

The *Dō* (ing) on Screen: Analyzing the Mediatization of the Cultural Practice of *Karate-dō* through *The Karate Kid* Series

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This research examines the American cinematization of the Japanese martial art and cultural practice of *Karate-dō* and the trivialization of its socio-political history of origin and cultural significance by representing it as a media spectacle in the context of the relations between America and Japan in the post-World War II era. Karate is a cultural practice and a practice of resistance that emerged under the specific socio-political contexts of *Okinawa* before being adopted and institutionalized as Japanese martial art and sport. The relationship between Japan and America during World War II and the American Occupation of Japan is based on the dynamics of power between the hegemonic America and the culturally Othered Japan. The study analyses three films, *The Karate Kid* (1984), *The Karate Kid 2* (1986), and *The Karate Kid 3* (1989), to understand how American cinema creates a cultural Other through the spectacularization, exoticization, and commodification of the cultural and technical elements of *Karate-dō*. The conceptualization of the research and the analysis of the films are conducted through existing scholarship on the definitions of culture and the role of martial arts in media against the background study of the origin of karate and the relationship between post-World War II America and Japan. The research utilizes textual analysis of existing scholarship, and visual analysis of the films to study the representation of the cultural and technical elements of *Karate-dō*. As a cultural practice, critical analysis of the films reveals that *Karate-dō* is appropriated as a media commodity by American cinema to corroborate its hegemony over Japan. Therefore, exoticization and commodification of cultures within media functions as a tool to concretize stereotypes, and perpetuate racism and discrimination against minority or different cultural identities and practices.

Keywords: American Cinema, Japanese Cultural Practice, Karate-dō,
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