

KEMPO/KENPO FAQ: Direction, Differences and Different Styles

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The following FAQ is for the [Kempo/Kenpo](#) arts in general and is not specific to one particular Kempo/Kenpo school. Most of the history and information has a focus towards Kempo systems descending from James Mitose's Kosho-Ryu Kempo. There are other Kempo systems mentioned in this document. In most cases, throughout this FAQ, the word "Kempo" is used, though either Kempo or Kenpo could have been used. The reasoning is explained in this FAQ. Remember that this document is a "*Frequently Ask Questions*" list. It is not intended as in in depth study, just a starting point. Most of the URL's of sites linked in this document can be found near the end of the document. Please send any feedback, questions, complaints, etc. about this FAQ to the [maintainer](#). Please note, that this FAQ, in no way (just in case anyone thinks it is), was not meant to be offensive and if you think it is...well...sorry! Any corrections to any information given, as well as additions, is much appreciated.

The Direction Of Kempo

With all things, certain paths are given directing us on various routes to a final goal. Sometimes, this goal is reached in a very short period of time, while at other times that goal is never completed as new paths cross the original. The direction in which Kempo leads its practitioners is similar to that. Its goals are represented in a sphere, constantly expanding with the final goal, only being the beginning of a new stage. Perhaps, one day, a realistic goal will be mapped and the final enlightenment of the Kempo master will finally be attained.

Kempo is a unique martial art having been founded several centuries ago in a Chinese Shaolin temple. Thus, bringing with it a certain air of mystery. As a martial art, Kempo is referred to as a Do. The Do is referred to in Buddhist Zen scripts as a path towards enlightenment. Lao Tzu, a priest of Taoism, said "Mastering others requires force, mastering the self requires enlightenment." This phrase sums the full circle of what Kempo strives towards. Although on its surface Kempo can be seen as a unique form of self-defense, hidden beneath its physical exterior are levels where characteristic centralization of mind and body form. At this level, Kempo's practitioners elevate from a simple form of fighting to a higher level of ability and enlightenment. Ying Kuchan, a Shaolin monk and master of Kempo, after a lengthy period of meditation in a Zen rock

garden, spoke of Kempo saying "Kempo is the power of adaptability and yielding, the harmony of all things working together."

Kempo is a unique art form of spiritual growth, health, and personal responsibility. It is a comprehensive and diversified means of unarmed self-defense, though it encompasses both an armed and unarmed systems of combat with techniques (applications) of varying appearances and methods.

On an external level, Kempo is a no holds barred fighting system of offensive and defensive methods, with equal emphasis of striking techniques with the hands and feet, immobilization and controls, projections and take downs; as well as weaponry, various spiritual, and healing arts.

Kempo, as developed in America, is a street wise defensive art that does not restrict its students in methodology. Clawing hands evolve into slashing feet. Cunning joint locks turn into devastating hip throws. Evasive blocks turn into breath closing chokes.

The possibilities are endless. The only true fighting systems are those where there are no rules applied. From the books of the Han dynasty, we learn "Nothing is impossible to a willing mind." And it is from this saying that we can derive the upper principles of Shaolin Kempo. What sets Kempo apart from boxing, wrestling, and Sunday night football is an emphasis on spirituality of body and mind.

Many people are quite happy with only the surface value of Kempo, taking its studies for reasons of physical health, self-defense, or a Monday night hobby. Yet, Kempo tries to build a person's psychological persona and betterment. Kempo is not solely a means of felling an opponent by force, but it teaches an inner peace to one's life and to the universe around us.

What's The Difference Between Kempo And Kenpo?

Nothing. Actually, the only difference is in the translation of the Kanji to its English form. The rules of Kanji holds, that when a character (written word) ends in an "n," the "n" is pronounced, when spoken; with the exception, that when the "n" is followed by another character (word), which begins with a "p," the two characters are unchanged in the written form and the "n" is pronounced "m". Ken-po follows this rule. So, if following the correct Kanji translation, it is spelled "Kenpo" and pronounced "Kempo". It is only in transliteration that Kenpo is written Kempo. Thanks to Mr. Will Tracy for the Kanji translation lesson!

The words Kenpo and Kempo are both pronounced the same and both mean "Law of the Fist." It's sort of like saying "Qi" or "Chi", "Gung" or "Kung." Generally, though, the more "traditional" (lightly used) forms of Kempo use the "Kempo" form, while the more non-traditional or contemporary versions use "Kenpo." According to American Kenpo Grandmaster Ed Parker's book, *Infinite Insights into Kenpo, Volume I*, William K.S. Chow was the first person to use the term Kenpo to show his break from the Mitose

family Kosho Ryu Kempo. The current head of Professor Chow's system uses the "Kempo" spelling.

Kenpo is the Japanese translation of the Chinese for **Fist Method/Path/Law**. The old style Mandarin (Wade/Giles) would be Ch'uan Fa. The modern Mandarin (PinYin romanization) is Quanfa. Remember that Quanfa is a completely generic term (like Wushu or Kung-Fu today) and does not refer to a specific system or style. In Cantonese, it's Kuen Fat. Kuen means, the fist and is often expanded to mean Boxing or Boxing style. Fa means, a method, path, or law. The Chinese translations are from [Rene Ritchie](#). Thanks!

Styles Of Kempo

In no way is this a complete list of Kempo styles. The following is a list of Kempo styles that I have some information, if even vague amounts on. If you have information on forms of Kempo not listed here, please send me some so I can add it to the FAQ. The following list is of "unique" versions of Kempo, thus are the 50-thousand versions of American Kenpo. Although referred to by different names, they are not all listed.

KOSHO RYU KEMPO - This style of Kempo was brought by visiting monks to the Mitose family in the 15th century. Over the centuries this form of Shaolin Chuan Fa was blended and refined with forms of Jujitsu that were common to the area; as well as Rinzai Zen philosophy, Kyudo, and other arts. Kosho, the name of the Mitose clan, means "Old Pine Tree" and the Kempo art is referred to as "The Old Pine Tree Style." Kosho-Ryu Kempo was brought to the United States by Hawaii-born James Masayoshi Mitose, who learned the art in Japan from his [uncle](#). James Mitose's son, [Thomas Barrow Mitose](#), claims that he teaches the true form of his father's art and that he is the true Grandmaster of the Kosho-Ryu style. [Kajukenbo](#) founder, Grandmaster Adriano Emperado agrees and has stated, that, in his opinion, *'without a doubt that Thomas Barrow Mitose is the true keeper and Grandmaster of Kosho Ryu.'*

Kosho Shorei Ryu Kempo -[Ryu Kempo](#) One of James Mitose's last students was Bruce Juchnik, who calls the Kempo he teaches [Kosho Shorei-Ryu Kempo](#). He is one of the few people to be issued a *Masters Certificate* from James Mitose. Some people consider him to be the current Grandmaster of Kosho Ryu Kempo. Before Mr. Juchnik even met James Mitose, he was a skilled instructor of American Kenpo (Tracy System) and other martial arts. These included [Wing Chun](#), and Silat. His training from Great Grandmaster Mitose was limited to verbal instruction, due to the fact that James Mitose was serving a life sentence in a California maximum security prison at the time. (Mr. Juchnik was introduced to James Mitose by one of his students, who was a prison guard at the maximum security prison where Mr. Mitose was serving his sentence.)

CHINESE KARA-HO KEMPO KARATE - Founded by William K.S. Chow, a student of James Mitose, this Kempo offshoot is a blend of the Kosho Ryu Kempo and [5-animal Kung Fu](#) of the Chow Family. [Chinese Kara-ho Kempo Karate](#) utilizes many circular as

well as linear techniques and requires 500 such techniques to be learned for black-belt status. Currently, Chinese Kara-ho Kempo Karate is under the evolution of Sam Kuoha who has added various new techniques as well as 12 kata based on Chow's original 12 base linear techniques. Chinese Kara-Ho Kempo Karate is currently is a growing Kempo organization with currently over 5000 members to its teachings.

SHAOLIN KEMPO KARATE - The Shaolin Kempo Karate system was founded by Fred [Villari](#), a student of [Kajukenbo](#) as well as other martial arts. Fred Villari's system tends more towards the Kung-Fu element and utilizes the techniques of the [5 animal Chuan Fa](#) to a large extent. Added to the Kempo system was White Tiger Chin Na techniques, as well as various Aikijujitsu projections and immobilizations. Shaolin Kempo Karate is taught across the United States and Canada. Grandmaster Villari's organization is [Villari's Martial Arts Centers](#). There have been several [splinter organizations](#).

AMERICAN KENPO KARATE - An offspring of William Chow's Chinese Kenpo Karate, Ed Parker's American Kenpo system is of the larger systems. Parker took what William Chow taught him and organized every technique and movement into a format that could be broken down into levels for all students. Parker felt that the innovations he added to his Kenpo eventually made up 85% of the system and, thus, he renamed it American Kenpo Karate. The American Kenpo system can be seen in the movies "*The Perfect Weapon*", and "*Street Knight*" starring 5th dan, Jeff Speakman, head of the *American Kenpo Karate Systems* and former student of Ed Parker.

NICK CERIO'S KENPO - [Nick Cerio](#) received his first black belt in the Kajukenbo style of Kempo from Mr. George Pesare. The Cerio Kempo schools teaches Shotokan forms, Kung Fu forms and Kajukenbo forms. Japanese stances, as well as Jujutsu are also taught. Weapons of both Chinese and Japanese systems are taught. Mr. Cerio called Master William Chow his "teacher" and Master Edmund Parker his "coach"

Professor Cerio passed away on October 7, 1998. The cause of death was complications from cancer. No single successor was named. The organization is run by an [executive board](#) set up by Mr. Cerio. There has been at least one major splinter organization created since his death.

WHITE TIGER KENPO KARATE - The art of Master John McSweeney (10th degree) and Thomas Saviano (5th degree). White Tiger springs from the training of Mr Saviano and Mr McSweeney. Mr McSweeney was first introduced to martial arts through the military and he trained in Judo at the Kodokan in Tokyo (1952). After returning state-side, he was introduced to Ed Parker and began training with him in 1959. Through Mr Parker, he also trained with many [Kung Fu](#) stylists, such as Jimmy Woo (Parker's assistant for some time) and James Lee (Bruce Lee's future training partner). Mr McSweeney trained in both [Parker's Kenpo](#) and White Crane Kung Fu (under Woo). He received his black belt from Mr. Parker in 1962. This combined with many street confrontations, turned into Mr McSweeney's style. Mr Saviano, also, trained in traditional Karate and forms of Northern Kung Fu. All this was combined into White Tiger Kenpo.

If your looking for references to back this up, look up the AKKA (American Kenpo Karate Association). Mr McSweeney is president and Mr Saviano is Vice President.

This information is from a post to [rec.martial-arts](#) by [Matt Knowles](#)

SHAOLIN AMERICAN KEMPO - A system that blends the Shaolin Kempo arts with other stlyes of Kenpo, and physics. Jim Brassard after achieving master ranking in Shaolin Kempo karate blended in other kenpo principles and techniques while deleting others to bring more order to this art, while applying proper physics for correct execution and economy of motion. [U.S.A. Martial Arts Alliance](#) under the direction of 10th dan Dr. Jim Thomas and 15 other grandmasters such as Aaron Banks, granted Jim Brassard a Sokeship and 10th Dan status after review of his time in grade, ability and knowledge of the arts in 2006.

KAJUKENBO - [Kajukenbo](#) was synthesized in the Palama settlements of Hawaii during the years 1949-1952. Five practitioners of their respective martial arts developed Kajukenbo to complement each others styles, to allow effective fighting at all ranges and speeds. The man credited with the founding of Kajukenbo is Siju Adriano D. Emperado, who practiced [Kempo](#) and Escrima. It was decided that Kempo would be the scaffolding, around, which Kajukenbo was built. The arts drawn upon to found Kajukenbo are Tang Soo do (**karate**), **Judo**, Ju-jitsu, **Kempo**, and Chu'an Fa [Gung Fu](#) (Chinese **boxing**); hence the name Ka-ju-ken-bo (Tang Soo Do was shortened as a form of Karate, even though that is technically incorrect. There are some students of Kajukenbo history, who state that the Karate part of the system is actually Shotokan. The practioner was Korean, not the art he practiced).

To test the effectiveness of their original techniques the five founders would get into fights around Palama settlement (the worst slum in Hawaii, at the time). If the technique succeeded consistently in street fighting, it was kept as part of the system. From these field test came Kajukenbo's Quins (known as the Palama's sets (forms or kata), Natural laws (self-defense), Tricks (close-quarters fighting), and grab arts (escapes).

GO SHIN JITSU - KAI CHINESE KEMPO FEDERATION OF AMERICA - This is the art of Grandmaster William Chun, a first generation student of Chinese Kara-Ho Kempo Karate Grandmaster William Chow. Their [organization](#) is based in Fairfield, California.

AMERICAN SHAOLIN KENPO - The art of [Grandmaster Ralph Castro](#). Mr. Castro studied Kempo from William Chow, then after moving to California, earned his Black Belt from American Kenpo Karate Grandmaster Edmund Parker.

[note: This is according to his daughter June on one of her Shaolin Kenpo instructional videos]

NIPPON KEMPO - The American Nippon Kempo Federation is based in California. In 1931 Master Sawayama founded the system, basing it on Shito Ryu karate and judo. In

1960 Master Koki Kinuya, a 5th Dan of Nippon Kempo, brought the system to the United States.

RAVEN KENPO JUJITSU - Founded by Sijo Art Lapham.

Koga Ha Kosho-shorei Ryu Kempo - These schools are based in Philadelphia. The head of this system is Shihan Nemir Hassan. Mr. Hassan, then using the name Terry Lee, was Great Grandmaster James Mitose's last student prior to his conviction and prison sentence. Mr. Hassan teaches what he says is the Mitose family Ninjitsu.

Kiyojute Ryu Kempo Bugei -- Kiyojute Ryu Kempo Bugei is a complete martial art that was developed by Dr. William Durbin and is taught in the tradition of the ancient martial arts of Okinawa. I was recognized in 1982 by the Zen Kokusai Soke Budo/Bugei Renmei, the International Board of Soke, in 1983 it was recognized by the International Kosho Shorei Association, and in 1986 by the Dai Nippon Seibukan Budo/Bugei Kai.

YOSHIN KEMPO -- Yoshin Kempo [meaning Willow Heart Fist Law] is a Japanese term for a Martial Art taught by: **Kyoshi Neil Hourston**, it is a modern self-defence system based on proven battlefield skills used by the warriors of Japan, the Samurai. The Yoshin Kempo system is based on two Samurai schools which are Yoshin-Ryu JuJitsu [Willow Heart School Pliable Art] and Kosho-Ryu Kempo [Old Pine Tree School Fist Law]. Yoshin Kempo incorporates a variety of physical, mental and spiritual elements.

I am acknowledging the following Kempo systems although I have little or no information about them.

- Okinawian Kempo
- Go Kempo
- Ju Kempo
- Sam-Pai Kenpo
- **Won Hop Kuen Do**
- Kam Lung Kempo
- Kempo Fu Shih
- Kam Lung Kempo
- Ken-sho Ryu
- Nippon Goshindo Kempo
- Oki-ryu Kempo
- Lee Do Kan Kenpo
- Ten-Chi Kenpo
- Kindai Inazuma Ryu Kenpo
- **Goshin-Ryu Kempo**