



What is Koryu Uchinadi Kenpo-jutsu?

by Patrick McCarthy, Hanshi 8th dan

Established as a pragmatic alternative to the plethora of terribly ambiguous and highly dysfunctional styles of "traditional" karate, Koryu Uchinadi Kenpo-jutsu® 『古流沖縄手拳法術』 is a modern interpretation of Okinawa's historic fighting arts: Tegumi, Tigwa, Torite, Buki-gwa & Kata. A completely systematized, and coherent method of learning/teaching, delivered in a traditional atmosphere, honouring both the culture from which it comes and the pioneers who forged its practice, Koryu Uchinadi is both an art and a science. Best explained through common mechanics and immutable principles, the most unique features of Koryu Uchinadi are its vibrant body dynamics, efficacious movement, functional HAPV-theory [Habitual Acts of Physical Violence] and two-person application drills, which breathe life back into kata.

Residing in Japan, and undertaking extensive travel throughout the country, China and SE Asia, a lengthy cross-comparative analysis provided me with the means to discover, identify and trace which part of what fighting arts made their way to Okinawa from China & SE Asia, when and how. Identifying fragmented parts of SE Asian fighting arts & Qing Period (1644-1911) Southern quanfa [kenpo/拳法] practices, largely from Fujian Province, I established a working hypothesis surrounding how these disciplines arrived during the later period of Okinawa's old Ryukyu Kingdom and became fused with existing traditions.

While looking into the evolution of this embryonic and eclectic history my field study brought me into contact with many of the most senior authorities of the Japanese/Okinawan, Chinese and SE Asian fighting arts. This contact did, in fact, prove very valuable in my overall studies. Identifying that no less than five individual combative-like disciplines were once embraced during Okinawa's old Ryukyu Kingdom Period, I made a meticulous study of #1. Tegumi; an old Chinese-based [Shuai Chiao] method of clinching & grappling practiced by boys and young men of every age, #2. Tigwa; a plebeian form of percussive impact brought to the island from the Kingdom of Siam [Siamese boxing], Torite; [qinna]; techniques of seizing and controlling employed by local law-enforcement officials, Buki-gwa; [Kobudo] the art of weapons, and Kata; the original Chinese holistic forms [Hsing] of human movement. During this study, and with the help of reading Donn Draeger, Joseph Campbell, Karel van Wolferen, Ruth Benedict, Douglas Haring, George Kerr, Taira Koji, and Edwin Reischauer, etc., it became evident

that that Zen, and post-Edo/pre-war Japanese Budo Culture [i.e. Judo/Kendo], under the auspices of the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai, had profusely influenced the subsequent development of modern karate-do.

Having studied since childhood, my passion with the fighting arts became a vocation which turned into a profession. An early decision to pursue the fighting arts provided the opportunity to devote my entire life to this study. After years of diligent practice and active competition I established my first school in 1974. With no academic background in teaching, I soon discovered that all students did not learn at the same pace, nor did they comprehend the target lesson equally. Such experience abruptly taught me that learning and teaching were two completely different disciplines, which could not be effectively mastered without further education. How naive I was to think that just because I could understand and perform a given competency with 'normal' or 'average' effort, that all other learners should be able to do the same thing. I myself had learned the fighting arts in a traditional manner: My master customarily, "lifted up one corner of the page," but refused to build upon that lesson until I discovered how to, "lift up the other three corners of the page" for myself, in order to understand the totality of the target lesson. While I personally appreciated the benefits of tradition, and fully realized that learning had as much to do with self-study as it did with dojo instruction, I was very surprised to discover the disparity it represented for the average student. Looking into alternative ways through which to best deliver the target lesson and improve retention levels---with learners of varying aptitudes---my interests opened the door to acquiring several types of knowledge, other than the fighting arts. Identifying the varying needs of learners, and the importance of establishing an atmosphere conducive to functional learning, I came to place great value upon eclecticism and innovativeness. I was empowered through studying pedagogical principles, instructional management and intelligent lesson planning. Armed with these new essential skills, I ventured forth to study the art in a new light at its original source.

My field studies were carried out in Japan, China and SE Asia and during a transition period and introspective time of my life. Newly married, putting roots down in Japan, starting a family, learning a new language and understanding a different culture had changed my life considerably. During these years I also took up the study of Japanese swordsmanship [Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto Ryu directly under the prominent master, Sugino Yoshio], while at the same time training under Kinjo Hiroshi [one of the most senior authorities of Okinawan karate on the mainland of Japan], along with Inoue Motokatsu [Ryukyu Kobujutsu Hozon Shink Kai], and developing a passion for submission fighting with Takada Nobuhiko [UWFI]. All of this, and simultaneously entrenched with the principal translation of the *Bubishi*, along with several other important works, had a collective impact upon the way I came to understand karate. During my studies I became most fascinated with the historical contributions of several pioneers; Kojo Taite (1837-1917), Aragaki Seisho (1840-1920), Xie Zhongxiang (1852-1930), Higaonna Kanryo (1853-1917), Hanashiro Chomo (1869-1945), Motobu Choki (1871-1944), Zhou Zhihe (1874-1926), Miao Xing (1881-1939), Kiyoda Juhatsu (1886-1967), Wu Xianhui (1886-1940), Tang Daiji (1887-1937) and Oshiro Chojo (1887-1935). Based upon my own background, new insights, and a keen understanding of what modern karate lacked, I reasoned that by adopting many of these "old", but highly functional practices, I could significantly improve my own training and progress - I was right.

As I continued to write about my experiences, several international-based magazine companies became interested in publishing my work, and did so. This ultimately led to introducing the functional part of my research at seminars all over the world where it became, and continues to be, widely embraced. Over the period of a few years my teachings generated widespread interest, in fact, it is no understatement to suggest that, "these teachings not only offered new insights, they have helped changed the way thousands of learners think about our art, provoked widespread controversy, and inspired other innovators to embark upon similar pursuits." As much of my teachings were based upon re-interpreting generic principles and timeless concepts as handed down by the pioneers, I felt confident referring to them simply as, "Old-School" practices. It was not, however, until later that it became necessary to establish a formal name through which to deliver these teachings.

The Making of a Name

Insecurities have a strange way of making some people do such stupid things. That said, had it not been for those who felt so threatened by what these teachings represented, I may have never found it necessary to establish such a unique name to identify and deliver this provocative body of work. After having been called every name in the book, and then some, I was ridiculed and opposed by those seeking to discredit me, my character and what I represented. To the open-minded, my innovativeness was openly welcomed. To the narrow-minded, and those still in-the-box or uninitiated, such a thing was terribly inflammatory, regarded as disrespectful and the source of much mixed opinion. Notwithstanding, I was/and still am confident that such eclecticism and innovativeness was, and is, far more in line with the original approach, intentions and teachings of the pioneers than is the conformist mentality, which underscores the foundation of modern karate; "Tradition is not about preserving the ashes but keeping a flame alight."

It's Just a Name

Wanting to identify Fujian China as a principal source of origin, and acknowledging Okinawa as the cultural conduit through which it evolved, while emphasizing function over form, I picked up on an idea that my Okinawan teacher, * Kinjo Hiroshi, suggested. Based on this idea I established the name, "Koryu Uchinadi Kenpo-jutsu," [古流沖縄手拳法術] as the formal title with which to describe this collective body of work.

By the time the name Koryu Uchinadi filtered out into the mainstream Karate community most folks welcomed it. My students were certainly pleased to finally have an official name to their study, my colleagues congratulated me and I even received a few letters of support from Okinawa. Naturally, there were and still are those who remained unaware of Koryu Uchinadi. In fact, despite my many books, DVDs, international seminars, organization, and publicity [good and bad] there are probably tens of thousands of people all over the world who have absolutely no idea what Koryu Uchinadi is. I am 100% confident they will continue to live perfectly normal lives never knowing Koryu Uchinadi exists. That said, a few folks out there just don't get it.

In 1990, the 1st World Wide Uchinanchu Festival was held at the Ginowan Sport Centre to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Okinawa's reversion to Japan. The intent of the

festival was to support prominent Uchinanchu [Okinawans] worldwide and to promote exchange projects with the countries in which Uchinanchu resided. Both local and Uchinanchu from all over the world gathered and presented a festival of arts, culture, sports, education and industry-related activities. The festival not only served as a wonderful platform upon which to feature a wide spectrum of cultural interests it also gave birth to the concept of family, friends and businesses networking together. To this day that network continues to thrive. Most importantly, the local term "Uchinadi" (沖繩手, a.k.a. Okinawa Te) began to gain popularity in Okinawa as a local way to refer to karate in general.

Within the martial arts community of mainland Japan, the various fighting arts fall into general categories and are further identified by specific names. For example, the term Kakutogi [格闘技/fighting technique] is one such general category into which several modern competitive fighting disciplines fall. The most familiar of these Kakutogi styles are Shoot-fighting, Pride and K1, along with myriad MMA styles. Budo [武道/Martial Way] is a term which identifies the modern [現代/Gendai] interpretation of classical fighting arts. This category includes such traditions as Judo, Kendo, Aikido, & Karatedo, etc.. The precursor disciplines from which the Budo come, fall into a category referred to as Koryu [古流/old school] traditions and include such as arts as Ju-jutsu, Ken-jutsu, Aiki-jujutsu, & Karate-jutsu. There are several schools of thought concerning how these different disciplines should be catalogued, and terms such as Bugei, Bujutsu & Budo reflect the efforts to do so. The most accepted school of thought is based upon dates of origin. For example, Koryu traditions are roughly considered systematized practices established prior to the Meiji Restoration [1868]. The Budo are generally accepted to be those traditions systematized after the Meiji Restoration, but before WWII. Naturally, there are exceptions to this rule as Gendai disciplines have been established in the post-war era and accepted as "authentic."

Where Koryu Uchinadi detractors have a problem is in understanding the way we've used the term, "Koryu." No where have we presented Koryu Uchinadi as an ancient discipline but rather as a modern interpretation of timeless fighting principles and generic application practices. In fact, if the truth be known, there little difference between the way the human body works now and the way it did in the early-to-mid-19th century. As such, not only do the mechanics of functional movement remain the same, they were and continue to be governed by the same immutable principles. What I have done is modify its practices and systematize them into a coherent curriculum; classical tradition with contemporary insights. This Karate-jutsu [沖繩手/Uchinadi] is based upon old-school [古流/Koryu] tradition and we have no intentions of changing its name anytime soon.

In 1994, while still residing in Japan, I was approached by the president of the Australian Karate Federation to develop a generic program in Australia through which to accredit karate instructors, irrespective of "style." I saw this as a wonderful opportunity which could lead to publicly introducing my work to the world sporting body---the AKF president was also an executive member of the WKF. Because of this opportunity, I ultimately received a full sponsorship from the ACNM. Through their assistance I succeeded in establishing my teachings as an undergraduate program. Complying with ANTA-based competencies [Australian National Training Authority], and those academic

outcomes and corresponding assessment criteria required at the college level, provided yet another important stage of development.

Alternative Benefit

Koryu Uchinadi can also be learned/imparted as a provocative alternative to conventional methods of physical fitness and stress management. Learning how to respond dispassionately to unwarranted aggression requires self-empowerment. Such training promotes an inner-calm and, where conflict exists, helps restore balance to personal and professional relationships. Koryu Uchinadi® is a non-competitive, totally application-based defensive practice, punctuated with moral philosophy and highlighted by introspective teaching as a comprehensive single study.

* Kinjo Hiroshi: Born 1919, Hanshi 9th dan, historian, researcher, writer, 4th generation master of Uchinadi and widely acknowledged as one of the most knowledgeable and respected Okinawan authorities of old-school training.