

Kenpo History

The earliest and, therefore, most speculative sources of our current American Kenpo Karate System are numerous. Kenpo originated from a southern Chinese martial art and is a mixture of 5 different cultures: Chinese, Japanese, Okinawan, Hawaiian, and American. Our curriculum at AKKA is primarily influenced by the original Chinese martial art and way of movement.

1) Shang Dynasty through Han Dynasty (1600 B.C.-220 A.D.) Most Chinese martial arts styles can be traced back about 3,500 years to the practice of Shuai Chiao. Shuai Chiao developed from such influences as the grappling maneuvers of Mongolian wrestling; the footwork of horn butting (Chiao Ti); and the simple empty hands boxing being practiced by the feudal nobility. It took approximately 1800 years of development for Shuai Chiao to develop into some type of standard techniques (with variations from different regions of China). Shuai Chiao became a national pastime that was widely practiced by the nobility and the military.

By the onset of the Han Dynasty, Taoism had developed as the main belief structure in China. The philosophy of yin and yang, force and counter-force, balance and counter-balance, and the philosophy of the Five Elements were incorporated into the people's Shuai Chiao. Taoist priests continued to work and develop internal power (qi or chi), breathing methods (nei gong), as well as moving and standing meditation.

One such Taoist contributor was Hua T'o, a surgeon who proposed a series of health exercises involving animal postures (bear's neck, fowl's twist, etc.). He is the source of the southern long-hand forms. Hua T'o also introduced our animal attitudes as physical and mental models, as well as the Taoist breathing techniques.

2) Liang Dynasty through Sung Dynasty (500-1260 A.D.) Bodhidharma (Daruma Daishi, Tamo) was the 28th East Indian prince and the successor to Buddha. Bodhidharma traveled to China to preach Buddhism, i.e., that one must coexist with nature and the surrounding environment. After being rejected by the warring Chinese populace, he retired at the Shaolin Monastery. While attempting to teach the Shaolin monks, Bodhidharma found that many fell asleep during meditation. Bodhidharma introduced a series of hand and foot movements to strengthen the physical and spiri-

tual natures of the Buddhist monks. The Shaolin monks used Bodhidharma's exercises as well as the fighting skills of body guards, temple guards, military generals, ex-soldiers visiting Shaolin and fellow monks (who came from poor backgrounds) to create the 18 Lohan Boxing style. From this beginning, the Shaolin monks continued to develop their martial techniques to aid in the protection and defense of the monastery from bandits. Bodhidharma's influence is preserved by us in his most famous quote, which is restated by Mitose: "...to fall down seven times, to rise eight times, life starts from now."

3) Yuan Dynasty (1260-1368 A.D.) During this Era, martial arts also became an integral part of the Chinese lifestyle. The martial arts were taught by only a select number of clans, who in turn passed on the deadly secrets to select clan members. The selected clan members were made, by their mentors, to swear never to disclose the secrets they received.

Around 1200 A.D., Genghis Khan began his conquest of China and in the process attacked a region containing one of the Shaolin temples. A high priest of the temple escaped to Japan where he met a Shinto priest whose name was Kosho. Kosho had already mastered a variety of fighting arts including: Kendo (Swordsmanship), Naginatado (Lance fighting), Kyudo (archery), fighting on

horses and swim fighting. The high priest taught the Ch'uan Fa (Fist Law) system to Kosho. After becoming a master of all these systems combined, he changed his name to Mitose and began teaching his martial arts (Kosho-Ryu Kempo).

Nearly 80 years later, a Buddhist descendant of Mitose (Kosho) founded the Kosho-Shorei (Old Pine Tree) temple in order to teach his philosophy of true self-defense (self-defense without body contact). Kosho-Shorei contained a complete system of wartime self-defense (Kosho Ryu) as well as a system of teaching religion, the arts, and humanities (Kosho-Shorii). The wartime art of Kosho-Ryu Kempo, was taught only to family members (insiders). Kosho-Ryu was passed on from generation to generation in order for the family members to be familiar with it and to be able to defend against it. Through these Japanese generations, the ancient Chinese art was extensively modified from its original circular movements to the more strict linear format preferred by the Japanese. The linear movements and takedowns incorporated into modern American Kenpo can be traced directly to Kosho-Ryu.

4) Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) By the start of this period, the Shaolin monk Ch'ueh Yuan had increased the original techniques of the 18 Lohan style to 72 movements. Ch'ueh Yuan eventually obtained permission to leave the monastery and traveled extensively throughout China in search of other Martial Arts masters to confer with. Ch'ueh Yuan obtained many techniques and ideas from his travels before teaming with two contemporaries; Li Sou (great Lohan martial arts master) and Pai Yu- Feng (Hit Tai Tau internal boxing master). The three masters returned to the Shaolin Monastery to combine what was known from the internal and external styles. Ch'ueh Yuan's 72 movements were expanded into 170. The new movements were then categorized into five distinct animal styles: Tiger, Crane, Leopard, Dragon, and Serpent. The five animal styles are the basis of the Shaolin Ch'uan Fa ("Fist Law") known as "Five Forms Fist".

Also during this era a dispersion of Ch'uan Fa or "Fist Law" occurred outside of China. In 1372, an official Chinese tributary relationship was established between China and Okinawa's King Sho-ha-shi. The Chinese martial arts began to mingle with Okinawan fist fighting (Tode). The intermingling of fighting styles occurred because of the establishment of a permanent Okinawan settlement in the Chinese capitol of Ch'uan Chou and the migration of 36 families from the Chinese province of Fukien to Kume-mura, Okinawa. In this way Chinese boxing was passed on to many Okinawans.

In 1609, Japan, lead by Shinazu, conquered Okinawa. However, the Okinawan Te Style (Ch'uan Fa) was already established within the populace. By 1629, various Okinawan Ch'uan Fa groups and tode (fist fighting) societies had banded together to form a new fighting style called "Te". During this period, many Okinawans were secretly sent to China to learn its fighting systems.

5) Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1912) After the Mongol takeover of China, the Ming Dynasty officials, which consisted mostly of the Imperial Guards, took refuge in the Shaolin Monastery to plot their revenge. With the influence of the Ming Dynasty Imperial Guards the Shaolin Monasteries began to codify and strengthen their particular martial art styles.

Legend has it, and we emphasize the legend has never been empirically verified, that in order to graduate from the Shaolin monastery, monks would have to exhibit phenomenal skills and pass through 18 testing chambers in the temple. If they survived the first 17 chambers, they would have to grip an iron cauldron with their bare forearms and have the raised relief of a tiger and dragon burnt into their skin. These marks were the signs of a true Shaolin Master.

During this tumultuous period, the monasteries were periodically burned down and the ever resilient Shaolin Monastery had to be relocated in Honan, Fukien, Kwangtung and elsewhere. This was beneficial to the development of the martial arts, because as battles between the

Ch'ing Dynasties and the Shaolin monks continued the different fighting styles intermingled and spread to the common populace. Two such styles born from the turmoil were Wing Chun Kung Fu and Hung Gar Kung Fu. Not only were these styles important to the spread of Ch'uan Fa to the common people of China, Japan, and Okinawa but they have significant influence on the evolution of American Kenpo Karate [See Thomas Connor, below]. A quick summary on the origins of Wing Chun and Hung Gar are given below:

Wing Chun Kung Fu

During the reign of Emperor K'angshi of the Ching Dynasty (1662-1722) Ch'uan Fa became very strong in the Shaolin Monastery of Mt. Sung, in Honan Province. This aroused the fear of the Manchu government, which sent troops to attack the Monastery. Although they were unsuccessful, a man named Chan Man Wai, a recently appointed civil servant seeking favor with the government, devised a plan.

He plotted with Shaolin monk Ma Ning Yee, and others, who were persuaded to betray their companions by setting fire to the monastery while soldiers attacked it from the outside. The monastery was burned down, and the monks and disciples scattered. Buddhist Abbess Ng Mui, Abbot Chi Shin, Abbot Bak Mei, Master Fung Doe Duk and Master Mew Hing escaped and went their separate ways.

Ng Mui took refuge in the White Crane Temple on Mt. Chai Har. It was there she met Yim Yee and his daughter Wing Chun from whom she often bought bean curd on her way home from the market. Wing Chun's beauty attracted the attention of a local bully, who tried to force Wing Chun to marry him. Ng Mui learned of this and took pity on Wing Chun. She agreed to teach Wing Chun fighting techniques so she could protect herself. Wing Chun followed Ng Mui into the mountains, and began to learn Ch'uan Fa. She

trained night and day, until she mastered the techniques. Then she challenged the bully to a fight and beat him.

Ng Mui later traveled around the country, but before she left she told Wing Chun to strictly honor the Ch'uan Fa traditions, to develop her skills after her marriage, and to help the people working to overthrow the Manchu government and restore the Ming Dynasty.

Hung Gar Kung Fu

Historically, Southern China has been dominated by five Kung Fu styles: Hung, Lau, Choy, Lay and Mok. Hung Gar is the most widespread and popular of these. Gar means clan or family in Cantonese, whereas Hung refers to the family name of the man who invented the system, Hung Hei Goon.

According to legend, Master Gee See, a monk of the Fukien Shaolin Temple, taught Hung Hei Goon, a Fukien tea merchant, the Shaolin Tiger Style. Hung, being a curious man, always sought to improve his skills.

He added to his Tiger Style many of the elements from his wife's White Crane system. He also incorporated movements from the Dragon, Snake, and Leopard forms, as well as techniques from the Five Elements Fist. He modified and expanded his "Tiger-Crane" Style to develop a system better balanced in long and short-range application, a system which better reflected his own character and skills of Hung Gar.

Hung Hei Goon developed a reputation for being a fighter of great skill and was known as "The Southern Fist". The essence of Hung Gar can be found in its name "Hung", meaning

to "stand tall with integrity." Hung Gar philosophy stresses honesty, directness, iron will-power and righteousness.

To show the diversity of fighting styles available throughout China, the following list names the various monasteries that existed at one point in time. A brief summary of the styles said to have been developed by the different monasteries is:

Honan - Northern Fist, Ground Dragon, Monkey, Praying Mantis, Cotton Fist, Eight Drunken Immortals, 10,000 Lotus Blooming, Golden Snake, Staff, Spear, Jointed Sticks, Single Broadsword, Double Broadswords, Tiger Hook Swords, Double Edged Sword, Three Sectional Staff, Chain Whip, Double daggers, Double Hand Axes, Single and Double Butterfly Knives.

Fukien - Southern Fist, Golden Centipede, Sparrow, White Monkey, Wild Horse, Iron Bone Training, Iron Palm Training, Iron Shirt Training, Short Fist.

Kwangtung - Tiger-Crane System, Fist of Ch'a, Crab, Golden Roaches, 10,000 Bees Attacking.

Shantung - Shantung Black Tiger, Tan Family Leg Techniques.

Omei Shan - White Crane, Eagle Claw, Golden Cock, White Swan, Ostrich.

Wutang Mountain - T'ai Chi Ch'uan, Pa Kua Chang, Hsing I Ch'uan, Liu Hsing Ch'uan, T'ai Chi, Broadsword, Spear, Ta Mo Sword and Double Sword and Spear, Seven Star Sword.

Hua Mountain - Classical Fist of Hua, Modern Fist of Hua, Chang Ch'uan.

As stated earlier, the influence of these unique styles are still highly present in modern American

Kenpo styles.

6) Karate Expansion (1915-1944) After the occupation of the Okinawan and Ryukyu Islands by the Japanese, the secret study of Okinawan Te was publicly allowed and a great popularization of Karate followed.

Gichin Funakoshi and Knewa Mabuni (Okinawan Te Stylists) exported a form of sport karate to Japan in 1916. This was the Showa Era in Japan. A great proliferation of martial arts and introduction of styles to the public occurred. By 1936 the term "Kara-Te" was utilized by the principal martial arts leaders of Okinawa.

7) Choki Motobu (1871-1944) Motobu was an eccentric Okinawan Karate master. He is responsible for secretly translating the Ch'uan Fa elements of Okinawan Shorin-Ryu ("Shaolin Way") into the current basic structure now known as Shorei-Ryu Karate. Choki Motobu is associated with the rise of Kempo in Hawaii because of a publicized visit in 1933 as well as a mysterious link with James Mitose and the development of modern Kosho-Ryu Kempo.

8) Dr. James Mitose (1915-1981) Mitose is a great grand master of Hawaiian/U.S. Kempo, and we can trace part of our lineage to him. At the age of 5, Mitose was sent to Japan to study the Mitose family tradition of Ch'uan Fa (or "Kempo" in Japanese) at the Mt. Akenkai Kosho-Shorei temple. As stated previously, the Ch'uan Fa tradition had already been modified by successive

Mitose masters until it became known as Kosho-Shorei Kempo (Old Pine Tree Style).

After fifteen years of training in his family's temple in Japan, Mitose returned to Hawaii. Following

World War II, he opened the Official Self-Defense Club to begin teaching his family's wartime art of Kosho-Ryu Kempo to the general public. During the next fifteen years of teaching, Grand Master Mitose awarded black belts to only six of his students: Giro Nakamura, Thomas Young, Paul Yamaguchi, Arthur Keawe, Edward Lowe and William K.S. Chow.

9) William K.S. Chow (1914-1987) Before studying under Grand Master Mitose, Master Chow had studied Boxing, Wrestling, Jujitsu and Karate. However, his main course of martial arts training was Chinese Shaolin Ch'uan Fa under the guidance of his grand-father (Hoon Chow).

Hoon Chow was a Buddhist Priest from Shanghai, China. Just prior to the Chinese Boxer Rebellion, Hoon Chow immigrated to Hawaii for a safer and more prosperous lifestyle. While living in Hawaii, Hoon Chow continued to practice the Shaolin Ch'uan Fa of Southeastern China (Kwangtung and Fukien). This is the style he taught his son,

William K.S. Chow. Master William Chow incorporated many of the things his father had taught him into what he would be the first to call "Kenpo" (Fist Law) Karate.

William K.S. Chow, a short man (approx. 5'1"), was raised in an Hawaiian culture where size, strength, and street fighting ability were highly regarded. In order to survive on an island of giants, Master Chow began to alter Shaolin Ch'uan Fa to make it faster, more powerful, and oriented around street fighting situations. Master Chow began the transformation by shortening the circular motions and flowing movements of Shaolin Ch'uan Fa. He continued by incorporating the linear movements, joint locks and takedowns learned in boxing, karate and jujitsu. Finally, he placed a major emphasis on the availability and targeting of vital parts of the human anatomy.

William K.S. Chow's Hawaiian Kenpo system (Kara-Ho Kenpo) was unusual for the time because it incorporated other martial arts techniques; Mitose had never associated his Kosho-Ryu Kempo with any other system. One of the most famous students under Chow's tutelage was Ed Parker.

10) Ed Parker (1931-1990) Ed Parker, a native of Hawaii and student of Master Chow, revised the traditional methods of coping with modern fighting situations and brought the art to mainland U.S.A. Master Parker developed the modern Kenpo style by analyzing combative predicaments from the viewpoints of the attacker, the defender, and the bystander or spectator. Through his observations, Master Parker disproved many theories and concepts that had previously been considered as combat effective.

Ed Parker systemized and categorized all the basic Kenpo elements into a logical order of progress for step-by-step instruction. Master Parker placed the Kenpo basics into eight categories: stances, blocks, parries, punches, strikes, finger techniques, kicks, and foot maneuvers. Master Parker also divided the Kenpo system into three major divisions: basics (including forms), self-defense techniques, and sparring (tournament and street). This innovative restructuring made the martial arts much easier to learn, understand, and master.

A recognized first generation student of Master Parker was Thomas Connor. Ed Parker and Thomas Connor were the founders of the Chinese Martial Arts Association.

11) Thomas Connor (1929-1989) Master Connor began martial arts training at the age of 7 years in the local Wing Chun and Hung Gar schools located in Newark, NJ and New York City. He studied continually until the age of 15 years at which time he enlisted

in the U.S. Army by falsifying his age to fight in World War II. At the end of the war he returned to the

United States to study linguistics. During this educational period, he honed his fighting skills and proceeded to win a series of Golden Gloves awards. Being a World War II veteran, a linguistics expert and having extensive knowledge of the fighting arts, Master Connor was the ideal candidate for intelligence work. From approximately 1950 to 1959, Master Connor worked for the U.S. Government as an operative in Central America and Mexico. As an agent for the U.S., Master Connor was able to broaden his martial arts training to include Jujitsu. In 1960, an exhausted Thomas Connor moved to Mexico with his young family to retire. With time to meditate on life, Master Connor decided to return to the United States to begin teaching the martial arts.

By 1965, Master Connor was running a very successful self-defense school and dance studio in San Jose, California. That same year, Master Connor formed a partnership (COPAR Kenpo) with Ed Parker and the two proceeded to open a series of Kenpo schools in San Jose, San Francisco, and Phoenix, Arizona. Within a short period of time, Master Connor's extensive knowledge and skill earned him the title of master in Ed Parker's original Kenpo system. It was during his time in California that Master Connor continued his involvement and training in Chinese Wushu or "Martial Arts". Master Connor frequently visited Chinatown in San Francisco to meet and train with other Wushu practitioners. It was in Chinatown that Master Connor learned how to use the two-headed chain and many other Chinese weapons.

By the early 1970's, the partnership between Master Connor and Master Parker had expanded to include the Tracy Brothers (TRACOPAR Kenpo). Master Connor's interests had also expanded to include bodybuilding (Master Connor won numerous bodybuilding including the Master's Division Mr. America). However, by the late 1970's the partnership had dissolved and Master Connor and the Tracy's remained as owners of a great many Kenpo Schools (TRACO International).

Master Connor's mastery of Chinese Martial Arts, boxing, Jujitsu, and professional bodybuilding were incorporated into what was to become a very strong, yet highly artful

form of American Kenpo. This unique system would later be named "American Kenpo Karate Academy" by Master Bill Packer, one of Master Connor's original students.

12) Bill Packer (January 18, 1946-August 19, 2005) William (Bill) Packer was born on January 18, 1946 in Columbus, Ohio. Three months later his family moved to Tucson, Arizona, where, later in life and after many moves he would begin studying Kenpo Karate. His father was a career military man and was transferred to Fairchild AFB in Spokane, Washington in 1953. Later, after a short stop in Ohio, the military sent the family to Puerto Rico. It was here that Mr. Packer was first introduced to Boxing and Judo. Master Packer also excelled in baseball, basketball, and swimming while on the island. Another military transfer moved the family to Springfield, Massachusetts where Master Packer resumed boxing around his first passion - baseball. The Vietnam War stalled extended efforts in baseball as Mr. Packer entered the military. Before and during the military, Master Packer had confined and limited experience in Okinawa-Te, Wing Chun, Tai Chi, and Tae Kwon Do. Boxing, however, was his most extensive prior training. After completing his tour of duty, Master Packer moved back to Tucson, Arizona and began training with Jay Huff, Sr., at TRACO International Schools for Self-Defense. Motivated and dedicated, Master Packer moved toward career training and became manager of the TRACO So. 6th Street school in Tucson. After a short stop at the Tucson Headquarters School, working directly under Mr. Huff, Master Packer was transferred to Globe, Arizona to open and manage that location and start direct training with Mr. Connor. Quick success moved Master Packer to greater opportunity in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Another success promoted him to Region-

al Director in the TRACO Organization. After opening another school in Flagstaff, Arizona, TRACO transferred Master Packer to Glendale, Arizona. The Glendale School became his home office as Regional Director for TRACO. As Southwest Regional Director, he interact-

ed with a great number of schools, managers, instructors and students. This gave him invaluable experience and insight as both a teacher of Karate and into the business at every level.

After establishing AKKA, Master Packer resolved to broaden the scope of his system. Early on, Master Packer was well aware of a variety of principles common to all Martial Arts (mind set, pressing, pushing, skill enhancement techniques, physical training, etc). Although the physical level seemed superior, he felt inadequate in that part beyond the physical. Master Packer started by researching the history, philosophy, and meaning of the animals, elements and colors associated with Kenpo. He incorporated various beliefs, according to belt, into the system. To insure the incorporation of traditional Chinese and Japanese ideas, Master Packer had a notable professor of Chinese Philosophy teach Martial Arts Philosophy classes to his instructors and student body. Most of AKKA's findings and developments can be found in the AKKA Black Belt Manual that he authored.

Concurrently, with the advancement of the system was the outburst of AKKA Kickboxing. After viewing the first World Karate Association (WKA) Championships, Master Packer knew, because of his prior boxing experience, the missing link was conditioning. In 1974, with these thoughts in mind, he moved forward to build AKKA Bad Company Fighting Team. Together they accomplished the following:

136 World Rated Fighters

20 World Titles

9 North American Titles

10 U.S. Titles

Premier Inductee of International Instructors Hall of Fame 1982 International Kickboxing Trainer of the Year

In 1978, Master Packer and Master Thomas Connor agreed the system could be even more balanced by integrating more Wushu elements of circularity and continual motion, movement chains, theory, concept, principle, iron palm, and seizing and striking the vital areas of the body. This constituted the following new and advanced forms annexed into the system: Tiger Hunt, Monkey, Leopard, Advanced Staff, Whispering Winds, and Enter the Temple. Forms not listed were appended in the same frame.

Master Packer passed away on August 19th, 2005 after a long fight with cancer. He is greatly missed by all who knew him.

13) Ed Bame (1951-Present) Master Bame began his martial arts training at the age of 15 years old in the Rembukai Karate Club, Stockton, California. Master Bame Studied Rembukai Karate under the direct tutelage of Gordon Kennedy and Ron Marchini.

Rembukai is a hard-style form of Japanese Karate based on the martial techniques utilized in full contact tournament fighting and competition. The Rembukai System is a conglomeration of elements from the different Japanese and Okinawan-Te styles (Shotakan, Kyukushin, etc.). Although Master Bame's training in the Rembukai was a relatively short one, elements of the Rembukai system can still be seen in his movements and teachings (deep stances, power generation, emphasis on form, physical training, etc.).

In 1974, Master Bame moved to Amarillo, Texas to begin his training in American Kenpo at the local Amarillo Kenpo Karate Academy. Master Bame studied under Mr. Phil Hower a student of both Master Tom Connor and Master Bill Packer. During his three years of training in Amarillo, Texas Master Bame developed an insatiable hunger for tournament competition

and full contact fighting. He would study and train for competition with such notables as Demetrias Havanas and Billy Jackson, from the Dallas, Fort Worth area.

In 1976, Master Bame began traveling to Albuquerque to study under Master Bill Packer at the headquarters in Albuquerque, New Mexico. By 1977, Master Bame had moved to Albuquerque to better continue his training and begin a career in professional kickboxing. A very successful career in kickboxing earned Master Bame the rating of 10th in the world by the World Kickboxing Association Federation (W.K.A.) and a chance to fight in some of the most famous fighting locations in the world (Tijuana Mexico, Oklahoma City, Denver, and Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas). His extensive fighting experience and proven training methods are evident through his successful tournament and full- contact fighters.

In 1981, Master Bame sustained a knee injury which forced him into an early retirement from the ring. About the same time there was a job opening in Phoenix, Arizona with the Traco International organization at a school in which Master Packer was also a partner. Master Bame decided to further his martial arts training by accepting the job position of manager and instructor at the Traco International school in Glendale, Arizona. For the next 3 years Master Bame would learn the business and management part of running a martial arts school from Master Connor. This time would also

allow him to train with Master Connor's son Thomas Connor II who had spent most of his adolescent life competing in Amateur Boxing in the greater Phoenix area. (Thomas Connor II earned wins in Golden Gloves, Copper Gloves, Silver Gloves, regional championships, and many other competitions.) In 1984, Master Bame returned once again to Albuquerque, New Mexico, but this time in pursuit of his own martial arts school under the training and guidance of Master Packer. Eventually, he came to own and operate many different AKKA Karate USA schools across the Southwest.

In 1987, Master Bame relocated to El Paso, Texas, where he now owns and operates his own martial arts school with the help of his wife, Martha Tovar. The school is located at 5362 Doniphan Drive.

In June of 2005 Master Bame tested for his seventh degree black belt along with Phil Gilbert in Albuquerque, New Mexico, thus sharing the highest rank in the organization tested by Master Packer prior to his passing. At present, Master Bame is furthering his education with Grand Master Fred Absher in the Kojosho system of Kempo, in Tijeras, New Mexico. Master Bame oversees the operation, training, and guidance of the AKKA schools located in El Paso, Texas and Cd. Juarez, Mexico.