

# History of *Uechi-ryu* Karate

The style of karate that you are studying is an Okinawan style of karate called *Uechi-Ryu Karate Do*. We call it Uechi-Ryu, or simply Uechi.

The word *ryu* means way, so Uechi-Ryu means Uechi's way, or Uechi's way of doing karate. This style is named after Kanbun Uechi, who went to china in 1897 at the age of 20 so that he could learn the art of self defense handed down through the Shaolin monks.

The monks had been taught a form of self defense from India which is still taught today and is called Gong Fu. This form of self defense was taught to the Shaolin monks by an Indian Prince and Buddhist priest named Bhodi Dharma. The katas taught to them helped them to survive and continue to teach and spread Buddhism. In turn, the monks continued to teach karate to their disciples for over 2000 years. Karate is self defense without weapons, and in fact the word karate means open hand or empty hand.

Chou Tzu Ho (pronounced Shu She Wah), a monk who taught in the Central Temple in the Fukien Province of China, agreed to teach Kanbun Uechi, and became his teacher for the next 13 years.

When Kanbun Uechi returned to Okinawa, he brought back with him the three katas he was taught by his teacher, Chou Tzu Ho. Those kata are the backbone of Uechi-Ryu. Especially important is the first kata taught to beginners, called Sanchin. Kanbun Uechi did only Sanchin kata for the first year of his training in karate, and he believed that striving toward perfection in Sanchin was the best basis for karate. Kanei Uechi, Kanbun Uechi's son, along with other senior students added 5 kata to the style.

The term Uechi-Ryu was not used until after 1940. The style of karate was previously known as Pan Gai Noon and was renamed to Uechi-Ryu to honor Kanbun Uechi by his students, and he was made the Grandmaster. Kanbun Uechi died in 1948 and Kanei Uechi, was named the next Grandmaster. After his death in 1991, Kanei's son Kanmei Uechi became the third Grandmaster. Kanmei Uechi's son, and great grandson of Kanbun Uechi,(the founder of Uechiryu), Kansho Uechi became the fourth Grandmaster upon Kanmei's passing in the fall of 2015.

George Mattson is credited for bringing Uechi-ryu to the United States in 1958 after studying under Kanei Uechi and Ryuko Tomoyose while in the service stationed on Okinawa and began teaching in Boston, Massachusetts. Sensei Mattson is the president of the International Uechi-ryu Karate Federation and currently teaches and lives in Mount Dora, Florida. (<http://www.uechi-ryu.com/>)