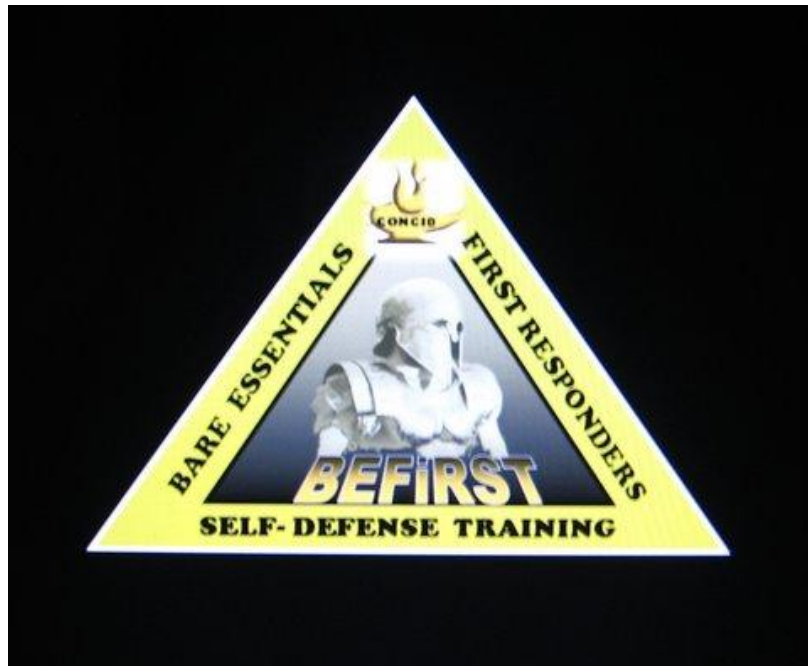


Bare Essentials First Responder's Self-defense Training

*What to look for when choosing a Self-defense
System or training hall?*



By L. Rivera

As the number of violent crimes has increased dramatically in the last few years, so have the public's interest in finding ways to mitigate the risks by learning how to protect themselves, their loved ones and their properties. Amongst the many avenues people are exploring, one of the most popular is self-defense training. However, the greater challenge encountered by folks is not finding a training hall, but rather deciding which of the many self-defense and martial arts schools and systems to join. In many cases people join a training hall to find out it does not meet their needs or expectations, which in the author's opinion is mainly due to lack of understanding, and background knowledge regarding the different self-defense and martial arts systems. This article provides information on the differences and similarities between self-defense and martial arts, as well as historical background and recommended criterion as to what to look for when deciding which school, training hall, organization or systems to choose.

Self-defense and Martial Arts

There are clear differences and similarities between Martial Arts and Self-defense. Self-defense has been defined in many ways by different sectors of the population; the dictionary defines it, *as the act of defending yourself*; nevertheless, one must also be cognizant of how far one can take this definition and not be found liable in a court of law. For this reason, one must also clearly understand the legal establishment definition. Self defense *is the legally justified use of force to protect oneself against an attempted injury; the "self defense" justification may also be used in the protection of another person or of property*. Under self defense, the defendant has the right to repel force with force. In order to prove a self defense claim, the defendant must have honestly and reasonably believed that protection required force. Other self defense factors include the restriction of amount and type of force used. Defendants that plead self defense must also demonstrate that they did not bring on the assault. Depending upon the state, self defense must either be proved by the defense or disproven by the prosecution (eJustice, 2009).

Martial Arts, however, are defined as systems of codified practices and traditions of training for combat; all Martial arts have a very similar objective: defend one or others from physical threat. In addition, some martial arts are linked to beliefs such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism or Shinto while others follow a particular code of honor. Many arts are also practiced competitively, most commonly as combat sports, but may also take the form of dance. The term *martial arts* refer to the art of warfare (from Mars, the god of war). It comes from a 15th-century European term for fighting arts now known as historical European martial arts. A practitioner of martial arts is referred to as a *martial artist* (Chang, 2009). Basically, the difference between the two is that unlike self-defense methods, martial arts are codified practices or tradition of training for combat, and the similarity is that tactics techniques and procedures typical of these codified practices are also applicable in self-defense situations. And now the question is "which came first, the chicken or the egg?"

Although the fact that survival drove primitive men to develop special unarmed and armed combat skills to defend themselves and their families from those who would not hesitate to harm them; the precise origin of sophisticated systems of fighting arts has been lost with time.

Most of the evidence of its development comes from ancient's scriptures, drawings and sculptures. According to martial arts historian Nijel B.P.G., the earliest documented evidence of



formal/organized martial arts system comes from wall drawings that were discovered in early 1800's inside a tomb in Egypt—from an area known as Beni Hassam. These drawings date this specific type of martial art as far back as 2500 BC. The aforementioned drawings depict a very complete fighting system that includes individual fighting techniques that combined punches, kicks and grappling techniques, the use of weapons, as well as infantry tactics and fortifications (A&E,1998).

Before the 1950's martial arts were a mystery and foreign to the western world.

Nevertheless, today the study and practice of martial arts is enjoyed by millions of devoted followers—men, women and children of every nationality that have perhaps found in it a way to satisfy their need to feel

safety or security of body—as defined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. However, self-defense and or protection skills are only some of the benefits of martial arts training. Other benefits include mental discipline and spiritual serenity.

Finally, although there are many systems of martial arts that preceded the Asian styles, it is the marriage of physical combat and philosophical aspects that distinguish or set them apart from the rest. The origin of these martial arts can be traced back to China, Okinawa, Japan and Korea, countries in which fighting systems have become an Art.

Asian Martial Arts

CHINA and its Martial Arts



In early 6th Century, on or about the year 527 AD, a Hindu Buddhist Monk named Bodhidharma who was the 28th Patriarch of Indian Buddhism and First Patriarch of Chinese Zen Lineage, created an exercise program for the Chinese Buddhist monks that involved efficient physical techniques that strengthened the body. These techniques were called the 18 hands of Lo-Han—exercise for greater holiness and that eventually, could be used for self-defense. When Bodhidharma instituted these practices, his primary concern was to make the monks physically strong enough to withstand both their isolated lifestyle and the demanding training that meditation required. It turned out that the techniques served a dual purpose, as a very efficient fighting system and to help the monks defend themselves against

invading warlords and bandits. Later, it evolved into a martial arts style given the Chinese name, "Kung Fu."

Bodhidharma taught that martial arts should be used for self-defense, and never to hurt or injure needlessly. In fact, it is one of the oldest Bodhidharma axioms that "one who engages in combat has already lost the battle". With time the 18 hands of Lo-Han evolved into a martial art form called *Chuan-Fa* or what it is known to westerners as Kung-Fu. However, this is only one of the versions relating to China's martial arts history. Some Chinese scholars say that the existence of martial arts training in China dates back way before Bihidharma ever set foot in China and that the martial arts of the Shaolin are only one aspect of Chinese martial arts history (A&E, 1998).

OKINAWAN Martial Arts

It is said that the traditional Okinawan martial arts called *Te* and Chinese *Kenpo* were blended together and developed into *karate*—It is important to understand that *Te* was not derived from, but influenced by *Chuan Fa* or Chinese Boxing. *Karate* later underwent significant developments in Okinawa based on several factors, including the policy of banning weapons following the political centralization of King *Shoshin* (1477-1526) and the Satsuma Clan's invasion of Ryukyu (1609) which also lead to the creation of *Kobudo*—an Okinawan term that refers to *Kobujutsu* or, ancient weapon art, and although *kobudo* weapons are not really a part of *karate*, their development has shadowed the development and evolution of *karate* to the degree that they are almost inseparable. *Karate* later developed further through a process of systematization into 'Modern Karate', which actually had a lot to do with the efforts of the men known as the *Chuko no so* (The Revivers), including Sokon Matsumura (1828-1898) of the *Shuri-te* style, Kosaku Matsumora (1829-1898) of the *Tomari-te* style and Kanryo Higaonna (1853-1915) of the *Naha-te* style (OPG, 2003).



In 1908, 'The 10 Articles of *Karate*' prepared by Anko Itosu were submitted to the Educational Affairs Section of Okinawa Prefecture. After that, *karate* started being introduced into the school gymnastics curriculum, thus acquiring broad accessibility, in contrast to the previously secret principles of *Isshi-soden* (the complete transmission of a *ryu's* techniques only to your heir). The developments that followed saw the dissemination of Okinawan *Karate* outside Okinawa's territory. Gichin Funakoshi—a school teacher in Okinawa—was invited to Japan to give an exhibition and later developed a new form of *Karate* called *Shoto Kan Karate*. Unlike Okinawan Masters, who taught fighting techniques and passed them from generation to generation basically undocumented, Funakoshi—whom as a school teacher who had a basic understanding of philosophy and a higher plain of intellect—used these abilities in the 1920's to write and published a book titled *Karate Do Kyohan* (A&E, 1998).

The Martial Arts of JAPAN



Japanese martial arts refer to the enormous variety of martial arts native to Japan. At least three Japanese terms are often used interchangeably with the English phrase "Japanese martial arts": "**budō**", literally meaning "martial way", "**bujutsu**" (武術[?]), which has no perfect translation but means something like science, art, or craft of war, and "**bugei**" (武芸[?]), literally meaning "martial art." The term "*budō*" is a modern one, and is normally intended to indicate the practice of martial arts as a way of life, and encompassing physical, spiritual, and moral dimensions with a focus of self-improvement, fulfillment, or personal growth. Judo is an example, a system that evolved from Ju-jitsu; however, in addition to the spiritual aspects, it also had a competitive side and it became the first of all martial sport and eventually an Olympic sport (JMA, 2009).

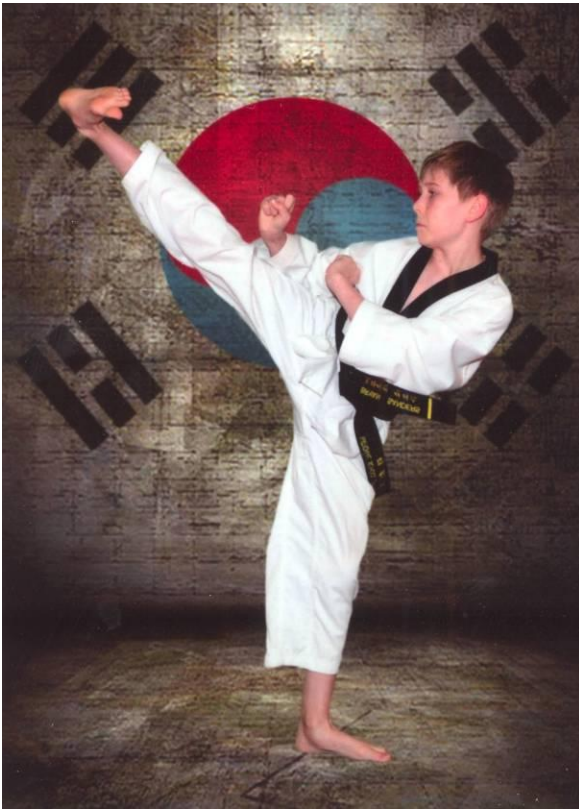
The terms *bujutsu* and *bugei* have more discrete definitions, at least historically speaking. *Bujutsu* refers specifically to the practical application of martial tactics and techniques in actual combat. *Bugei* refers to the adaptation or refinement of those tactics and techniques to facilitate systematic instruction and dissemination within a formal learning environment (Wikipedia, 2009). No other martial art exemplifies the true meaning of *bujutsu*, more specifically, the military applications, than the art of Ninjutsu. Close analysis of historical records, from as early as the eighth century to as late as the nineteenth century; show that the fundamental nature of Ninjutsu was in fact methods of infiltration into unfriendly, often hostile territory. Descriptions of such infiltration usually talk about a general who sends his agents to infiltrate his enemy's encampment, castle, or province. The purpose of that infiltration was to gather information about the enemy, to cause disorder, and to disseminate false information. Sometimes infiltration was the first act of a military confrontation, that is, an agent was sent to infiltrate a fortress in order to open its gates from the inside to allow warriors into the fortress. And sometimes the purpose of infiltrating the enemy territory was simply to assassinate the enemy's general. It is interesting to note that most descriptions of such infiltrations are only a minor theme within a larger narrative, that the term "ninjutsu" does not even appear, and that only rarely do we get a description of the method of infiltration. The most common terminology used in all of these historical records is, *shinobi komu* and *shinobi iri*, which generally mean infiltrating incognito (MARdb, 2007).

KOREA's Martial Arts

In the year 540 AD a new monarch by the name of King Chinhung came to power in the Korean kingdom of Silla—one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, and the longest sustained dynasty in Asian history. One of his most significant acts was the creation of the HWA RANG warrior. To accomplish this he called on a Buddhist Priest named Won Kwan Bopsa that had developed a system of martial arts whose germinal seed was embodied in the logo of UM-YANG symbol (Yin and Yan symbol). The priest taught martial arts and Buddhism to Silla's elite guards. He also taught them to act as models of cultured and chivalrous warriors. These

warriors received the title of HWA RANG or “Flowering Youth” and the institution Hwa Rang Do, or the “Way of Flowering Manhood (Lee, J., 1978).

In 1942, according to Mr. Joo Bang Lee, a monk named Suahm Dosa took him and his brother, Joo Sang Lee, for training. (Note that "Dosa" is actually his title, and it is roughly equivalent to "hermit sage expert.") They lived with Suahm Dosa at the Suk Wang Sa Temple in the Ham Nam province of North Korea, before later escaping with him to Ohdae Mountain in South Korea during the communist takeover. Suahm Dosa had no formal syllabus to teach them, but rather taught whatever caught his fancy that morning. After their training by Suahm Dosa, the two brothers spent some time learning other martial arts before they set out to create their own martial art.



Texas' Tae Kwan Do Fighter and Champion Bryan Sanders demonstrates a TKD Kick

The brothers generated their syllabus from scratch, based on the techniques which they could remember from Suahm Dosa, and then started to teach it to the public. At this time, Joo Sang Lee moved to the United States to spread Hwa Rang Do there.

In January 1969, Suahm Dosa died. However, prior to his death he gave the Hwarang title of Do Joo Nim ("Owner of The Way") to Joo Bang Lee. Because the younger brother was the one still in Korea and, in Suahm Dosa's eyes, the one who cared more about the art, Suahm Dosa gave him the title. This action angered Joo Sang Lee, and led to an estrangement between the brothers in later years. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the aforementioned dispute, the fact remains that Hwa Rang Do is the Korean Martial Art from which Tae Kwon Do—the Korea National Sport—and other Korean martial arts originated from (A&E, 1998).

Although the Asian martial arts are very popular, they are hardly the only choice for those looking to learn self-defense. The west also has many martial arts systems that one should consider. The main differences from eastern and martial arts from the west is that Martial Arts from the west are combat centric; take western boxing for instance. Western boxing is an excellent form of hand to hand combat which provides not only a set of fighting skills but also allows its practitioners the ability to develop their own style of fighting or self-expression. A boxing workout is not confined to just the tactics, techniques and procedures associated with combat skills, but it also addresses the improvement of the physical fitness of the individual with a series of endurance exercises such as calisthenics, shadow boxing, heavy bag, road work and full-contact sparing sessions. The very same can be said about the new sport of Mixed Martial

Arts. These two combat sports, although very effective in the sport arena lack the spirituality and some of the discipline eastern martial arts bring to the equation.

The fact of the matter is that although traditional eastern martial arts and modern western martial arts systems/styles can be beneficial to those that practice them, there are some negative aspects that must also be considered; in traditional Martial arts, the greatest drawback is just that, the word *tradition*—Beliefs or customs taught by one generation to the next. Many of these teachings have become part of the history and culture of the country of origin of the give art, and self-defense has taken a back seat to said traditions. Not that there is anything wrong with learning about different cultures, but if the reason for joining a martial arts training hall is to learn self-defense, learning other countries traditions and cultures will not help the person meet his or her objectives.

There are also some training halls that concentrate in teaching tournament style fighting. These watered down techniques, tactics and procedures; are good in a competition arena having little application in street combat situations. The other side of the coin is combat sports. Again, these martial arts or combat sports are also governed by a set of rules designed for ring safety that leads to the development of habits that will most likely limit the individual's ability to reflexively employ effective disabling techniques that are instrumental in surviving violence situations.

The selection of effective self-defense training should not be based on traditions or rules of a given sport or discipline, but rather in its emphasis on situational awareness and how it can be applied in the two stages of violent confrontations—the *“Pre-conflict Stage* and the *Engagement Stage*. It should also include Self-defense strategy and the psychological factors that influences personal behavior in dangerous situations, such as self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and perceived control, as well as carefully selected realistic, practical and easy to perform self-defense techniques, tactics and procedures that can be applied against different scenarios and situations, which will undoubtedly enhance the person's ability to repel an attacker, and consequently, their survivability. And last but not least are the legal aspects involving the difference between violence, self-defense and the justified use of force.

*The right Self-defense training is something your life may depend on some day
... Don't put your life and money in the hands of just anybody
Shop around ...!!!*

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