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Analysis of  
**GENUINE  
KARATE 2**

*Sociocultural Development,  
Commercialization, and  
Loss of Essential Knowledge*

**Hermann Bayer, Ph.D.**

Foreword by Noel Smith, Hanshi, 9th Dan



## Advance Praise for *Analysis of Genuine Karate 2*

Hermann Bayer once again provides fresh perspectives and prudent explanations of the complex developments of karate-jutsu into karatedo and into sports-karate. He not only dares, in his seventies, to successfully add a combat karate system from scratch up to black belt to his thirty years of karatedo training, but he assesses his training observations and experiences with analytic acumen and astute research.

—Noel Smith, Hanshi 9<sup>th</sup> Dan Yamashita International Budo Association, Kyoshi, 8<sup>th</sup> Dan Shorin Ryu, Shorinkan, head coach for the US karate team (1973 to 1978), USA Karate Hall of Fame Inductee (1976)

All who are serious about knowing more concerning the early life protection methods developed on Okinawa, and how they've "morphed" since then to become the karate-do many know today, will applaud this latest work by Dr. Bayer. I found it to be just as important to the future of genuine Okinawan karate as his first book, if not more so. This well-researched, comprehensive blend of history, philosophy, martial culture, and informed opinion educates our judgment when it comes to the reasons practitioners are rarely exposed to more than a glimpse of "genuine karate" these days, on Okinawa or elsewhere. This book fills numerous gaps in our understanding of that which we seek to learn and share. It provides thoughtful perspectives and honest appraisals—all with the intention of helping us steer a "true course."

—William "Bill" Hayes, Hanshi, 9<sup>th</sup> Dan Shorin Ryu, Shobayashi-Kan, Major United States Marine Corps (retired), Karate Masters' Hall of Fame and American-Okinawan Karate Association Hall of Fame Inductee, award-winning author of *My Journey with the Grandmaster: Reflections of an American Martial Artist on Okinawa*

Supported by historical and socio-cultural facts, scientific analysis, and public records, Bayer examines how Japan reinterpreted Okinawan karate to best serve its own nationalistic agenda. Through his collective analyses he quantifies karate as an industry and reveals a complex and convoluted evolution, aptly illuminating the motivations behind various stakeholders.

—Patrick McCarthy, Hanshi 9<sup>th</sup> Dan, ranks in jujutsu, judo, Yamaneryu kobudo, and Japanese swordsmanship; martial arts researcher, historian, and best-selling author. Director of the International Ryukyu Karate Research Society, Canadian Black Belt Hall of Fame Inductee (2012)

Once again, the author, Dr Hermann Bayer, invites karateka around the world to look at their art through the lens of reality rather than myth. His dedication to budo karate is clear, but that enthusiasm is put to one side as he burrows further into the legends, propaganda, and misinformation entrenched in modern-day karate, a field of study and practice where many students and teachers regularly mistake fiction for fact and place imagery over substance. As with his first volume, a level of discomfort while reading this book should not be unexpected. The book challenges the reader to examine their beliefs, and that alone makes the work a valuable tool in the learning of karate. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone making a serious study of karate.

—Michael Clarke, Kyoshi, 8<sup>th</sup> Dan Okinawan Goju-Ryu, award-winning author of *The Art of Hojo Undo*, *Shin Gi Tai*, and others

The first source for you to learn more about your karate. *Analysis of Genuine Karate 2* is second to none!

—Kris Wilder, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan Goju-Ryu, black belt taekwondo and judo, USA Karate Hall of Fame Inductee (2018), award-winning author of more than twenty martial arts books, including *The Way of Kata*, *The Way of Sanchin Kata*, and others

*Analysis of Genuine Karate 2* follows the first volume nicely. This is an insightful look at the multiple directions modern karate is taking based on the historic roots discussed in the first volume. An excellent reference for anyone interested in the history of karate and the directions it is currently moving toward.

—Raymond “Gene” Adkins, Renshi 6<sup>th</sup> Dan  
Shorin Ryu, Shorinkan

Dr. Bayer’s *Analysis of Genuine Karate 2* expands on and develops a further analysis of the concepts and relationships of karate-jutsu, karatedo, and sports-karate. Drawing on an anthology of publications, educational materials, people, places, and concepts, Dr. Bayer furthers his analysis of what he has termed “Genuine Karate,” discussing how it evolved, retreated, and is reinventing itself. Volume 2 is a wonderful exploration of his research and findings and his relevant exploration of Okinawa’s “Gift to the World”—Okinawan karate.

—Ted Jacobson, Renshi, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan Shorin  
Ryu, Shorinkan

*Analysis of Genuine Karate 2* is a book that reflects a love, devotion, dedication, and level of knowledge that in my opinion is comparable to, if not exceeds, anything that has been published on the topic.

—Bernard N. Curry, PhD, LCSW, CSOTP,  
CCTP, university professor



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## FOREWORD BY NOEL SMITH, HANSHI 9<sup>TH</sup> DAN

For some years now, we have been seeing new and growing interest in understanding karate as it was intended to be, beginning at its birthplace, Okinawa. Karate originally arose as a martial art that aimed at protecting oneself and others. Yet senior practitioners who studied the art on Okinawa some sixty or seventy years ago point out that much of today's karate may have lost its suitability for self-protection as it no longer contains the essential classic ways.

Okinawan *ti*, as the art was called in the local language (i.e., *te* in Japanese; both terms meaning “hand”) before its name change into Japanese *kara-te* (empty hand), is a complex art. It is composed of several martial methods that go beyond simple punching—grappling, limb and head manipulation, throwing, joint locking and joint straining, nerve striking, and more—in addition to the unity of its martial, mental, and spiritual components. It takes a long time and much persistence to learn and to understand, which makes this art less attractive for those looking for easy achievements recreationally or athletically. Moreover, karate, as it was intended to be on Okinawa, neither was, nor is, freely and completely shared with all non-Okinawans. Specifically, those outwardly “small” nuances in moves, which make all the difference to success in a fight, were not taught to all, not in the past and not today. Hence, karate did not become mass market in its classic Okinawan form. Karate became mass market through modified Japanese karatedo styles, and when I compare what we learned sixty years ago to today's mainstream karate, I see significant contrasts to how it was taught to me and others back in the day.

I learned *Shorin Ryu* karate on Okinawa as a self-defense art from Hanshi Judan Shugoro Nakazato in the 1960s, first while stationed on the island and then while living there with my Okinawan wife. Thereafter, I continued to train with O'Sensei Nakazato every year until his passing in 2016, and after that with his son, Hanshi Judan Minoru Nakazato. Training was always based on the mindset of fighting an

actual fight, and it produced a deep understanding of body-weight-power transfer into direct, short, hard, effective moves. The reality of combat and its logic were the leading ideas for every training session in O'Sensei Shugoro Nakazato's dojo and in other Okinawan dojo at that time. When we actually fought, which we did with full force in the evenings, we used the most direct, fight-ending kata techniques, instead of trying to re-engineer new complicated kata applications.

A group of Okinawan and Western students like myself, for decades close to their Okinawan sensei and now in their upper seventies and their eighties, preserved and taught this mental and spiritual combat mentality as their leading idea of what karate was intended to be at its birthplace of Okinawa: the self-defense art of karate-jutsu. However, it is obvious that newer concepts beyond classic self-protection better match the demand of what younger generations are looking for today. Though classic Okinawan karate always contained the unity of physical, mental, and spiritual development, newer Japanese karatedo versions, favoring meditative, self-development, health, and athletic aspects over combat skills, seem to better fit that bill. Consequently, today many karateka of all ranks have no realistic fighting experience anymore and use a different logic to learn and to teach the art.

So, where does this leave us? Should we better understand the old or invent something new? Or both? Well, it depends. On the one hand, there is "right" and "wrong" karate in terms of the logic of combat and moves for the purposes of self-*protection*, which would favor better understanding the old. But, on the other hand, this perspective involving "right" and "wrong" dissipates when health, spirituality, and character development are pursued for the purposes of self-*perfection*; then individual effort becomes the purpose of training, and a karateka's personal path to improved health and character replaces the initial self-defense logic. That way, by inventing something new, karate-jutsu evolved into its modern karatedo- and sports-forms as it did, based on the new leading ideas and noble intentions of the art's reformers.

Those modern recreational karate philosophies, with their interpretations of the art based on self-development, meditation, and athleticism, need to be understood and respected in their uniqueness instead of melting it all together with the classic ways. We are fortunate that Hermann Bayer does just that in his book *Analysis of Genuine Karate 2: Socio-Cultural Development, Commercialization, and Loss of Essential Knowledge*. Following *Analysis of Genuine Karate: Misconceptions*,

*Origins, Development, and True Purpose*, this analysis clarifies the background and intentions behind today's classic and modern karate versions, without putting one form above another. It reveals their differing purposes and identifying characteristics, and it leaves the choice of the karate type one wants to pursue to the reader. In the end, all of us karate enthusiasts are united in our dedication to upholding and disseminating the art.

Presenting substantially more than just an overview, the text further explains *why* karate developed as it did. It sheds light on the art's Okinawan origin and on the cultural settings, the political intentions, and the social mindsets during the decades in which it moved from secrecy into public practice and competition sports. It shows how socio-cultural conditions formed today's karate styles and prevents these key influences from falling into oblivion. We read about Japan's prewar reinterpretation of karate as part of the country's nationalistic agenda, and we find keen thoughts about the art's postwar industrialization and the loss of essential classic knowledge prompted by both developments. On top of that, the analysis discloses vital yet underrated truths about mastery, about karate's initial moral code, and about the current rollback to the art's Okinawan roots.

I highly recommend this comprehensive and captivating exploration of karate's past and probable future not only to all of us martial artists, but to everyone who is interested in Southeast Asia's history and socio-cultural evolution.

Noel Smith, Hanshi, 9th Dan *Kobayashi Ryu*

USA Karate Hall of Fame 1976

Head Coach of the USA's national karate team 1973–78



# INTRODUCTION: STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT, RESEARCH, AND ANALYSIS

Deeply humbled by the positive reactions and the appreciative reviews of *Analysis of Genuine Karate—Misconceptions, Origins, Developments and True Purpose* (in this text referred to as “Volume 1”), and supported by my *Kobayashi Ryu* sensei’s enduring encouragement to dive deeper into specific aspects of modern karate’s misconceptions and developments, I brought my research and the additional thoughts I developed over the last years into the text before you.

You being familiar with the thoughts presented in Volume 1 would be of advantage, but that is not a specific “prerequisite.” Though this new text refers to some of that content, I now look into further aspects of karate’s socio-cultural development, its commercialization and related loss of knowledge, and my following conclusions stand alone.

To continue the approach appreciated by many readers in Volume 1 of illustrating karate’s socio-cultural developments and possible misconceptions with practical examples and documenting photographs, hands-on practical examples and photographic illustrations are included here in Volume 2 as well.

Volume 1 of *Analysis of Genuine Karate* ended with the request to use different terms for today’s three completely different karate versions to help characterize them and clearly distinguish them from each other—and this is exactly where Volume 2 starts.

## Content and Structure of This Text

Chapter 1 introduces the three different terms of karate-jutsu, karatedo, and sports-karate, which represent today’s three karate versions; it gives the reason why these terms should be used, and it points out the fundamental differences among the three variations. Using different terms is the first step to avoid one of the most fundamental misunderstandings today: the assumption that “karate is just karate.” The terms

presented here are combined with the hope that the entire karate world finally decides to stringently use these different terms for the different versions of the art we all love.

In Chapter 2 the analysis moves on to endorse karate-jutsu as a genuine Okinawan martial art and not as a Chinese one—though foreign knowledge and skills from China were integrated—thus trying to shed some additional light on its nebulous historic roots. The current status of research is best described by nineteenth-century mathematician Henri Poincaré, quoted by Sensei Patrick McCarthy in his Facebook group: “Science is built upon facts as a house is with stones; however, the mere collection of facts is no more a science than a heap of stones is a house.” Using the well-established hermeneutic-heuristic way of historic reasoning, Okinawan karate’s “heap of stones history” is in this chapter transformed into meaningful understanding; the method for accomplishing that is explained further below and later in the text. The basic line of argumentation in Chapter 2 was considered worthy enough to be prepublished in Okinawa by Miguel Da Luz in his bilingual Japanese/English karate newsletter.

Chapter 3 retraces the strategic and political intentions behind Japan’s assertion of Okinawan karate by neglecting its subcultural roots and claiming it as its own martial art, going several steps beyond our analysis as presented in Volume 1. Here, in Volume 2, we focus on Japan’s strategy of using its Japanized karatedo to encourage a nationalistic-militaristic warrior spirit as part of an all-out spiritual and physical mobilization to prepare the nation for war. I am honored that some thoughts in this Chapter 3 were considered worthy enough to be presented by me at the 2022 Martial Arts Studies Conference in Lausanne, Switzerland. In this chapter references are made to Japan’s culture of conformity, which carries the risk of misconceptions for foreigners, and I once again call for the highest sensibility when talking about Asian cultures through a Western lens. Hence my comments in Volume 1’s preface are unaltered in force: looking at Eastern cultures does require more than intellectual understanding; it calls for open-minded holistic-hermeneutic avenues of reasoning, explaining, and interpreting, with broad perception, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Therefore, despite having developed these social skills as a professional coach, and despite having gone to great lengths to be objective in my arguments and conclusions, I cannot completely exclude bias, and I do apologize in advance for any misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

Since the Japanization of Okinawan karate-jutsu that transformed it into karatedo meant changing an antique fighting art not only into a new form of meditative athletics, but also into a new recreational form as a competitive sport, Chapter 4 specifically highlights the main implication the postwar commercialization of karatedo had for the way the art is practiced today. We look at sports-karate's separation of the initial unity of *kata* (sequences of fighting moves against imagined opponents) and *kumite* (fighting actual opponents), as well as at the newly invented interpretations of these two components. *Kata* and *bunkai/kumite* used to be the two essential pillars of karate in traditional training. This unity was completely torn apart and morphed into two separated sports-karate disciplines, which are substantially different from the genuine forms and which are separately performed and independently judged at tournaments.

This chapter also includes considerations about Itosu Anko Sensei's psychological motivation for teaching karatedo to young children and thereby adds an additional explanation to the commonly accepted one that Itosu Sensei wished to support Japan's militarization at that time. This psychological consideration points out his underlying, nobler intention beyond militarism in a way that has never been done before in any martial arts literature.

The chapter furthermore contains reflections on the moral code of the martial arts. A look back at Matsumuro Sensei's writings of more than two hundred years ago—or more than two thousand years ago with respect to their Chinese source—reveals that martial arts were initially understood as a value-neutral tool and weapon to maintain and restore peace, and that the specific code or moral guidelines for how to use this tool, how to handle this weapon, was developed separately, outside of the art, not within the art. Hence, the principle of not to move or attack first, for instance, was not a moral code within the art; it is a modern invention, and I explain why and how its interpretation today bears significant risk for misconceptions and for improper applications.

Practicing *kata* and *kumite* in unison in its traditional way once generated those legendary karate authorities, by Westerners sometimes called “masters” or “grandmasters,” even “great-grandmasters”, who we all admire and learn from. Consequently, in Chapter 5, we deal with the question that fascinates not only me but anyone who takes up this difficult art in a serious way, the question of what characterizes and

establishes “mastery”—and this not only in the field of the fighting arts. What are the core components of mastery, in whatever area of expertise—in an occupation, in the arts, in crafts, in sports, or in any other field? We all are baffled by the seemingly effortless and spontaneous actions and reactions of a master, which are always spot on and are often called “intuitive.” So, one question to be answered is whether masterly capability epitomizes an inherited ability, a God-given competence, a talent that someone has and another one does not have. And if not, if one can actually learn it, what path leads to it? By combining the relevant findings and explanations generated in sociology, social psychology, holistic developmental psychology, systems science, and cybernetics, we find the germane answers, and we are able to characterize the path to mastery adequately—which at the same time allows us to identify and clarify some common misunderstandings about “talent versus persistent practice.”

Finally, in Chapter 6 a prognosis of karate’s development in the twenty-first century is presented. Looking at the example and blueprint of the evolution of other traditional arts and crafts, their industrialization with a following counterculture, i.e., the example of the so-called “Arts and Crafts Movement,” allows us to identify the most probable path toward the ultimate market structure of the art and craft of karate. A parallel existence of three different karate variations today is obvious, and the size of these variations will be defined by the demand for them in modern societies. Sports-karate will without a doubt remain the largest category. It is well on its way to establishing a new karate category of its own, as far away and as separated from its origin as the sports of javelin-throwing or fencing are away from their martial origins some centuries ago. The second large group will be karatedo, but I want to take the opportunity to suggest that some rediscovered karate-jutsu elements, which—as pointed out by the countercultural movement against karatedo’s industrialization—were neglected after the time these Japanized styles were created, will eventually be integrated into old-style karatedo. This prognosis is supported by obvious jutsu incorporations in this sense within the Japanese karatedo style I train in, as well as by discussions with style headmasters and sensei, and by internet and print publications over the past years. Such a development brings the Japanized old-style karatedo versions closer back to their martial origin, whereas pure karate-jutsu will be

preserved as an ancient relict and point of reference by a group of dedicated curators.

The question remains whether these three karate categories are seen differently by the public, as it is the case with common handcrafted versus mass produced physical goods which are closer to everyone's daily experience, or whether they are only seen differently by insiders. I do hope that the text before you, in combination with Volume 1, allows a comprehensive general clarification in this sense for everyone and helps to establish the use of three separate terms for the art's three unlike versions.

The chapters in this Volume 2 are written to be read independently of each other in the order of your preference, which of course means that one or the other brief explanation or background information has to be given more than once. This kind of overlap, however, is kept to its barest minimum.

## Methods and Analysis Used

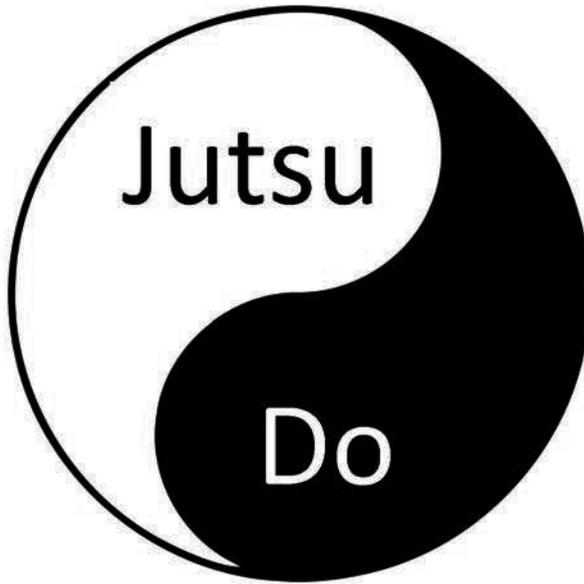
The benefit of using examples, photographs, and illustrations that enhance the message was pointed out in feedbacks to Volume 1; this approved approach is used here too in Volume 2 to illustrate my reasoning. When using practical examples from my training experience I refer to *Shorin Ryu*, the supposedly oldest Okinawan (and thus worldwide) karate system, in Chibana Choshin Sensei's *Kobayashi* version as prototype for karate-jutsu as I did in Volume 1. And I refer correspondingly to *Doshinkan* karatedo, the supposedly purest successor of Toyama Kanken Sensei's *Shudokan* (not to be confused with Funakoshi Sensei's *Shotokan*), as prototype for old-style Japanese karatedo.

Both approaches, *Doshinkan* karatedo and *Kobayashi Ryu* karate-jutsu, touched me deeply, helped me to understand better, and have their specific role in my personal development. I am grateful to have had and to still have the honor and privilege to study the most genuine versions of these Okinawan and Japanese karate systems, as I had and still have the rare opportunity to train with Hanshi and Kyoshi who were directly taught by the most senior authorities and creators of both systems. This has allowed me the chance to identify authentic forms and practices in both karate paths as valid representations of genuine Okinawan karate-jutsu and of old-style Japanese karatedo. However, I

am neither authorized to speak for either of the two organizations in any official or unofficial capacity, nor do I intend to. *My position is the neutral-analytic one of independent research.*

I am still strongly convinced that Okinawan karate-jutsu approaches,

Image 1: Jutsu and Do Are Both Inseparable  
Components of the Whole of Karate



Graphic by Wikimedia Commons; text is the author's.

like classic *Shorin Ryu*, and Japanese old-style karatedo approaches like *Doshinkan*, i.e., those without competitive sports application, may merge into an overarching martial, spiritual, and mental unity (see Image 1)—as long as Japanese karatedo does not lose its combat orientation and application, which implicitly existed in *Doshinkan* karatedo in the 1980s. It was clearly embodied in Ichikawa Isao Sensei's powerful *kata* execution I had the honor to witness and to learn from. It is my opinion that this combat basis, though it always remained a part of the style, became less significant when some of Hanshi Ichikawa's

influential followers prioritized holistic meditative and health-related aspects, and started to prefer the art's Zen-based meditative character development over its martial purpose. Since 2019, however, under Hanshi Fujimoto-Stock Masako's new leadership, in every training session I had the privilege to attend, there were strong indicators of her intention to point out the martial aspect and to rebalance *Doshinkan's* karatedo's path of character development with karate-jutsu's fighting applications.

Two years have passed since Volume 1 was launched, years during which I, now in my mid-seventies, thoroughly kept up (and still maintain) my strict training regimen of practicing karate daily and of attending at least three 90-minute empty-hand and *kobudo* training-sessions every week. My insight, however, remains limited, as it always will be. My thoughts and conclusions are based on my personal level of understanding and I am in no position to claim that my opinions are as relevant as the ones contributed by anyone else who studied martial arts for several decades. Having said that, I trust that my academic socio-cultural research background and my analytic skills as a scientist—in combination with my current level of understanding—allow some fruitful perspectives.

In terms of the specific approach I use to find explanations, the method scientists call “qualitative research” (explanation below) comes in handy, since there are basically no written records about karate's early history, before Matsumura Sokon Sensei, available. I use exploratory techniques that are able to describe and to interpret socio-cultural and historic phenomena which cannot be exactly measured. Such techniques are “holistic” in nature, which means in English, that they are based on the idea that “the whole is more than the sum of its parts.” In this sense, we find plausible answers to historic questions when discovering a pattern by combining a socio-cultural analysis with references to analogous occurrences either in history or in other socio-cultural fields which show a comparable configuration (Gill 2020; Gilje 2020).

The comments in this last paragraph bring us to research methods. If you, Dear Reader, are a *karate practitioner*, you may be mainly interested in the core messages of the text and you perhaps care less about the scientific background to get to those. If so, feel free to skip the following Excurse. Colleagues and readers primarily interested in history, or those in the academic field, however, definitely want to know more

about the scientific basis of this study; and, since we are addressing these groups as well, it may be wise to comment on our approach in order to allow transparency and to position our qualitative research within the range of scientific methods.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Excuse: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Characteristics**

The scientific field is not as homogenous as one may assume. In fact, there is a conflict to be found which sometimes elevates into a clash of beliefs and even antagonism. I am talking about the (supposed) contradiction of “quantitative” versus “qualitative” research and its related “intersubjective verifiability,” which is, in English, the impact of the methods used on the scientific research’s requirement that other researchers can confirm the findings of their colleagues, that they get the same results when they use the same methods. Fulfilling this requirement is quite different between qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell 1994) and can be seen as a huge advantage of the latter, because quantitative research is based on the statistical analysis of more or less precisely measured numerical data which are accessible or replicable.

Qualitative research on the other hand is dealing with topics that cannot be measured as easily. This kind of research is mostly used in the social sciences and humanities disciplines to gain an understanding through observation and interpretation. It is an exploratory technique that deals with complex social, socio-cultural, and historic phenomena where data are missing or which are impossible to be measured exactly. Thus, the results presented by this kind of research depend on the analytic capabilities, skills, and thought processes of the researchers involved. Fellow researchers can confirm the findings of their colleagues, or get the same results, if they share the same lens, if they use comparable analytic approaches, if they share comparable analytic skills and thought processes.

And there the conflict is rooted . . . when results of qualitative research are presented, they may trigger a quasi-automated response from the quantitative researcher group of being “speculation” because of its probable lack of hard facts and data. The other way round, quantitative research may face the critique of “reductionism” or

oversimplification from their qualitative researcher colleagues, because it does not include any un-scalable phenomenon. Jokingly speaking, in qualitative research a human being would be characterized as a combination or synthesis of body, soul, intellect, and emotions—the last three difficult to measure—whereas in quantitative research a human being would be seen as a combination or synthesis of easily measurable amounts of water, chemicals, minerals, fat, electric currency, and protein.

Obviously I cannot resolve these kinds of basic philosophical questions which deal with the challenge of how to correctly acquire knowledge and how to differentiate between true and false. These so-called “epistemological” questions and their possible answers are heatedly discussed in philosophical departments for decades (Seiffert 1971a, pp. 1-11). However, I dare to suggest that a possible solution is rooted in the fact that both research methods complement each other; that they are not mutually exclusive but mutually interdependent. In scientific terms, using dialectical thinking<sup>1</sup> (Seiffert 1971b, pp. 199-217), both approaches define each other in contrast, and form a new overarching unity, like night and day form a unity of time, yin and yang form the well-known holistic circle.

Hence, dialectically speaking, qualitative and quantitative research are the thesis and its antithesis which, when combined, form a new synthesis at an elevated level of insight and understanding. In this view, hermeneutic-heuristic case studies, which is qualitative research, may over time even provide the empirical raw material which then amounts to statistically relevant empirical support as quantitative research.

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1. Dialectic thinking, formulated by the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, allows some parallels to some East Asian way of reasoning, where contradicting issues define each other by contrast, cannot exist without each other, and form an overarching entity together. Accordingly, in dialectic thinking a contradicting thesis and antithesis may lead to a new synthesis of higher quality.



## Chapter 1

# Why Different Terms Are Needed for Today's Versions of Okinawan Karate-jutsu, Japanese Karatedo, and Sports-Karate

Many may think that “karate is just karate”—but nothing can be farther from the truth. As Sensei Walter Dailey, 10<sup>th</sup> Dan *Shorinji-Ryu*, already stated 1996 in *Bugeisha* magazine’s premiere issue, karate in its various forms resembles a “fruit salad,” where it, as “one says is an Art or way of life (*budo*), another says it’s a Self-Defense (*bu-jutsu*), another says it’s a Sport, and another Business” (Dailey, *Bugeisha* 1996, Issue#1, p. 3). But, guess what; all these views are correct in their specific sense, all these variations are indeed mixed into today’s “karate fruit salad”—they simply address different versions of the art. This creates an unfortunate misconception, because the same term “karate” is confusingly used for all these completely different karate-types and thereby suggests that unlike kinds would be alike.

In all other Japanese martial arts we see different terms in use for their different types; especially for their initial *koryu* [traditional] martial use and for their modern sports derivatives.<sup>1</sup> For karate, however,

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1. See Volume 1, pp. 84ff. For instance, there is the term *ju-jutsu*, for the original combat martial arts version used by samurai in ancient Japan, and there is the different term *judo* for *ju-jutsu*’s modern sports variation.

this is not the case; we do not see comparable different terms, but *the same term “karate” is used for all of the art’s currently practiced three dissimilar varieties*; which are:

1. Classic *Okinawan [combat] karate-jutsu*, the genuine and lethal version which was created to protect oneself and others in violent situations.<sup>2</sup> This martial art was developed at least 500 years ago, some say more than 1,000 years ago (e.g., Funakoshi 1973, p. 3), and was called *Te* [hand] at that time at its birthplace on the Ryukyu Islands, and later karate-jutsu.<sup>3</sup> The genuine Okinawan combat art “is not a kind of striking to be incorporated into another fighting system . . . This is an independent style of martial arts, called karate-jutsu and is particular to Okinawa” (Motobu 2018, p. 19).
2. “Old-Style”<sup>4</sup> *Japanese karatedo*. This Japanized version transformed combat karate-jutsu into recreational athletic gymnastics with a meditative component, as a *budo* art, as a general way of life. Though karatedo still focusses on powerful execution of martial moves, yet hitting air instead of opponents, it concentrates on mental, spiritual, and health related character- and personality-development—including newly incorporated philosophical, Zen-based undergirdings which typify all mainland Japan *budo* arts. These philosophical components were not a part of Okinawan karate-jutsu and neither was Zen Buddhism the island’s traditional belief system; that was ancestor worship (more details on this later). Japanized karatedo was created on mainland Japan in the 1920s, kicked off by Funakoshi Gichin Sensei’s teachings—in other words 500 to 1,000 years after the creation of *Te* on Okinawa (Volume 1, pp. 21ff). “Before that time I think it was safe to say that almost no one had any knowledge

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2. Funakoshi Gichin Sensei speaks of *Goshin-Karate* [karate for self-protection] in this sense (in Wittwer 2014, p. 193; Footnote 377).

3. For additional reasoning about Okinawa being the birthplace of karate see Chapter 2 “Did Genuine Kara-Te Originate in Okinawa or in China? A Contribution to Historical Reasoning in Martial Arts History.”

4. Strictly speaking, there is no “traditional” Japanese karate, only a traditional Okinawan one, because the Japanized karatedo versions on the mainland were developed less than 100 years ago—which is a rather short period of time in the millennia-old history of martial arts. We use the term “old style” here to further distinguish earlier, pure Japanese non-competition karatedo versions from later, newer, Japanese competitive sports-karate derivatives developed after WWII. Old-style karatedo is called “*Budo-Karate*” too by some researchers (Wittwer, 2014, p. 193).

of karate-jutsu” (Motobu 2018, p. 19). In other words, during all the centuries before the 1920s, *Te* was unknown on the mainland. Strangely enough, however, today “the world knows karate as a Japanese sport, but it is far more likely that it is a ‘Japanified’ [*sic*] foreign sport created during a time of strong militaristic nationalism” (Swennen 2006, p. 2).

3. Modern *sports-karate* was created after WWII in the 1950s (Corcoran 2012),<sup>5</sup> in other words even some decades after mainland Japan’s creation of non-competitive—here called “old-style”—karatedo. Some authors split this sports-karate version further into the two sub-categories of “competition karate” and “fitness karate” (Wittwer 2014, p. 193).

Hence, in order to clearly distinguish today’s three different karate types, we use these above three different terms, which are further explained below, and we will empirically illustrate some of the essential differences between these three karate types by using the practical example of looking at a karateka’s body positions when performing *kata*.

## Classic Okinawan Karate-jutsu

The term *classic karate-jutsu* refers to the genuine, 1,000 year old, *Okinawan self-protection* version of karate, a lethal local fighting art for self-defense.

Sensei Bruno Ballardini, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan *Shorinji Ryu Zentokukai*, an author, university professor, and president of the Italian Association for the Research on Ancient Karate, justified the choice of this term in his feedback to an earlier draft of this text, explaining that “before the famous 1936 meeting between the masters of Okinawa, in which it was decided to adopt the writing 空手 (it is read ‘karate’) to replace the writing 唐手 (it is read “tode,” but it can be pronounced ‘karate’ as well), the discipline was called tode-jutsu and later it was called karate-jutsu. Thus the genuine Okinawan self-protection version should be

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5. Sensei Roy Roitman, 5<sup>th</sup> Dan *Shotokan* and President of the Israel Shotokan Association, shares in his feedback to a draft of this text that “competition sport actually started at Waseda 1952, as they wanted to bring more students to practice karate. This was told to me personally by Sensei Tetsumo Ohshima . . . Captain of Karate Club in Waseda 1952-55.” (A clarification: in this organization, *Godan* is the highest-achievable rank and hence would be comparable to the highest rank in other styles.)

called tode-jutsu or karate-jutsu to distinguish it from the Japanese karatedo.”<sup>6</sup>

To be consistent with the use of terms in this text, the initial and genuine form of the art is here exclusively named as karate-jutsu [空手術]; we do not use the other terms which were also in use before 1936, and which may be used by other authors today, like *ti'gwa* [手小], *te/ti/di* [手], *toudi/todi/tode* [唐手; sometimes, as on this book's front cover, with the addition of the “jutsu” kanji].

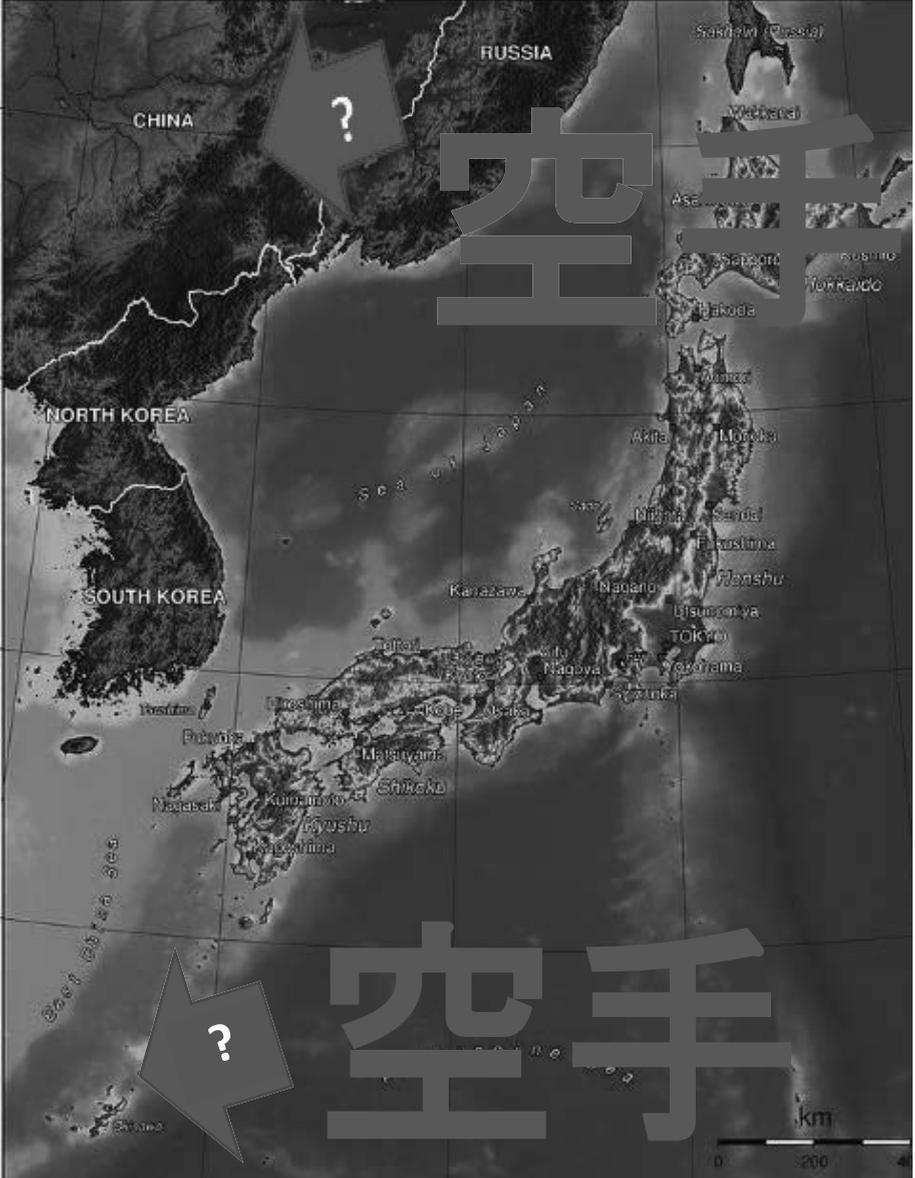
Though there are strong efforts and distinguished proponents trying to preserve karate-jutsu in its traditional version today, and though we see a remarkable movement back to the original forms over the last two decades, combat oriented karate-jutsu has slowly faded after WWII into a smaller fragment of worldwide practice. The reason for its reduced importance is karate's all-embracing and overwhelming Japanization, or, as Sensei Bruno Ballardini calls it “Shotokanization,” even on Okinawa itself (more about this in Chapter 4). At this point we want to highlight the challenge that a precious ancient heritage “is slowly being dispersed. . . classical karate is not a simple object but a complex one, extremely rich, composed of several complementary disciplines, it is not suitable for everyone, it cannot become mass market, and therefore it cannot be simplified. This is the great dilemma faced by Okinawan karate today. . . It is possible that in some schools the most ancient teachings are still handed down only to the oldest students, but from what some friends who go to Okinawa every year tell me there is no guarantee of this. I believe instead that the last school leaders who knew classical karate are dead and have left their legacy to a few senior Western students” (Ballardini on Facebook 2021, n.p.).

However, we need and want to tread very lightly here and avoid even the slightest form of unintentional Western hubris, because we actually don't know whether Sensei Ballardini's assumption is accurate. One can simply speculate here, and it is equally probable that Okinawan masters do not want to share karate-jutsu's hidden concepts and true combat abilities with Westerners anymore. As mentioned in Volume 1 (pp. 71f), asking an Okinawan master to share secret lethal techniques may be an ineffective, perhaps even an inappropriate

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6. Sensei Ballardini's statement refers to the transcript of the 1936 meeting, which was published by several translators; in this text the one by McCarthy (2018, pp. 185-200) is used.





Map Wikimedia Commons, graph author

## Chapter 2

# **Did Karate-jutsu Originate in Okinawa or in China? A Contribution to Historic Reasoning in Martial Arts History**

Twenty years ago, when the average Western “person in the street” was asked where karate originated, the answer was “Japan,” and karate was seen as one specific martial art among the group of (mainland) Japanese martial arts and their sports derivatives like judo, aikido, and kendo. It is only recently and in large part because of an extensive public relations effort by the Okinawan prefectural government and Okinawan karate officials over the last decade (Volume 1, pp. 50ff) that one may now hear the answer, “It comes from Okinawa.”

Okinawan efforts to have karate registered as an intangible Okinawan cultural asset with the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have been underway for several years (Fuente/Niehaus 2020). The catchphrase government and karate officials use is “Okinawa Is the Birthplace of Karate,” which targets the center of an ongoing dispute about karate’s “true” origin.

Interestingly enough, today we find a strong movement back to origins and genuine forms of karate-jutsu, not just in Okinawa but in the West as well, a movement some call “the reality drive” (Bowman 2014,

p. 1).<sup>1</sup> Groups on social media discuss authentic karate-jutsu, interpretations of moves, and historic findings; important research is conducted by specialized research societies and published on the internet as well as in print format (see “Back to the Roots’ Karate-jutsu Movement as Countercultural Response” in Chapter 4 for examples). For more than two decades the renowned *Classic Fighting Arts* magazine has covered traditional martial arts topics, technical, and historical material at a high level. In 2020, *Bugeisha* magazine, the self-acclaimed “first magazine of traditional martial arts,” which was founded 1996 and ceased to exist 1998, was reissued by one of its initial editors in the form of a collector’s edition for all its previous issues and resumed production of new issues. Even the release of my books may be listed as examples in this context, which seem to bring more jutsu training practices back into today’s training.<sup>2</sup> All these tendencies concentrate on efforts “to bring basics and foundation back into the limelight of martial arts” (*Bugeisha* Issue #1, p. 1).

Many martial arts historians agree that karate-jutsu is indeed an indigenous Okinawan martial art form, initially called *Te* (this is the term used here), *Ti* or *Di*, *Ti’gwa*, Okinawa-*Te* or *Uchinadi* (e.g., among others, Funakoshi 1973, p. 7f; Hokama 2000, p. 15; Nagamine 1976, p. 21; McCarthy 2016, p. 138; Chambers et. al. 2020, p. xiii). “It was an art that depended principally upon the use of clenched fists to strike an opponent in contrast to the open-hand method preferred by Chinese arts, according to both Kyan Chotoku and Miyagi Chojun, although the head, feet, shins, elbows, and knees were also favored” (IRKRS, n.d., n.p.). Okinawan *Te*, initially a “form of percussive impact” (ibid.) was completed by *tegumi*, an ancient system of grappling/wrestling, and by *tuite*, a system aimed at restraining opponents (see “The Loss of Essential Knowledge” in Chapter 4).

Other authors claim that karate was developed out of Chinese *ch’üan fa*; for instance, Mark Bishop (Bishop 1991), Heiko Bittmann (2005),

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1. The author, Dr. Paul Bowman, professor at Cardiff University, UK, however, sees the invention of new “realistic styles” as a drive toward reality in martial arts instead a return to the origins within existing Okinawan karate systems, which we describe here.
  2. For example, one sensei wrote in a review on Amazon.com that the first volume of *Analysis of Genuine Karate* “certainly has caused me to reflect on my teaching so I am passing down his [‘his’ refers to me] teaching to my students. It is a necessity for all sensei and karateka to understand the perspective of jutsu that makes karate more than just a sport or performance.”

Werner Lind (Lind 1991), and, more recently, Jesse Encamp, who mostly uses the World Wide Web as his publishing platform (Encamp n.d.). Beyond that, legend has it that sometime in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD the Indian monk Bodhidharma came to China (e.g., Clarke, C.M. 2012a, pp. 49f; Funakoshi 1973, p. 7; Haines 1970, pp. 23ff; Herbert 2019) to teach and establish the Zen branch of Mahayana Buddhism. Legend also credits him with having trained monks of the Shaolin monasteries in meditation and in martial arts, which were then passed on to Okinawa through the island's long-standing trade relations with China, and that this would embody the real and initial birth of karate.

Allowing all those speculations to be what they are, the issue martial arts historians are confronted with is that no written records about the origin of *Te* exist due to centuries-long secrecy, natural disasters, and war. When historic facts and documents are not available, gathering “oral history” as interpretations of witnesses’ statements results in a collection of historic possibilities, and these possibilities allow authors to put forth their personal views. As Henri Poincaré put it, “Science is built upon facts as a house is with stones; however, the mere collection of facts is no more a science than a heap of stones is a house.” But, is it actually possible to organize this heap of stones, to advance beyond mere speculation, on the basis of an eclectic approach that says that “everything may be possible and everything is equally important?” And, if yes, what yardstick could help us to understand the logic and the “why” of karate’s historical development?

As so often in historic research, plausible answers lie in a “heuristic-hermeneutic” perspective, which is the combination of a descriptive socio-cultural analysis with good old logic and with reference to comparable occurrences in history or in other socio-cultural fields to identify known developments as possible patterns (Gilje 2020). Such a heuristic-hermeneutic approach in historic research allows us to *understand* a development instead of only describing it and as such is comparable to heuristics in psychology.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Heuristics in psychology and other social sciences are strategies or systematic mental processes that individuals, organizations, and machines use to form judgments, make decisions, and find solutions to complex problems. Evaluating those processes became a valuable method in forensic psychology and criminology, usually called “profiling,” where the reconstruction of heuristic processes are used to find answers and solutions most likely to be correct when analyzing the behavior of an offender. Profiling is used internationally and was further developed as “behavioral case analysis,” for instance in Germany, where “within the German police behavioral case analysis is considered to be a further development of profiling as established in the 1980s by the American FBI” (Dern 2010, p. 1).

So, let us begin with a historic example that shows a similar development and thus may allow us to find a possible pattern. It concerns an event that took place in a completely different area: space technology.

## Throughout History Foreign Knowledge Has Been Integrated into Existing Knowledge

Do you believe that the US space program is solely an American project, created by NASA, and its predecessor NACA, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics? Yes, of course, you would agree, and you would be correct, since for more than one hundred years these US agencies developed and launched their missions. One of these missions in the 1950s was led by the engineer and rocket scientist Wernher von Braun and his team, who developed the first transportation rocket able to accommodate a satellite payload. Using that rocket, the West's first satellite was successfully launched in January 1958 and kicked off America's new space program in response to the Russian's "Sputnik" satellite launch one year earlier.

However, are you aware that Wernher von Braun as well as his team, who embodied US expertise in rocket science and space technology, were actually German rocket technology pioneers who carried out major research in their homeland before and during WWII? As Nazi-Germany's rocket scientists,<sup>4</sup> Wernher von Braun and his team developed in the 1930s and 1940s self-flying bombs and rockets.<sup>5</sup> After the war the United States and the Soviet Union captured large numbers of V-2 rockets and used them in research that led to the development of their missile and space exploration programs. Wernher von Braun himself was secretly moved to the US and naturalized, along with about 1,600 other German scientists, engineers, and technicians.

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4. Wernher von Braun even held the rank of *Hauptsturmführer* (Captain) in the "Schutzstaffel" (abbreviated "SS" and meaning "protection squadron"), the foremost agency of security, surveillance, and terror within Nazi-Germany and German-occupied Europe. This fact is conveniently not mentioned in his NASA biography.
  5. Those were the V-1, the world's first self-flying bomb and thereafter the V-2 rocket, the world's first guided, forty-five foot tall, long-range ballistic missile. More than 8,000 V-1 bombs and more than 3,000 V-2 rockets were launched at London and other European cities (<https://www.britannica.com/technology/V-1-missile>; <https://www.britannica.com/technology/V-2-rocket>).

### Chapter 3

## Japan's Assertion of Okinawan Karate—How a Subcultural Intangible Heritage Is Used as a National Cultural Symbol

Today, “karate, together with judo, is commonly regarded as a Japanese national sport symbol” (Swennen 2006, p. 1). Mainland Japan claiming karate as a Japanese martial art—though correct in terms of the governmental sphere, is incorrect in terms of subcultural heritage—denies proper credit to the region that invented and cultivated the art, to Okinawa; it challenges subcultural identity (Chen/Lin 2016) and lacks acknowledgement of cultural traditions.

It was mentioned earlier that, compared to more than a thousand years of *Te*, Okinawan “*Kara-Te*’s” predecessor, Japanese karatedo—with less than a hundred years of existence—is a relatively new development. Its incorporation into mainland Japan’s cultural and martial tradition started in 1920 after the former feudal *province* “Ryukyu” had become Japan’s *prefecture* “Okinawa.” At that time the following evolution of Japanese karatedo became a part of Japan’s general integration policies and efforts toward socio-cultural amalgamation when many of Okinawa’s non-Japanese cultural elements were eliminated in order to politically and culturally integrate the region (Kerr 2018, p. 440ff). But interestingly enough, the dominant cultural element of

karate was not eliminated. Quite the opposite: in this amalgamation process karate was required to open up its tradition as a secretly practiced combat art and became culturally integrated as a part of (mainland) Japan's martial history. In other words, though many Ryukyuan cultural artifacts were chosen to be eradicated, karate was taken over by Japan “according to the motto ‘eliminate everything Ryukyuan but assimilate *todi*’ [karate-jutsu]” (Feldmann 2021, p. 196).

Japan, the “karate-reproducing” country is—and used to be—the superior political power governing the “karate-inventing” and culturally autonomous region of Okinawa, beginning in the 1600s as the occupying force of the Ryukyu kingdoms and thereafter in the mid-1800s as the central government overseeing Okinawa prefecture. The sociological/social borders of cultures and subcultures and their unique symbols, cultural assets, and heritage do not necessarily match the political borders of governments, and even today the Okinawans have not totally assimilated into Japanese society (Hein/Selden 2003). A boundary remains, a dichotomy of culture and citizenship endures, and nothing indicates that it will disappear in the future (Meyer 2007). This means that an *Okinawan subcultural heritage and symbol does not necessarily represent the overarching culture of the nation*—or, in other words, the subcultural symbol that is karate may from the outside be incorrectly interpreted as a national Japanese cultural symbol, which it is not.

## **Okinawa's History Creates Unique Socio-Cultural Conditions**

However, the picture is multifarious, and the Okinawan socio-cultural situation is more complex as one may assume after reading the last paragraph. A large group of Okinawan people then and today want to be both Japanese and Okinawan. In many aspects of daily life this cannot be consolidated and results in an overwhelming impression of Okinawa representing a basically Japanese culture. This is expressed in symbols like the language spoken, the food eaten, the educational and governmental systems implemented, the money used, the visible

presence of Shintoism and Buddhism, the politics that determine society, and the policies to administer it.<sup>1</sup>

As such, Okinawans are subject to the same state canon and mindset that originated on the mainland. This mindset represents, beyond all dichotomy of culture and citizenship, an overlying culture of conformity. The impact of the Confucianism that ruled Okinawa for several hundred years is undeniable and created the prevalent, all-embracing culture of group conformity, including its components of not questioning authority, adhering to longstanding protocol, and using an imitative social mechanism, the *senpai/kohai* system (see Footnote 1), which will be explained in a moment.

This means that outright opposition between Okinawan subculture and mainland Japanese culture is unimaginable for all parties involved. Instead, Okinawans became used to combining different cultures during the hundreds of years when they maintained tributary relations in a dual subordination to Japan as well as to the Chinese court. Consequently, while carefully avoiding any confrontation with the mainland, Okinawans adapted and integrated relevant aspects of the Japanese culture into their own. For example, Shintoism as well as Buddhism were both installed and made mandatory belief systems in Okinawa by the Japanese government at different times in history. Shintoism and Buddhism mingled with Okinawa's traditional ancestor worship and, depending on the specific spiritual purpose and the demand for divine support, Okinawans still turn to both Shinto *kami* and shrines and to Buddhist priests and temples as well as to their home-based shrines where their ancestors symbolically rest.

The ability to integrate and synthesize such contrasting cultural demands, and to make them cooperate without giving offense, was a question of mere survival for an island people who lacked economic, political, and military power at the same time they were in close proximity to the powerful imperial neighbors of China, Korea, and Japan, any one of which could have swallowed up Okinawa had it not offered something unique, something everyone around it needed, appreciated, and therefore desired to protect.

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1. The criteria stated here were suggested to me as cultural indicators by Sensei Patrick McCarthy in an email on November 17, 2021, where he also explains that the local language Uchinaguchi, which would be another cultural symbol, is almost non-existent today and became more a question of academic interest.

To illustrate this historic condition with another socio-cultural example, let us briefly look at Switzerland, a tiny but wealthy state and thus an alluring and supposedly easy prey for its neighbors. Since its foundation in the Middle Ages (1300s), this mountainous nation has been surrounded by sable-rattling large and powerful countries. But Switzerland was never occupied by any of them (with the exception of the two-month-long French invasion of 1798), not even by neighboring Nazi Germany during the latter's aggressive expansion all across Europe. One reason for this is that Switzerland exclusively offered, and still offers, something unique that all other nations and many powerful individuals all around the world want, need, appreciate, and therefore protect: a reliable and completely secret banking system.<sup>2</sup>

For Okinawa, the Ryukyus also seemed to offer something unique that all the surrounding nations as well as many powerful individuals in Asia wanted, needed, appreciated, and therefore protected: a reliable and secure trading post and hub, comfortably located halfway on the trade routes connecting these nations and allowing the controlled and reliable flow of goods. Okinawa functioned in this way for several hundred years. This status demanded that Okinawans integrate and synthesize contrasting cultural demands and cooperate with these cultures without offending them. Then the Satsuma invasion followed in the 1600s, and for another two-hundred-plus years Okinawans had to constantly combine their subcultural identity with the Japanese culture while maintaining positive relations with the Chinese empire as

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2. Less known is the fact that Switzerland can only be occupied if invaders pay the price of the complete destruction of all important infrastructure and of a long, arduous guerilla battle: Firstly, Swiss citizens are armed to the teeth. The country has mandatory military service, and the soldiers take their weapons home after their service and store them privately. In addition, regulations surrounding the purchase of firearms in Switzerland were and are among the most liberal in the world; the law allows citizens to acquire semi-automatic and, with a permit, fully automatic weapons. Secondly, the country used the past century to carve out its mountains and to create shelters for its civilians as well as bunkers for its military. After the possibility of nuclear war arose in the 1960s, Switzerland would eventually construct bunkers to shelter the country's entire population with enough surplus space for foreign fugitives too. Thirdly, "Switzerland's military defense involves blowing up all roads into the country. . . To interrupt the utility of bridges, tunnels, highways, railroads, Switzerland has established three thousand points of demolition. That is the number officially printed" (Hickey 2012, n. p.). This strategy of self-sabotage and bringing the entire defense force underground was already developed in the 1800s, continuously perfected, and has since then threatened every potential invader with the prospect of an endless guerilla war in a completely inaccessible mountain area with all infrastructure blown to pieces.

## Chapter 4:

# The Metamorphosis of an Ancient Fighting Art into Athletic Showmanship

After WWII, things changed dramatically in Japan. A collective attitudinal shift away from hegemonic prewar militarism (Hashimoto 2015) impacted the way in which war, violence, the warrior spirit, *bushido*, and *budo* were viewed and what role they would play in the society. “Even to this day it has been reported that Japanese society has lost its interest in both modern and ancient martial ways . . . as a post-World War II Japan came to terms with its nationalistic and militaristic heritage” (Dodd/Brown 2016, p. 37). Interestingly enough, the US’s cruel act of dropping atomic bombs on Japan also allowed the birth of a postwar narrative of a victimized Japan<sup>1</sup> which overshadows, if not quasi-erases, the imperial army’s own atrocities all over Southeast Asia.<sup>2</sup> These Japanese war crimes were for a long time neglected by the

1. An illustrative example of how commonplace such victimization narratives were are the Japanese *Godzilla* motion pictures, launched in 1954 and 1955, where an unstoppable monster, coming from the general direction of the USA, is awakened by a nuclear explosion (!) and creates havoc while there is nothing the population can do.
2. The most prominent examples of this kind of mayhem are the Nanjing Massacre in China as well as other mass killings in Southeast Asia; the rape, mistreatment, and forcing of women into sexual slavery as “comfort women” for the imperial army; enslavement of men as forced labor; mistreating prisoners of war who, because they had surrendered, were viewed as having forfeited all honor and merited nothing but contempt. Estimates of the number of deaths that resulted from Japanese war crimes range from 3 to 14 million (Park 2020).

country's postwar historic research and did not appear in the history curriculum in Japanese schools for some decades.

On the other hand, karate was already included in educational programs as karatedo before WWII, which allowed a smooth official redefinition of the socio-cultural role of martial arts. Japan's attitude shift led to a redefinition of karate as a recreational, health-related, and spiritual way rather than the way of the warrior. The art's lethal combat skills had already been softened for educational purposes before WWII, and beginning in the 1950s were strongly redirected toward sport applications and consequently and systematically moved further away from their martial origin. New public attitudes and sport-political objectives accelerated not only the transformation of karate-jutsu from a combat art into karatedo but developed and altered the art even further by creating sports-karate as a new derivative of karatedo with its own *kata* and purpose.

Change is usually called progress. We no longer use manual typewriters, power brakes have replaced non-power brakes, television sets don't have tubes, and thousands of other devices in common use at the end of World War II are now forgotten. The common denominator here is that something becomes obsolete when something better comes along to serve the same purpose. Things are different, however, with respect to the development of the art and craft of karate. Here we do not find an improvement in the way we achieve a certain purpose; we see instead a *change* of purpose (from self-defense and combat to recreation and spirituality) and the creation of a new approach to achieve this new purpose.

When the art's inherent lethal combat skills were strongly redirected into athletics, health-improvement, and meditation, Zen-related superstructures became more important for karate than the art's original self-protection purpose (see above and also Volume 1, pp. 29ff). But whereas culturally integrated Japanized karatedo was still grounded in the powerful execution of martial *kata* moves, though hitting air instead of opponents in applied *bunkai* or combat training, the new version of sports-karate required an additional change of techniques from creating the most possible damage in the most effective way toward speedy fencing-type moves with tagging contact with limited target areas.

Consequently, even more Okinawan karate techniques were eliminated in sports karate after WWII, especially bone-breaking

block-strikes, throws, back-leg sweeps and groundwork; as well as grappling, nerve suppression, joint locks, limb-, head-, or neck-manipulations. Other techniques were radically altered by outlawing the traditional targets of Okinawan karate-jutsu, which were organs, eyes, throat, groin, wrists, ankles, knees, elbows and points of nerve concentration—all prone to immediately end a fight when severely hit and damaged—and the essence of the original fighting system was eventually completely lost in its transition from Okinawa into mainland Japan's karate versions.

## **Sports-Karate: The Commercialization of Karatedo and Its Consequences**

After WWII, Japan's national efforts to prove the country's significance and importance shifted from an emphasis on martial success to economic success—however, not with the Western concept of a free-market economy centered on individual self-interest, but with a Japanese version of “common interest first” (Drucker 1981) in a governmentally regulated market. Large and successful Japanese corporations optimized their strategic advantage by basing their corporate culture on traditional socio-cultural philosophical concepts, e.g., on “harmony,” thus matching the cultural norms of the Japanese society (Feldmann 2007, pp. 61ff). Thus, a dedicated workforce and strong enterprises were created in a corporate economic structure that strongly barred entry of foreign businesses. In this corporate economy the Japanese government heavily supported its own domestic companies with subsidies and created legal barriers for foreigners to enter a market. Japan became a powerful exporting country and succeeded in heavily penetrating Western markets, sometimes even taking over entire markets, e.g., cameras, consumer electronics, and, later, large sections of the automobile market. Postwar Japan changed the orientation of the country's trade relations, which for many centuries were concentrated toward Southeast Asia and on China. Now the US and European markets replaced the (still-communist) Chinese market as Japan's major international trading partner.

In this economic context, *karate developed into a government-supported sports-oriented business of considerable size.*

In economics and business terms, we may say that karate, especially in its *Shotokan* version, was turned into a commodity and followed the typical path of industrialization by successfully mimicking the manufacturing process of other goods and services (see “Postwar Industrialization and Commercialization of Japanese Karatedo” in Chapter 6). It is the path of standardization (standardizing techniques and curricula), multiplication (educating dozens of instructors to teach based on these standardized curricula), and large-scale-production (sending accredited instructors all over the world to educate local students who then in turn open accredited dojo overseas) that created nothing less than a worldwide karate inflation after 1950<sup>3</sup> (Volume 1, p. 28ff). The resulting sports-karate represents one more example of how “traditional martial arts have been uprooted from their historical locations, new hybrid forms have emerged, and in the process, the places, roles, and functions of martial arts have changed considerably” (Bowman 2010, p. 2).

Sport-business opportunities reached a crescendo in the Olympic Games, the self-acclaimed “greatest show on earth” where its economic aspect became at least as important as the initial Olympic idea.<sup>4</sup> Recognition of a sport in the Olympic program creates a booming business opportunity by stimulating and increasing worldwide participation in this sport; it leads to television exposure, to more sponsors, and to amplified income for the parties involved. In addition, “Victory at the Olympics very much symbolizes the strength of a nation. Thus, because of its political importance, governments want to do whatever it takes to win. Sports used effectively to strengthen the unity of a nation is the wish of any government” (Swennen 2006, p. 4).

So, understandably, after WWII Japanese governmental officials and mainland karate associations worked hand in hand to initiate and aggressively pursue the installation of a new Olympic karate

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3. In this Volume, we do not look at the modifications karate underwent in the course of its “Americanization” in the Western world, which created another branch of commercialized sports by selecting specific approaches from Asian martial arts and combining those for competition purposes, e.g., as mixed martial arts, or as kickboxing (Volume 1, pp. 33ff). These new hybrid forms in the West are usually not called “karate” like the Japanese sports-karate version are.

4. The initial Olympic idea was to build a peaceful and better world based on mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity, and fair play (<https://olympics.com/ioc/beyond-the-games>; retrieved 09/30/2021). The phrase “greatest show on earth” is quoted from <https://olympics.com/en/news/the-greatest-show-on-earth> ; retrieved 09/30/2021.

## Chapter 5:

# The Path to Mastery in Karate: Growing into Higher Levels of Understanding of Karate-jutsu

Okinawan karate-jutsu may be called a multilevel system in terms of *kata* and *bunkai*. In its classic way, “Karate practice was based exclusively on *kata*, but this . . . consisted of the study with a partner of the applications contained in each movement. This could take several years considering the fact that *kata* included several layers appropriate to different levels of practice” (Ballardini, *Bugeisha* 2021 Issue #10, p. 8). In terms of these layers, there are obvious, *omote* (surface) applications for combat included in *kata*; these are offensive or defensive moves that can be recognized as such even with the untrained eye. Then there are *ura* (hidden) applications behind or underneath the obvious ones, which are only recognizable with deeper knowledge and understanding (some examples are given earlier in this text, as well as in Bayer 2020; and especially in Kane/Wilder 2005).

The more *bunkai* is advanced and hidden, the fewer students these concepts and their applications are shared with; because karate-jutsu’s true application was a system of lethal techniques, it was “the art of killing” (Shimabukuro/Pellman 2022), which simply could not be taught to every student. Its most effective components were hidden and codified within *kata* and were taught, in complete secrecy, only to a few chosen students considered worthy by the headmaster of a school.

Image 18: Okinawan Masters of Shorin Ryu Shorinkan



Photo by Noel Smith

These are the highest ranking and most senior Okinawan Yudansha under Nakazato Minoru, 10th Dan *Shorin Ryu Shorinkan*, who is Headmaster of this *Kobayashi Ryu* system.

(Right to left) Sakihara Chosei, 10th Dan; Kinjo Kenpo, 10th Dan; Buntoko Ifuku, 10th Dan (deceased); Gibo Giyu, 10th Dan; Genka Noritsune, 10th Dan.

In many karate systems the highest ranks of 9th Dan and 10th Dan wear a Red Belt. Depending on a system's tradition, ranks of 7th and 8th Dan, the two ranks sometimes called *Kyoshi* and sometimes *Shihan*, may wear a Red-White Belt or they may wear a Black Belt.

This fact is confirmed by contemporary witnesses, who explain how a karate-jutsu master chooses one individual or a small group of his students who are then secretly taught the deeper aspects of the art. "The selection criteria used by a headmaster to pick those special students who will receive high-level training is a personal matter and those selected have no way of knowing whether or not they will ever receive full *Okuden* level instruction" (Hayes 2018, p. 89).

## **Chapter 6:**

# **The Outlook—What Will Happen to Karate in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?**

It was mentioned earlier that postwar Japanese karatedo turned into a worldwide business the development of which followed the track of industrialization of other crafts and arts. This thought has to be further elaborated and supported, because if that is the case, the further market developments of those other arts and crafts should provide a historic blueprint we can use to shed some light on the most probable further developments of the art and craft of karate.

## **“Arts and Crafts Movement” Following Industrialization Offers a Historic Blueprint**

To be able to do that, the gist of industrialization first needs to be understood, and to aid in gaining that understanding we illustrate the process with the example of how the handcrafted table became an industrially mass-produced commodity. Initially, individual fine carpenters built the tables they designed from beginning to end in one pass, and the path to finished table had its individual meanderings. One core method of industrializing a craft is breaking down a sequential construction process into its constitutive passes that then could be carried out separately, repeatedly, and independently from the

following step, thus standardizing and rationalizing the manufacturing process.

So, the passes of cutting, ripping, dadoing, sanding, coating, etc., were separated and normed (i.e., standardization), then independently repeated in their most effective way (i.e., rationalization), while the parts were later assembled into similar end products with one design. This reduces the average cost per output unit (one table) quite considerably.<sup>1</sup>

A second core element of industrialization is reducing the cost of production to maximize profit. The industrialized manufacturing process aims to produce the minimum quality needed for the market instead of producing the highest quality possible. Thus, production is stripped of complicated and costly procedural components, which secured high quality and which are replaced with simpler techniques of lower cost (e.g., gluing or screwing parts together instead of dovetailing them). Mass production of the same product further reduces the cost per produced unit (i.e., multiplication), a phenomenon also called “economies of scale.” This basic economics term refers to the fact that an organization’s proportional cost when producing one unit declines as output increases. If that is the case, growing bigger provides an economic advantage to the organization, which carries increased profit opportunities. In addition, the use of cheaper raw material (e.g., plywood or core boards instead of solid wood) lowers the cost of production for our tables even more. The driving force behind all this is the evolution of a seemingly unlimited demand for goods and services (here, tables) on the one hand, and the money and the profit to be harvested by the owners of the industrialization process on the other.

The loss of traditional knowledge, the loss of product quality, and the loss of craft-specific values and skills through mass production provoked the rise of a counterculture in all those countries that went through their industrialization process about five decades later, a counterculture called the “Arts and Crafts Movement.” “The Arts and Crafts Movement was fueled by anxieties about the quality of life in the industrial era and the rise of mass-produced goods. Arts and crafts designers sought to reform both decorative design and daily life,

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1. Let’s simplify for the sake of the argument and say that one fine carpenter can build one table in a week. That would be four tables a month. With a rationalized and standardized process, these four tables would be produced in, say, one day, which results in a time reduction of around 94 percent per table. “Time is money,” as they correctly say.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### **Hermann Bayer, PhD Biography**

Hermann holds degrees in economics, sociology, psychology, and business administration. He worked in German and US universities for eighteen years as a scientist, professor, campus dean, and multi-site dean. For another twelve years Hermann served as the CEO and executive coach of a German coaching and consulting firm. In addition, he had ten successful years of self-employment, another nine years working in the manufacturing industry, and two years serving in the (West) German army's corps of engineers. He immigrated to the USA in 2005.



The author of several books and numerous articles on industrial relations, coaching, and consulting, Hermann now publishes on karate-jutsu's and karate-do's socio-cultural roles and their development.

Hermann started to train and to study the art of karate—including its historical and socio-cultural development—in 1981. His experience covers traditional (non-sports) Japanese *Shudokan-Doshinkan* karate-do as well as classic Okinawan *Shorin Ryu* karate-jutsu. In 2016 he completely changed his life priorities from academics to “full-time-karate.” To broaden his karate development beyond its Japanese form and to better understand today's misconceptions about the art's original orientation toward protecting and preserving life, he restarted from scratch with classic Okinawan *Kobayashi Ryu* karate-jutsu and kobudo. In addition, Hermann studies *suikendo*—meaning “the art of fists flowing like water,” today's most advanced karate fighting system. Over the years, he has spent considerable time with renowned Japanese, Western, and Okinawan karate teachers, all the while researching the core essence of the style they represent.

Today, in his mid-seventies, Hermann is still training hard, practicing karate daily and attends at least three, but mostly four, two-hour empty-hand and kobudo training sessions every week. To make a point about combining (not to be confused with “integrating”) traditional karate-jutsu and sports karate, he successfully competes in martial arts tournaments and secures first place in his age bracket.

*Genuine Okinawan Karate was developed as a fighting tool.  
Non-Okinawan Karate is for other purposes.*

**"Comprehensive and captivating exploration of karate's past and probable future. Highly recommended!"**

—Sensei Noel Smith, Hanshi,  
9th Dan Kobayashi Ryu

**"Thoughtful perspectives and honest appraisals—all with the intention of helping us steer a 'true course.'"**

—William (Bill) Hayes, Hanshi,  
9th Dan Shorin Ryu, Shobayashi-Kan

**"[Bayer] quantifies karate as an industry and reveals a complex and convoluted evolution, aptly illuminating the motivations behind various stakeholders."**

—Patrick McCarthy, Hanshi  
9th Dan, researcher, historian,  
best-selling author

**"Invites karateka around the world to look at their art through the lens of reality rather than myth."**

—Michael Clarke, Kyoshi,  
8th Dan Okinawan Goju-Ryu,  
award-winning author

**"Analysis of Genuine Karate 2 is second to none!"**

—Kris Wilder, 6th Dan Goju-Ryu,  
award-winning author

Karate practitioners and everyone caring about Asian martial arts and its culture will enthusiastically appreciate this eye-opening work.

Dr. Bayer further reveals how the art of karate was used to prepare a nation (Japan) for total war, how it became Japanized and commercialized, and how its following transformation into athletic showmanship destroyed the art's unity and distinctiveness.

Without denigrating karate's later developments, Bayer endorses karate-jutsu as a genuine Okinawan martial art and identifies the social forces that turned this local fighting art into a symbol of national identity.

Martial arts were initially understood as a morally neutral tool, like a weapon, contrary to the modern understanding of karate as a peaceful art centered on nonviolence. In truth, moral codes, or guidelines on how to use this tool were developed separately, not within the art.

Today, a "back to the roots" karate-jutsu movement is arising as a counterweight to karate-do's industrialization, helping to integrate some neglected aspects of karate-jutsu back into karate-do. Such a development brings Japanized versions closer to their martial origins, while pure karate-jutsu will be preserved as a point of reference by a group of dedicated curators.

Supported by historical facts, scientific analysis, and public records, Dr. Bayer reveals the complex evolution of karate and the unsettled claims made upon it by various stakeholders.



**Hermann Bayer, Ph.D.**, holds degrees in economics, sociology, psychology, and business administration. Hermann's karate training began in 1981. He has spent considerable time with renowned Japanese, Western, and Okinawan karate teachers, all the while researching the core essence of the style they represent. Hermann Bayer resides in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

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