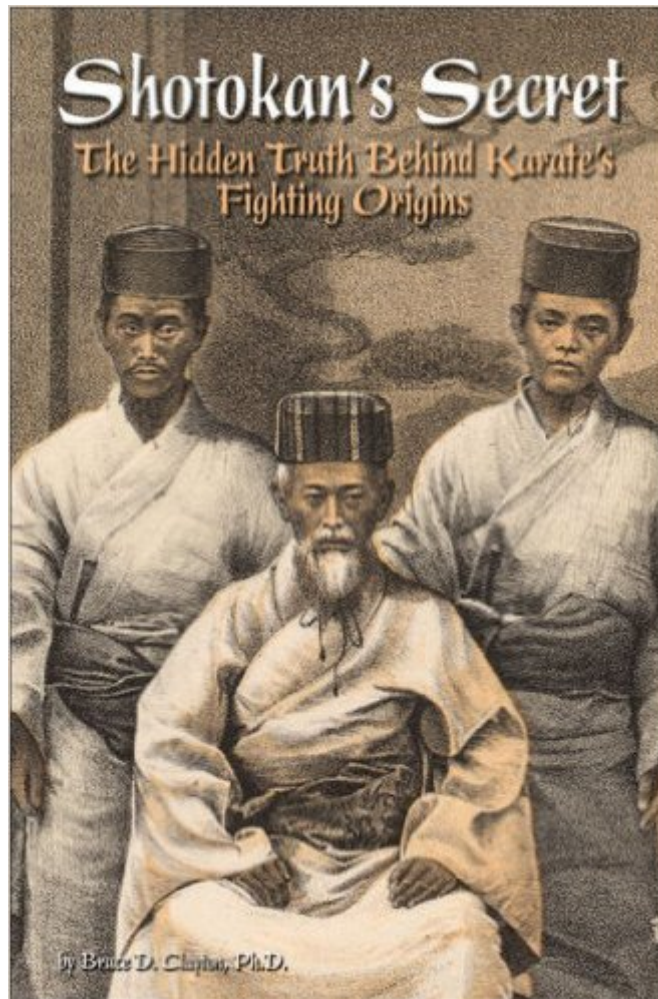


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Shotokan's Secret: The Hidden Truth Behind Karate's Fighting Origins



Synopsis

Learn how the hard-style karate that became shotokan took shape in 19th century Okinawa as an embattled king with an unarmed force of bodyguards faced an armed invasion from overseas. In this new 328-page book, author Bruce D. Clayton, Ph.D., uses rare sketches, footnoted historical research, archival lithographs, period photographs and contemporary technique demonstrations to reveal shotokan's deadly intent and propose modern practical applications of such knowledge. Achieve a new level of theoretical understanding and fighting ability by learning Shotokan's Secret for yourself!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am a 5th Dan Traditional Taekwondo Instructor here in Australia. In 2003, I started doing research into my system, exploring several hard style systems and doing extensive bunkai analysis of traditional taekwondo patterns. I was simply looking for some clarity to improve my teaching syllabus. Along the way I have met a handful of instructors and authors who are on the same path as myself. Some are ahead of me, and some who have not as yet caught up to me. These people however all seem to have the perceptiveness of 'old school' training yet an inquisitiveness from just being stubborn about looking for the truth. I like these practitioners - they cut through fads and trends, and set the standard using their own personal benchmarks. In 2005, I counted myself lucky to have stumbled upon a gem of a book 'Shotokan's Secret' from author Dr Bruce Clayton. Dr Clayton Sensei's book clearly marked him as a person who was even more "stubborn" than me in "looking for the truth." The book apparently started off with an "innocent quest" to find a portrait for

one Yasutsune Azato, Shotokan's Founder Gichin Funakoshi's first teacher. From my review of the first edition, I said that after picking up my copy of the book, I "have not been able to stop reading it." The easy narrative builds a compelling look into the life and times of the founders of modern karate - painting a picture of the risks they faced and the obstacles they had to surmount. No longer are we dealing with ancient mountain dwelling hermits, these were real men, and real lives were at stake. I could not stop turning pages because all of a sudden I had a story in my hands that gave me a very plausible reason for why we do what we do.

In "Shotokan's Secret", Bruce Clayton seeks to understand the environment under which Shotokan's parent art, Shuri-te, originated and developed. He paints a picture of an Okinawa in which every administrator in the royal court was a deadly practitioner of unarmed combat, and brutish Samurai and US Marines were the chief aggressors, intent on deposing the puppet king of the island. The descriptions are quite vivid and, if such circumstances are assumed to be true, might very well explain why Shotokan developed as it did, with the emphasis on long-ranged techniques, deep stances, and virtually no grappling. The primary problem I have with this book is that the situation that Clayton presents, which is necessary if we are to accept his logic about Shotokan's development, is based largely on supposition. The records of Okinawa during this time period are scarce at best, by the author's admission. What he does is look at modern bodyguard doctrine, and the kata found in Shotokan, and try to find a convenient place for the two to merge. It's as if, in realizing that his round peg won't fit into the square hole of reality, he decides to simply carve his own hole. In addition, he admits that the circumstances that he imagines Shuri-te developed under are impractical for modern self-defense. So, then, it becomes at best a point of historical interest; at worst, it's a vivid imagination at work, trying to justify modern Shotokan's less-than-realistic modern practices. That said, this book has many points in it that I enjoy. His descriptions of the Tokugawa shogunate and the social order it strictly enforced, coupled with his explanations of honne and tatemae, should be required reading for any student of the Japanese arts.

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