



II Karate

THE ORIGINS

The origin of this ancient martial art has its roots in Japanese culture and undoubtedly also in the Chinese. The Ryukyu Islands, an archipelago that is geographically located between Japan and China, is the place where this known martial art developed. According to the most accredited history, Karate was born as a fusion between the autochthonous fighting systems of these islands and the Chinese martial arts with which the inhabitants came into contact thanks to continuous trade with China and especially with the Fukien region.



Gichin Funakoshi

The Karate as we know and we practice today has more recent origins: only at the beginning of this century, thanks to the Master Gichin Funakoshi, karate is known outside of Japan.

Indeed, before that date, the practice of karate was handed down in secret and never in writing, but only through a series of codified exercises, the KATA, and only to a restricted and selected group of students.

Karate was first presented for the first time to the Japanese public by Funakoshi, in 1922 in Kyoto during a national physical education event. Despite the initial plan, which foresaw his return to Okinawa, Master Funakoshi was invited to introduce his martial art in the famous Kodokan dojo in Tokyo and thanks to the interest aroused, he decided to stay to spread the art of his country.

The Shotokan style, practiced in our gym, was created by Master Funakoshi and the name derives from the first

dojo founded in 1938. After, the teaching of the Master Funakoshi has evolved also thanks to the contribution of his son Yoshitaka and has been handed down to the present day through his older students. Even now it is practiced in respect of those rules of form, ethics and respect that makes karate a martial art.

THE MEANING OF THE NAME

The word Karate is composed by two ideograms: "kara" which means "empty" and "te" which means "hand" (the art of the empty hand); where empty can stand for the non-use of weapons or, in a more spiritual form of the term the inner emptiness that leads to always being present to themselves.



An important aspect of Karate as practiced in our Dojo, is that it cannot be considered a sport, as it is commonly understood in the West.

It is not in the spirit of karate to focus on competition, considering the practice partner an opponent to be defeated to earn a medal. The real opponent is indeed within yourself, and through the practice with a partner the person is able to reflect and highlight its own limits. The learning of this ancient art is based on the constant practice of its three different levels of training: the KIHON, the KATA and the KUMITE, practiced at all levels, from beginners to higher belts

Kihon

KIHON, which literally means "fundamental", indicates the complex of defense and counterattack techniques performed both with the arms and the legs that constitute the fundamentals of this discipline. It is from here that we begin to learn and assimilate all basic techniques that will then be applied in subsequent levels.

Kata

KATA, which literally means "form", is perhaps the part where Karate is enclosed with all its secrets and its deepest roots. The Kata was born as a historical document, a codified form of gestures that gathered the history of the school, but was also able to disguise what were the most important dictates of the same school, in order to allow

allow the transmission only to the adepts who understood the allegories. In short, it was a tool that only a few had the benefit of knowing entirely and which gave everyone the opportunity to practice it. There are different categories of Kata of varied origin that have marked the study of the various styles. Each Kata contains itself the most important information that each style has inside.

The Kata are exercises with their own sequential design, with preconceived defense techniques and forms of attack and counterattack inserted in the form that represents and simulates a fight against one or more opponents. Kata practice improves the speed, control, breathing, rhythm, coordination, concentration and performance of practitioners. The study of KATA is still the main tool for the knowledge and the deepening of Karate.

There are various levels of KATA learning, starting from the basics ones up to the superiors where physical skills of coordination, strength and speed are required.

Kumite

The Kumite, the fight, the last of the three fundamental levels of Karate, represents in itself what can be defined the synthesis of the two previous levels, that is the practical application of the techniques of attack and defense in real combat against an opponent.

Kumite is not, however, the ultimate goal of traditional karate: Karate is first of all a form of self-defense, rather than of attack.

Unlike other forms of fighting sports, traditional karate does not reward the amount of strokes carried out, but the quality, respecting the opponent and the rules of form dictated by the various levels in which it can be practiced



Through Kumite the student trains power, speed and self-control. The need to train the combat allowing performing the techniques at maximum speed and power without causing damage to fellow practice has introduced a fundamental concept: the technique is in fact stopped a few centimeters before the actual objective of the attack; this control allows a safe training for practitioners.



There are different levels of Kumite that are trained according to the experience of the students, starting from the lowest, the KIHON IPPON KUMITE, in which attacks and parries are declared at the beginning and opponents stay still; than in the JIYU IPPON KUMITE students declare the attack, but this is performed in movement without command; the last level, the JIYU KUMITE, generally trained only by the black belts, the technique is not declared and each one attacking freely choosing the technique or the combination of techniques more congenial to him.

BELTS

In Karate the levels of progress in practice are distinguished by the color of the belt. The levels preceding the Black belt, called Kyu, are traditionally 9, although in some Federations there are only 6, and they are associated in the following way:

- 6° Kyu: White belt
- 5° Kyu: Yellow belt
- 4° Kyu: Orange belt
- 3° Kyu: Green belt
- 2° Kyu: Blue belt
- 1° Kyu: Brown belt
- 1°-10° Dan : Black belt



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