UECHIRYU BUTOKUKAI™

History & Terminology

STUDY GUIDE

For Black Belt Testing

A Brief History of UECHIRYU KARATE-DO

Uechiryu is purportedly based on three animals: The Tiger, Crane, and Dragon.

The history of Uechiryu (Pronounced Way-Chee-Roo), began in Okinawa on May 5, 1877, with the birth of the founder: Kanbun Uechi. Kanbun was the oldest son of Samurai descendants Kantoku and Tsura Uechi.

In 1897, Kanbun left Okinawa for China to avoid Japanese Military conscription. He arrived in Fuchow City, Fukien Province and began his marital arts training.

For the next ten years, he studied under the guidance of a Chinese Monk we know as Shushiwa (1874 - 1926). The style of karate that Kanbun learned from Shushiwa (Pangainoon) later became the foundation of Uechi Ryu.

In 1907, Shushiwa encouraged Kanbun to open his own school. He eventually did in Nansoe, a day's journey from Fuchow. Kanbun was credited with being the first Okinawan to operate a school in China. The school ran successfully for three years, then one of his students killed a neighbor in self-defense in a dispute over an irrigation matter. The incident hurt Kanbun to the point that he closed his school and returned to Okinawa. There he married, settled down as a farmer and vowed never to teach again. On June 26th, 1911, his first son Kanei Uechi was born.

In 1924, Kanbun Uechi, along with many other Okinawans, left his home and went to Japan for stable employment. He arrived in Wakayama and worked as a janitor. It was here that he met a younger Okinawan Ryuyu Tomoyose. It was through this friendship that Kanbun agreed to begin teaching in a limited capacity. On November 25th, 1948 Kanbun Uechi dies of nephritis. He was Seventy-One.

It was here that the co-founder of this style, Kanei Uechi (Son of Kanbun) began his martial arts practice. After ten years, he returned to Okinawa. Like his father, Kanei married an Okinawan (named Shige) and kept his martial arts practice from becoming public knowledge.

Sometime later, Ryuko Tomoyose (born December 10th, 1928), son of Ryuyu, approached Kanei and following the advice of his father, did everything he could to convince Kanei to begin teaching in Okinawa. Kanei resisted until Ryuko and several fellow farmers built a dojo for Kanei. Later, this was moved to its current location in Futenma and was called “Uechi Ryu Karate Family Headquarters Dojo” (a.k.a. “Soke”). Kanei and Ryuko stayed together for many decades and became the best of friends. A friendship which continued until Kanei Uechi died (February 21st, 1991).

Ryuko Tomoyose has a long list of amazing accomplishments. In addition to becoming one of the highest ranking living martial artist in Okinawa, he was also given the title of National Living Treasure of Japan. He is also fluent in English. In 1956, with the permission of Kanei Uechi, he began teaching the first non-Okinawans Uechiryu Karate.

There have been several highly known non-Okinawan students. Two examples are, the late Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond, and George Mattson, who would become the first American to be promoted to Shodan (First Degree Black Belt). In 1958, Ryuko Tomoyose gave George Mattson two instructions for returning the United States: write a book and teach Uechiryu.

George Mattson began teaching at the YMCA in Boston and this grew into becoming the famous “Mattson Academy of Karate”. It was at this school that many of the most remarkable Uechi practitioners began their training.

In 1963, George Mattson published his first book “The Way of Karate”. This was the first hardcover publication of martial arts ever to be written in English.

In 1966, Buzz Durkin began his practice under the tutelage of George Mattson. In 1969 Mr. Durkin received his Shodan. In 1974, he opened his dojo is Salem, NH.

In 1984, Master Uechi visited the Salem dojo and named it “The Butokukan,” which translates to mean “Place Where People Study the Virtues of The Martial Arts.” That same year, Buzz Durkin formed the Uechi Ryu Butokukai (Gathering of People Who Study the Virtues of The Martial Arts). The Uechi Ryu Butokukai is now an association of schools consisting of Buzz Durkin’s Karate School and all schools owned by Mr. Durkin’s students.

In 1988, Buzz Durkin opened his new facility in Atkinson, NH. Mr. Tomoyose, Mr. Nakahodo and Mr. Kanmei Uechi attend the dedication ceremonies. The dojo would later be awarded “Best Martial Arts Facility in North America” for three years in a row by the United States Martial Arts Association.

February 21st 1991, Master Kanei Uechi dies at the age of 79. Kanmei Uechi then became the headmaster of Uechiryu.

September 14th 2015, Master Kanmei Uechi dies at the age of 74. Currently, Kancho Uechi (Great-Grand son of Kanbun Uechi) is the headmaster of Uechiryu Karate-do.

On August 19, 2017, Buzz Durkin was promoted to the rank of Judan – Tenth Degree Black Belt.

In 2018, Judy Durkin (Mr. Durkin’s wife) was promoted to the rank of Kudan (Ninth Degree Black Belt). Among her many accomplishments, Judy is credited with being the highest ranking woman in all Okinawan Martial Arts.

Ryuko Tomoyose passed away on April 9th, 2019

In 2024, Judy Durkin was promoted to the rank of Judan – Tenth Degree Black Belt.

UECHI TERMINOLOGY

Term	Translation
Ichi	1
Ni	2
San	3
Shi	4
Go	5
Roku	6
Shichi	7
Hachi	8
Ku	9
Ju	10
Ju-Ichi	11
Ni-Ju-Ichi	21
Hyaku	100
Karate	Empty hand
Karate-Do	Way of karate
Uechi Ryu	Uechi's style / Uechi's way
Pangainoon	Half-hard, half-soft (Foundation of Uchi Ryu)
Butokukai	Gathering of people who study the virtues of the martial arts
Butokukan	Headquarters dojo of the Butokukai
Sensei	Teacher / One who has gone before
Karate Ka	Karate student
Sempai	Senior student
Kohai	Junior student
Dan	Senior
Kyu	Junior
Dojo	Way-place
Gi	Uniform / Shirt
Do-Gi Wa	Uniform of the way
Obi	Belt
Chi	Spirit (Chinese)

Ki	Spirit (Japanese)
Kiai	Shout of spirit
Kami Dana	Guard shelf
Makiwara	Striking post
Bunkai	Application
Kumite	Clashing hands
Kotekitae	Forging of the bone
Shinkokyu	Deep breathing exercise
Seiza	Proper sitting
Waza	Technique
Uke	To accept / Block
Wa-Uki (Mawashi-Uke)	Circular block
Jodan-Uke	Upper-area block
Chudan-Uke	Middle-area block
Gedan-Uke	Lower-area block
Nagashi-Uke	Push block
Tsuki-Uke / Zuki-Uke	Thrust block
Hajiki-Uke	Snapping / Striking block
Uchi	Strike
Tsuki	Punch / Thrust
Seiken-Tsuki	Straight punch
Mawashi-Tsuki	Roundhouse punch
Seiken	Fore-knuckle fist
Uraken	Backfist
Boshiken	Thumb-knuckle strike
Hiraken	Flat fist
Shoken	One-knuckle fist
Shuto	Knife-hand strike
Nukite	Spear-hand strike
Haito-Uchi	Ridge-hand strike
Empi-Uchi / Hiji-tsuki	Elbow strike

Geri	Kick
Shomen-Geri	Front kick
Mawashi-Geri	Roundhouse kick
Yoko-Geri	Side kick
Sokuto-Geri	Kick using the blade edge of the foot
Tobi-Geri	Flying / Jumping kick
Ushiro-Geri	Back kick
Hiza-Geri	Knee strike
Keage	Snap (Snap kick)
Kekomi	Thrust (Thrust kick)
Hai	Yes
Iie	No
Dozo	Please
Domo Arigato	Thank you
Arigato Gozaima-shita	Thank you (formal)
Go Kuro Sama	Thank you for your hard work
Do Itashi-Mashite	You're welcome
Kaicho	Good work
Gambatte Kudasai	Please do your best
Onegaishimasu	Do me this favor
Shomen / Mae	Front (or front wall of a dojo)
Migi-e	Right
Hidari-e	Left
Massugu	Straight
Mawate	Turn
Sanchin-Daichi	Sanchin stance
Kiba-Dachi	Horse stance
Zenkutsu-Dachi	Leaning forward stance
Musubi-Dachi	Bowing stance (heels touching, feet out about 40 degrees)
Hachiji-Dachi	Informal stance (parallel stance with feet out about 40 degrees)

PRIMARY KATA

INFO AND TRANSLATION

Sanchin

Three Conflicts (Chinese)

There are many interpretations, but the generally agreed upon conflicts Sanchin refers to are mind, body, and spirt.

The first kata in Uechi-Ryu. It was the first kata that Shushiwa taught Kanbun Uechi.

Seisan

Thirteen (Chinese)

This is generally understood to mean “Thirteen modes of attack and defense”

The fifth kata in Uechi Ryu. It was the second kata that Shushiwa taught Kanbun Uechi.

Sanseiryu

Thirty-six (Chinese)

It is heavily associated with the moniker “Tiger coming down the mountain”

The eighth and final kata in Uechi Ryu. It was the third and final kata that Shushiwa taught Kanbun Uechi.

Suparimpe

According to legend, this is the fourth kata of Shushiwa’s system. It was never taught to Kanbun Uechi.

SECONDARY KATA

INFO AND TRANSLATION

Kanshiwa

The former name of this kata was “Kanshabu”. Both names are a mix of Kanbun and Shushiwa (Shushabu).

The second kata in Uechi Ryu. This was added to the style under the influence of Kanei Uechi in 1956.

Kanshu

The former name to this kata was “Daini Seisan” meaning second Seisan. The current name is a mix of Kanbun and Shushiwa.

The third kata in Uechiryu. This was added to the style under the influence of Kanei Uechi in 1956.

Seichin

Ten Conflicts (Chinese)

The fourth kata in Uechiryu. This was created by Saburo Uehara and added to the style in 1963.

Seirui

Sixteen (Chinese)

The sixth kata in Uechiryu. This was added to the style under the influence of Kanei Uechi in 1950.

Kanchin

Tactics of Kanbun.

The seventh kata in Uechiryu. This was added to the style under the influence of Kanei Uechi in 1960.

OTHER EXERCISES

	INFO AND TRANSLATION
Junbi Undo	Primary Exercises. This was added under the influence of Kanei Uechi in the 1950's.
Hojo Undo	Secondary Exercises. This was added under the influence of Kanei Uechi in the 1950's.
Kumite One	Understood to be the first Kumite introduced to Uechi Ryu. It was added under the influence of Kanei Uechi in 1956.
Kumite Three	This was designed by George Mattson in the 1960's to teach beginning students the concept of distancing.
Dan Kumite	Originally called "Ten-point Kumite". The word "Dan" means senior, indicating it was designed for advanced students. This was added to the style under the influence of Kanei Uechi in 1965.
Kyu Kumite	The word "Kyu" means junior, indicating it was designed for beginning students. This was added to the style under the influence of Kanei Uechi in 1973.
Kanshiwa Bunkai	Applications of Kanshiwa Kata. This was added to the style under the influence of Kanei Uechi in 1956 as a junior version of Seisan Bunkai.
Seisan Bunkai	Applications of Seisan Kata This was added to the style under the influence of Kanei Uechi in 1958.