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# VORTRAG

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## From invented traditions to distorted history: Okinawa as portrayed in narratives of karate



Popular narratives in the West often depict karate as Japanese martial art embodying the spirit of samurai. Such karate is a typical example of “invented tradition”, given the fact that in Okinawa, where karate was born, there were never samurai. This is not to say that karate is “fake” or “untrue” and thus lacks legitimacy to represent Japanese traditions. The problem lies elsewhere: karate narratives often confuse Okinawa with Japan and depict the entire Okinawan past by means of Japanese imagery, as if Okinawa had always been an integral part of Japan.

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