

Karate is an evolving art that traces its roots to Mainland China. While much of Karate's history cannot be academically verified, there are some basic facts that can be stated. Okinawan and Chinese merchants have been conducting commerce for centuries. Somewhere during that exchange of goods, Knowledge became a commodity of trade as well. The Chinese had many styles of empty-handed boxing and the Okinawans had an indigenous grappling art known as Ti. At some point in time some Okinawans began synthesizing these two sciences into what eventually became Karate. The three main hubs of Karate activity on Okinawa were the villages of Shuri, Naha, and Tomari. There were, of course, many other enclaves of practitioners around the island, but these three cities seem to have stood the test of time as the most prolific areas of practice and instruction.

Shito-Ryu is unique among modern Karate styles in that it incorporates kata from all three of these traditions. A kata is a prearranged fighting drill in which the practitioner conducts a mock battle with imaginary opponents. Kata is the chief mechanism for instruction in traditional Karate. Indeed, it was not until earlier this century that Kihon (basic drills) were invented. A person wanting to learn karate had to simply start with advanced kata since that was Karate at the time. Earlier this century Itosu Anko Sensei (a resident of Shuri) developed the Heian Kata and subsequently Kihon based on these kata as a means of introducing Karate to Okinawan school children in a more accessible manner. Half of the word Shito in Shito-Ryu comes from Itosu Sensei's name. The other half comes from Higashionna Sensei's name. Higashionna Sensei was a legendary sensei from the Naha area of Okinawa. His primary student, Miyagi Chojun Sensei, went on to found the Goju-Ryu school of Karate.