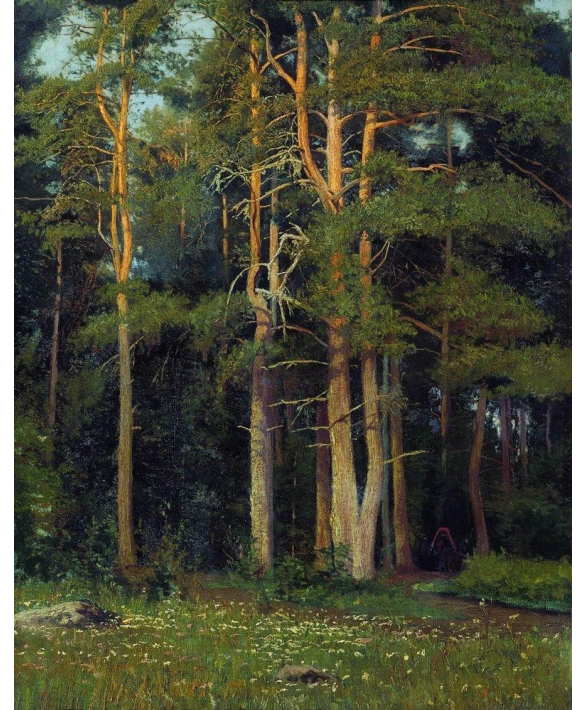


The Evolution of Shotokan Karate-do

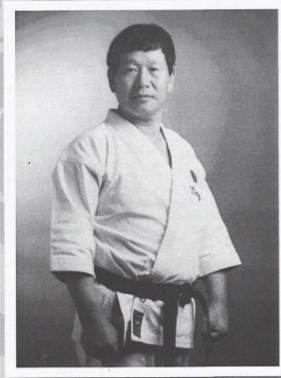
Late 1700s to Today



Bruce Green, © 2025
ISKF Colorado
Boulder Shotokan Karate-do
www.shotokan.net

IN MEMORIAM

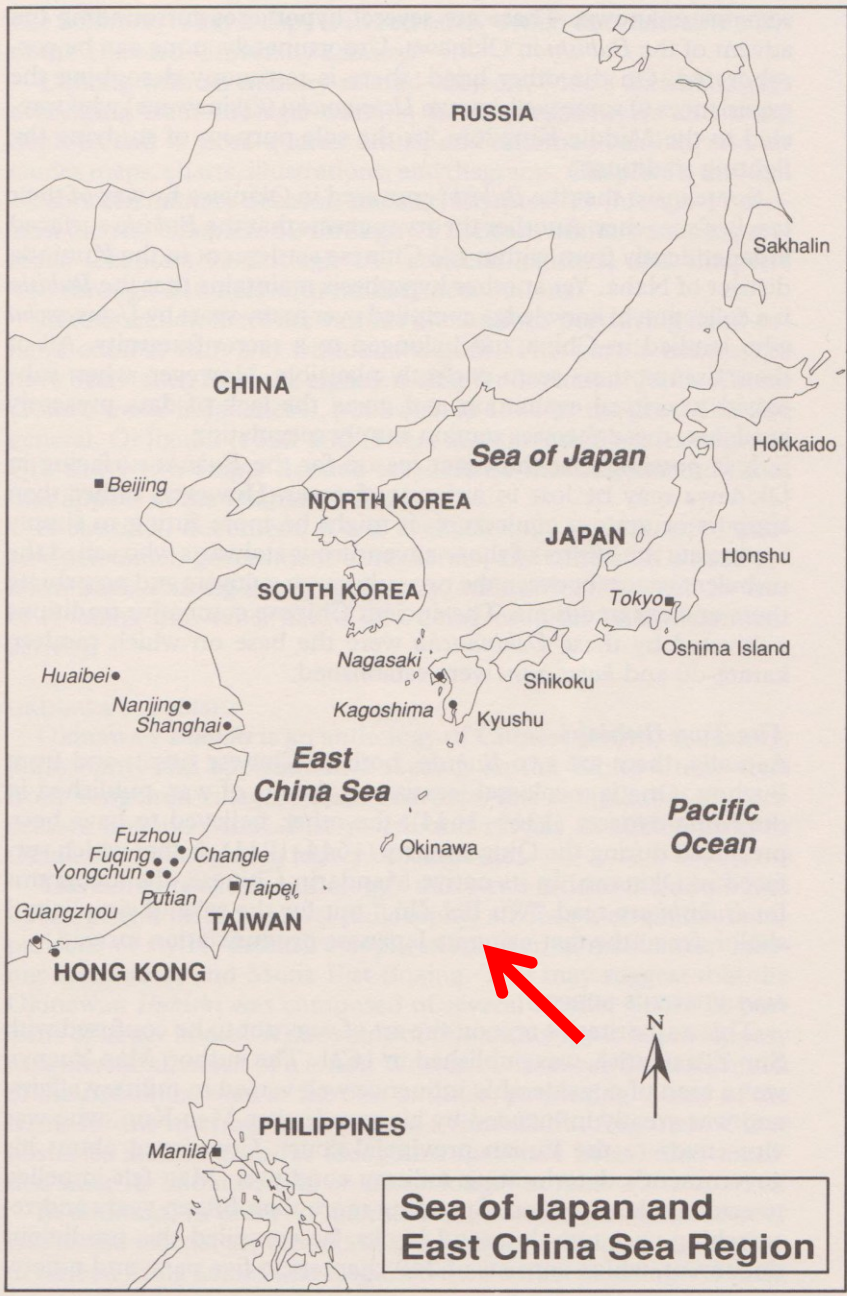
MASTER YUTAKA YAGUCHI



1932 – 2023
NOV 14TH OCT 26TH



B. Green & Sensei Yaguchi, 2008



Sea of Japan and East China Sea Region



Okinawa, aka The Ryukyus or Ryukyu Islands

Brief Overview

Islands likely visited by a Chinese expedition in **608 AD** sent by Emperor Yang Chien.

Chinese trade missions with The Ryukyus commenced often operating out of Fuzhou, Fujian/Fukien Province on the southeast coast of China.

The Ryukyus became a vassal state to China around **1372** and tribute started flowing from the Ryukyus back to Fukien. The Chinese used martial-art (e.g., wushu, quanfa, or kenpo) trained guards on these tribute ships. Naha was a primary port of entry for these Chinese 'missions.'

In **1393**, 36 Fujian Chinese families settled in Kume, about 2 miles south of Naha. This village became a Chinese cultural outpost in Okinawa and a source of some transmission of Chinese martial arts.



Satsuma Clan Takeover – 1609

The **Shimazu clan** were the daimyo of the Satsuma estate, southern Japan. Okinawa now becomes a vassal state of Japan.

On **April 5, 1609**, the palace of Shuri was sacked and King Sho Nei was carried off to Kagoshima, Japan. The Satsuma samurai were also equipped with muskets.

The Shimazu abolished the Shuri government's sword smithy in **1669**, followed by a ban* on imported weapons in **1699**.

The Shimazu also brought the Jigen-ryu style of swordsmanship to Okinawa. Later, Master Azato, one of Sensei Funakoshi's instructors, would become a prominent master of Jigen-ryu. According to Sensei Funakoshi, it was Master Azato who said "Think of the hands and feet as swords."



* Actually, the second weapons ban; first ban roughly 500 years ago.

Samurai of the Satsuma clan, ~1869

The Origins of Okinawan Martial Arts

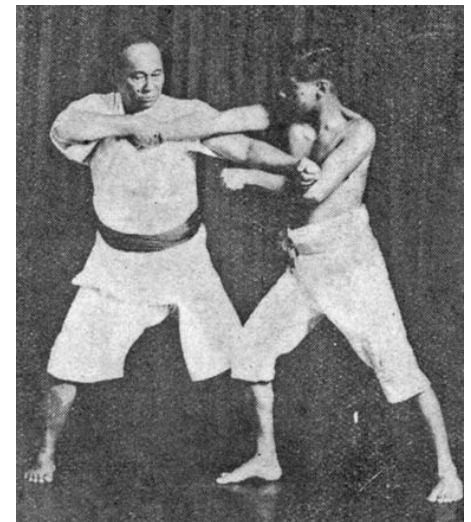
Te-gumi: Encounter of hands – a form of popular wrestling coming from Japanese Sumo

Ti'gwa, Ti, or Te: Hand that will involve a technique or skill. Originally, only practiced with closed hands/fists. Also known as Uchina'di or Okinawa-te.

Buki'gwa: Use of weapons used primarily in battle (e.g., swords, daggers, spears, and shields)

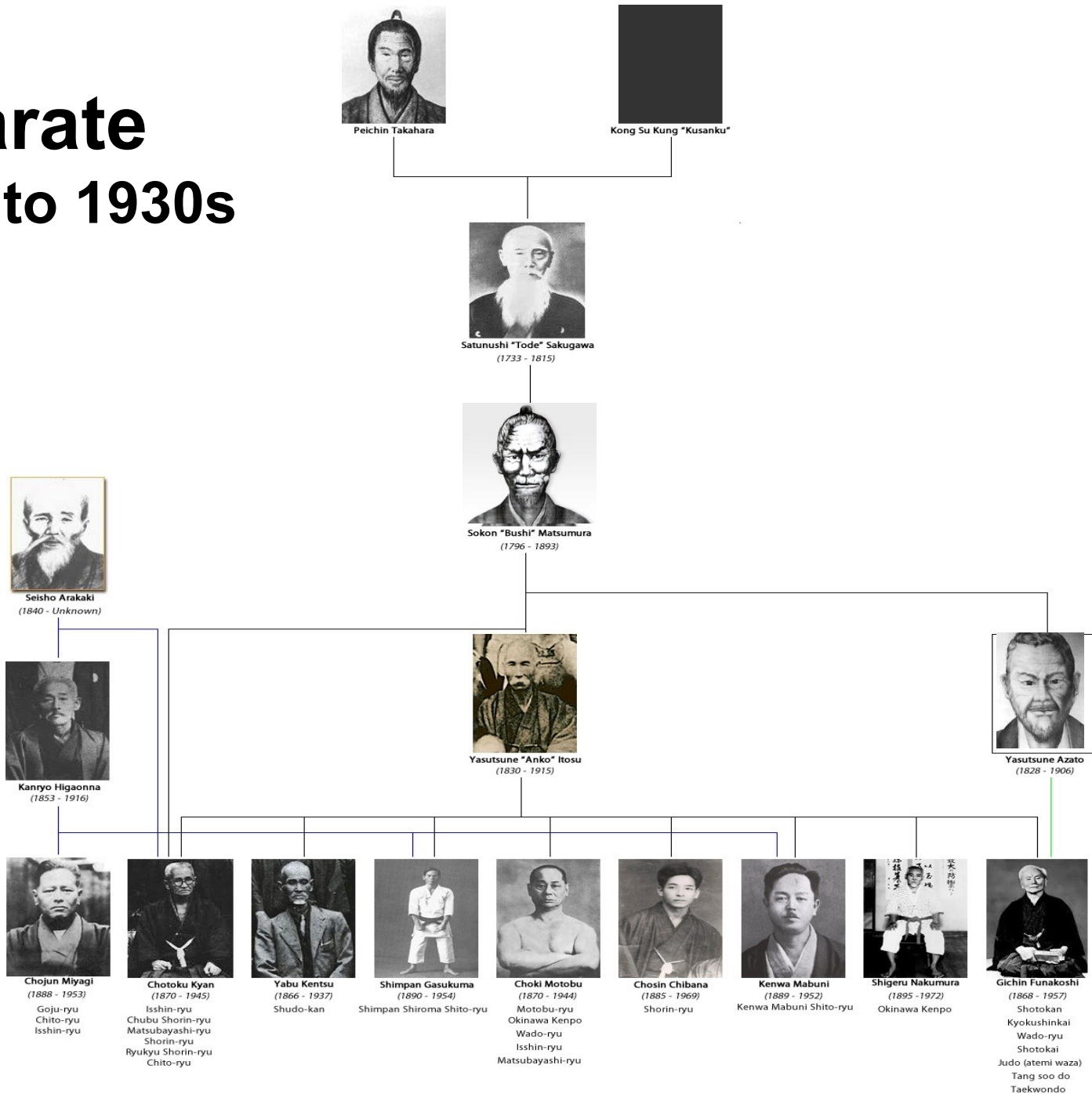
Tuidi, To-de, Tode-jutsu evolved from Ti'gwa and the influence of new Chinese martial-art practices (e.g., *taolu* or kata).

Choki Motubu and student,
Okinawan Kenpo



Karate

1760s to 1930s



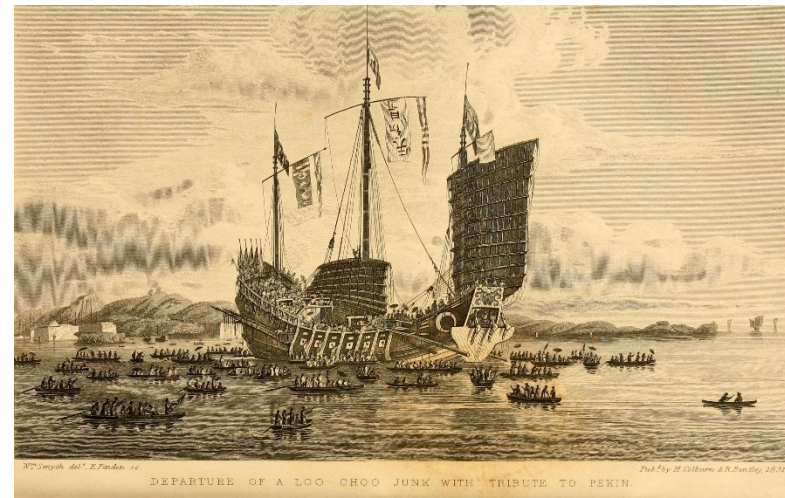
Kong Su Kung 1670 (?) to 1762

A.k.a., Kūsankū, Kwang Shang Fu, Ko Shang Kun



Roughly around 1756, Kūsankū was sent to Okinawa as an ambassador of the Qing Dynasty.

Historical record: Chinese shipwreck, 1762, Okinawan tribute ship ('Oshima Incident').



Kanga “Tode” Sakugawa

1733 to 1815



His father died from internal bleeding after a beating by drunken bullies when Kanga Sakugawa was a teenager, sometime around 1750.

Also likely studied under Takahara *Pechin** (1683? to 1760?) besides Kūsankū.

Third generation before Funakoshi.

Ancestor of “Shorin Ryu” style, but style not called by that name at the time.

*Pechin = Okinawan term for the scholar-officials class, also responsible for the development of and training in the traditional fighting style, called Te.

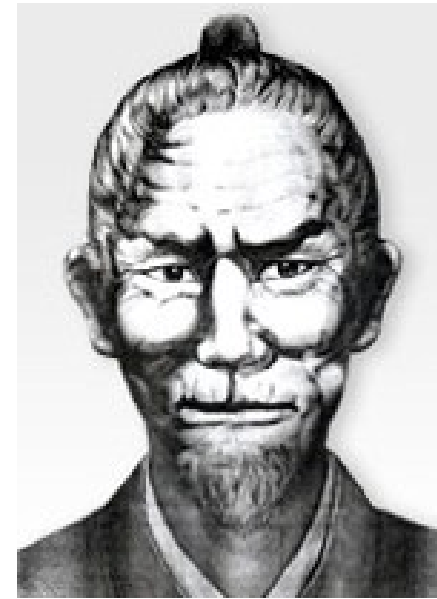
Takahara Pechin →



Soken “Bushi” Matsumura

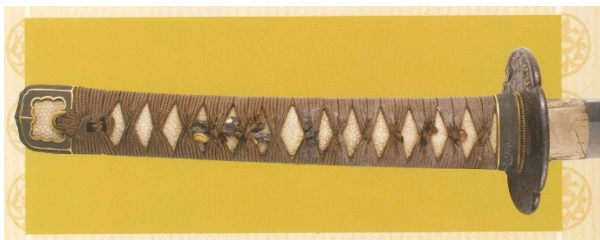
1809 to 1902

Matsumura first learned the native Okinawan fighting traditions under the watchful eye of "Toudi" Sakugawa and later, while serving as a security agent for three consecutive Ryukyuan kings, studied in both Fujian and Satsuma*. Also, he studied under the *gongfu* Master Iwah.



In many ways, Matsumura is considered the "grandfather" of the karate movement that surfaced in and around Shuri. Second generation before Funakoshi. His wife was an accomplished martial artist too.

Linear karate did not exist before Matsumura, but it was clearly modern to the next generation to follow him. He had BIG reasons as security boss to be efficient and able to dispatch violence quickly. He may even have been compelled this way because of Perry’s visit.



* He was the first to introduce the principles of Satsuma's swordsmanship school, Jigen-ryū, into Ryūkyū kobujutsu (Ryūkyūan traditional martial arts) and passed on Jigen-ryū to some of his students, including Ankō Asato.



‘**M**atsu’ means pine tree. ‘Mura’ means village.

Pine trees and forests are common symbols in karate styles that trace their roots to Matsumura.

Matsumura is best known as the bodyguard of three Okinawan kings: Sho Ko (1804 – 1834), Sho Iku (1835 – 1847), and Sho Tai (1848 – 1879).

His principal disciples included:

- **Anko Azato** (1827 – 1906)
- **Anko Itosu** (1832 – 1915)
- "Bushi" Ishimini (1835 – 1889)
- Kyuna *Pechin* (1845 – 1920)
- Sakihara *Pechin* (1833 – 1918)
- Nabe Matsumura (1850 – 1930)
- Tawada *Pechin* (1851 1907)
- Ryosei Kuwua (1858 – 1939)
- Kentsu Yabu (1866 – 1937)
- **Gichin Funakoshi** (1869 – 1957)
- Hanashio Chomo (1869 – 1915),
- Chotoku Kyan (1870 – 1945)



It is from these karate-ka that the method of Shorin-ryu evolved.

Yasustune (Anko) Itosu

1832 to 1915



What's likely, Itosu learned the Tode art from a number of different teachers, with Matsumura (Shuri-te) and Shiroma (Tomari-te) probably most essential.

Itosu served as secretary to the last king of the Ryukyu Islands until Japan abolished the Okinawa-based native monarchy in 1879. In 1901, he was instrumental in getting karate introduced into Okinawa's schools. In 1905, Itosu was a part-time teacher of Tode at Okinawa's First Junior Prefectural High School. It was here that he developed the systematic method of teaching karate techniques that are still in practice today.

He created and introduced the Pinan forms (*Heian* in Japanese) as learning steps for students. Itosu is also credited with taking the large Naihanchi form (*Tekki* in Japanese) and breaking it into the three well-known modern forms Naihanchi Shodan, Naihanchi Nidan, and Naihanchi Sandan.

Yasustune (Anko) Azato

1827 to 1906



Confucian education, wealthy family, had lots of training equipment (home looked like one big training facility, said Funakoshi).

Was an accomplished practitioner of *Jigen Ryu kenjutsu* (same as Matsumura)

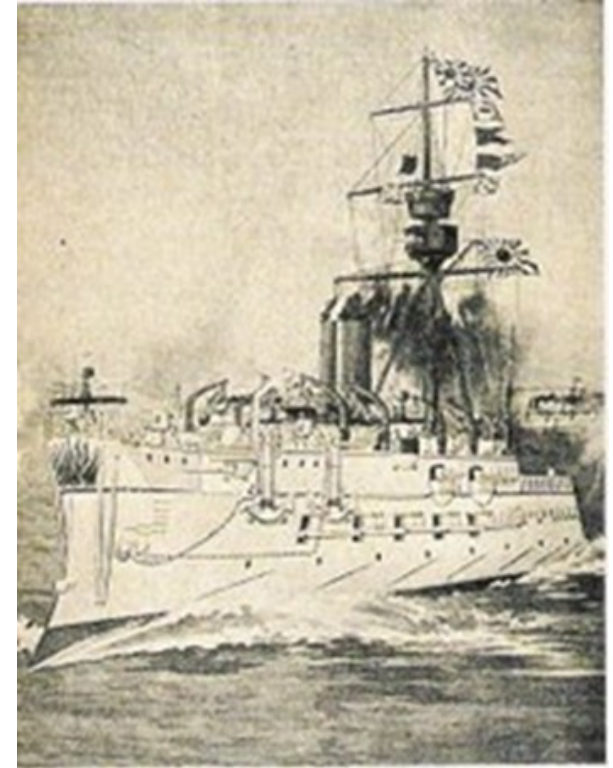
He's the one who said, "think of your arms and legs as **swords**."

Funakoshi described Azato as tall with broad shoulders and with sharp eyes.

Funakoshi says he thrust his hand, "with the fingers held together, (i.e., **nukite**) into the side of a freshly slaughtered pig."

A Rude Visitor Arrives

June 6, 1853



Commodore Perry Pays a Visit to Okinawa

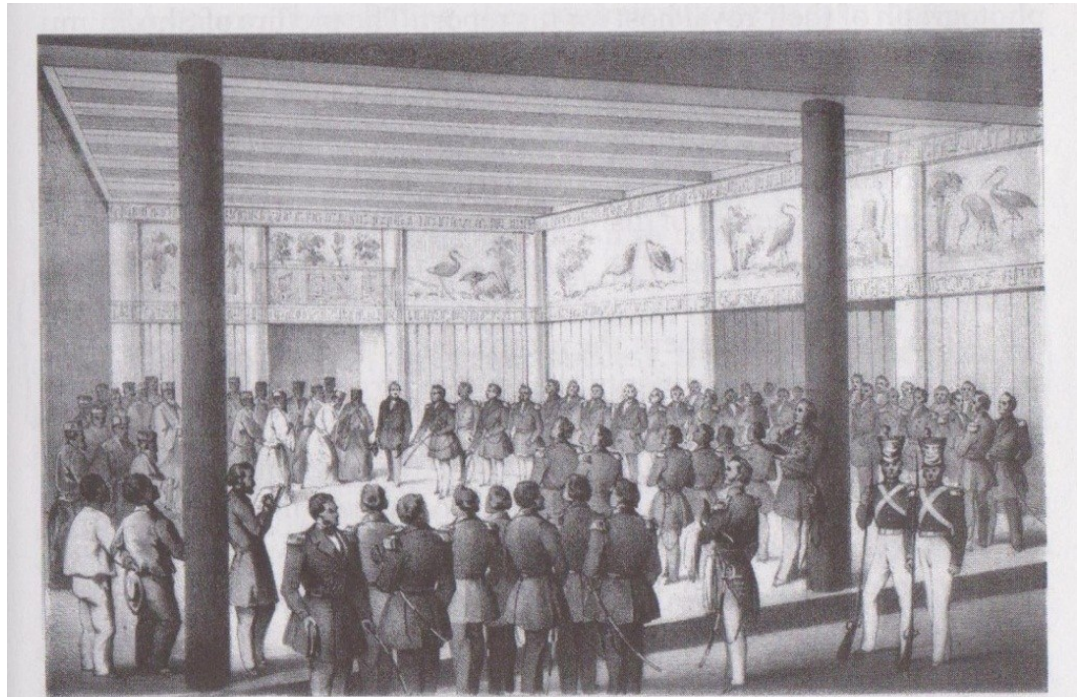


Figure 3-4: Commodore Perry received with stale gingerbread at Shuri Castle. The Okinawan officials are huddled in the far left corner of the room.¹³² Except for this room, the castle was deserted.

He came with firepower and a pissy attitude. On June 6, 1853, he rolled to Shuri Castle with two companies of Marines (armed with muskets and bayonets fixed), 50 naval officers, two military bands, and two cannons.

The bodyguards would never forget this encounter, especially security chief Matsumura!

Tense Meeting within Shuri Castle

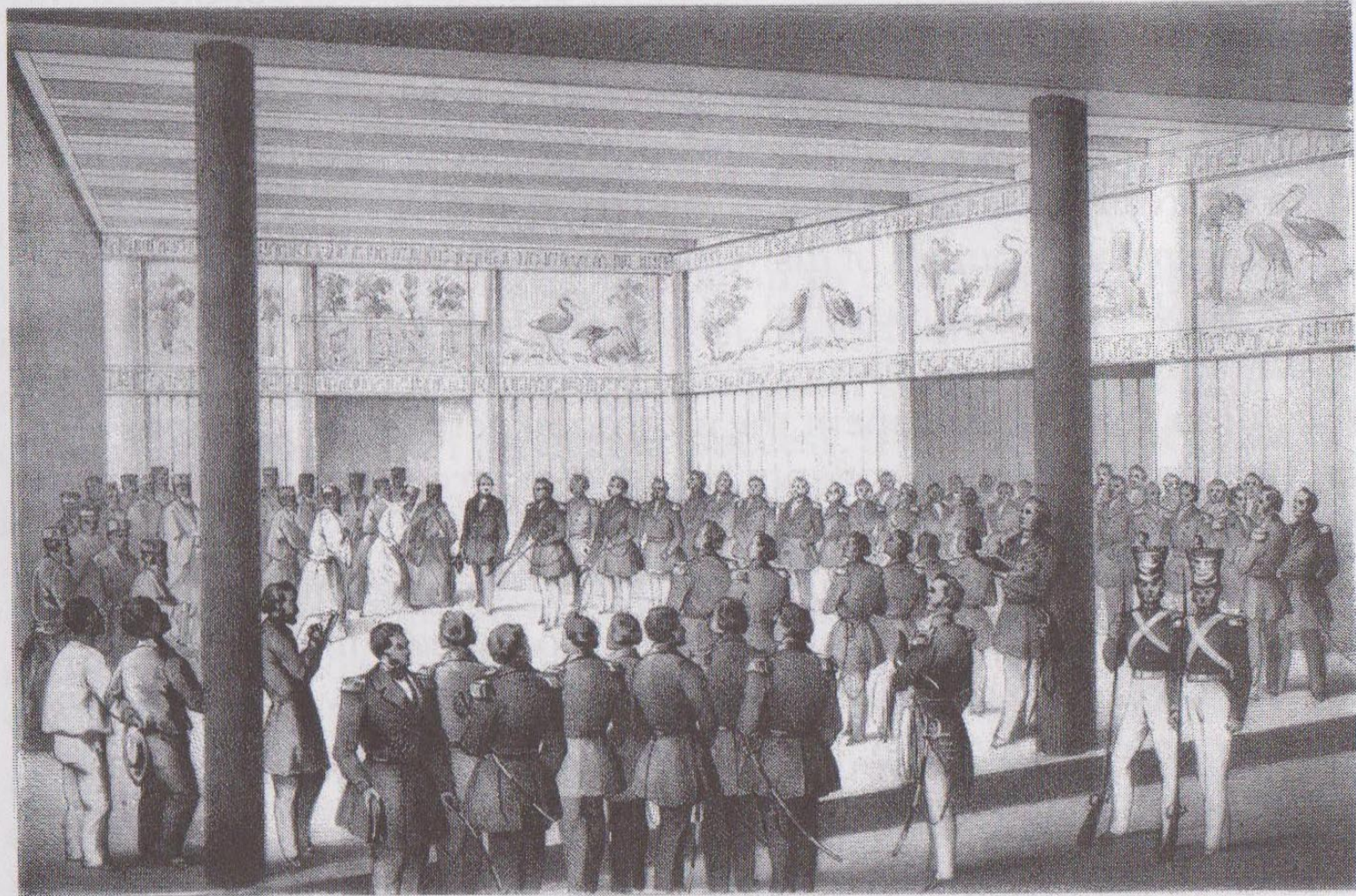


Figure 3-4: Commodore Perry received with stale gingerbread at Shuri Castle. The Okinawan officials are huddled in the far left corner of the room.¹³² Except for this room, the castle was deserted.

King Sho Tai
seems annoyed
and alarmed.

Matsumura →



← Itosu

← King Sho Tai

Figure 3-5: The regent of Okinawa, Sho Taimu, during his last public appearance on June 6, 1853. Sho Taimu was a very angry man that night. (Note the *hachimaki* hats and haori topcoats, signifying the wearer's high rank.)¹³⁵

Source: Clayton

Meiji Restoration and Modernization of Japan



Emperor Meiji
1852 – 1912

The period spanned from 1868 to 1912 and was responsible for the emergence of Japan as a modernized nation in the early twentieth century.

The Meiji Restoration was a chain of events that restored practical imperial rule to Japan in 1868 under Emperor Meiji.

Class systems in effect for centuries are tossed!

Militarism, possibly to appease the old samurai class (see [Saga Rebellion](#)/1874 and [Satsuma Rebellion](#)/1877) became a method of national transformation, pride, and prowess.

Military conscription was instituted.

The Samurai class
lost privileges.



Change Throughout Japan

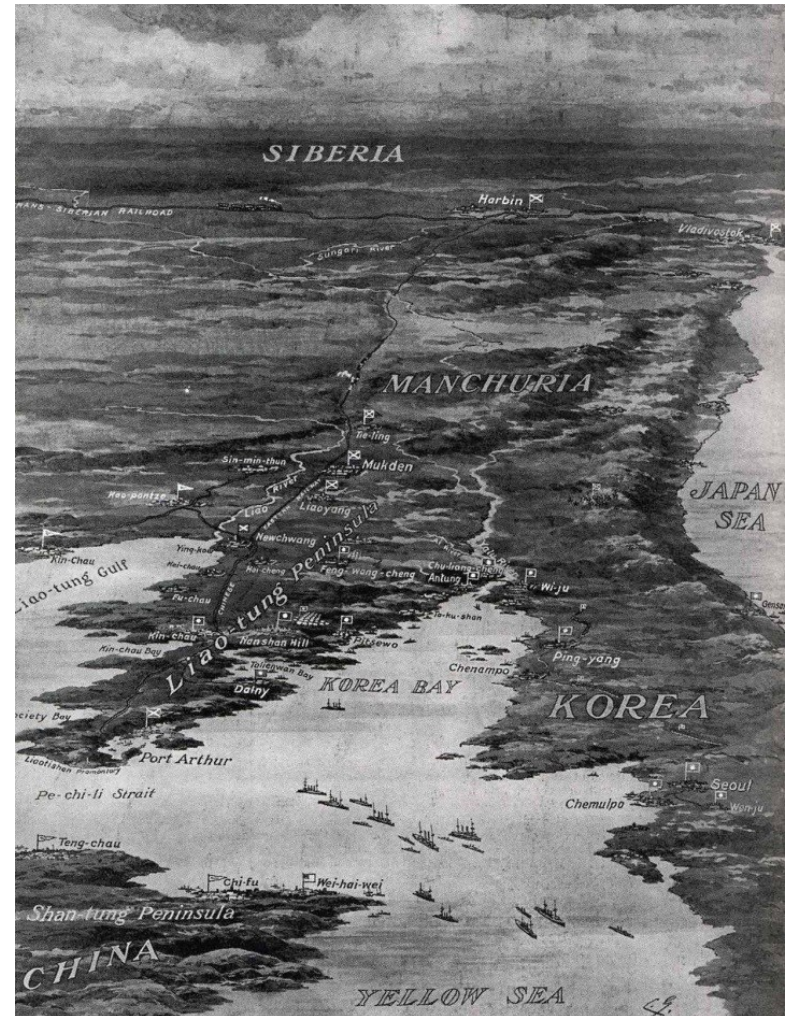
Social change becomes the norm of the day.



War with China (1894 – 1895)



Japan rises!

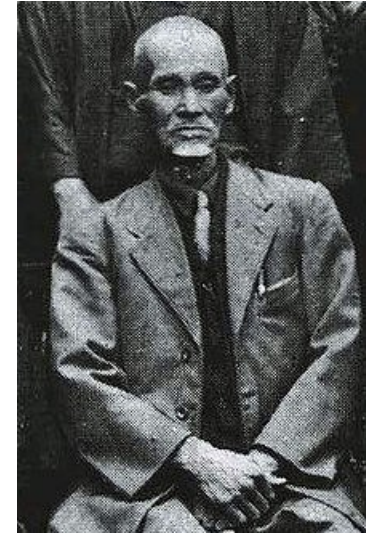


War with Russia (1904 – 1905)

Kentsu Yabu, 1866 (Shuri) to 1937



One fit son of a gun!



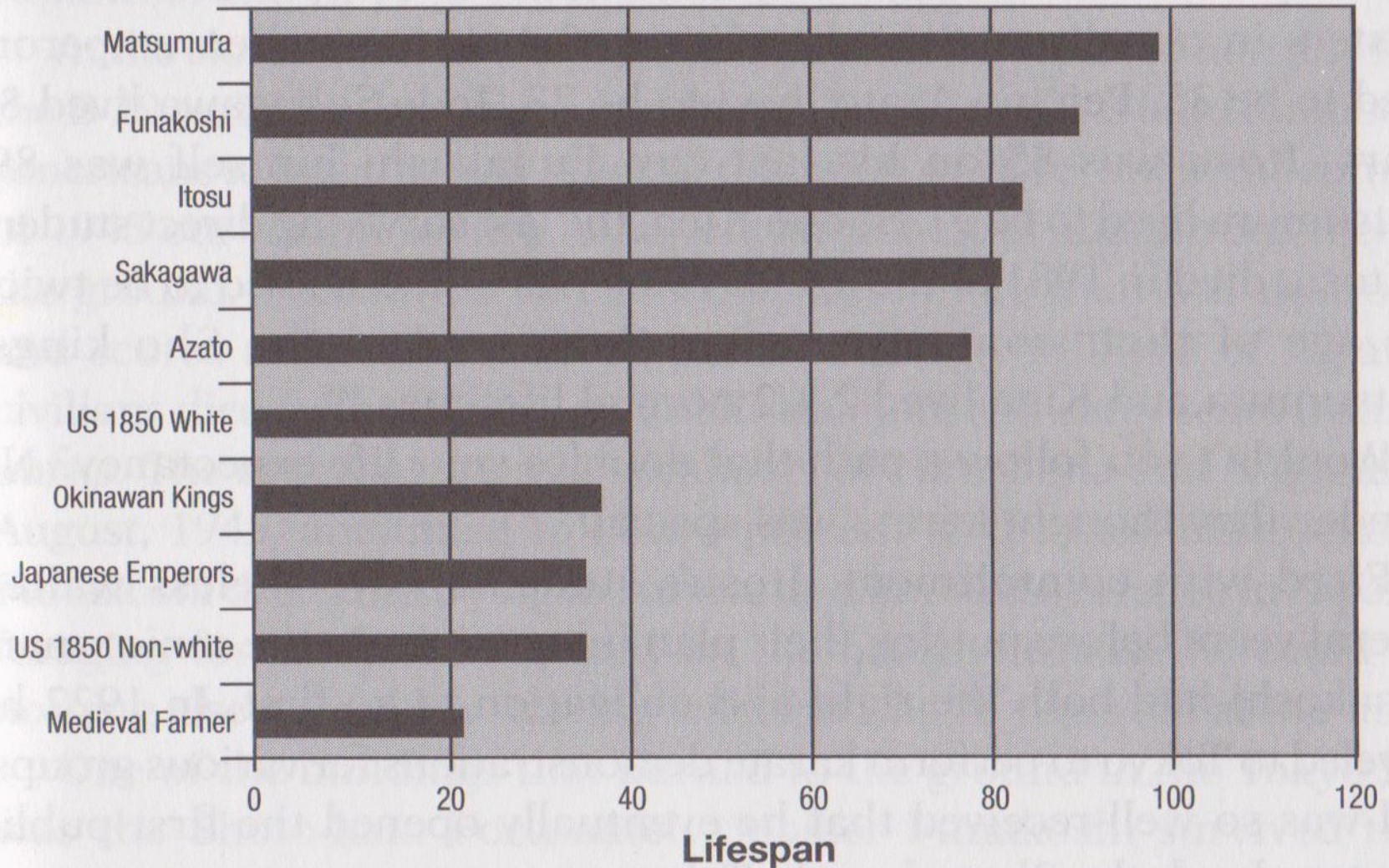
The draft – Japan started by mixing it up with China (1894 – 1895) and Russia (1904 – 1905). Conscription at the turn of the century turned up noteworthy results.

With the draft invoked and Okinawa an official Japanese prefecture, the military vigorously campaigned for local recruits there. In **1891**, during their army enlistment medical examination, Choma Hanashiro (1869 – 1945) and Kentsu Yabu (1866 – 1937) were two of the first young experts recognized for their exemplary physical conditioning due to training in Ryukyu *kempo toudi-jutsu* (karate-jutsu).

To help set the new cultural tone, the Ministry of Education embraced a program emphasizing discipline, even militarism – it was compelled to encourage modern Budo. New and old Budo became a significant ingredient.

Clear and Obvious Health Benefit

Longevity of Karate Masters



Source: Clayton

Early to Mid 20th-Century Karate Training




Hangin' at the gym

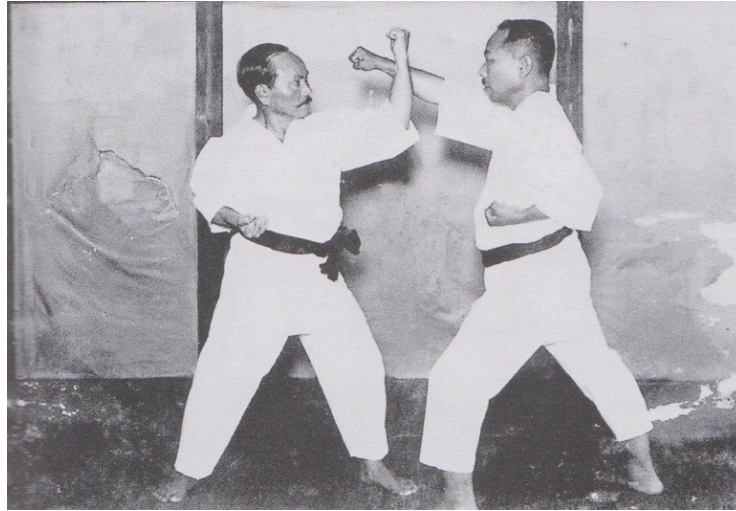


The dreaded 'toe kick'



 **Karate training with Shinpan Gusukuma sensei at the Seiden (throne room) at Shuri Castle c.1938, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan.**

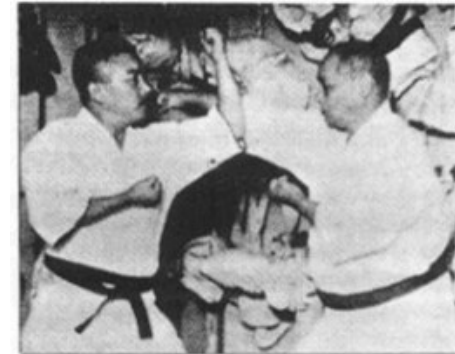
Japanization of Karate



Konishi, at Meisi-Juku, early 1920s

Konishi Yasuhiro (1893 – 1983), born in Takamatsu, Kagawa, Japan, a ju-jutsu expert and prominent kendo teacher, had studied Ryukyu *kempo* karate-jutsu before it was formerly introduced to mainland Japan.

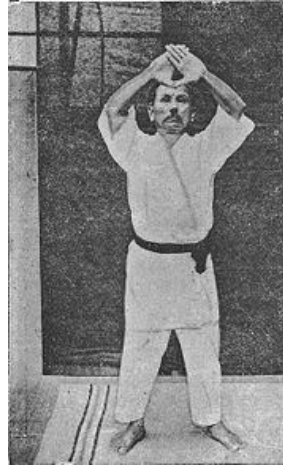
Later, he studied directly under Gichin Funakoshi, Choki Motobu, Kenwa Mabuni, and Chojun Miyagi. As a Japanese national already well-versed in the martial arts, he had ideal positioning as promoter, integrator, diplomat, champion, and facilitator.



Konishi (L) and Motobu (R), 1935

Gichin Funakoshi

1868 to 1957



Shuri-te, Naha-te, and Tomari-te – terms “formalized” in 1926.

This method of classification has led to the mistaken view that these three styles were in some important way separate from one another, but in fact they are all derived from the same sources. It is also true that the various practitioners of *te* freely learned from one another, mixing the methods in a natural way. [Source: Cook]

Shuri-te comes to Japan



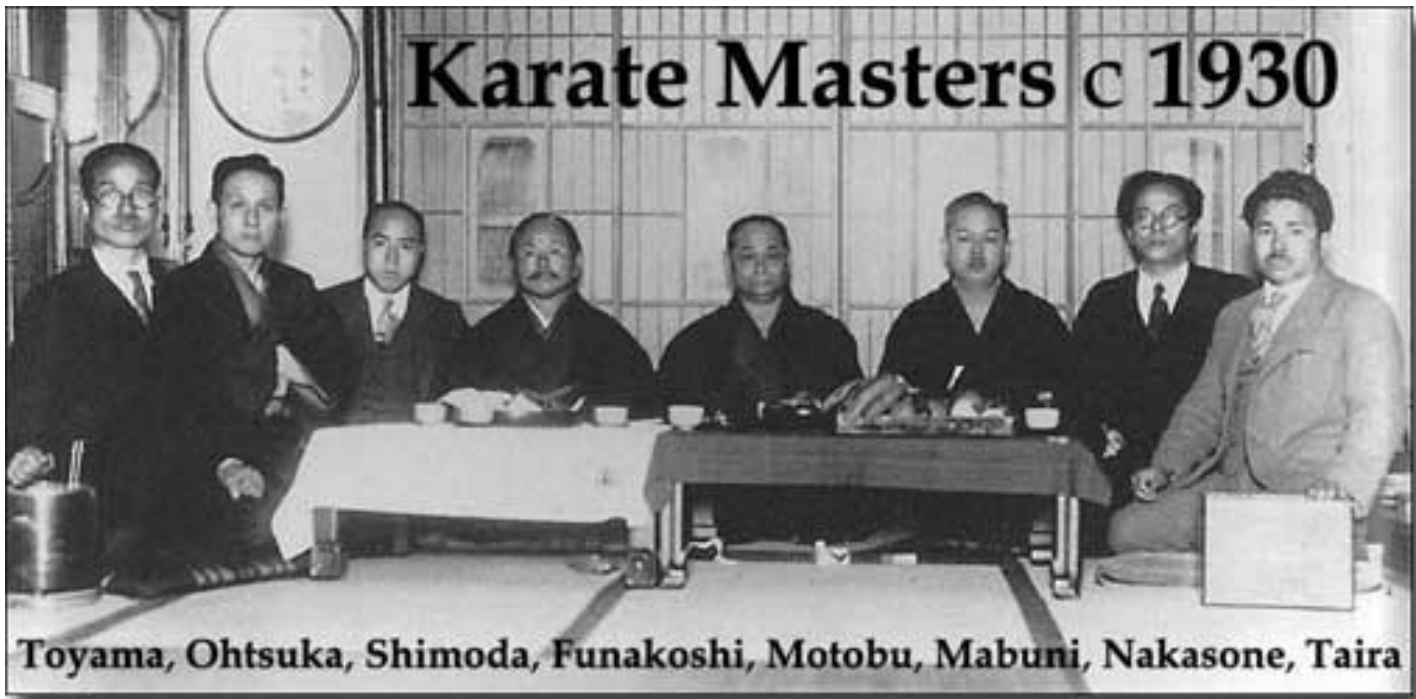
Gichin Funakoshi with students at the Meisei Juku, the Okinawan Prefectural Hostel in Tokyo. Circa 1925.

Early 1920s Meisei Juku hostel, Funakoshi with early students.



Meisei Juku, 1926





**Where's
the
sake!**

Toyama, Ohtsuka, Shimoda, Funakoshi, Motobu, Mabuni, Nakasone, Taira

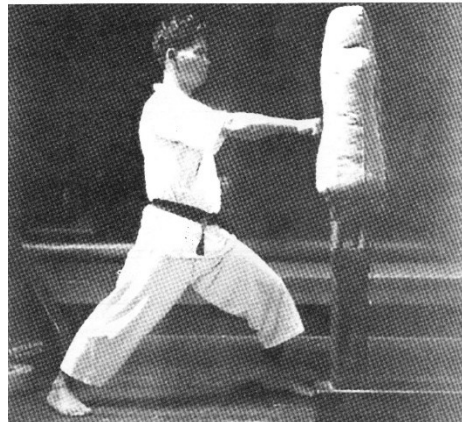


Gigo and Gichin Funakoshi



Yoshitaka “Gigo” Funakoshi, 1906 to 1945

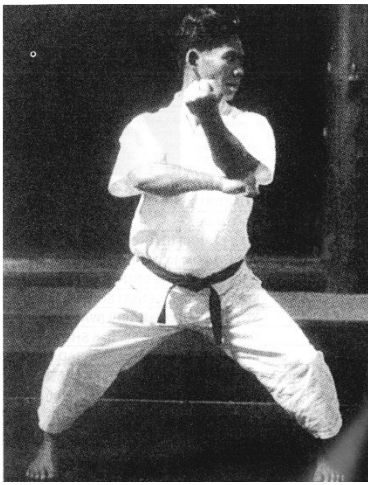
Gigo Funakoshi was born in Okinawa and diagnosed with tuberculosis at the age of seven. He was sickly as a child and began the formal study of karate-do at the age of twelve as a means to improve his health. In the early years, Funakoshi often took Gigo with him to his training with Itosu. He was the third son of Gichin Funakoshi.



An unusual looking training aid (body-like) in the Shotokan dojo.



Yoshitaka (right) application from Kata Heian Sandan with Egami sensei, circa 1940.



Gigō began to develop a karate technique that definitively separated Japanese karate-do from the local Okinawan arts.

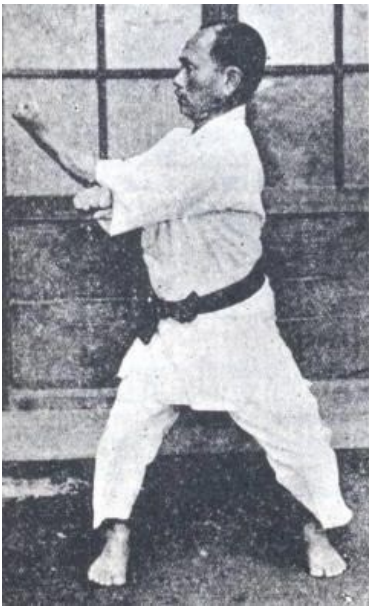
Gigō developed long distance striking techniques using the low stances found in kendo kata. Gigō developed higher kicks including mawashi geri (round kick), yoko-geri kekomi (side-thrust kick), and yoko-geri keage (side-snap kick).



Gigō's kumite (fighting) style was to strike hard and fast, using low stances and long attacks, chained techniques and foot sweeps. Integration of these changes into the Shotokan style immediately separated Shotokan from Okinawan karate.



Source: Cook



Gigō became the technical creator of modern Shotokan karate.

Gigo's kicking techniques were performed with a much higher knee-lift than in previous styles, and the use of the hips was emphasized. Other technical developments included the turning of the torso to a half-facing position (hanmi) when blocking, and thrusting the rear leg and hips when performing the techniques. These adaptations allowed the delivery of a penetrating attack with the whole body through correct body alignment. Gigo also promoted free sparring.

The difficult living conditions of World War II weakened Gigo, but he continued training. He died of tuberculosis at the age of 39 on November 24, 1945, in Tokyo.

Original Shotokan



The original Shotokan dojo before bombing, in March 1945.



Taken at the inauguration of the Shotokan dojo in 1939 (Shown 14), Gichin Funakoshi is seated in the centre with Yoshitaka Funakoshi to his immediate right.

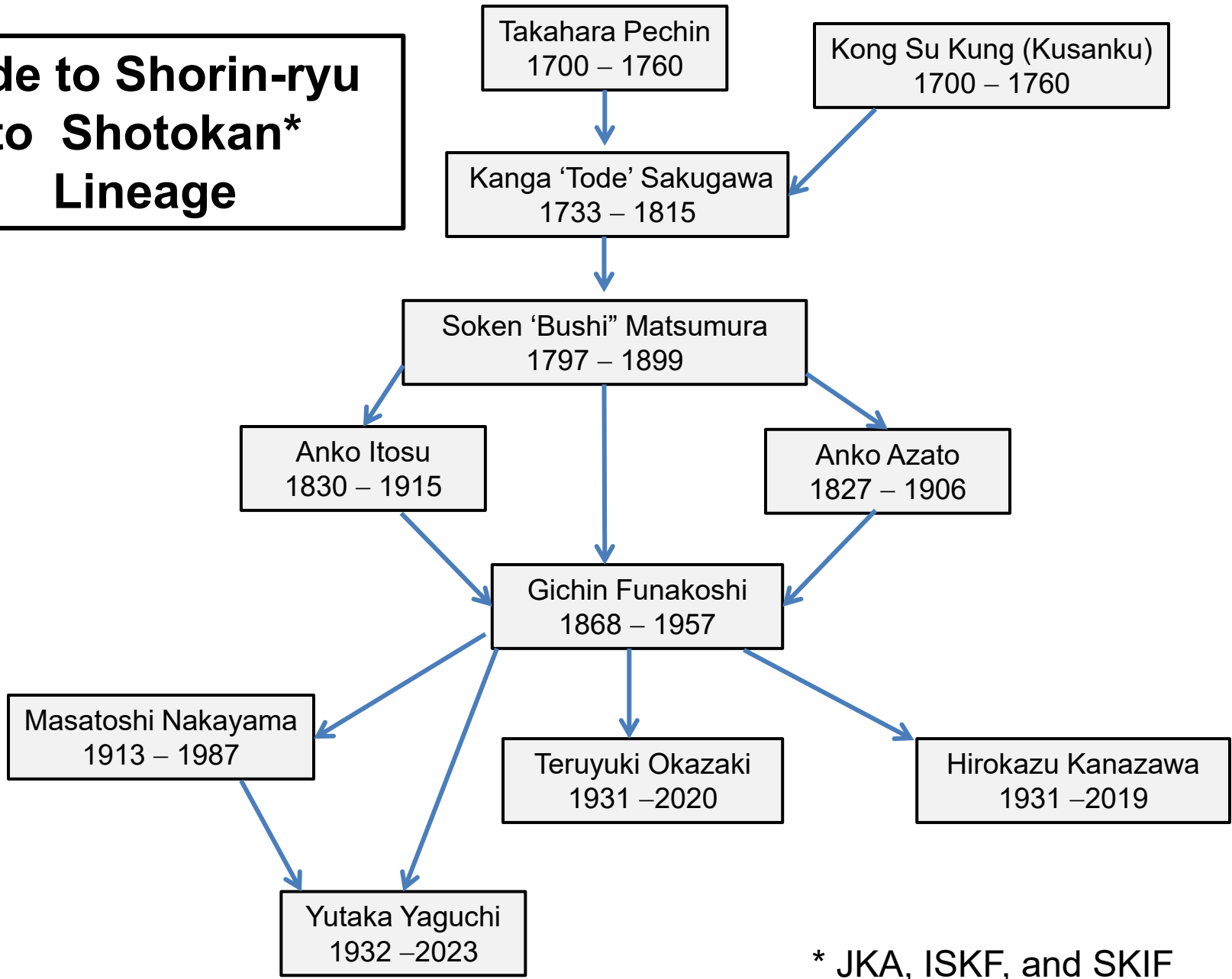


The formal opening of the Shotokan dojo



Seated ; unknown, G. Funakoshi, Y. Funakoshi, & M. Nakayama

Tode to Shorin-ryu to Shotokan* Lineage



* JKA, ISKF, and SKIF

The Differences Between Shorin-ryu and Shorei-ryu

The Shorin-ryu style Itosu taught was essentially Okinawan in character even though as its name suggested, it was influenced by "hard" Shaolin Chinese methods. In comparison to the Shorei-ryu (i.e., Naha-te) style being taught in Naha at about the same time, it was said that Shorin-ryu (i.e., Shuri-te) was better suited to people with smaller frames and less strength.

Shorin-ryu was developed earlier than Shorei-ryu, and thus, reflects a time when the Fujian-province Shaolin temple was still using some of the older, northern Shaolin methods. As a result, Shorin-ryu is a more mobile, longer-range art, reliant on fast "in and out" movements, fast leaps and turns, and more kicking techniques than Shorei-ryu. Shorin-ryu is also a very precise martial art with great emphasis on clean, neat, and aesthetic technique. Very kinetic.

By contrast, Shorei-ryu as taught by Kanryo Higaonna, placed much emphasis of body conditioning, strength training, and practicality of technique. Shorei-ryu, as even the Shorin master Funakoshi acknowledged, taught a more effective form of self-defence even though it lacked the mobility of the Shorin styles.

Source: Clayton

Modern Shotokan



M. Nakayama & Y. Yaguchi



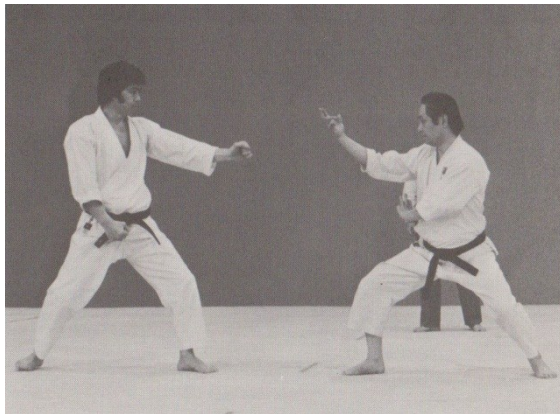
H. Nishiyama & T. Okazaki



T. Okazaki



Y. Yaguchi



H. Kanazawa & T. Asai



K. Enoda

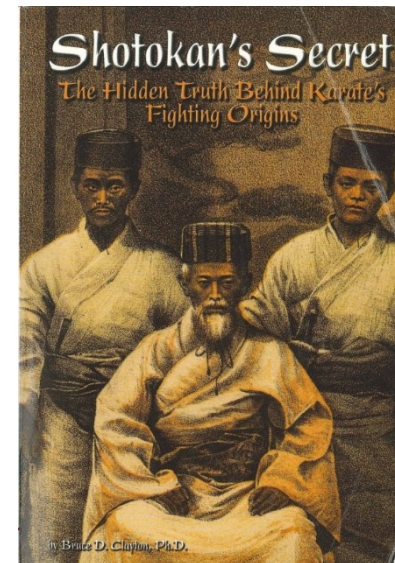
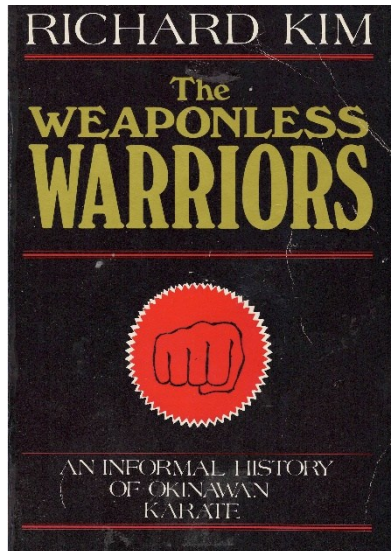
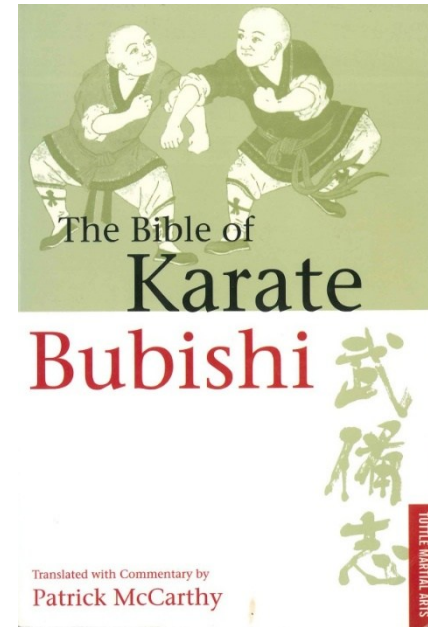
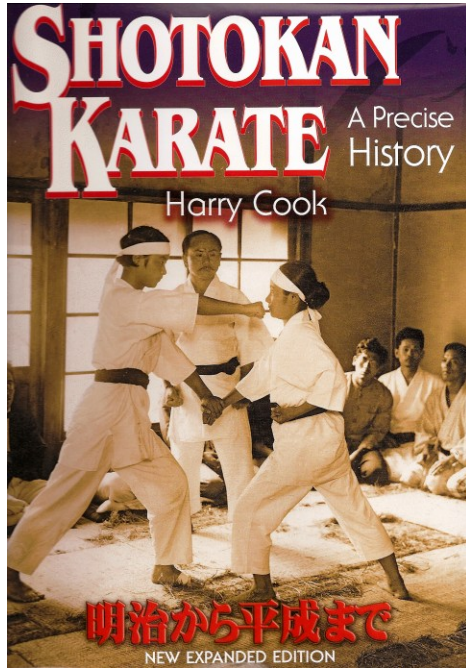


J. Field

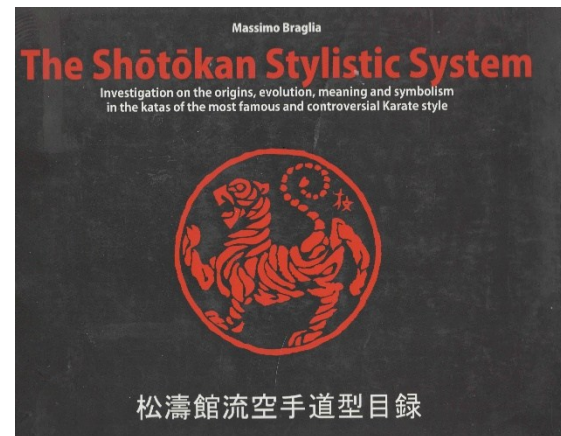
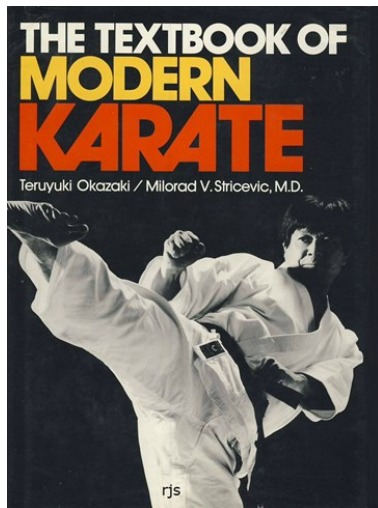
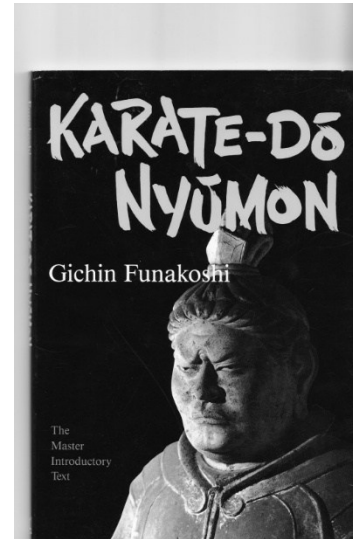
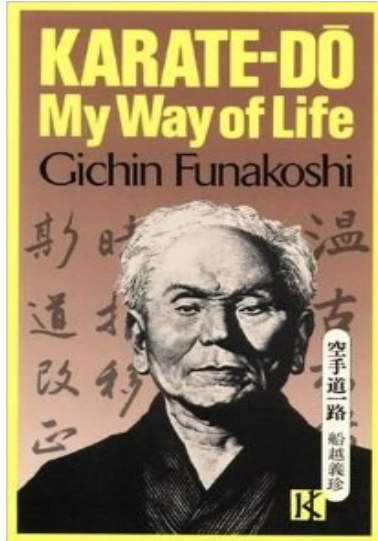


H. Okazaki

Primary References



Primary References



Many photos from searches within:

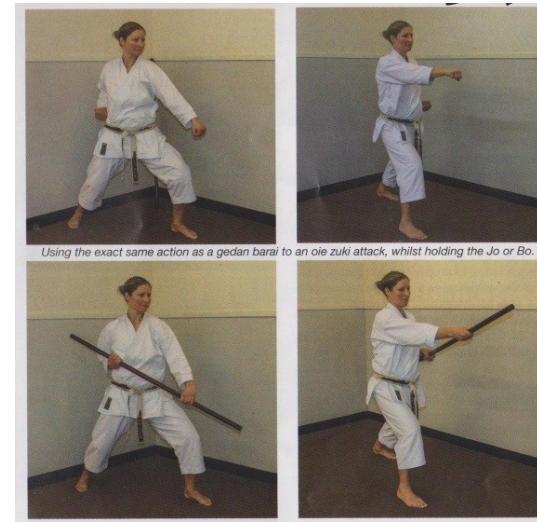
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

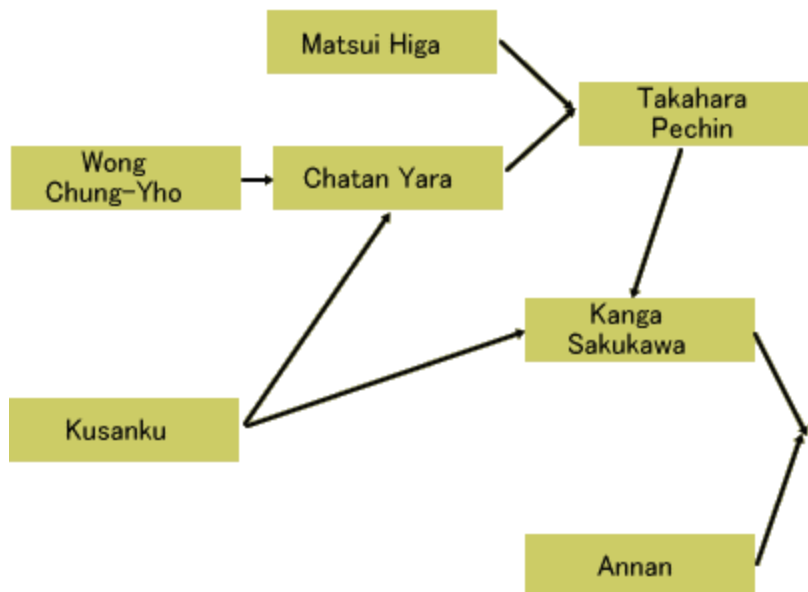
Presentation Take-Away Points

- Shotokan is a hybrid combining multiple Chinese martial influences with the indigenous Okinawan martial arts that underwent their own evolution.
- Matsumura originally had a prominent influence on Shuri-te/Shorin-ryu, and gave the art teeth. Needed brutal efficiency! No time for ground fighting.
- As Itosu introduced Shuri-te into the public schools, it was de-fanged.
- What Funakoshi introduced to Japan was a hybrid of Shorin-ryu and Shorei-ryu that emphasized character development and civil appeal. Gigo made even more evolutionary strides!
- Weapons training was dropped from post-war karate practice to appease the Allies.
- Modern practice of Shotokan is reviving some of the bunkai originally deemed inappropriate, and exploring how some kata contained possible weapons application (e.g., Jutte w/bo).

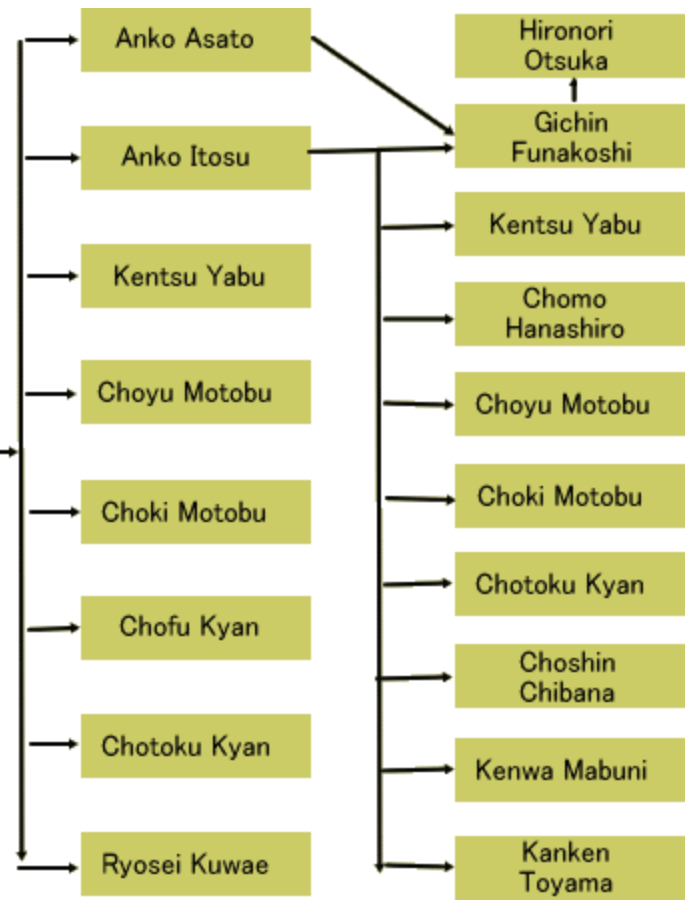


Shotokan Karate Magazine (April '14):
Shotokan with a Stick in Your Hand!





The Lineage of Shuri-te



Masters Okazaki and Kanazawa





1999 松本五郎 90歳

一人格完成に努むる事

誠の道を守る事

努力の精神を養ふ事

禮儀を重んずる事

血氣の勇を戒むる事



松本五郎訓

