

The Story of the Shotokan Tiger

The History and Evolution of the Shotokan Tiger

According to Sensei Randall Hassell's "Shotokan Karate: It's History and Evolution"

Hoan Kosugi, a famous artist and president of the Tabata Poplar Club, an artist guild, was a very important figure in the development of Shotokan karate-do in Japan. To entice Funakoshi to write a book about karate, Hoan Kasugi told Funakoshi that if he would write the book, Hoan Kasugi would design it and provide a painting for the cover. When Gichin Funakoshi produced the book, Hoan Kasugi produced the now famous Shotokan tiger.

Hoan Kasugi's idea for the tiger came from the expression "Tora no maki." Tora no maki in the Japanese tradition is the official written document of an art or system which is used as the definitive reference source for that particular art. Since no books had ever been written about karate, Hoan Kasugi told Funakoshi that his book was the tora no maki of karate, and since "tora" means "tiger", he designed the tiger as a representation of Funakoshi's art.

The irregularity of the circle indicates that it was probably painted with one brush stroke. The characters by the tigers tail denote the name of the artist.

The Shotokan tiger is a traditional Chinese design which implies that the tiger never sleeps. The tiger, therefore, symbolizes the keen alertness of the wakeful tiger and the serenity of the peaceful mind which Master Funakoshi experienced while listening to the pine waves on Tiger's Tail Mountain.