

## TRANSLATION/DEFINITION:

拳

# KEMPO:

## WHAT DOES THE NAME MEAN?

By WILLIAM LUCIANO

法

**Kempo** is a Japanese term for Chinese martial arts. It is made up of two words, Fist (拳) and Method or Law (法). In the Chinese Mandarin dialect it is pronounced Ch'uan-Fa or Quanfa. In the Cantonese dialect it is pronounced Kuen-Fat.

Kempo has also been used in the United States since the 1940's when talking about Chinese martial arts. Because Japanese martial arts were publicly more prominent, the Japanese point of view was the context in which other arts were viewed. Up until the early seventies Kempo and Chinese Karate were commonly used when talking about Kung-Fu. Similarly, Tae Kwan Do was called Korean Karate.

### KEMPO/KENPO

To the Japanese there is no difference between the sound ken or kem, they are interchangeable. The proper sound is ken, however both are used. Fist in Japanese is Ken, the word for sword is also Ken. So Kempo could mean fist method or sword method, The characters (Kanji) or the

context of what one is talking about will define which one it is.

In the U.S. there is a lot of confusion between using an "m" or an "n" when spelling Kempo/Kenpo. They are simply different romanizations. The different spellings have taken on additional meanings. Most people use Kempo when talking about Chinese and Okinawan arts. Kenpo is used when describing the arts that trace their Lineage to James Mitose's Kosho-Shorei Ryu System.

### KEMPO THE MARTIAL ART

As a martial art, Kempo can be most accurately described as a fundamental Chinese martial art which has been transplanted to another culture and has grown and developed on its own, despite being separated from its source. It should be noted that most Kempo systems have been spread throughout the world via Okinawa and Hawai'i.



*SHUFFLE VS. SIDE KICK. In a sparring exhibition at the Tournament of Champions, Muhammad Ali puts his fabled pugilistic skills against kempo practitioner Daniel K. Pai.*

- FROM BLACK BELT MAGAZINE, FEBRUARY 1973

Basic Kempo is generally a hard, external style martial art which relies on physical strength, speed and body conditioning. Advanced Kempo becomes "soft-hand." Kempo can be either northern or southern in nature depending on the Chinese system or systems upon which it is based.

## SYSTEMS OF KEMPO

There are many systems of martial arts that are considered Kempo/Kenpo. They can be divided into 4 different groups.

**Chinese Kempo** - This is essentially Chinese martial arts described from a Japanese perspective. In the U.S. this has come to mean any martial art that is Chinese or Chinese based.

**Okinawan Kempo** - Most Okinawan Karate systems. Chinese Kempo that has been transplanted and integrated into Okinawan culture. Okinawan Kempo is essentially Chinese martial arts (Ch'uan-Fa 拳法) combined with Okinawan martial arts (TI-Gwa 手小). Okinawan Go-Ju Ryu, Founded by Chojun Miyagi (1888-1953), is one the most popular of these arts.

**Japanese Kempo** - Chinese martial arts that have been transplanted and integrated into Japanese culture. Shorin-Ji Kempo, founded by Doshin So (1911-1980), is one of these systems, claiming to be directly decendent from the Shao-Lin Temple. Shorin-Ji Kempo is Japanese for Shao-Lin Ssu Ch'uan-Fa (少林寺拳法), Shaolin Temple Fist Method.

**Hawai'ian Kenpo** - Any Kenpo method that traces their lineage to James Mitose (Kosho-Shorei Ryu Kenpo, 古松槩勵流拳法) or William K.S. Chow (Kara-Ho Kenpo). Adriano Emperado's Kajukenbo, Edmund K. Parker's American Kenpo Karate as well as any system that has it's roots in one of these methods are in this category.

## KEMPO IN THE PAI FAMILY ARTS

In Pai Family Martial Arts we use the

term Kempo to describe fundamental, hard style martial techniques (such as closed fist basics) which are used as a foundation on which higher level skills can be built, as well as a number of more advanced forms of Chinese/Okinawan heritage.

Kempo, (Chinese, Okinawan and Hawai'ian) is part of our martial heritage. Particularly Okinawan Kempo. While this is evident in our basics, some of the Fukien White Crane skills found in Pai-Lum may have come from this source as well.

Some instructors use the term Bok Leen Pai or Pai-Lien P'ai 白蓮派 (White Lotus Sect) to identify the Kempo taught in the various Pai-Lum schools. While this is a common practice, the name Bok Leen Pai was used by all of Pai-Lum in the mid to late seventies when referring to the entire system, not just Kempo.

There is also a branch of Pai-Lum combining Pai-Lum and Kajukenpo (a martial art developed by the late William Gregory, combining Karate, Judo and Kenpo) This method, Kajukenpo PaiLum, teaches both arts separately and combined.

When asked about the difference between Kempo and Kung-Fu, Grandmaster Pai stated that "Kempo can be learned in a mirror, Kung-Fu you have to feel". This statement was aimed at a specific audience for teaching purposes. Taken out of context it might be taken to mean Kempo is basic and Kung-Fu is advanced. Because the terms Kempo and Kung-Fu are interchangeable, It



CHOJUN MIYAGI  
GO-JU RYU



SHIGERU NAKAMURA  
OKINAWAN KEMPO



DOSHIN SO  
SHORIN-JI KEMPO



JAMES MITOSE  
KOSHO-SHOREI RYU KENPO

should be read as “basic Kempo/Kung-Fu can be learned in a mirror, advanced Kempo/Kung-Fu you need to experience or feel”.

## DANIEL K. PAI’S KEMPO

Daniel K. Pai (1930-1993) trained in many martial arts. Aside from his family’s martial method, Okinawan Kempo, Judo and Ju-Jutsu played a major role in his martial development. He is said to have trained with Richard Takamoto (1915-1967) and Shigeru Nakamura (1894-1969) in Okinawan Kempo. It is not unreasonable to assume that he may have trained in some of the Mitose or Chow based Kenpo arts while growing up in Hawai’i. It is speculated that he had some associations with William K.S. Chow (1914-1987) and Adriano Emperado (1926-2009). While I have not found proof of him training with William K.S. Chow. I did meet Mr. Curtis Arrayan (1938-2003), one of Mr. Emperado’s first Kajukenbo black belts, he told me that Daniel Pai and Adriano Emperado were friends and that he had seen him (Pai) at the Palama settlement training hall on a number of occasions. Daniel Pai was also friends with Ed Parker (1931-1990). Both he and Mr. Parker stated that they were



GLENS FALLS, NY 2001 L. TO R.  
WILLIAM LUCIANO (PAI-LUM), CURTIS ARRAYAN (KAJUKENBO)  
STEVE NACUA (HOP-GAR KUEN, KAJUKENBO CH’UAN-FA GUNG-FU)

cousins, though there is some question as to if it was meant in a family sense or in a cultural sense (all Hawai’ians refer to each other as cousins). They did however know each other well and exchanged ideas about the martial arts.

## IN CLOSING

The primary goals of this article are to define what Kempo means and how it applies to the Pai Family martial arts. As you can see, it is a general term that can have a number of different meanings and cover a variety of styles/techniques. It would take volumes if one were to explore all of its variations and uses. Kempo has a profound influence on our entire art.



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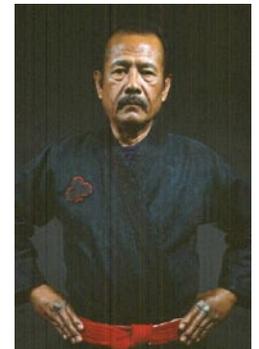
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PAI-LUM, PAI-SHOW, WHITE LOTUS AND PAI-CHIA TRAINING  
MANUALS, POLICY DOCUMENTS, HANDOUTS AND NOTES.



WILLIAM K.S. CHOW  
KARA-HO KENPO



ADRIANO EMPERADO  
KAJUKENBO



DANIEL K. PAI  
CHINESE/OKINAWAN KEMPO  
PAI-LUM KUNG-FU



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AMERICAN KENPO KARATE