

## **Karate and its history**

It can be said that karate is either Okinawan or Japanese as it originated in Okinawa before it became part of Japan. It began life as “*ti*” though there were no particular styles. Some early styles of karate were Shuri-te, Naha-te and Tomari-te, all named, apparently, after the cities they originated in. These were practised by Okinawan royalty who went to China to learn a variety of disciplines. This meant Chinese Kung-Fu began to influence “*ti*”. According to legend, Tode Sakukawa started teaching a martial art called “Karate-no-Sakukawa” (meaning China hand of Sakukawa at the time) which is the first reference to karate.

Anko Itosu (Tode Sakukawa's student's student) adapted two kata, ku shanku and chiang nan, to create pinan kata, as simplified versions for beginners. He also broke down the kata naihanchi into naihanchi shodan, naihanchi pinan and naihanchi sandan. Itosu helped to get karate into schools in Japan where his kata were taught to pupils. One of his pupils was Gichin Funakoshi who would later come to take karate to Japan. He brought the pinan kata to Japan and began to “modernise” karate. Karate meant China hand and so Funakoshi changed the meaning to empty hand. He also added –*dō* to the end of karate to show it was also to do with mental growth rather than just the physical side (-jutsu). He changed the name of other things such as many kata so it would be accepted by the Japanese budo organization Dai Nippon Butoku Kai. He gave the kata Japanese sounding names such as the pinan kata became heian; niahanchi became tekki and so on. He created a style called Shotokan and was one of the first to incorporate white gi's and coloured belts.

Ohtsuka Hironori saw the style of karate that Funakoshi created and thought that it did not work in realistic fighting situations so he incorporated the useful bits of Okinawan karate with traditional Japanese martial arts and began using kumite (sparring) in karate. Ohtsuka thought a more fluid style of karate needed to be taught and so he decided to begin the style of Wado. Later in 1964 another style of karate was created by a man called Masutatsu Oyama called Kyokushin. This was called “full contact karate” as it emphasized on physical toughness, practical application of techniques in self-defence situations and full contact sparring.

Since 1964 karate has become an international martial art with at least one of its many styles being taught in nearly every country in the world. Despite this popularity it hasn't reached Olympic status as although it received more than 50% of the votes for it to become an official Olympic category it needed over 75% of the votes to reach Olympic status. There are many different karate organizations all over the world although only the World Karate Federation is recognised by the National Olympic Committee. Each country has a few official karate committees but only one of these is linked to WKF. Each country organizes its own championships but these must follow the WKF rules.

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