



# Karate Uchina-Di

## 沖縄手

**Okinawan Karate**  
**An Exploration of its Origins & Evolution**

History  
Methodology  
Culture  
Philosophy  
Ethics  
Legacy  
Official Combat Force and Civilian Discipline  
Continuity and Change in Practice

**Itzik Cohen**

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History, Methodology, Culture, Philosophy, Ethics, Legacy  
Official Combat Force and Civilian Discipline

Continuity and Change in Practice

**Itzik Cohen**

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# **Part 1**

## **Historical Background**

History, Methodology, Culture, Philosophy, Ethics, Legacy,  
Official Combat Force and Civilian Discipline

### **General Overview**

The book has two parts.

Part 1 defines the historical field in which Karate developed. This background is essential in order to familiarize the reader with the environment, atmosphere and the many factors that lie behind the process of the evolution of Karate. This familiarity will enable the reader to distinguish between primary issues and others that may be considered as secondary, and to understand how several sources shaped the Art of Karate. Many references mentioned in Part 1 will be found in Part 2.

The book reviews and examines closely the information gleaned from the broad and in-depth research undertaken. Environmental and geopolitical processes in several countries are examined, together with their peoples and cultures. These constitute primary forces and principles that contributed to the development of Bare-Hand Combat in China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asian kingdoms such as Siam, and its subsequent transference to the West following the entry of Western powers to East Asia. The book also points out the instances where distinctions must be made between historically verifiable facts as opposed to folk narratives or legends.

Part 2 elaborates on the issues discussed in Part 1 and thoroughly investigates the varied and differing approaches, with their consequences and changes, and the trends and stages of progress that have been influential in bringing Karate into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The focus is placed on teachers and key figures whose dedication enabled the formation, definition and interpretations of current and future directions in the evolution of Karate.

It would be possible to read the book purely by way of subjects that are of interest to the reader, but I strongly advise adhering to the chronological order of the book. A large part of the analyses and explanations in the second part is based on the data provided in the first part.

## **Acknowledgements**

*“If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.”*

Isaac Newton

My first experience of and foray into the world of Karate was thanks to Isaac Florentine Sensei, who began to teach Karate while in his early twenties. Isaac Sensei has two loves, which he wisely combined in later years, namely the arts of Cinema and Karate. He instilled this passion in me with his love and enthusiasm and after a short while I developed an interest in the terms, culture, language and origins of Karate.

A fascinating world had opened before me. As the years have passed, my interest in the origins and evolution of Karate has increased. The more I have dug deeply, the more I have been able to find clear answers on the one hand, while facing ambivalent issues that arose on the other. Over approximately forty years I have met teachers and expert figures who have given of their time and experience, and have brought me to the place where I stand today.

I wish to express deep thanks to my teacher, Mr. Tamas Weber Sensei, who has directed my path for so many years. He is the one with whom I travelled step-by-step from my early days, as a youngster, well before my recruitment into the military.

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to Akamine Hiroshi Sensei for his very warm and friendly hospitality in his home and Dojo, as well as for sharing with me his encyclopaedic historical knowledge, and imparting practical knowledge at the Shimbukan Honbu-Dojo and also for introducing me to teachers and very dear people who have contributed to the writing of this book.

I give deep thanks, from the bottom of my heart, to Higa Minoru Sensei, for a fascinating interview and for opening the doors of Kyudokan Hombu-Dojo to me. Higa Minoru Sensei is a direct disciple of the famous Higa Yuchoku Sensei, the founder of Kyudokan and successor of Chibana Choshin.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to Sawada Kyoshi Sensei. Mr. Sawada is a polymath and a most pleasant person, with whom I had a series of interesting and educational conversations about Okinawan history and culture.

Special thanks go to Effi Schleyen Sensei, a teacher and friend who is very dear to my heart. Effi Sensei has a profound knowledge of Karate and we have had many discussions on the subject over many years.

My gratitude also goes to Israel Levi Sensei. Israel is a unique character - a teacher and friend and also much more than that. I thank him for his educated advice in making this book become a reality.

More information about these people follows in the section on the Author's *curriculum vitae*.

Many thanks to all my teachers and those who broadened my mind on the subject of Martial Arts

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### **About the Author**

*"All experiences will lead you to more experiences,*

*Expect nothing from experiences "...*

Nisargadatta Maharaj

Itzik is currently a member of the following Okinawan Karate Organizations:

Karate - Kyudokan Kobayashi Shorin-ryu headed by Soke Higa Minoru.

Kobudo - Ryukyu-Kobudo Shimbukan headed by Soke Akamine Hiroshi.

Itzik Cohen began to practise Karate consistently during the mid-1970s.

His initial step was in Sanshinkan Organization, under Isaac Florentine Sensei and Soke Tamas Weber.

After a few years, at the age of 18, Itzik joined the army in 1981.

He served in an infantry combat unit and fought in the Lebanon war between 1982-1983.

Itzik participated in a combined special forces operation of infantry and intelligence at the forefront of the battlefield.

Later he served in the Directorate of Military Intelligence/Research Department (Aman)/Terrorism arena.

After his military service Itzik worked in a family business, while studying economics and business administration.

A decade passed and Itzik graduated in Software Engineering and worked in the field of high-tech. After a short time he joined a Startup Company as software designer and software engineer, and later worked in an IT Company as a project manager.

#### Martial Arts Skills:

Main fields: Karate, Ryukyu Kobudo, Self-Defence and Military Bare-Hand Close-Combat.

Background: Krav-Maga, Korindo Ikido, Xing-Yi, Koryu Iai Jutsu and Jujutsu.

At present Itzik is the head of Teishinkan Dojo – Okinawan Martial Arts School.

The school includes Karate, Kobudo, Self-Defence courses and Health Practice activities.

#### Itzik:

My military operational experience in the infantry has helped me to understand field conditions such as topography and terrain combat necessities, security information exchange and combining or integration between forces in order to accomplish a mission successfully.

The skills gained in military intelligence research experience give me increased abilities in the processes of information-gathering, assessing, analyzing, reasoning, setting opinion and suggesting alternative options if any are required.

This process involves information gathering and the classification of findings such as source type, source credibility, reliability of information, dating, objective information examination, identifying and cross-referencing of the material.

My professional experience in software engineering has helped me greatly in accessing the benefits of computing power while at the same time acknowledging the limitations of data mining, the segmentation of information, erroneous statistics and logic cuts, which can be misleading and lead to incorrect results and bring about inaccurate or erroneous conclusions.

I believe in the concept of a deep-rooted grounding, with the resultant tall solid trunk or body of knowledge being able to grow wide, flexible branches. The

research of the art of Karate is also the bridge between the basics and creativity, between heritage and vision, past and future.

*"If you cannot find the truth right where you are, where else do you expect to find it?"*

Dogen

About myself - my path, friends and teachers

My background has three facets:

Okinawan Karate and Kobudo

Civilian Self-Defence and Military Bare-Hand Close-Combat

Health Practice

With some humility, I am aware that this particular combination sets out some challenging goals in the light of current realities.

I thank each and every person from whom I've learnt over many years - teachers, colleagues, friends and students.

Born in 1963, I have diligently practised Karate since the mid 1970s. I started on my path while at school and was taught by Florentine Isaac Sensei. After a close friend, who was a boxer, encouraged me to try Karate training, which I found both fascinating and intriguing, I wanted to know more about the varied settings from which Karate had evolved. I was eager to understand the meanings of the actions involved in Karate and to understand fully the expressions of those actions. The names of techniques, terms, ethics - it was all new for me. I developed an interest in Japanese culture, art and history, and then also an interest in the Japanese language. I discovered Buddhism and was an enthusiastic reader of Zen literature. At that time there was no internet, nor were there computers in homes or libraries. Books on the subject were not easily available where I lived. A deeper interest directed me naturally towards the charms of Okinawan culture, the origin of Karate.

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## **Introduction**

*The pure and simple truth is rarely pure and never simple."*

Oscar Wilde

Much has been written about Karate from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, but very little is known about the roots of Karate and its gradual evolution and development prior to this era. This book addresses these very issues and therein lies its unique quality and importance. By raising, discussing and analyzing the changes, modifications, differences, nuances and factors involved in the development of Karate before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the book presents the reader with the deep roots and evolutionary sources of this magnificent Art that reaches back hundreds of years.

In this book I analyze historical facts, investigate processes and identify trends as well as the important transactional and developmental routes by which Karate progressed, and I have formatted a time axis of history. I review the environmental lifestyles and mindsets, the forces that acted on different levels, bilateral relationships, folklore, culture, social structure, internal and external economy and geopolitical processes that changed the regional topography in multiple dimensions and imposed the conditions for the manner in which Karate has paved its progress and shaped its character, as it presents itself to us nowadays.

The book's aim is to trace the roots and evolution of the Art of Karate. In order to do this it is necessary to reveal the active forces and study the course of events that influenced and shaped the history of the region and to investigate carefully and understand these implications on Okinawan local Bare-Hand, which is Karate. In addition, familiarity with Ryukyuan culture, customs and the atmosphere in which the local arts developed is a necessary requirement.

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When we assemble all the parts of Karate's historic puzzle and fit them together as one picture, we are required not only to assess the components, but also – and especially – to examine contexts and conjunctions and the relationships between them. These are the aspects that will lead us to detect processes and trends, and through them to reveal the historical texture. Difficulties become even more complicated when we reveal within this historical texture other ingredients that actually belong to other puzzles and not necessarily to the one in which we are interested. This is why we should carefully select and sort the correct components.

Documented sources and stories reveal the constant transition through which Karate has passed over the years, a process with some significant turning points.

The difficulty lies in the availability of complete sources as well as their accuracy. The structure and character of Karate today is very different to that of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kata(s) were changed and others were added. The Kihon 基本 was also changed. Karate has broken through geographical and cultural borders and has become institutionalized. Karate's evolutionary process existed well before the 20<sup>th</sup> century but unfortunately we lack sufficient reliable and precise documentation and all we can do is simulate the process with a backward-projection. In order to do so correctly, we should collect and gather trustworthy data, verify and authenticate sources, cross-check and analyze information and then conclude and construct an educated and informed opinion.

The extensive process of collecting material demands the search for, exposure and sorting of many details in various fields, such as history, geopolitics, economics, society, architecture, agriculture, trading, culture and arts, religion and philosophy, stories, folklore, fictions and myths. The ability to identify trends, interests and environmental factors is required. Any piece of information must be researched and investigated and details need to be examined, as well as the observation of the subject from a global point of view. In addition, a measure of breadth and depth of professional knowledge of Karate is essential in order to analyze and pinpoint, approve or refute assumptions that will be interpreted from the large amount of information collected. It is impossible to investigate the micro when we lack understanding of the macro. The whole region was in a constant process of transition, with internal and external affairs that impacted on each other.

I took into consideration each and every source that I have found or about which I was informed. I was discriminating and have made a sincere effort to separate the wheat from the chaff, to distinguish facts from myths and to sift the truth from legends and narratives found in the rich folklore, while paying careful attention not to withhold their appeal or implications.

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## **Ryukyu and Uchinadi 沖縄手**

*“As long as you seek for something, you will get the shadow of reality and not reality itself.”*

Shunryu Suzuki

The Ryukyu Islands are first mentioned in Chinese and Japanese sources dating from 200 B.C.E.

The Ryukyu Island chain is formed as an arc in the East China Sea, lying to the southwestern side of Japan, with Formosa (Taiwan) at its southernmost tip.

The Islands constitute an important geographic intersection of strategic importance: Southeast Asia, Japan-China-Korea, Siam, Indonesia and the Philippines. The chain of Islands comprised small kingdoms that were united circa 1429 under Shō 尚 rule, and so a new era began in building the socio-economic fabric from within, while relationships were established with kingdoms and countries that lay further afield. The Government maintained a centralized internal policy. Feudal Lords not willing to show sympathy and loyalty to the new rule were forced to retire and give up their rights and assets, and they therefore lived by relying on taxes they had collected in the past, or they turned to private occupations. Feudal Lords who showed loyalty to the King were not dispossessed of their lands, but had to move their place of residence to the Shuri area, under the constant supervision and surveillance of the central government. Towards the end of the 15th century, more specifically in 1480, King Shō Shin (1477-1526) banned the possession and use of weapons in order to prevent potential risk to his rule and to strengthen the Shō Dynasty. King Shō Shin created a clear hierarchical administrative structure and established three classes that were active social circles of support around him. The closest circle was within the Royal and aristocratic families. The second included the high officials in Shuri, now familiar as “Shuri Ofu”, or ‘Shuri Royal Government’. The third circle consisted of the local administrative system that was set up in each district, “Magiri/Majiri”, now known as “Bansho”, or District Offices.

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## **The Military and Conflict in the Ryukyu Islands**

By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the residents of Ryukyu possessed gunpowder and firearms received from the Chinese. Named “Hyaa” 火矢 and “Tihyaa” 手火, the quantities and use remain unclear but possibly the Royal Guard possessed both. It is known that by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, these weapons were already commonplace in most armies of the region, although not as common as they were in western armies.

Sailors on board Korean ships that sailed towards the Islands during the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century reported on the existence of an armory of weapons in the hands of the Ryukyuan Kingdom that included guns and even artillery, for example Chinese cannons named “Futsurōki” in Japanese. There is also evidence in Chinese records of an inventory of firearms that arrived on the Islands from China, and of the restrictions imposed by China on the transport and trade of weapons.

Naturally the local Kingdom aspired to maintain its own independence and to protect itself against foreign attacks by aggressive forces such as pirates and other military forces that attempted the invasion of the ports and the northern region of the Kingdom in Gajashima Island and the area between Ryukyu and the Satsuma.

Prior to the Satsuma invasion of the Ryukyu Islands there was a local army, or more precisely, military forces attached to each of the three kingdoms. After fierce battles, Shō Hashi 尚巴志, the head of the Mid-Kingdom, succeeded in occupying the Northern Kingdom in 1416 and then proceeded to destroy the Southern Kingdom in 1429. At the end of these military clashes, Shō Hashi unified the three kingdoms. But prior to the unification each of the kingdoms enjoyed autonomy and even sent separate delegations to China, and Chinese records give dates, details and the number of delegations sent by each kingdom. In order to surmount the complex political relations between China and Japan, and yet still retain some socio-economic autonomy, the people of Ryukyu concentrated on creating an outwardly serene and pacifist image. King Shō Shin 尚真 banned the possession of weapons throughout the kingdom, but he empowered the Royal House by establishing a faithful army, thereby strengthening the centralized rule of the monarchy.

King Shō Shin gathered his warlords and stationed them in Shuri, close to him, granting them prestige and aristocratic status while at the same time maintaining close supervision and wielding supreme authority over their military power. A stringent policing mechanism was needed in order to maintain order and ensure his rulership. He therefore instituted methods in which the land was divided into districts named “Hiki”. Each Hiki had administrative and economic autonomy including police forces and local armies. Four Hiki were gathered within one

framework named “Ban” and this structure enabled the regular inspection and supervision of the regime over everyone in the entire region.

Over the years, the walls that protected the castle of Shuri were strengthened, and access roads for military forces as well as structures to protect the ports were built. The initial Satsuma attack on Naha Port failed and the Satsuma forces retreated. In further attacks the Satsuma warriors suffered heavy losses and only after occupying Urasoe Castle and isolating Shuri Castle were they eventually successful in occupying the Islands.

During the Satsuma invasion of Ryukyu in 1609, a famous saying, but of questionable authenticity, was attributed to King Shō Tai 尚寧 (1834–1901):

**“Nuchi du Takara” 命ど宝**

**“Nothing is more precious than life” or “Life itself is our treasure”.**

Refer to page 276.

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### **Relationships between Ryukyu – Fujian – Kumemura 久米村 (Okinawan: Kuninda)**

A highly significant and distinguished portion of the history of Karate is kept in the Chinese settlement of Kumemura. This is also true of records pertaining to diplomacy, culture and other fields of endeavour. Some of this knowledge was transmitted officially in an orderly manner and properly organized within the administrative structure, while other sections of the knowledge were unofficial and were transmitted sporadically to the civilian enclave of Kumemura and the environs.

It is therefore worthwhile investigating in depth and conducting a detailed examination of the details surrounding the establishment and development of Kumemura, including its inhabitants, together with its characteristics and influence on the local population over a lengthy period lasting several centuries.

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## **The Pragmatic Approach of Ryukyu**

The Ryukyans succeeded in surviving and flourishing despite the crises and upheavals in China because of their pragmatic approach.

At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ming rule became corrupt and weakened. In 1637 British armed forces compelled China to continue trading. In 1644 the last Emperor of the Ming Dynasty hanged himself in his palace and the Manchu Dynasty arose, establishing Qing rule in the capital. This reign survived until the revolution in China in 1911. The Ryukyans for their part continued to dispatch envoys with documentation that was formulated in such a way as to be acceptable to both Ming and Qing.

The Japanese raised questions related to Sino-Ryukyuan affairs given the changing circumstances and the new rule in China, but the Japanese Shogun left the decision to the Satsuma.

The region experienced difficult times because of instability and lack of order. In spite of Satsuma efforts to block the pirates (Wakō) who had increased their activities in the region towards the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century, the robberies, looting and murders continued and included raids on diplomatic delegations. As in 1665, when the Wako had attacked delegations, valuable property was lost.

Instability in China continued under the Manchu but Beijing was too busy with its own internal affairs and could not find the time or resources to attend to Sino-Ryukyu matters.

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## **The Ryukyuan Army at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century**

At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Gusuku(s) were located along Ryukyu's coastal areas from north to south.

More about "Gusuku": Refer to the chapter: Gusuku/Gushiku period 御城.

The Ryukyuan soldier's equipment, such as helmets, armour and weapons, was a mixture of Chinese and Japanese styles. They often used shorter swords which were held in one hand, while the other hand held a shield. Others used Japanese swords such as Katana.

The Ryukyuan army was equipped with advanced weapons including firearms, including heavy cannons. The Ryukyuans traded in saltpeter and sulfur and were also familiar with gunpowder. The Ryukyuan soldiers used various weapons that enabled them to make use of short-range Bare-Hand techniques, which had been transmitted at various levels from regional neighbours.

Tactics and strategies were fundamental since the armed forces were small and mostly limited to defensive missions. The Ryukyuan Kingdom did not cherish any imperialistic ambitions in order to extend its territory at that time.

The Ryukyuan army was heavily influenced by Chinese military concepts. It was furnished with supplies of both Chinese and Japanese equipment. Sometimes a mixture of both was available, as well as military equipment from other foreign countries.

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### **Infiltration of Western forces in Japan and Ryukyu during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries**

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century agents were sent by five different western countries to the Southern Islands, that is, the Ryukyu Islands, with the aim of penetrating Japan. These powers were Britain, Russia, France, Holland and the United States. The attempts to gain access to Japan were to be carried out by diplomatic means if possible and with force if this failed. Each country aimed to expand and increase its power and control over the economic, political and military centers of influence in East Asia.

The ultimate aim was that each western power as mentioned above expected Japan to show its acquiescence in adopting a supportive stance in relation to other western powers. In this way Japan and Ryukyu found themselves caught up in the scenarios of western conflicts.

The maritime area around Japan became more attractive and more threatened than ever. The Russians were pressing from north to south, Britain and France emerged from the seas of Southern Asia and the Americans arrived from the East. Japan felt intimidated and this affected the citizens of Ryukyu and its environs. The more the actions of the West intensified, the more the Japanese felt threatened by these unwelcome elements and unwanted Western influence permeating the Japanese way of life.

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## **Ryukyu in the center of Japanese internal conflict and the Satsuma rebellion**

The Samurai soon discovered that the return of the Meiji regime brought with it a socio-economic revolution that impaired both their status and income. In August 1871 the Imperial government announced revisions to the feudal peripheral areas and borders, including those under the control of the Shimazu Satsuma clan. This clan still wielded significant power and retained its offices located in Kagoshima. According to the revisions, the northern chain of the Ryukyu Islands, which had in the past been an integral part of the Ryukyu Kingdom and had been, from 1609, controlled by the Satsuma, would now be part of the Izumi district in Kagoshima. This caused difficulties in the collection of taxes from the Ryukyuan, namely whether the taxes were to be collected in Shuri by Shimazu and then sent to the government in Tokyo for the Emperor, or whether they were to be collected in accordance with the order of the Kagoshima government. The question arose as to whether the tax benefit would be shared by the Imperial regime in Tokyo or the Satsuma rule in Kagoshima. In addition, the Imperial government's position was entirely vague on the matter of Ryukyuan foreign affairs. Once more the Okinawans were forcibly pushed into the middle of a conflict, this time between the Satsuma and its powerful opposition in Tokyo. In an unprecedented and decisive step, Emperor Mutsuhito summoned the Okinawans to Tokyo and advised them to respect and not reject the status of the Emperor.

In 1868 an internal war broke out, a civil war that dragged into 1869, acquiring the name "Boshin War" - Boshin Sensō, 戊辰戦争 "The Year of the Yang Earth Dragon War".

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## **The link to Shaolin 少林寺**

"Believe those who are seeking the truth, doubt those who find it!"

André Gide

The bond between East Asian Martial Arts and the Shaolin Monastery is remarked upon in almost every book on the subject. The name "Shaolin

Monastery” is famous worldwide, with many stories and legends told about the monastery and its fighters with respect to Karate.

The legend tells the story of Da´ Mo (Bodhidharma) who created eight positions called Sho Pa Lo Han (“18 Postures of Shupa/Shao Pa Lohan/Luohan”). The Lohan (Lo Han) thus established this basis for many other styles that spread from the Shaolin Monastery over the years. There are approximately 72 confirmed sects that emerged from Shaolin, from which were derived numerous styles, estimated today to exist in more than 2500 Gung Fu styles in China alone.

## **The Secret of Shaolin Monastery**

### **The Secret of Shaolin Monastery**

Martial Arts history is, just as is religious history, saturated with myths and legends. The immortal Taoist monk Zhang San Feng, was said to have created only a few exercises at most (or if any at all) but was certainly not the founder of Tai-Chi.

Two books, “Travels of Lao Can” written between 1904 and 1907, and the book “Secrets of Shaolin Temple Boxing”, written in 1915, were eagerly shared between excited readers who read about the “secrets of Shaolin fighting”. Readers were very enthusiastic in giving credence to the books in spite of the lack of references to historical sources in support of the written details.

In this chapter a clear line will be drawn between history and myth, and between the reality of facts and imaginary legends. The development of Combat Arts in general and Bare-Hand Combat in particular was driven by various factors such as philosophy and religion, politics, economics and social factors, together with culture, health and medicine. The arrival in China of Taoism, which existed before Buddhism, had a profound impact on Bare-Hand Combat. There is a distinct difference between Taoyin (Japanese: Daoyin) practice to that of Bare-Hand Combat methods, as further details will show. Hence the comparison between Buddhist temples, with Shaolin at the apex, to Chinese Martial Arts over history, is of limited value and certainly remains an inappropriate comparison to make in general.

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## **Reasons why this occurred**

Firstly, an explanation deriving from a broader examination of the facts is required, which includes the political aspect. The monks acted with a modicum of self-interest in order to sustain the rule that benefited them, and they were supported in turn with Imperial permission to defend their homeland.

Secondly, mystical influences should be taken into consideration, namely the Tantric and Taoist symbolism used by the monks to magnify their spiritual states and acquire approval for their deeds.

**Thirdly, clarification of how the notion of “War” was perceived in Buddhism should be considered.** War, according to the Buddhism of India, is “Akusala”, which is interpreted as evil, malicious and corrupt. Therefore there would be legitimate reasons to fight this corrupt wickedness in order to bring about the return of order to society, thus benefiting the people. The “Bushi” 武士 (Japanese Warriors) also made use of Buddhism to justify their objectives. Samurai adapted Zen Buddhism to their way of life. In World War II the Japanese authorities utilized the principles of Zen Buddhism to imbue its soldiers with a fighting spirit. Today, in the modern world, some authorities in certain places engage in the inappropriate use of Buddhist principles.

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It is obvious that during the 18th century the reputation of the Shaolin Monastery led to the creation of many myths and legends being spun around its name. These stories of folklore spread across many countries, praising the combat skills of the monks so highly that many warriors and Martial Arts teachers attempted to associate their names with the Shaolin Monastery in any way possible in order to gain reputation, publicity and glory. In this way they have increasingly empowered the monastery’s name and have ensured its symbolic stature.





The locations of the Northern and Southern Shaolin Monasteries

### **How Martial Art was developed in the monastery**

The monastery was a Buddhist institute in which monks lived a religious and philosophical life. But the question remains as to where their knowledge of combat came from and how the monks trained and developed fighting skills. There is also the question of how they integrated these skills with Buddhist activity. There are confirmed references to the active part taken by Shaolin monks in battles during the 7<sup>th</sup> century, at the end of which the Tang Dynasty was established. The questions regarding the skills of the monks and the quality of their fighting can be answered with reference to three components:

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## **“Bare-Hand” – The Art of Fighting with no weapons in the Shaolin Monastery (the literal meaning of Quan is “Fist”)**

There is evidence from various sources, for example, poems, that even at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century monks practised fighting without weapons. Nevertheless, at this point in time there are no serious professional references to Bare-Hand techniques in the monastery, but only to fighting with weapons, indicating that Bare-Hand Fighting in Shaolin at this time was only of minor interest. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the nature of “Bare-Hand Combat” had expanded and acquired technical and motor-physical characteristics, which were unique to the monastery. An interesting turning point occurred during the mid-Qing period (18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) as the monks began to emphasize Bare-Hand Combat over Weaponry Fighting.

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### **In conclusion**

The 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and the Ming period were characterized by the development of urban culture in China. Theater and street plays, poems and literature had become accessible to all. Historical novels were published in China in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and became very popular by the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Books and literature were undergoing a process of popularization and were more available to the population at large. Naturally this was a positive and much-welcomed process, but as a result literary sources began to include stories transmitted by word of mouth, as well as narrative fictions with some inaccuracies compiled from unofficial sources. This phenomenon opened the way for a folkloristic trend in historical novels.

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## **Bubishi 武備志**

<b>BU</b>	<b>武</b>	warrior
<b>BI</b>	<b>備</b>	science
<b>SHI</b>	<b>志</b>	spirit

The Bubishi represents a significant document in the history of Karate. Some even see it as part of Karate's origin. According to one of the important Karate figures, Shoshin Nagamine Sensei, "The Bubishi reveals to us the Orthodox Origins of Karate, the applicative perception of Kata, principles of stability and movement as well as the art of using Kyūsho-Jutsu 急所 (vital points)".

The book contains information about Kempo, Kenpo/Quanfa, which some claim was kept secret for many years. This material describes "Monk Fist Boxing", the fighting techniques of the Shaolin monastery in the White Crane gongfu style.

In fact there are two completely different Bubishi books, both with their origins in China, but they differ in their era, scope, clarity of sources, their subjects and their authors.

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# **Karate Uchina-Di 沖繩手**

## **Okinawan Karate: An Exploration of its Origins and Evolution**

### **Part 2**

Karate: Continuity and Change in Practice

## **General Overview**

This part is a continuation of Part 1, which introduces the reader to the historical background, geopolitical processes and cultural factors that shaped the ancient Ryukyuan-Hand, and the history of the evolution of Ancient Karate. Part 1 separates “the wheat from the chaff” and facts from fairy tale versions, providing detailed analyses. This primary information gives a solid and reliable base for Part 2. Though reading only Part 2 may seem an attractive option, it is strongly recommended that Part 1 be read first because it is important and even crucial for a deeper and more profound understanding of Part 2.

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### **About “Knighthood and Bushi-Dō” or “the Knight and the Samurai”**

An additional dimension of the term “Budō” 武道 (Military Way) is in the literal translation of the term “Military Knight Way” or alternatively “Precepts of Knighthood”, an interpretation of the way in which knights used to conduct their daily lives within the professional framework and in relation to their skill, class and title. Although there is a significant difference between the Bushi and the European Knighthood, there are common characteristics such as uniform and helmet decorations, the bearing of symbols and badges as well as behavioural codes and ethics which was in Japan, the adherence to the Military House Laws, that is the “Buke Hatto” (Buke shohatto 武家諸法度 Laws for Warrior Houses).

In some periods only a few warriors were granted the title of Bushi and this was also the case in Okinawa, both during the warrior era and also within the Karate environment.

The etymology of the word Samurai 侍 is Saburai/Saburau さぶらい / さぶらひ, which simply means “Servant” or “One who serves nearby”, and only later did it receive the meaning of “Warrior”.

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## The Essence of Karate

千日の稽古を鍛とし 万日の稽古を練とす。

*“Sen Jitsu no keikotan to ii, Banjitsu no keiko rento yu”.*

*“One thousand days to forge the spirit, ten thousand days to polish it”.*

Miyamoto Musashi

Karate is fundamentally a practical Art and an essential ingredient for progress lies in practice. In order to understand Karate one should do Karate. Comprehensive information may turn into practical knowledge from studying, practising, and training, delving into and ultimately also investigating the art for a long time, with patience and diligence, while proceeding along a proper and correct course.

The perception of Karate in Okinawan culture:

In general there exists a difficulty in observing other cultures from one's own point of view and to absorb, understand, feel, and assimilate the local mindset. Karate in Okinawa is regarded more as folklore than as Budo or the “Military Way”, as it is in Japan. The Okinawan approach to Karate is practical, with a warm, kindly and hospitable ambience. This virtue has characterized Okinawan society throughout history and this is also reflected in the local dialect. For example the meaning of the word Chimu 肝 is “Liver”, however there is also an additional meaning which is interpreted as “Heart” in the emotional sense. It is often referenced in Okinawan literature and poetry and used in various contexts in order to express emotion. For example Chimu-Gurisa 肝苦 りさ is used to express compassion for someone's pain. Chimu-Ganasa 肝愛 さ expresses deep sympathy, Chimu-Jurasa 肝清 らさ is an expression meaning a pure mind. Sometimes a word will be bound together with its Japanese parallel: Kokoro 心 and then the expression Chimu-Gukuru 肝心 is obtained. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kiyoshi Sawada. Okinawa: Landscape of Minds. p. 36

## **Karate's Evolutionary Roots in East Asia**

*"Only the wisest and stupidest of men never change"*

Confucius

"Law of Natural Selection" and "Market Blindness"

An examination of the transformation process in East Asia will show through how many phases Martial Arts has passed over the years. . The focus will be on points relevant to Karate originating mainly from China, Japan and Ryukyu.

Terms commonly applied in the world of nature or economics may be used, and just as in other fields, the field of Martial Arts follows suit where the Law of Natural Selection operates. The stronger, the wiser, the more sophisticated, the efficient, the pragmatic and primarily the adaptable – survives. We are all part of a continuous process of change and we adapt ourselves to the environment. A person or company that does not adjust itself to the new emerging reality, lacking a vision of the future, will be stricken by "Market Blindness" and will become extinct in time. Karate is no different and is subject to the same principles and laws.

When military engagements were deemed necessary, Warrior Monks were skilled in such martial weaponry as spears, bows, swords and suchlike. When the need for "Bare-Hand Combat" arose, they acquired the relevant knowledge and ability in the desired quantities. With the passing years, an interesting combination of Zen, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism took shape. This integration allowed their philosophical, religious and health elements to permeate Martial Arts. The use of these elements increased over time and produced the terms: "Northern and Southern Martial Arts" or "Internal and External Martial Arts". The Industrial Revolution arrived in East Asia and had an impact on economic, social, political and military lifestyles. The weapons were changed and so were the mobility and logistics that brought changes in tactics and strategies.

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## **The Sources and Development of Bare-Hand**

*If you change it, you will ruin it. Try to hold it, and you will lose it.*

*[If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading].*

Lao Tzu

Bare-Hand Combat developed via three major routes: Military, Civilian and Sport.

Our focus will be concentrated on the first two routes, because of their relevancy to the evolution of Karate mainly prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In his combative martial role, the warrior specialized in the use of tools of combat and was usually skilled both in the use of weapons and in Bare-Hand. However Bare-Hand Combat was used as a complement to fighting with weapons. Nevertheless (a point to be discussed later) Ryukyuan Bare-Hand Combat was more dominant than in other combat forces, a fact that constitutes a central and significant factor in the development of “Local Hand” (Ryukyuan Bare-Hand Combat) and characterizes its unique quality compared with other methods.

Skills changed over time and according to requirements. For example in Japan during the Heian 平安 and Kamakura 鎌倉 periods, the main Samurai weapons were Naginata (Halberd) and Nagamaki (Combination of Naginata and long blade). In the Nabokucho 南北朝 period, the Yari (Spear) as well as Nodachi/Odachi (long blade sword) were considered to be preferable instruments on the battlefield. Then the Katana with its shorter blade appeared. According to the type of weapons and their use, the fighting distances between opponents were also changed as well as the methods of conducting the fight. Bare-Hand Combat had been altered, as had fighting with weapons and adjusted itself in accordance to its needs and the existing environmental factors.

An additional change was to be found in the character of the warrior. While during the Heian period the warriors who were named Servants, “Samurai”, belonged to the lower class, during later periods some were promoted to the upper Warrior class (“Bushi”).

During the Kamakura 鎌倉 period the warriors gained political power. At the same time the warrior also acquired...

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The phenomenon of segregation and integration between education and culture to the study of Martial Art was described in such expressions as:

“Bun Bu Ryodo” 文武兩道 “Literature and Martial Art are separate though equally important”.

“Bun Bu Ittai” 文武一体 “Literature and Martial Art are one”.

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## **The Evolution of Karate**

*If you realize that all things change, there is nothing you will try to hold on to. If you are not afraid of dying, there is nothing you cannot achieve.*

Lao Tzu

### **Facts that we know about the development of Karate and those engaged in combative art, and their aims:**

As early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century Karate had absorbed influences not only from China, Japan and Korea but also from kingdoms in Southeast Asia such as Siam.

In Ryukyu, during the era prior to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were two streams of Bare-Hand Combat, the local one without a name, which was sometimes nicknamed “Local Te” or “Ti’gwa” 手小, and the Chinese stream, which was called “Toudi/Tode/Tote” 唐手, that is “Tang Hand”.

The “Local Te” (Okinawan Te) was greatly influenced by Chinese Bare-Hand Combat.

At times when Ryukyuan residents were forbidden to bear weapons, it was only natural that the citizens of the Islands, especially those of the Shizoku Class, would continue to maintain and practise Combat Art, even as an underground activity if necessary, in one way or another.

Prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Bare-Hand Combat in China, as an independent art, was of minor importance and only from the 17<sup>th</sup> century did this art begin to expand and develop.



Knowledge of Martial Art was also transmitted to the Ryukyu Islands by the Japanese Satsuma clan.

Bare-Hand Combat Art in general was not used as a primary means of combat for military purposes as much as weapons were obviously of prime use on the battlefield. However the warrior had to have knowledge and practical ability in Bare-Hand Combat...

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### **The transfer-route of knowledge**

Knowledge arrived on the Ryukyu Islands via eight routes:

“The thirty six families” – there were settlers who came from China at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and settled in Kume/Kuninda village. Knowledge of Martial Arts came mainly from Southern Fujian.

Sources of knowledge from Southeast Asia:

Despite a lack of detailed recorded evidence, it may be assumed from historical records testifying to the fact, that there was a significant relationship with kingdoms such as Siam as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Intensive research into the Local-Te and an ancient Siamese Art reveals a concurrence of specific parameters between these two arts and particularly highlights a difference between these parameters in comparison with the Chinese Art and again, by contrast, with the Japanese Art.

Professional transmission of knowledge between the Ryukyuan garrison and skilled security personnel who were affiliated to Chinese colleagues; it stands to reason that information and knowledge such as techniques, methods and ideas were mutually exchanged. Parts of this knowledge were adjusted, assimilated and implemented in the Local Hand Combat methods.

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## **The need for Bare-Hand Combat in the Islands**

The process of combining Local Bare-Hand Combat with special official security forces and occasionally armed military units in the Ryukyu Islands had begun, of course, much earlier than in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; however from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the names of some significant figures who formed Karate, such as Sakugawa Kanga To-te/Toadi (1733–1815) and his practitioner Bushi Matsumura Sokon (1797–1889), who acquired local knowledge as well as direct Chinese and Japanese knowledge, became familiar. Their followers created the fabric of traditional Karate when they fused the Local-Te with “Toadi”, making them one.

At this point it should be remembered that these two important figures also had the resources of knowledge originating in Beijing, in addition to the Martial Arts of Fujian.

As early as around 1429 the document “Act of Eleven Distinctions”...

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Later, with their occupation in 1609, the Japanese Satsuma clan again banned the bearing of weapons, which was a ban that acted as a catalyst for the revival of the Local-Te.

The Satsuma restriction on the bearing of weapons was only for a short duration, and to be precise, the ban was exclusively against the importing or bearing of weapons by those entering the Ryukyu Islands. The upper classes in Ryukyu possessed various weapons, including swords.

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... Practising was exercised behind closed walls in the teacher’s yard or house, often individually or in very small groups and not, as today, in big groups with an ordered schedule. During the times that the practising of Fighting Arts was restricted, practice took place covertly under cover of darkness. Domestic architecture at that time was designed to assist in clandestine practice, as high stone ventilated walls and the “Fukugi” trees surrounding the yard and house, which were usually used to protect against strong winds and typhoons or alternatively as shade from the sun, also hid what was happening behind the walls and inside the house.

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## Classification in Karate

道可道，非常道

*"The Way that can be described is not the true Way."*

名可名，非常名

*"The Name that can be named is not the constant Name."*

Tao Te Ching (Dao De Jing)

(Simplified Chinese: 道德经; traditional Chinese: 道德經)

### **“Shuri-Te”, “Tomari-Te” and “Naha-Te” or “Shorin-Ryu” and “Shorei-Ryu”**

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was no division into styles or characterization of groups for “Local Bare-Hand” in the Ryukyu Islands. Individuals and families practised one or another Combat Art, knowledge of which had never leaked outside the very close professional framework or the family unit, which consisted of very few members. In the Taishō period (1912-1926) there were around 64 styles and organizations across Okinawa.

When, in 1921, after overpowering the boxer in the famous match, Motobu Choki was asked what this Martial Art was that he practised, and what its name was, he answered: “Nothing special, simply Ryukyu-Te”.

The “Local Hand Art”, including part of the Kata(s) that are attributed to a later period (the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) or to certain streams such as Shuri-te and Naha-te, had actually existed in the Ryukyu Islands in one form or another even at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kata(s) like Seisan, Sochin and Suparinpei existed before Higashionna visited China.

Refer to “Kata” chapter.

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**The Classification Process had divided the “Local Hand” into several styles and with the passage of time the Process of division and segregation increased.**

An example of one of the sources of shared knowledge is Aragaki Seisho who taught several key figures such as Higashionna Kanryo (Goju-Ryu), Funakoshi Gichin (Shotokan), Mabuni Kenwa (Shito-Ryu), Uechi Kanbun (Uechi-Ryu), Chitose Tsuyoshi (Chitō-ryū).

**By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “Local Hand” was restricted to highly-skilled officials who served the Royal house and local government. The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period during which knowledge was exchanged between teachers, and the “Local Hand” Art had begun to spread amongst the civilian population.**

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### **When categorization took place for the first time**

As early as 1908 Itosu Ankoh laid the foundation of the classification principle and actually divided Okinawan Karate into two major streams, which he called “Two Schools”: Shorin-ryu and Shorei-ryu. In a series of articles that he wrote, Toudi Jukkajo (“Ten Articles of Toudi”), Itosu mentions that the local Quanfa (Kung-Fu) is based on two main styles that were imported into Okinawa, Shorin-ryu and Shorei-ryu. It is impossible to ascertain exactly what Itosu based these articles on – we will never know. Perhaps he heard it from his teacher, Matsumura Sokon, or perhaps it was his impression from the Bubishi, which makes reference to Shorinji-ryu (“Shaolin Temple Style”) and Shoreiji-ryu (“Shorei Temple Style”). Nevertheless it is important to clarify that the Bubishi does not specifically refer in these terms as they appear in the Okinawan classification of Shorin-ryu and Shorei-ryu and certainly it did not refer to any physique suitable for this or that fighter as suggested in some sources.

Opinions are divided concerning Itosu’s colleague, Higashionna Kanryo. Some claim that Higashionna gave the name Shorei-ryu to the style that he practised, while others such as Kyoda Juhatsu, one of Miyagi Chojun’s senior students, claim that Higashionna named the Te-Art as Quanfa (Kempo) while teaching his students. Some sources state that Higashionna Kanryo was quick and light on his feet and that his actions were different from today’s Goju-Ryu, the contemporary Shorei-ryu.

Later, Funakoshi Gichin expanded the program of categorization and classification, attempting to adapt Okinawan Karate for the wide Japanese audience. In 1917 he demonstrated, lectured and published books about Okinawan Karate. In his first book, written in 1922, Funakoshi classified

Okinawan Karate Kata(s) and divided them into two categories: Shorin-ryu and Shorei-ryu. Funakoshi claims that Shorin-ryu stances are light-footed with movements that are faster compared with Shorei-ryu, which places the emphasis on grounded positions and forceful movements. Funakoshi continued and even broadened this approach in his future books.

However it is important to note that...

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## **Summary and Conclusion**

The vague and sometimes contradictory information provided by different sources places difficulties in the way of revealing the ancient past clearly and unequivocally.

The reasons are as follows:

Oral Records transmitted through the generations and as related by various equally reliable sources, contain many inaccuracies and contradictions with no way of verifying them.

The reliability of sources is not always sufficient and sometimes relies on evidence provided by family relatives from whom the story was first heard, or secondary or other indirect source.

The difficulty making a proper and accurate interpretation of the Chinese ideogram provides frequent double or even multiple meanings and contributes to the ambiguity, as shown below.

Some of the people who dealt with Martial Arts simply had difficulties with reading and writing.

The teachers made varied uses of the same ideogram or replaced an ideogram with another in order to give a new orientation and meaning to the old existing one, or simply in order to segregate themselves from others.

Some ideograms are ancient and have not been in use for many years. In some cases the original intention is not clear.

An ideogram's multi-meaning over different periods is not uncommon. It has been noted that the terms "Shorinji-ryu" and "Shoreiji-ryu" mentioned in the *Bubishi* inspired the notion of the later terms "Shorin-ryu" and "Shorei-ryu".

Striking examples of name changes are the replacement of the name Tode 唐手 with the name Karate-Dō 空手. The change from the Chinese-oriented name “Tang Hand” to the Japanese-oriented name “Way of Bare-Hand”; both are indicative of the significance of such changes.

In any event the “Local Hand” existed well before the Bubishi arrived in Okinawa. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the teachers saw in the Bubishi a kind of written testimony or authentic source, from which they took inspiration and perhaps some technical and conceptual direction. It is important to emphasize the relatively late occurrence, that is, from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Since most of the accumulated knowledge we have today originates in a tradition that was transmitted by word of mouth, and since some of the written sources from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are ambivalent, it is difficult to determine with certainty the origin of the three classification streams. The facts that we have indicate that a main reason for that classification was the attempt to fashion Karate in Japan in terms considered to be clear and modern. In addition, Karate has, over the historical past, been eclectic in character much as was Ryukyuan society in general. This fact makes the division into categories even more difficult. Many Karate styles combine hard and soft in almost the same way, so it is impossible to ascertain which of the two holds the dominant approach. Mabuni Kenwa pointed out the difficulty and confusion in the classification of Karate. He claimed that more than being useful it could deceive or mislead and I absolutely agree with him. Mark Bishop wrote in his book “Okinawan Karate”, that Seiki Arakaiki, the student of Hohān Soken/Matsumura Orthodox Shorin-ryu, claims in an interview that Karate in general is “Hard/Soft”. Arakaiki also added that in a private conversation with Eiichi Miyazato (Goju-ryu), the latter told him that it is better to abolish the present concept (Classification concept) and return to that held prior to the war, in which all Karate was simply called “Tode”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bishop, M. Okinawan Karate. Tuttle Publishing, 2nd edition p. 60

## The Local Combat Art

*“Chiiku kasaniree,*

*Jooji nayun”*

(Source language: Uchina Guchi)

*You can be an adept man by constant practice.*

The Local Combat Art did not have any formal names. Sometimes it was names such as “Di”, “Ti”, “Tiwa”, “Ti’gwa”, “Tui-te”, “Tori-te”. This art was also influenced by Tegumi, the local wrestling art as it was named in Naha, or Mutō as it was named in Shuri and Tomari.

Very little is known about this Local Art and there are no records that can shed light on how this art was actually practised in the historical past. There is clear evidence of wrestling motifs to be found in many Kata(s), particularly in the older examples. Movements, stances, switches between positions, dominance of open hand and grappling types, unbalancing and stumbling actions – all are the remnants of the deep roots linking wrestling and close-combat.

Clear evidence of the traces of wrestling motifs is to be found in the descriptions of the Local Fighting in the Oshima Hikki documents.

Refer to “Kushanku”.

Some records mention or even describe Ryukyuan-te, though not in detail. Some of these are Chinese or Japanese records, such as by members of the Satsuma, while others are by Westerners, such as Basil Hall. In some, the sources are known and in others they remain unclear. We cannot conclude any substantial information about Ryukyuan-te techniques from these sources, but we can certainly establish that the techniques used included closed fists, open hand techniques and some sort of wrestling. This all left a deep impression on the viewers. The significant fact is that we learn and are aware of the extremely highly skilled use of the body as a weapon, and that it was exceptionally powerful.<sup>3</sup>

In the old, basic fighting patterns (“Kihon”) as well as in Kata, the switches from one position to another (from stance to stance) in which the advancing leg moves

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<sup>3</sup> Hall, Basil. Account of a Voyage of Discovery to the West Coast of Corea: And the Great Loo-Choo Island; with Two Charts (Front Cover) pp. 153-154.

forward in a half circle, sometimes with emphasis, cannot be ignored. There are three major basic explanations for this:

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## **“Internal and External/Soft and Hard/Northern and Southern” - Martial Arts**

*In a mind clear as still water,  
even the waves, breaking,  
are reflecting its light.*

Dogen Zenji

### **Background**

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, or more precisely 1669, inscribed on the tombstones of Wang Zhengnan and Huang Zongxi, teachers in the Combat Arts school that was defined as Neijia Quan, that is “Internal Fighting”, were the words that “now a school engaged in Internal Fighting exists, contended well, overcoming aggression by responding with peace and quietness”. The inscription distinguished between “Internal Fighting” in which the school was engaged, and the words “External Fighting” of the Shaolin Monastery.

The beginning of “Internal Martial Arts” is attributed to Zhang Sanfeng 张三丰, a legendary Taoist monk shrouded in mystery, who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century towards the end of the Song Dynasty...

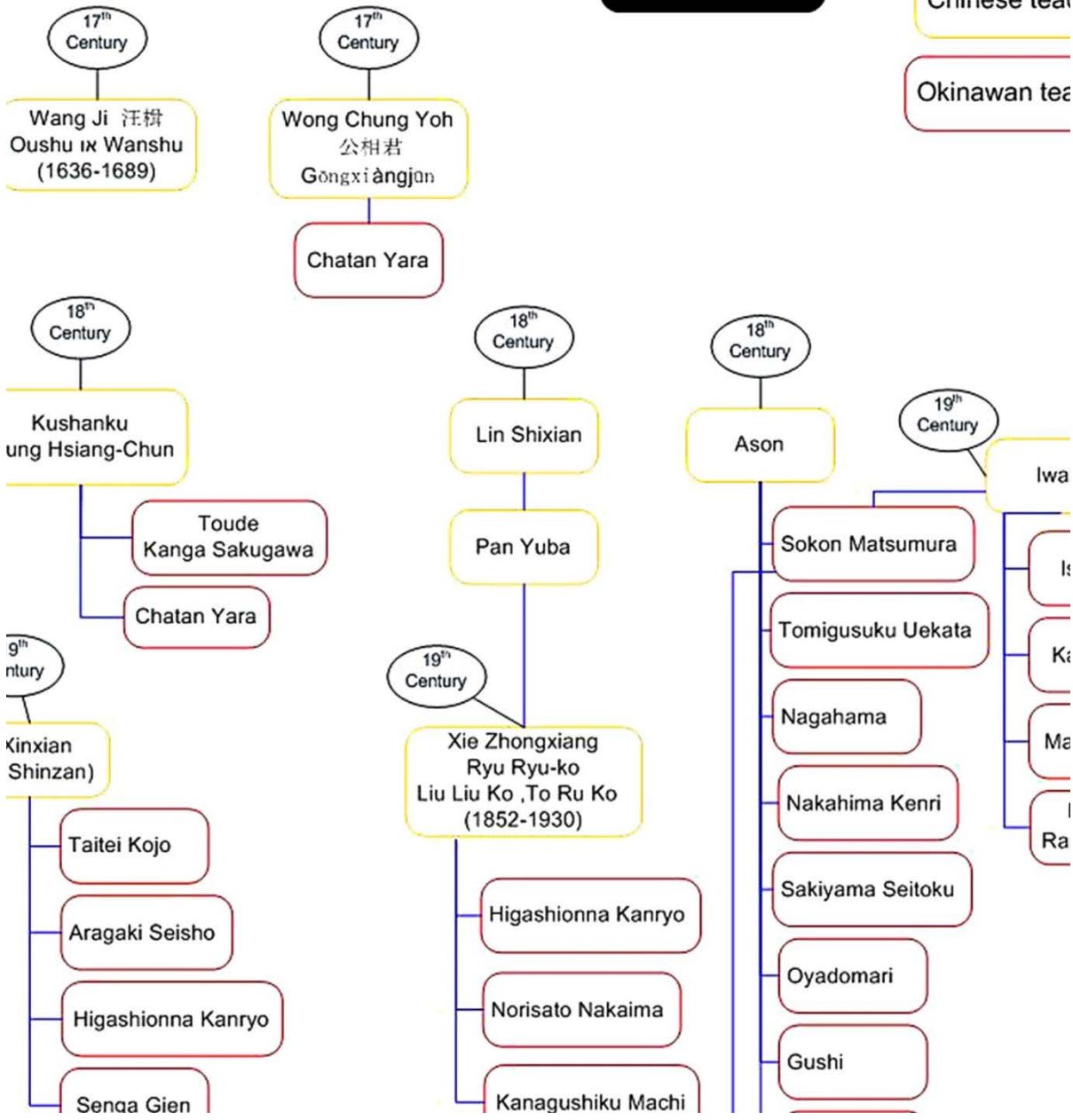
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# Okinawan Karate Chinese Genealogy

Chinese tea  
Okinawan tea



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Later, Miyagi added his own variation to the Kata, closing palms into fists, and omitting a turn. A significant change was the respiratory performance, which was made slower and much more emphasized. It is important to note that from the energetic aspect of the Kata there is significance in the move from open to closed palms, beyond, of course, the Bunkai implementation.

An additional significant change to the Sanchin Kata lies in the difference between Goju-ryu and Uechi-ryu. In both styles Sanchin Kata constitutes a mainstay and is practised regularly. Yet there are more differences than similarities between the two schools. This is in spite of the fact that the Kata came from the same region, that is Fujian, and during the same period with a difference of only three decades, which is significant from the historical point of view over time.

Higaonna Kanryō came back to Okinawa in 1880 and Uechi Kanbun returned to Okinawa in 1910, but some dispute the accuracy of these dates.

There are reasonable grounds for assuming that the Kata, or more precisely, the movement patterns found in Sanchin Kata, were practised with several variations in Okinawa before the Kata was brought to Okinawa by both Higashionna and Uechi. Similar South Chinese movement patterns and ways of practising exist in the following patterns:

Wenzhou Gang Rou Quan, Hard - Soft Boxing

Paipuren (Happoren, Minghe-Babulien)

Sam Chi/ San Zhan

Wuzu Quan/Ngo Cho Kun (Five Ancestors Boxing)

Some of the above styles have many parallels with Shorin-ryu. For example identical movement patterns found in Kushakun Kata in its many variations, Wuzu Quan/Ngo Cho Kun.

In both styles the position of the legs and lower part of the body is very similar. Body strengthening and mental concentration is a central motif in the Kata. But from here onwards the similarity ends. The position of the torso is totally different as well as the execution and emphases. This does not refer to technical

differences such as open/closed hand or order of movements, but to significant differences in the method and way of practising.

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## **White Crane 白鶴**

Karate in general and some Karate styles in particular were significantly influenced by the “White Crane”.

Similar to many other fighting styles, “White Crane” was also divided over history into many streams. This process was, in fact, much more intense than in other types of martial arts. Initially the knowledge was transmitted orally...

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“White Crane” exists in a wide variety of interpretations, some emphasizing high muscle-tone and power while many others focus on soft agile movements, natural stances rooted to the ground and intrinsic power that is acquired with practice.

Some may say that during the Qing period, in 1644, a monk named Xinglong (Sing Lung) was dispatched from Shaolin Monastery to Tibet in order to ...

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## **The Bond between Bare-Hand Art and the use of Weapons (Kobudo)**

*When you fight with bare hands, imagine yourself holding a weapon,*

*When you are holding a weapon, imagine yourself as if you were fighting with bare hands.*

The original and primary intention of “Local-te” was to ensure combat par excellence. It was intended for the provision of security for the King and the Royal Family, the personal guarding of diplomats, important people, and delegations, to secure sensitive locations and various government missions. Then it was also used for internal order and only later was it used for self-defence. It is natural that under these circumstances the warriors had to maximize their efficiency and effectiveness. Every relevant practical achievable factor, especially one granting a comparative advantage, was welcomed and also essential. If there was a firearm within reach, one could use it, and if not then other weapons were used. If one weapon was not available then the warrior tried to improvise a weapon. If this was impossible for environmental reasons (such as diplomatic events when weaponry was forbidden), then the warrior had to utilize his own bare hands and body as an effective weapon. That is the “Local-te”. In some periods an arsenal of weapons was not available because of the ban on weapons whether from the local Royal House or from the Satsuma. Sometimes certain weapons were not suitable for the circumstances. For example a sword was an excellent weapon for a warrior on the open field or in a large room, but there might be a scenario in which one could not use it efficiently or could not use it at all, as mentioned, in diplomatic gatherings and important meetings. How distinguished people could then be guaranteed security remained a problematic situation. This occurred when the Ryukyuan hosted foreign delegates or alternatively when they visited places away from the Islands. Spears or bows were not suitable for securing closed or sometimes crowded, places. Some of the envoys took on an important role in the security missions, sometime undercover. The Ryukyuan authorities operated under constraints and therefore found alternatives.

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Before Ryukyuan vessels set sail, certain security preparations were carried out. These included gathering of intelligence information, assigning organized army forces on the ship, and the acquisition of weapons and even large cannons, in order to protect the ship. If necessary, boats manned with armed soldiers were used to escort the envoys’ vessels. This navigation task was very well organized, including stationed forces, equipment and weapons and even plans of action, if needed.

From various records of Chinese and Ryukyuan scholars of that time, and from Oshima Hiki, we have definite evidence of the use of Kumiaijutsu or Kumiau, which is the knowledge of the grappling technique held by Ryukyuan security staff. These records also provide evidence for the existence of weapons including swords, halberds, lances etc.

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Starting from the bond in China, and its dominant influence on the Okinawan art, and tracing through Chinese Martial Arts, we find that between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the warrior monks were skilled in the use of weapons and only later after the 16<sup>th</sup> century, did they practise and also use “Bare-Hand”.

For further information refer to Part 1.

In the years 1561-1562 General Qi published a book based on his personal experience on the battlefield. He composed a synthesis comprising thirty two efficient options, according to his viewpoint...

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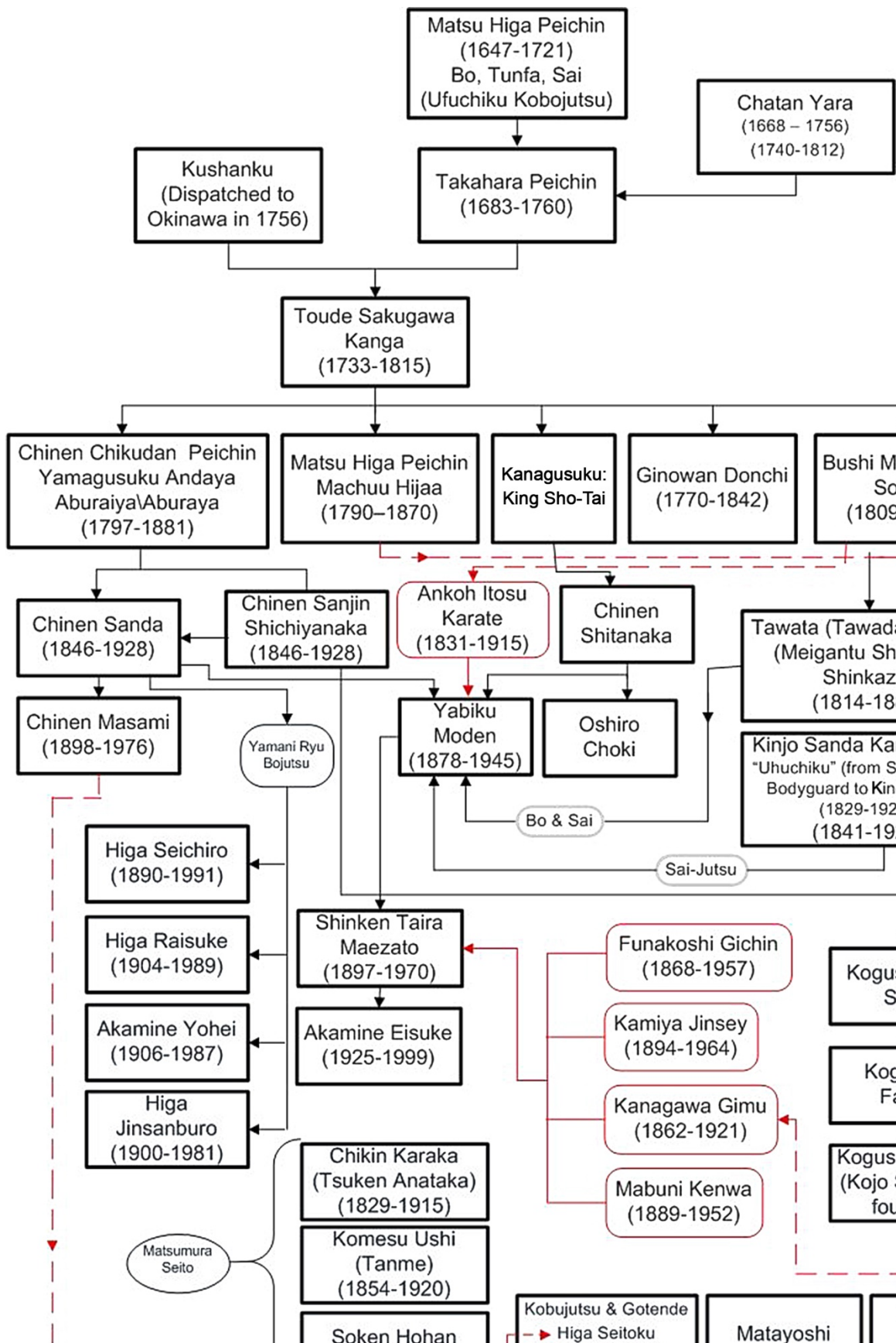
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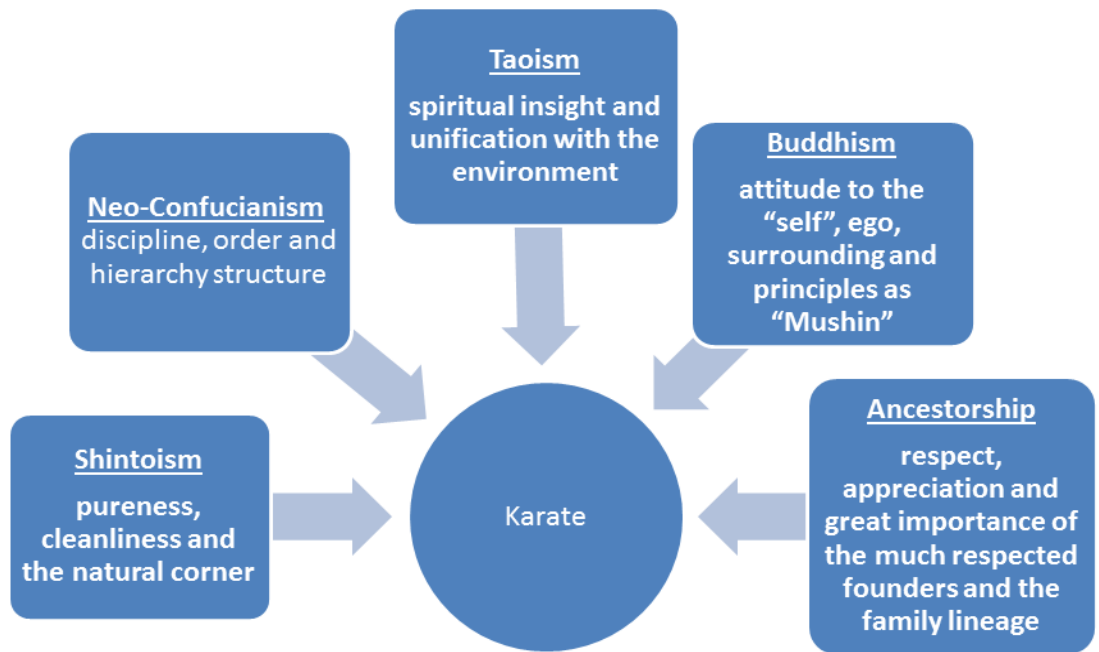
**An interesting turning point occurred during the mid-Qing period, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as the warrior monks began to focus more attention on Bare-Hand Combat than on fighting with weapons.**

Cheng Zongyou explains this matter as being the case because the monks became involved in aggressive encounters here and there, and there was a necessity for intensifying the knowledge and abilities of Bare-Hand Self-Defence...

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### **Modern tools to trace the roots of Karate – for and against**

As a specialist in Software Engineering I am familiar with statistical tools for research and advanced methods of Data Mining in order to identify the trends of processes and trace the roots of Karate through Kata factorization, identifying various characteristics and comparison with other Kata(s). Together with the advantages of these methods there are also disadvantages. Inaccuracy and lack of understanding of the observed environment, general assumptions, statistical association and false axioms, lack of data or even minimal unreliability, may cause distortion and deception. The quantity of Kata(s) is not so large and the probability of errors increases. The statistical model or the algorithm must be planned wisely depending on the correct parameters. In addition to all of the above we should carefully take into consideration the hypothesis: “Simple, Composite, Null (H0) and Alternative (H1)” as well as the Critical value (the threshold value delimiting the regions of acceptance and rejection to examine), the Power of a test ( $1 - \beta$ ) and is prone to error. The essence of the hypothesis is very important. For example if the researcher’s intention is to observe the Kata’s contribution to combat or conversely to physical health and strength, then one may obtain a result that reflects reality. By contrast, these two hypotheses might

provide different historical results, which would obviously be wrong. This means that one cannot ascribe a Kata or group of Kata(s) to a particular figure for by doing so the examination would be irrelevant. Of course you can point to a group of Kata(s) with characteristics in common, but you cannot make sweeping conclusions about the sources and origins of the Kata through statistical analysis only.

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### **Ryukyuan-te and the old Siamese Combat**

Although the Ryukyuan-Siamese bilateral relations are, from the historical point of view, minor compared to the three mentioned above, the Ryukyuan-Siamese relationship was significant for the evolution of Karate. There are some significant similarities shared between Karate and ancient Siamese combat. That the resemblance is not visible in either Japanese or Chinese Martial Arts is interesting. Considering the close and warm relations between Ryukyu and Siam, and after a close observation of some fighting characteristics, there is a common bridge of transmission of knowledge between Ryukyuan-te and the old Siamese Combat that had occurred by the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

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### **Factors that advanced the development process of Karate**

- **Sharing knowledge** – The teachers learnt from several sources and combined them. Very often they changed Kata(s) and this brought about a situation of mutual impact. Examples, which are many, include the disciples of Arakaki Seisho and Chotoku Kyan, and this was a common phenomenon. **This trend caused difficulties in accurately tracing the development of Karate, though it is natural and blessed, since the Art has survived and improved because Karate adapted itself to the needs, objectives and environment of the times. Karate has matured over the years and has not lost its attraction or efficacy.**
- **Sequence of events – an explanation** – Historical errors have taken root over the years, leading to false axioms. This fact is fundamental since the mistakes have been constituted as crossroads in tracing the development of Karate. An excellent example is the accepted fact that Matsumura Sokon learnt from Toude Sakugawa's son or from Toude Sakugawa's disciple, but not directly from Toude Sakugawa. Another example is the fact that Higashionna Kanryu is not actually the first



figure of Naha-te chronology and in fact there is some obscurity about several of the professional figures associated with him, as well as some of the Kata(s) attributed to him after his return from Fuzhou/China. The Art he taught was significantly eclectic, an attribute characteristic not only of Shorei-ryu, but shared in general by most styles...

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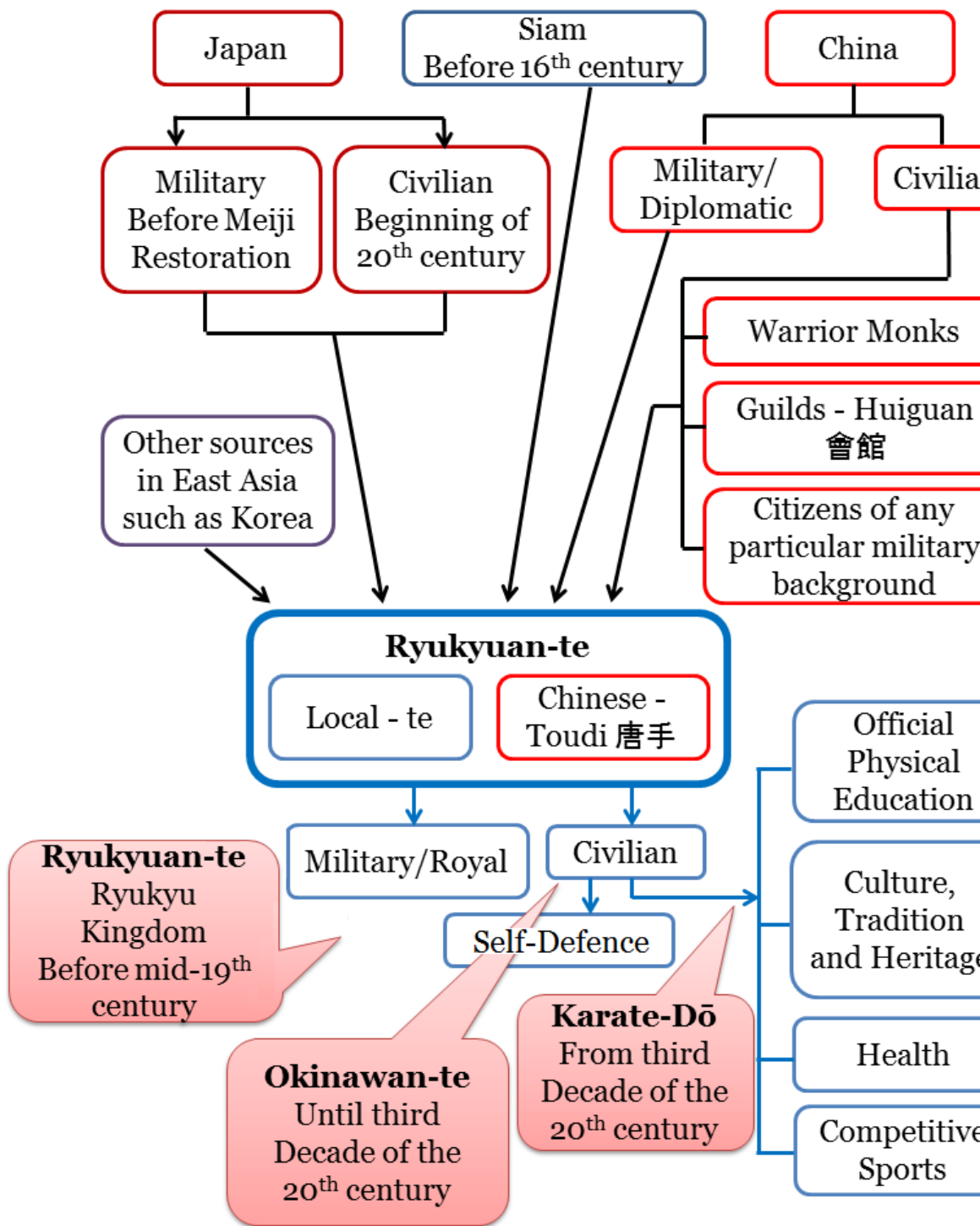
### **The Essence of the Knowledge**

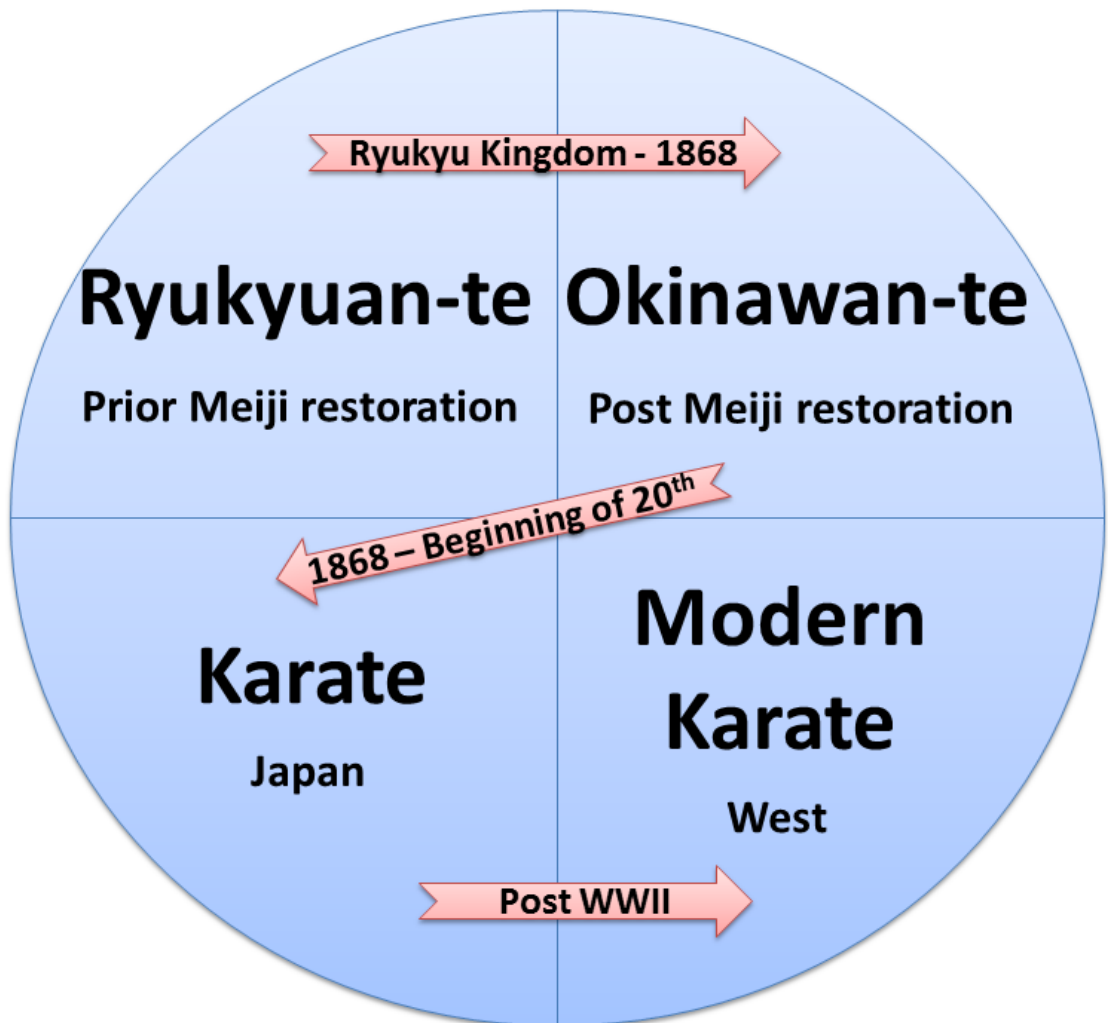
It is evident that Toadi Sakugawa was a member of the official Royal delegation that visited China. It is also known that he visited not only Southeast China but also Beijing. There is a high probability of knowledge exchange between Chinese and Ryukyuan security teams and certainly between high officials although there are no records to prove this.

There is vague information about Matsumura Sokon, even regarding his birth date. It should be taken into consideration that Matsumura Sokon may have been a disciple of Toadi Sakugawa and that Matsumura Sokon had some other significant sources related to Toadi Sakugawa:

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**Transition from the Military/Skilled environment to the Civilian environment**

A clear distinction must be made between popular combat or, more precisely, Self-Defence in the civilian environment and the professional skilled combat of the warriors or the special security units of the Royal family and the government. These people were carefully chosen from the upper classes and were highly skilled experts, well trained for special assignments.

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### **The difference between the Military/Royal environment and the Civilian environment**

The military and Royal environments chose the Special Forces members while strictly considering all aspects such as social class and personal abilities. These top quality selected warriors required very different skills from those of the fighters of the civilian environment. Tasks, aims, nature of the threats, missions, dangerous environments, combat scenarios and enemies were all fundamentally different. Hence the requirements, methods, techniques, character and general atmosphere were changed accordingly.

An additional parameter is culture. Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ryukyu was influenced mainly by Chinese culture in spite of Satsuma control from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Japanese impact increased over time and intensified significantly with the Meiji restoration. Then it would grow even more at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Ryukyuan Bare-Hand Martial Art combines local motifs and strong influences from Tegumi or Mutō, which is the local wrestling and from Toudi, which is the Chinese “Tang-Hand”. These motifs are dominant in the old Kata(s). There are elements of combat as well as physical or health elements. The purpose of the latter was to prepare and maintain the warrior’s physical and mental strength for combat. At this time Chinese Bare-Hand also developed in parallel as sport-based and folkloristic wrestling, but nevertheless from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Combative Bare-Hand Martial Art reappeared, gained momentum and spread over the following centuries. Physical and health elements were mainly derived from Chinese Martial arts in general and Chinese Bare-Hand in particular and originally came from ancient Chinese Taoyin (Japanese: Daoyin). These exercises were originally meant to develop and maintain the health of body and soul (that is, physically and mentally) and included exercises in concentration and relaxation, flexibility and respiratory exercises which can be identified in some of the Karate Kata(s) in one way or another.

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## **The unique quality of Okinawan-te and basic differences from other Bare-Hand Arts**

Ryukyuan-te is different to other Bare-Hand arts in other places by the fact that in some periods and especially after the unification of the Ryukyuan Kingdom circa 1429, the local Art developed and was used as a major instrument, not only during those times when weapons were banned but also during normal times. Weapons were less available on the Islands compared to other kingdoms such as China, Japan and Korea and in fact the requirements, aims, resources and local reality did not demand that the Ryukyuan maintain a large-scale army. In other places Bare-Hand Combat was used as a complementary tool for fighting if necessary and for physical and mental strength. By contrast, in Ryukyu, the weapons were often used as complementary addition to Bare-Hand. As mentioned, the local reality on the Islands demanded the use of Bare-Hand as a major tool...

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## **The transition from Ryukyuan-te to Okinawan-te**

Bare-Hand knowledge was transmitted from teacher to practitioner on two levels, hierarchical and lateral, which included mutual exchange between the teachers. This fact was also true for the first thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the beginning of the categorization process.

The Karate of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was different from that with which we are familiar today. The tempo was faster and there was more mobility. The professional practitioners used it not only for self-defence but primarily for security assignments.

From the last thirty years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Local Hand went through a transition process. The military government environment was replaced by the civilian environment, which meant that the aims and tasks had changed...

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## **What did Ryukyuan-te look like?**

First we should differentiate between the Ryukyuan soldiers before the union of the Kingdom circa 1429 and the nature of the soldiers after the union.

There should be a distinction between the standard soldier in the military framework and that of the special security forces of the King. Ryukyuan-te later became Okinawan-te and then later, after the Meiji restoration, it spread to the civilian environment. During the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became known as Karate. Still, Okinawan Karate does, in fact, carry “the genes” of that old Art of Ryukyuan-te combat.

Additionally, the Ryukyuan Kingdom...

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## **Epilogue**

*We live in a world woven of reality and illusions.*

*It is in our power to turn an illusion to reality and vice versa!*

Itzik C.

The investigation into the past and the passion to know and comprehend what things looked like is not necessarily to cling to the art technically as it was practised in the past, but more for lifting the veil on the past and to understand the original context of the Art within a different reality from that of today. The comprehension of the process of development and the factors that impacted on it may give us a wider view and deeper understanding of the Bare-Hand Art of Ryukyu on the Islands. There are many legends that have been spread during the past that still remain today. There are many crumbs of information that may give a partial insight, but much cannot be verified or is ambiguous, and opinions have taken root and remain fixed without any deeper examination. There are erroneous axioms and mistaken assumptions that could lead to incorrect conclusions and wrong outcomes. All these abound, so due care and attention are required in the investigation of this process as well as both lateral and profound knowledge in Martial Arts in general and Karate in particular.

Having been accepted as a disciple in the Kyudokan Honbu-Dojo, one would become a member of the Kyudokan family, and a completely new world would be

revealed. This is the knowledge and experience passed from Chibana Sensei through Higa Yuchoku and Minoru Sensei. Step by step, with the passage of time, the internal fundamentals of Ryukyuan Karate will emerge.

If we do, indeed, enter the Ryukyu Kobudo Shimbukan Honbu-Dojo and engage in a deep conversation with Akamine Sensei, who is a direct ancestor of Eisuke Akamine Dai-Sensei, senior disciple of Shinken Taira, then we will become aware of the historical background and the combative link between Ryukyuan Kobudo and Karate. Furthermore, if we diligently practise Kobudo, then we find the internal principles that make this combat art so powerful. The phenomenon lies not simply in the visual experience of the instrument that you see. It lies in the combination of the instrument used with an internal mechanism of the body. This is true concerning other Okinawan Dojos as well.

**Here are some important points:**

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“Karate Uchina-Di” is an exciting new book that offers exceptional insights into the Art of Okinawan Karate, based on ground-breaking original research and analysis.

Uchina-Di 沖繩手, Okinawan-Hand, has its own authentic origin and line of development, and carries “the genes” of the ancient Art of Ryukyuan-te combat. This unique book investigates in depth the roots of Karate, revealing important cross-currents in its evolution.

Part 1 explores the background and cultural, geopolitical and historical fields in which Karate developed.

Part 2 elaborates on the issues discussed in Part 1 and investigates changes, trends and stages of progress that have been influential in bringing Karate into the 20th century.

The extensive quantity of researched material is supported by references to historical sources that have been examined carefully and in accordance with their relevance and reliability.

The book distinguishes myth from reality and significant topics are thoroughly discussed.

There are Chinese, Japanese and Western records that mention or even elaborate on Ryukyuan-te, describing techniques that left a deep impression on these foreign viewers. Significantly, we are aware of the extremely skilled use of the body as a weapon, and that it was exceptionally powerful.

Itzik Cohen has practised Karate since the mid-1970s and spent over ten years in extensive research for this book. His unique experience in the fields of combat and military intelligence assisted him in consolidating the essence of this comprehensive work.

Nuchi du Takara 命と宝  
“Nothing is more precious than life”

King Shō Tai 尚寧

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