



Karate-Do
“Empty Hand Way”

The evolution of karate began over a thousand years ago, possibly as early as the fifth century BC, when Bodhi Dama arrived in Shaoli-si (small forest temple). He travelled from China to India and introduced a systemized set of exercises designed to strengthen the mind and body. In both, the origins of karate appear to be somewhat obscure and little is known about its early development until it appeared in Okinawa, Japan.

It was on the island of Okinawa, the traditional point of contact between the Chinese and Japanese cultures, where the development of combat techniques evolved and the self-development aspect was introduced. Under Japanese occupation of Okinawa (1609-1868), the use of weapons was prohibited – a circumstance that forced the inhabitants to become particularly proficient at fighting with their bare (‘empty’) hands. In 1902, the Okinawan government introduced karate into the secondary school system. It was there that karate became a systemized methodological approach to learning the art and later became popular among the general populace.

Traditional systems of karate require that a strong emphasis be placed on the development of the human qualities of the individual student. Other blocking, kicking and punching martial arts do not have the competition rules or a training methodology that exact such requirements of their techniques. Because of this distinction, the training methods and biomechanics of traditional karate are much different from other versions of the art.



Shukokai is a traditional Okinawan style and was founded in 1949 by Chojiro Tani (1920-98) in Kobi, Japan. Tani perfected his style by studying the mechanics of the human body and developed techniques which are delivered with maximum efficiency. The theories behind Shukokai are complex and it takes a lifetime of study to truly understand the style. Photo: Master Shigeru Kimura (left) and Master Chojiro Tani (right)