminality of his Okinawan heritage was probably felt in a more pronounced manner. This was largely because he grew up within the higher echelons of an annexed culture and society that was continually viewed as “backward” in comparison to mainland Japan’s.

Funakoshi first encountered the practice of Tou-de during primary school, through a classmate who was the son of the renowned karateka Azato Yasutsune. He had begun to take lessons secretly under Azato even though the practice of te was still banned by the Japanese during the late 19th century. Over time, the young Funakoshi began to gradually develop a strong sense of commitment and passion toward its practice. The tutelage of Funakoshi subsequently extended to both Azato and Itosu Yasutsune, as both men were also good friends who took an equal interest in coaching their young and enthusiastic student. Funakoshi’s training therefore was largely based on Shuri-te and Tomari-te, as noted earlier in the technical lineages of his two teachers (Stevens, 1995).

By the turn of the 20th century during the Meiji Period (1868-1912) however, further significant changes began to take place. The Ministry of Education, under the recommendation of its commissioner, advocated that karate be incorporated into its revamped but burgeoning education and military systems (Funakoshi, 1973). The practice of martial arts, on the whole, was to be integrated into the national school curriculum as a form of “spiritual education” (Bodiford, 2001). This was believed to have happened sometime around 1902 (Draeger, 1996; Funakoshi, 1975). According to Funakoshi (1974), one of the reasons for incorporating karate was because “during the physical examination of draftees and students, those young men with karate training . . . greatly impressed the examining doctors with their well-balanced limb development and clearly defined muscular development” (p. 9). Although it was never successfully incorporated into the military, karate was still accepted into the education system on the pretext of its “character-building” qualities (McCarthy, 1995).

This sudden interest by the Japanese authorities may have ignited a growing interest and self-identification with karate among Okinawans, especially among its elites. Although the practice and co-optation of karate may have been viewed as part of a militant agenda by the Japanese authorities, one would postulate that it also led to a growing self-awareness, among Funakoshi and his peers, of the cultural and political potential that remained embedded in this development. Therefore by the end of the Russo-Japanese war in 1906 and together with Itosu’s support (McCarthy, 1995), Funakoshi had gathered and organized a number of like-minded karateka to conduct karate demonstrations all over Okinawa in an enthusiastic attempt to reinvent and popularize a martial tradition, banking on its growing cultural capital in the eyes of the Japanese (Funakoshi, 1973, 1975; Haines, 1995; Nagamine, 1976). Such demonstrations to some extent may have served as a reassertion of Okinawan cultural or ethnic pride in the face

of a Japanese government that had mostly regarded Okinawa and the inhabitants of the Ryūkyū Islands in somewhat culturally inferior terms. Karate thus appears to have served a role in elevating the status of an Okinawan identity among the Japanese, especially for Okinawan elites such as Funakoshi.

Sometime around 1916,²⁴ Funakoshi was also invited to be the official representative of Okinawa at the *Butokuden* in Kyoto (Draeger, 1996; Funakoshi, 1973; Stevens, 1995), and this was believed to be the first time karate was demonstrated outside Okinawa. Subsequent demonstrations continued and finally culminated in a live demonstration in front of the then crown prince Hirohito at Shuri castle on March 6, 1921. During the spring of 1922, Funakoshi once more exhibited karate at the first National Athletic Exhibition at Tokyo (Funakoshi, 1973). Over time, the practice of karate eventually began to entrench itself within several universities such as *Keio*, *Waseda*, *Shodai*, *Takushoku*, *Chuo*, *Gakushuin*, and *Hosei*— a clear indication of its growing integration and acceptance into mainstream Japanese society (Draeger, 1996).

It was in 1936²⁵ when Funakoshi and his peers advocated and implemented the rewriting of the kanji for karate. The change that was instituted was the removal of one character, which was to be replaced by another character, although this did not entail any change in the actual reading of the kanji as both were also read as “Kara” (Draeger, 1996; Funakoshi, 1973; McCarthy, 1995; Umezawa, 1998). Despite seemingly innocent and politically correct claims of the inappropriateness or inaccuracy of the old kanji in view of a newfound morality in its practice, the real reasons were obvious, for expansionist sentiments toward China were on the rise and open hostilities would soon erupt a year later (Hall, 1970). This change in the writing of karate’s kanji was really more of an attempt at disassociating karate from any of its Chinese linkages than anything else. The addition of the suffix *dou* was also at times added hence creating the name “Karate-dou,” to further emphasize and promote the art as a “martial way” that possessed para-religious undertones.²⁶

But what is even less discussed is that this change in kanji usage was also followed by the creation of even more Japan-based *ryū* that virtually discarded the use of the older *ryū* such as “Shourin” and “Shourei” from Okinawa. This once more appears to be related to deliberate attempts to distance the development of karate from its Chinese sources.²⁷ Political contingency is then seen as a much more accurate explanation rather than mystical and hazy rhetoric used to justify the reinvention and renaming of a martial tradition that needed to reflect its philosophical and character-building qualities (Draeger, 1996; Funakoshi, 1973, 1975; Nagamine, 1976). Therefore while gradually gaining acceptance and respectability within Japanese society, karate elites ironically reimagined its own cultural and historical legacy and consequently reinvented its past and present according to the prevailing political constraints of its time.

With an exodus of several prominent karateka from Okinawa to the mainland and the development of karate in the form of Japanese-based *ryuu*, this signified the beginning of a new site for its propagation and the subsequent internal politics and rivalry that would follow. The most popular *ryuu* that were created from the introduction of te to Japan during the first half of the 20th century consisted of four major ones that still exist today. They are the *Shotoukan*, the *Shitou-ryuu*, the *Goujuu-ryuu*, and the *Wadou-ryuu*.²⁸

Funakoshi officially founded the Shotoukan in 1936 as part of his efforts in popularizing karate on an institutional level (Funakoshi, 1975; Nakayama, 1966; Stevens, 1995). As for the three other styles, Shitou-ryuu was first named in 1934 and is often portrayed as a blend of Naha-te and Shuri-te, for its founder Mabuni Kenwa had been taught by Itosu Yasutsune and Higashionna Kanryo. Goujuu-ryu, on the other hand, is a direct derivative of the Naha-te legacy of Higashionna Kanryo, and its name was actually first established by Chojun Miyagi in 1930. Finally, Wadou-ryu (first named in 1940) in contrast to the rest is heavily influenced by *jujutsu*, as its founder Ostuka Hironori also possessed a background in *jujutsu*, while having been a former student of Funakoshi himself.

BEYOND OKINAWA: CREATING A MARTIAL TRADITION

By the end of World War II (1939-1945), Okinawa was an island devastated by the ravages of war. The scene of the final major battle of that dark period of human history, the death toll between American and Japanese forces was estimated to be more than a total of 100,000 dead over a 3-month period of intense fighting (Glacken, 1955; Tacuber, 1955). Particularly high casualties were among the Japanese and Okinawans, which were made up of more than four fifths of this number (Kerr, 1965). What is less well known were the actual number of civilians killed during the fighting, which, according to Kerr (1965), numbered approximately 47,000. Beginning with Commodore Perry's visit nearly 100 years earlier (Braibanti, 1954), this horrific battle between the Japanese and the Americans on Okinawan soil also signalled the beginning of a new era of geopolitical relations.

With the end of the war after Japan's surrender on August 14, 1945, American forces began to occupy Japan along with one of their most hard fought military victories—the island of Okinawa. Initially, a strict ban with regard to the practice of the arts of *Juudou* and *Kendou* was imposed (Nagamine, 1976) on the assumption that they fostered an ideology of militarism, and it appeared then that the future of the martial arts, on the whole, looked uncertain. However, it is interesting to note that karate did not suffer the same fate as *Juudou* or *Kendou*, and its practice was allowed because it was viewed as something akin to “a form of cultural dance” or “mere exercise.” The occupying American forces perceived karate as a form of physical education linked to “Chinese boxing,” and thus deemed it “harmless” (Draeger & Smith, 1969). A possible explanation for this may have been the

relatively marginal status that karate still possessed in comparison to the “more Japanese” martial arts such as *Kendou* or *Juudou*, and the fact that it was never really incorporated as part of Japan’s military training program.

Looking back at the events that unfolded, it was somewhat ironical that the American occupation during the late 1940s was to play an important role in the growing international popularization of the Japanese martial arts, including karate. By the 1950s, American contact with the Japanese society had led to the creation of a significant cross-cultural dialogue and exchange that arguably still exists today. And since 1945, the United States has continually maintained a significant and controversial military presence on Okinawa (Braibanti, 1954; Johnson, 2000; Weiss, 1946). In addition, although a significant base of Okinawan karate practitioners may have settled at Hawaii as a result of migrations during the late 19th century,²⁹ it was not until the official end of the occupation in 1952, before a significant surge of interest in the “Oriental” martial arts began to emerge (Haines, 1995) after approximately 7 years of close intercultural contact between the two former bitter opponents of World War II. In 1953, the United States Air Force had already begun to sponsor the instruction of karate and *Juudou* to their personnel at their military installations, thus playing an initial role in paving the way for a growing transnationalism and commercialization of the Japanese martial arts from then on (Funakoshi, 1975; Haines, 1995).

Furthermore, returning troops from Japan and Okinawa, having been exposed to the practice of the martial arts, inevitably forged social relations that eventually led to another exodus of “masters” beyond the shores of Japan, this time to the West. Karate was certainly not alone in this aspect, as it became part of a “triumvirate” of Japanese martial traditions (the others being *Juudou* and *Aikidou*) that virtually contributed in no small part toward a growing commercialized Oriental martial mythology in North America. Investing in an auto-Orientalizing discourse, these martial traditions of Japan often played up their associations to a former golden cultural age, by evoking imageries of a “glorious and noble” but also mystical past rooted in grand narratives of a valorized and morally infused notion of “Budou,” often translated and formulaically repackaged as the “Way of the Warrior” (Inoue, 1998).

The growing international popularity and awareness of karate thus came at a time when Japan was attempting to recover from economic and social devastation along with the humiliation of defeat and occupation. Karate then grew to become part of efforts by a Japanese national identity that sought to reassert itself by reimagining its past, not unlike the former aspirations of an annexed Okinawa during the years before World War II. Once more in another interesting turn of cultural reimagination, karate was represented and remythologized—this time as an essentialized expression of Japan’s historical legacy and cultural heritage. This again coincided with the further rationalization and bureaucratization of the four major karate *ryuu* that had already been initially created in the years of the first exodus of Tou-de practitioners from Okinawa to Japan under the influence and

encouragement of Funakoshi and his peers. Each of the four major Japanese *ryuu* then began to set their sights beyond the shores of Japan for a larger share of the “market.”

By 1964, the Japan Karate-dou Federation (JKF) was formed, which basically became an umbrella organization of the four major Japanese *ryuu* (Shotoukan, Shitou-ryuu, Goujuu-ryuu, and Wadou-ryuu). However, with the passage of time and the gradual passing of Funakoshi’s own generation of karate elites (e.g., Mabuni Kenwa, Ryusho Sakagami, Miyagi Chojun, Gogen Yamaguchi, Ohtsuka Hironori) toward the late 20th century, further developments have arisen with the creation of even more *ryuu* from Japan and the United States, ultimately leading to more reconstructions and reinventions of whatever that could be conveniently rallied under the banner of karate-dou. Popular imagination along with a growing entertainment industry inevitably created pop icons of martial artists from Japan and other homegrown talents in North America. Well-known names, whose reputations often preceded their abilities, have included personalities such as Ed Parker, Robert Trias, James Mitose, and William Chow in the 1950s and 1960s (Barber, 2001; Haines, 1995).

Much of the American or Western encounter³⁰ with karate during the second half of the 20th century was then largely a result of the efforts of a strong Japanese counterdiscourse that saw in the West either as a potential source for a re-elevation of their former defeated cultural status as a platform for commercial gain within a strong capitalist economy and a society increasingly driven by popular culture. Likewise, the incorporation of an alternate Oriental identity along with its resident stereotypes and mystifications similarly served many non-Japanese exponents in gaining legitimacy and commercial profit. By asserting this, one, of course, does not necessarily completely rule out the occurrence of well-meaning teaching efforts outside highly ideologically or market-driven motivations. Alternatively, it could also be argued that the representation and imagining of karate within Anglo-American culture could lead to an opposite effect, where a demystification and rationalization of its practices may instead occur over time and be disassociated with its former social-cultural baggage (Krug, 2001).

Yet, in spite of all this, it does not detract from the argument that the collective social memory of karate, in the eyes of the public and even many karate practitioners in contemporary times, now predominantly stems from only the postwar years. Hence, a rapid forgetting of a pre-Japanese and pre-Okinawan past, along with a compression of a broader historical outlook, has consequently occurred together with karate’s growing international popularity. Although one still occasionally encounters the rather cursory claim that “Karate came from Okinawa” in so many popular efforts at recounting its history, the name *Okinawa* has become commonly understood and assimilated under a series of semiotic signs that only speak of a common hegemonic Japanese past, one where little recollection is possible of a marginalized discourse that was never essentially Japanese. The practice of

karate therefore, as it takes its initial steps toward the 21st century, has virtually become, through a series of historical contingencies and elective affinities, an “authentic” Japanese martial tradition.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Adopting a more critical and broader historical perspective, the history of karate therefore more closely resembles a complex matrix of historical and social-cultural interests and events rather than one that its popular image often asserts. As I had set out to show through a general overview of its historical trajectories, karate is seen to be a highly politicized and historically contested construct that has stemmed thoroughly from entwined and correlational social histories. Its evolution into a martial tradition of Japan nonetheless can be traced to significant historical narratives of China, Japan, Okinawa, and at a much later stage, the impact of Western interests in imagining the Orient.

Although now commonly framed as a Japanese or Oriental martial tradition, karate was never a direct creation or invention of any one particular cultural form or political interest. Rephrasing a term coined by the historical anthropologist Sahlins (1985), the construction and subsequent reconstructions in light of changing historical and political climates may be described as a “structure of conjunctures,” where the “martial tradition of karate” is often a dynamic interplay between various cultural logics as they constantly encounter and reinterpret each other throughout history. The historical fate and future of karate-dou then is one that can never be apprehended through a rigid and linear understanding of the process of history making or any narrow claims to essentialized notions of culture. Therefore, only through the adoption of a multistranded and critical approach would one be able to appreciate the fullness of any seemingly empty hands.

APPENDIX

Karate-dou (空手道)	<i>Ryuukyuu</i> (琉球)
<i>kata</i> (型)	<i>daimyo</i> (大名)
<i>kumite</i> (組手)	<i>Nanto</i> (南島)
<i>kihon kata</i> (基本型)	<i>tozama daimyo</i> (外様大名)
<i>ryuu</i> (流)	Kyushu (九州)
<i>ippon kumite</i> (一本組手)	<i>soke</i> (宗家)
<i>jiyu kumite</i> (自由組手)	<i>sensei</i> (先生)
<i>doujou</i> (道場)	<i>Bubishi</i> (武備志)
<i>keikogi</i> (or <i>gi</i> (着) for short)	<i>bushi</i> (武士)
<i>Mawashi Geri</i> (回し蹴り)	<i>bakufu</i> (幕府)
<i>Joudan Tsuki</i> (上段突き)	'Tou-de' (唐手)
<i>Sensei</i> (先生)	<i>ch'uan fa</i> (拳法)
<i>Senpai</i> (先輩)	Kushanku (公相 君)
Okinawa (沖縄)	漢字 'Han words'
'te' (手)	
<i>Pinan</i> ¹ (平安)	<i>Goujuu-ryu</i> (剛柔流)
<i>Sanchin</i> (三戦)	<i>Wadou-ryu</i> (和道流)
<i>Goujuu-ryuu</i> (剛柔流)	<i>Juudou</i> (柔道)
'chi' (気)	<i>Kendou</i> (剣道)
<i>Shourin-ryuu</i> (松林流)	<i>Kobudou</i> (古武道)
<i>Shourei-ryuu</i> (尚礼流)	<i>Kobujutsu</i> (古武術)
<i>kenjutsu</i> (剣術)	<i>Aikidou</i> (合気道)
<i>jujutsu</i> (柔術)	
唐 as 'Kara'	
空 as 'Kara'	
'dou' (道)	
<i>Shotoukan</i> (松涛館)	
<i>Shitou-ryu</i> (糸東流)	

AUTHOR

Kevin S. Y. Tan is currently a graduate student at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alberta, Canada. He is working on a doctoral dissertation on the Japanese martial art of aikido and its relation to anthropological perspectives on culture, violence, and the body.

NOTES

1. This has always been a somewhat controversial point, as some modern karate styles in fact do practice the use of weapons although this has become exceedingly rare. They are referred to as *kobujutsu* or *kobudou* (Frederic, 1991), which possess a strong link to historical Okinawan martial practices. The use of weapons such as the bo, the sai, the nunchaku, the tonfa, and the kama are some of the better known weapons that are associated with older forms of Okinawan martial practice (see Draeger & Smith, 1969; Mottern, 2001a).
2. This observation is obtained from the kata that are being practiced in the four major styles of Japanese karate-dou. They are the shotoukan, shitou-ryuu, goujuu-ryuu and the wadou-ryuu.
3. This is the case in certain styles that have de-emphasized older or "traditional" kata in the name of "practicality." Of particular mention are the 20th-century creations of ashihara karate and kyokushinkai karate, both which stress full contact fighting. See Related Web Sites.
4. Draeger and Smith (1969) noted that actual sparring or official competitions did not occur until 1940. This however, should not imply that fights between martial artists did not occur before the 20th century beyond a rule-bound and controlled event such as a tournament.
5. Some specific examples include *mawashi geri* for "roundhouse kick," *joudan tsuki* for "punch to the head." Terms of address include *Sensei* for teachers and *Senpai* for seniors.
6. There are, of course, always exceptions, as in the case of the "Bubishi" with regard to karate, which will be discussed at a later point in the article.
7. This is often referred to by authors as the "Thirty-Six Families" (McCarthy 1995, pp. 46-47; McCune, 1975, p. 41), which comprised settlers and imperial envoys (*sapposhi*), who allegedly played a role in infusing Okinawa society with Chinese influences. Although there were clearly migrations from China, the specific myth of the Thirty-Six Families remains unsubstantiated.
8. An alternative reading of this title may also be "Grand First Official."
9. Previous invasions had included the Mongols in the 13th century and by Toyotomi Hideyoshi during the late 16th century, in an attempt to "punish" the Okinawans for their lack of support during his Korean campaign (Hall, 1970; Kerr, 1965)
10. A prime example of such interests was revealed even earlier in 1874 when the Japanese sent an expeditionary force to Taiwan to punish its indigenous peoples who allegedly killed 54 shipwrecked Ryukyans in 1871 (Leung, 1983). By doing so, Japanese was able to indirectly stake a political claim over the Ryukyu Archipelago.
11. McCarthy actually uses the term *monk fist* in his text, which I find to be a rather weak translation of the Mandarin term *Luohan*. I have thus retained the original usage in my article. The term *Luohan* is more akin to the Buddhist term *Arahat*, which broadly refers to an "enlightened being." Other attempted translations of this term include "Buddha fist," which is just as problematic and misleading.
12. This Kanji literally meaning "*Han* words," or better known as Chinese characters.
13. McCarthy (1995) noted three conflicting birth and death dates for Sakugawa: 1733-1815, 1762-1843, and 1774-1838.
14. A generic Chinese term that literally means "fist skills" but may be more generally interpreted as the "martial arts" or martial skills.

15. *Kushanku* appears to be a general term of reverence to a person in authority rather than the name of a specific person. One may postulate that it was used broadly for the various military attaches or bureaucrats.
16. This certainly includes McCarthy's (1995) postulations about the technical origins of karate.
17. Tomari-te never really possessed a distinct style all on its own. It therefore seems possible that it was more likely a subvariety of Shuri-te. Draeger and Smith (1969) on the other hand noted that Shuri-te and Naha-te was influenced by external and internal martial systems, respectively, and also claims that tomari-te possessed elements of both.
18. Another name used by other karate ryuu is *Heian*, a Japanese rendering of the Okinawan *Pinan*. The Pinan are believed to have been derived from a more advanced kata known as *Kushanku*, or *Kanku*.
19. Funakoshi (1973) stated that Matsumura was also taught by the Chinese military attaché, Awah, while another Southern Chinese man who had drifted ashore to Okinawa was to have taught Matsumora.
20. The label internal martial arts is often used in quite an indiscriminate and stereotypical way to refer to styles that place greater emphasis on leading and flowing movements, hence avoiding attempts at meeting force with force. Common Chinese examples include *hsing-yi chuan*, *taichi chuan*, and *bagua zhang*.
21. Broadly defined and loosely translated, the term *ki* or *chi* usually refers to the notion of an intangible of energy life-force that can be cultivated and developed within any human body.
22. A less popular but possibly more formal name noted by Draeger (1969) has been *karate-jitsu*, or empty hand techniques.
23. Stevens (1995) and Funakoshi (1975) claimed that the actual birth date was in 1868 although the official date is 1870. Funakoshi claimed to have added 2 more years for himself to sit for an exam that was open only to those born 1870 or thereafter.
24. Draeger and Smith (1969) and Stevens (1995) gave the date as 1917, however Funakoshi (1974) claimed that the year was 1916. Draeger and Smith (1969) and Stevens (1995) also noted that this was actually a private demonstration and that the first public demonstration occurred in 1922 at a National Athletic Exhibition sponsored by the Ministry of Education.
25. Draeger again differed by giving the date as 1933, but I am more inclined to the date given by Funakoshi.
26. This became part of a wave of reinventions of the Japanese martial arts at the turn of the 20th century. Other examples include *juudou* and *kendou*.
27. The popularized and idealized title of The Way of the Empty-hand also appears to be a highly contemporary 20th-century invention. A wider historical outlook would once more reveal just how historically problematic this is. The practice of *kobudou*, or *kobujutsu*, as mentioned before, had already existed side by side with the training of *te* training for a long time on Okinawa for quite some time.
28. For a sampling of present-day Web sites representing these *ryuu*, please see the Related Web Sites section. Bear in mind that this list is nonexhaustive, as each ryuu may also possess substyles headed by differing political factions.
29. Some well-known karate figures who played a role in bringing the art to pre-World War II Hawaii included Yabu Kensu (1927), Motobu Choki (1933), and Miyagi Chojun (1934) (Haines, 1995).
30. The West does not simply refer to North America. The spread of karate to Europe also occurred simultaneously in former Allied nations such as the United Kingdom and France (Frederic, 1991).

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- Japan karate-do Federation (JKF): www.karatedo.co.jp/
- JKF Shotokan: www.jka.or.jp/english/e_index.htm
- JKF Shito-kai (An organizations of the JKF): www.karatedo.co.jp/shitokai/English/et-index.html
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