

CENTRAL CANADA MARTIAL ARTS ASSOCIATION

GENERAL HISTORY OF JAPANESE AND OKINAWAN MARTIAL ARTS

We will start our history of the Japanese martial arts in the small country of Korea. During the three kingdom period Shilla began to unify the peninsula by conquering its neighboring countries. When the Kingdom of Paekche was at its collapse the royal family and its guard were have said to flee to the land of the rising sun. Many experts today believe this to be Japan since this countries name specifically the original pronunciation Nepal which in translation means “Land Of The Rising Sun”. Thus if you look off the coast of Korea towards Japan you would also see the sun rise. This being stated, in Japan itself it is also recorded that a warrior class group had once landed upon their shores around the same time. The island natives apparently made agreements with them for protection since they were not themselves a warrior based society. This is one of the most logical versions of how the possibility of the Samurai society began. Traditionally Samurai used Nagata, Archery, Horse Riding and several other military arts quite similar to the Korean Muye Dobo Tonji which also contains Japanese weapons if you examine it. At a later period during the Ming Dynasty, Japan had a visitor from China named Chen Yuan-Yun who was skillful at Chinese Fast Wrestling. A monument of him even exists in current day Tokyo. This in some experts’ belief greatly influenced Ju Jitsu. It is also noted that the Daitoryu Aiki Ju Jitsu was dated to around 1100AD this was taught to the Minamoto Family and was kept reserved for their clan only. Eventually these influences lead up to Modern Judo as a sport when Jigoro Kano merged many sub styles of Ju Jitsu into a single version being the ultimate method of Ju Jitsu. After all Ju means soft, and jutsu school, and do is art, so they both mean soft or gentle method with identically similar methods. He also kept a modern version for the police called Taiho Jitsu. This kept to the original format of using kicks and strikes with the holds throws grappling and other various aspects of the art (If you are interested in further Judo reading please reference Jigoro Kano’s book which will later be shown in a section of our website as Martial Arts Founder Texts). Alongside this development Aikido was also derived by master Uechiba whom was an Aiki Jutsu master. He focused more on throws and locks opposed to pinning via wrestling. His original version also did include some striking functions which might disagree with some modern practitioners. You can directly reference this in his book by seeing actual photos of him doing so.

I should also note that throughout these time periods Kobodu was also a practice for Ju Jitsu. This historically contains many of what in modern times we call Ninja weapons which I will not get into for the moment.

. Ninjitsu or Ninjutsu depending on the Romanization period to the word was a highly skilled samurai or rogue agent trained in various weapons, hand to hand skills and specialized in espionage. One of the most famous stories of ninja is when the Shogun hired the Koga clan to dispose of the Iga clan. Later with the help of hiring all Ninja the shogun unified Japan for the time period. Fortunately both clans did have a set of scrolls which contained their secrets as well as a condensed manual known as the Shinoki.

This leads us to the discussion of Kara-Te sometimes spelled Karate in modern times. First we will discuss the origins of Karate and more specifically Kata. This is the formal and original techniques of each style of what was once called Okinawa-Te or To-Te Jitsu which is also once called ryu kyu kempo no jitsu to give its more historical names. According to Choki Motobu in his book Okinawan Kempo the following Kata were what existed prior to the year 1900AD: Sanchin, Seisan, Seuinchin, Jo-Ju-Shi-Ho, Ippakku-Re-Hachi, Nahanchi (ichidan, nidan, Sandan) Chinte, Wanshu, Rohai, Passai (commonly spelled Bassai) Chinto and Kusanku. It should be noted that what is known as the Pinan and eventually in Japanese as Hein or in the Tang Soo Do system (a Korean version of Shotokan) Pyang-Ann was created by Mr Itosu. Which were kata designed for middle school children and were traditionally not taught to adults. As many stories from other sources will explain. This being said this is the original kata of what we now call Karate.

Historically in Karate as we will continue to call it from here out a student would learn a basic kata such as Nahanchi, or Sanchin and would then learn one perhaps if he was lucky two kata for the master level. Application or Bunkai was the major focus of this traditional teaching and the kata was merely a dictionary of the styles techniques. All other training was focused into Hojo skill's which is a system devised of sticks with weighted ends as well as many other apparatus's that were used to train muscle. This along with Makiwara, Sand bag and other various pounding skills was diligently practiced for the majority of the time to harden the striking tools. A student also had to endure body conditioning which hardened him for intense blows which eventually would allow him to have branches or boards broken across him to develop further skills. This is still seen in some arts today like Uechi Ryu. I would like to clearly state at this point if you are not learning these aspects of training you are not practicing traditional combat arts of Okinawa or Japan but rather sport karate which is not actually effective in a real situation. Contact training is a MUST for any real life situation so that a student may know how to deal with being hit and being able to get through the initial attack to react or better

yet act and defend him or herself against harm. This does not take away from sport karate and should not come off as an insult. It is merely stating that they are two separate functions and train reactions and body conditioning in different manners. Returning to the historical facts of kata I would now like to explore the Shorin Lineage of how things developed into modern times. According to Shoshine Nagime sometime in the 1650s an emissary named Wanshu came up onto the island and he taught his techniques. Eventually this developed into the oldest known kata Wanshu. It should also be noted some claim the form designer of this set also developed Rohai. Both of these kata are popular in Tomari Village. The next advancement in kata would be when a man named Kusanku washed up on shore in Okinawa. He was known to teach two well-known masters. Sakugawa and Chatan Yara, Sakugawa learned more externally since he could not understand Chinese so well and developed his art specifically for fighting. This set can be found in modern day Shotokan according to some experts and has been broken into Kanku Dai and Kanku Sho. Ironically in Gitchin Funakoshi's original text he used to call the form Kusanku and originally labeled the art To-Te Jitsu. You will be able to find this book listed in our founder text section. On the other hand Chatan Yara could speak Chinese and learned the internal and external aspects of the form there for keeping the form more fluent and internalized. This version can still be found in Shorin and Matsubayashi karate-do lineages. It should also be noted Chatan Yara also composed a Sai Kobodu Kata as well which is still popular. It should also be noted that Kusanku as he was called was also likely a Crane or Jumping Crane style Chinese Boxer. The remainder of the Shuri-te kata doesn't always have a labeled created however is dated to of been around for generations. A lot of theories on the development go back to the 36 families of the envoys from china while living in Okinawa.

The next development was the surfacing of of a master text known as the Bubishi. (If you are looking for a copy of this text Patrick McCarthy has an excellent version. Please see the Founders texts section for details) Sometime between Kusanku and the developments of the Naha style of karate this wonderful text found its way into karate explaining technique of Monk Fist, Crane Boxing, Herbs, Healing , acupuncture or acupressure charts and a lineage back to Chinese monk Miu Hin. Some say it was brought back through the Goju Ryu Lineage and others also claim Uechi Kanbun brought it back from Uechi Ryu. Whomever brought it back it taught all the great masters of the time its deepest lessons and had to be hand copied from one master to the next with no mistakes as a secret initiation into the masters and grand masters of Karate realm per say.

Kanryo Higaonna went to china and learned Chinese Kempo or Chuan Fa as some would call it. He eventually returned to the Naha district and began to teach this line of Karate. His top student was Chojun Miagi the founder of Goju-Ryu. Chojun Miagi also ventured to China like many Karate men of the time began to do. Unfortunately for him as the stories go the masters and schools changed drastically and he couldn't find what his teacher found. He settled on a school which some today say was an Ngo Cho Kune lineage which taught white crane and other

various sets of Kung Fu for the time. This led to the form Tensho which he brought back to be the soft set to the hard Sanchin set (which in White Crane is actually a qigong set). Goju Ryu also shares similar sets to Uechi Ryu. Uechi Kanbun originally went to China around a similar time period and found what was called the Pangainoon School as many experts claim. Most agree this was a Pak Mei style being taught which shows in such forms as Seisan which focus on tiger and some leopard skills. From personal practice it has similarities to the Nine step push set in Pak Mei as Sanchin appears to be similar to Pak Mei's Straight Step Push set. I would also like to note at this point that at one time Sanchin even for Goju from what research has shown was once open handed and eventually changed to fists. None the less these two arts are very similar and contain the same type of forms mainly Sanchin, Seisan, Sanseiryu. The other forms in Goju Ryu remain practiced with in that style. Some experts Say Chojun Miagi's original list of forms were Sanchin, Tensho, Gekisai Itch, Gekisai Ni (Please note according to Shoshine Nagime Gekisai was actually developed as a co-authored set which is still called Fujigata two in Matsubayashi Karate-Do) Sai-Fa, Seuinchin, Saneisryu, Shi Sho Chin, Seisan, Sepai, Kururunfa and Superempi. Please note many of his students after such as Gogen Yamaguchi and master Tada also composed Kyohon forms which were not the original format of his system.

Uechi Kanbun on the other hand only had three kata original. Sanchin, Seisan and Sanseiryu.. His son and top student developed the other five kata by taking the original three and making of sequences of more basic motions or favoured techniques to get beginners more used to the motions. These sets should not be considered historical Uechi Ryu. However I will label them in this section as such: Kanshiwa, Kanshu, Seichin, Seirui, Kanchin.

You will note I passed over Shotokan Karate when I began to explain the histories and the Shorin systems. This is because it is actually Japanese and comes from Okinawan martial arts. Gitchin Funakoshi created this system after he first introduced Karate to main land Japan. They wanted a standard system with belt ranks, a curriculum and so forth. After this and the demonstration of Kusanku to the Emperor's court the system of Karate was designed. He named it Kara-Te at a committee meeting deciding what to call the Okinawan arts and there for as far as the history records are concerned Karate as we are calling it is a Japanese sport designed similar to judo and is commonly called Shotokan. This was due to the fact that in post WW2 Japan wanted little to do with killing after seeing the blood shed from the war so they converted their ancient ways into Judo, Kendo, and Karate competitions to keep tradition without hurting people further. In Gitchin's Text To-te Jitsu which is the second book he published (The first being unfortunately destroyed and lost to time) the following forms were taught and used the original names. Binan (Hein) shodan, Nidan, Sandan, Yodan, Godan. Nahanchi (Tekki) Shodan, Nidan, Sandan, Koshukun (Kanku). Seishan (Hangetsu) Passai (Bassai). Wanshu (Empi). Chinto (Gankaku). Jitte and Jion. It should also be note he went on to create ten no kata and Ki bon series kata later called taikyoku or in Korean Tang so do Ki Cho.

Also I would like to note that this lead to the creation of Wado Ryu as an off shoot and Kyokushin Karate which is a Shotokan/ Goju Ryu off shoot. There is also the Shito Ryu Off shoot which is also a mix of Shotokan and Goju. Which lead to many modern Karate systems.

The next Chapter labeled History of Korean Martial Arts will explain the evolution of karate into Tang Soo Do and Tae Kwon Do. It will also explain how Aiki Jutsu was developed into such arts as Hapkido and Kuk Sool Won. Please view the next PDF for further history.

Although CCMAA accepts all Karate kata and styles the following is our primarily practiced and recommended kata list.

Nahanchi Shodan (a Favourite by both Grand Master Gary Powell and Grand Master Justin Powell)

Sanchin (Both Open and Closed fist versions)

Wanshu (A favourite by Grand Master Gary Powell)

Rohai

Kusanku Chatan Yara Lineage (A Favourite by Grand Master Gary Powell)

Kanku Dai Sakugawa Lineage (A favourite of Grand Master Justin Powell)

Kanku Sho Sakugawa Lineage (A favourite of Grand Master Justin Powell)

Seisan/Hangetsu (Note this set has four Major Versions) (These sets are favourites of Grand Master Gary Powell and Grand Master Justin Powell)

Basai Dai (A Favourite by Grand Master Gary Powell)

Basai Sho

Pasai (A Tomari Village version of Basai which is a favourite of Grand Master Justin Powell)

Chinto (A Favourite of both Grand Master Gary Powell and Grand Master Justin Powell)

Sepai (A Favourite of Grand Master Gary Powell) (although not prior to 1900 has valid and unique techniques)

Superempi (A Favourite of Grand Master Justin Powell)

Sanseiryu (Historically valid)

Founded by Grand Master Gary Powell

As Taught By Grand Master Justin Powell

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**If You Wish To Learn Powell's Personal Combat System Or Are Interested In Teaching
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Please note that the above information is CCMAA personal view of the history explained and might vary from other schools and is not out to insult or cause conflict between schools but to give a general history to its own students. All Information explained is the oral traditions as taught and explained by Grand Master Gary Powell who requested this to be marked down for all his students to remember for generations to come.

Please note all references will be listed in recommended reading PDF We appreciate all information provided from any text we may have viewed over the last 30 to 45 years as well as oral traditions we have gained from interacting with other martial arts masters from around the world.