

There are most speculative sources in the history of our current American Kenpo Karate System as follow:

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 who 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 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 [Canzonieri, Feb. 1996]. 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.

Liang Dynasty through Sung Dynasty (500-1260 A.D.)

Bodhidharma (Daruma Daishi, Tamo) was the 28th East Indian prince and the successor to Buddha who 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 spiritual natures of the Buddhist monks. Military generals, ex-soldiers visiting Shaolin and fellow monks (who came from poor backgrounds) to create the 18 Lohan Boxing style [Canzonieri, Feb. 1996]. 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."

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 [Tindall, May 1996]. 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 [Golub, Reference]. 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 the modern American Kenpo can be traced directly to Kosho-Ryu.

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 Snake. The five animal styles are the basis of the Shaolin Ch'uan Fa ("Fist Law") known as "Five Forms Fist" [Canzonieri, March, 1996]. 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, led by Shinazu, conquered Okinawa. However, the Okinawa 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 [Corcoran, 1984].

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 [Yip Man, Reference].

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-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 attributed 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 Broadsword, 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.