

Shin-gi-tai Karate Clubs

The Korean Link

Background:

Until recently I have seen Tae Kwon Do as a high kicking sports based martial art with little value in self defence or karate development. I was aware that some students of the Martial Arts like Rick Clark sensei studied this art and have transformed the techniques into effective applications to acts of violence but I still did not understand the lineage of the system other than it originated from Shotokan.

I eventually decided to ask my sensei (Bud Morgan) about the line of skills development as he studied the Korean arts in the 1970's and his replies have led me to document my current understanding in the hope that others may find this interesting.

Time Frames:

To understand what probably happened with the link between what we know today as Shotokan and the Tae Kwon Do system, we should look at the events around that time;

1. Karate was introduced into the Okinawan school system in 1902.
2. First public demonstrations of karate in Okinawa (Funakoshi and friends) was in 1906.
3. In 1912, the Imperial Navy's First Fleet visited Okinawa and 12 members of the crew stayed and studied karate for a week. This started people talking of karate in Tokyo but formal visits from Okinawa to teach were only conducted about 10 years later.
4. A demonstration for the emperor of Japan was conducted at Shuri castle in 1921.
5. Korea was occupied by Japan from around 1910 to the end of WW2.
6. In 1922 Funakoshi was asked to visit Tokyo to present karate to the Ministry of education.
7. The term 'Shoto Kan' was first used in 1936 as the name of the new dojo in Zoshigaya, Toshima Ward.

Conclusions On Time Lines:

Based on the recorded time lines of events, we can assume that any early introduction of Karate to Korea was probably Okinawa Te (Uchinadi) and not what is today called Shotokan. However, there also appears to be a definite link between Funakoshi teachings and the knowledge of his karate in Japan, so it is quite possible that the Funakoshi Karate of the early 1900's was the base of Tae Kwon Do.

Kata naming Convention:

The early kata names used were;

Pyong Ahn for Pinan
Chulgi for Naihanchi/Tekki
Wangshu for Empi/Wanshu
Kong Sang Gun for Kusanku/Kanku

However, by 1965 (first English Translation), in Choi Hong Hi's book, on page 216 he states "The Shorin and Shorei schools are Japanese and Okinawan in origin", (which funny enough follows Funakoshi's writing in Karate do Kyohan, yet he makes no mention of Shotokan whatsoever) and the book goes on to list and describe the following patterns:

Heian 1-5
Batsai
Enbi
Rohai
Kouh Shang Kouh
Tetki
Jitte
Hangetsu
Jion

Conclusion:

In my opinion, from what I have read and been told, it would seem that the older Okinawan kata were translated, via Japan, to the Korean martial artists and maintained up until somewhere around 1950 before the modern day, rigid form of kata were introduced.

This translation was before the development of the rigid form karate that we see today and is probably a true picture of the birth and transition of pure Okinawan to Japanese karate through the 30's, 40's and 50's.

References:

Besides a lot of information provided to me via e-mail, mainly from sensei Bud Morgan, we also have the following reference points;

1. Karate-do, My Way of Life by Gichin Funakoshi
2. Karate-do Kyohan by Gichin Funakoshi
3. Tae Kwon Do by Choi Hong Hi

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