

Introduction to Albany Shito-Ryu Karate-Dō

Karate-Dō is a Japanese phrase which means "Empty-Hand Way" in English. While usually thought of as a Japanese fighting art, Karate actually originated on Okinawa in the RyuKyu Islands south of Japan. Originally, Karate referred to "Chinese Hand" because the Okinawans borrowed many of their techniques from the Chinese. In this century, the Japanese adopted Karate and changed the kanji (Japanese characters) so that the pronunciation remained the same but the characters now meant "Empty-Hand".

Karate is typically thought of a martial art which includes just blocking, punching and kicking. That view is partly the result of the spread and popularity of Karate tournaments during the 20th century. To make competition safe for the athletes, many aspect of traditional or classical Karate had to be changed or removed. Therefore, what most people think of as Karate is a sport form which only awards points for certain techniques under certain conditions. Classical or traditional Karate is focused on movements that can be used for self-defense during fighting including takedowns, throws, grappling techniques. If it could be used by an attacker, old Karate had to deal with it. But some of the techniques are far too dangerous and effective to be used in a sport. For example, a response to a punch that starts by breaking the attacker's arm and follows up with crushing their pelvis can not be used in sport.

Shito-Ryu is the name of a particular style or school of Karate (Ryu means style or school). The name Shito comes from a combining the first kanji of two famous Okinawan Karate masters, Itosu and Higashionna. The founder of Shito-Ryu, Kenwa Mabuni, studied with both of these masters. Even though they came from different areas of Okinawa and had very different approaches to Karate, Kenwa Mabuni thought both perspectives were valid. So when Kenwa Mabuni moved to Osaka, Japan in the early 20th century, he began teaching Karate incorporating both the Itosu (Shuri-Te) and Higashionna (Naha-Te) methods. As a result, Shito-Ryu has over 60 kata or formal exercises (the combination of both systems). When asked to name his "style " of Karate by the Japanese Ministry, Kenwa Mabuni called it "**shi**" (from the first character of Itosu's name) "**to**" (from the first character of Higashionna's name). The Karate that Kenwa Mabuni taught was the old or classic fighting form of Karate. The students that he taught then went on to form there own schools and spread Shito-Ryu. The utility and practical nature of Shito-Ryu made it very popular. Therefore, today there are many schools and styles (a version or individual teacher's interpretation) of Shito-Ryu world-wide.

Dudley Moon, the chief instructor for Shito-Ryu in Albany, has over 40 years experience teaching Karate. First introduced to Shito-Ryu Karate by Mr. Robert Coryer, Moon Sensei (teacher) also trained under masters such as Siyogo Kuniba and Teruo Hayashi. Then in the early 1990's, he was accepted as a direct student of Kenzo Mabuni, the son of Kenwa Mabuni. Kenzo Mabuni (1927 - 2005) was the second generation headmaster of the Shito-Ryu karate system. Dr. Moon holds the rank of Hachidan (8th degree black belt) and Hanshi (master teacher) in Shito-Ryu Karate-Do. Moon Sensei teaches traditional Karate-Dō which emphasizes the use of the various techniques in self defense, but is ultimately focused on character development and kensho (self-knowledge). Classes are run much the same as Shito-Ryu classes in Japan complete with Japanese terminology. In addition to Karate, Moon Sensei has also trained in and teaches other forms of Kobudo or traditional Japanese/Okinawan martial arts.