

A Brief History of Karate

It is a common tradition in the Far East that Karate's roots began with a Royal Prince of India named Bodhidharma. This story is probably refuted by modern historical record, but we make it required education due to its almost universal retelling.

As the story goes, Bodhidharma studied military arts as a young man. In later life, his thinking and study in his Buddhist religion produced Zen Buddhism. He became a monk and traveled the perilous routes through the Himalyan Mountain passes into the country of China.

Bodhidharma went to what is today modern Canton where he was granted an audience by WuTi, the emperor of the Liang Dynasty. He was invited to remain in China, where he stayed for the rest of his life. He lived at the Shaolin Temple located in the Hunan province between four mountain ranges. The temple was built in about 495 A.D.

The Shorei (or Shuri) style of Karate was developed in the city of Shuri. It emphasizes a hard fist, low stances and relies principally on the upper body. The Goju system of Karate was developed in the city of Naha. It emphasizes kicking, and uses open hand blocks and strikes, which are good for grabbing opponents.

Two Okinawan Masters are credited with the spread of Karate to the rest of the world. The first is Anko Itosu. In 1901, he taught Karate in the Okinawan school system. This was the first time that a Martial Art was taught openly to the masses. The second is Gichen Funakoshi. He brought Karate to Japan in 1922, and founded the Japanese Karate Association. His Okinawan Karate became known in Japan as Shotokan, and he is widely considered to be the father of modern Karate.

After World War II, Karate came to America through our soldiers who studied the art while stationed in Okinawa and other islands in the Pacific. The first American school opened in Phoenix, AZ, in 1946. The instructor was Robert Trias. Master Trias studied for two years in the Solomen Islands with a close friend of one of the original masters. This man's name was Hsing. He was Chinese and had settled on the islands as a missionary. After some further study on mainland China, Master Trias returned to the U.S. but never quit learning and studying.

Through our school you can learn a martial art that traces back to that first school and to the system that Master Trias first taught, Shorei Goju Ryu.