Contents

A Note on Romanization, ix

Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia

Volume 1: A–Q

Africa and African America, 1
Aikidô, 12
Animal and Imitative Systems in Chinese Martial Arts, 16
Archery, Japanese, 18
Baguazhang (Pa Kua Ch’uan), 23
Boxing, Chinese, 26
Boxing, Chinese Shaolin Styles, 32
Boxing, European, 44
Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, 52
Budô, Bujutsu, and Bugei, 56
Capoeira, 61
China, 65
Chivalry, 72
Combatives: Military and Police Martial Art Training, 000
Dueling, 97
Europe, 109
External vs. Internal Chinese

Martial Arts, 119
Folklore in the Martial Arts, 123
Form/Xing/Kata/Pattern Practice, 135
Gladiators, 141
Gunfighters, 149
Hapkidô, 157
Heralds, 162
Iaidô, 169
India, 173
Japan, 179
Japanese Martial Arts, Chinese Influences on, 199
Jeet Kune Do, 202
Jûdô, 210
Kajukenbo, 219
Kalarippayattu, 225
Karate, Japanese, 232
Karate, Okinawan, 240
Kendô, 249
Kenpô, 255
Ki/Qi, 260
Knights, 263
Kobudô, Okinawan, 286
Korea, 291
Korean Martial Arts, Chinese Influences on, 299
Koryû Bugei, Japanese, 301
Krav Maga, 306
Kung Fu/Gungfu/Gongfu, 313
Masters of Defence, 317
Medicine, Traditional Chinese, 327
Meditation, 335
Middle East, 338
Mongolia, 344
Muay Thai, 350
Ninjutsu, 355
Okinawa, 363
Orders of Knighthood, Religious, 368
Orders of Knighthood, Secular, 384
Pacific Islands, 403
Pankration, 410
Performing Arts, 417
Philippines, 422
Political Conflict and the Martial Arts, 435

Volume 2: R–Z
Rank, 445
Religion and Spiritual Development: Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval West, 447
Religion and Spiritual Development: China, 455
Wrestling and Grappling: Europe, 710
Wrestling and Grappling: India, 719
Wrestling and Grappling: Japan, 727
Wrestling, Professional, 735
Written Texts: China, 745

Xingyiquan (Hsing I Ch’uan), 775
Yongchun/Wing Chun, 781

Chronological History of the Martial Arts, 787
Index, 839
About the Author, 895
In 1979, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) decided to employ the pinyin system of romanization for foreign publications. The pinyin system is now recognized internationally. As a result, the pinyin system is the preferred method in the present volume. Prior to this decision by the PRC, the Wade-Giles system had gained wide international acceptance. Certain terms, therefore, may appear under spellings unfamiliar to the reader. For example, Wade-Giles Hsing I Ch’uan or Hsing I Chuan appears as pinyin Xingyiquan, and Wing Chun is romanized as Yongchun. Pinyin spellings will be used in most cases. Old spellings, often unsystematic, are given in parentheses, for example Li Cunyi (Li Tsun-I). For those terms that are well established in another spelling, pinyin is noted in parentheses for consistency; for example, Pangai Noon (pinyin banyingruan). For Chinese names and terms that are not associated with the PRC, we have chosen to follow locally preferred romanizations.
Rank

The word *rank* in this context refers to a system of hierarchies in martial arts based on various criteria such as physical fitness, mastery of curriculum, success in competition, length of time of study, and contributions to the system.

Traditions differ as to the reasons for awarding rank and the ways in which rank is bestowed. Although in contemporary martial arts rank is commonly associated with the belt systems of the Asian arts, the practice of ranking practitioners of martial arts is not uniquely Asian. In 1540, Henry VIII of England granted letters of patent that formally enfranchised the English Masters of Defence (who previously had plied their trade without benefit of licensing) and at least tacitly gave the royal stamp of approval to a four-tiered hierarchy based on the model of the medieval university: scholar, free scholar, provost, and master. The Masters of Defence then fixed requirements for testing for rank, length of time required for apprenticeship at each rank, and other criteria deemed necessary for formally establishing the hierarchy.

Until the twentieth century, many Asian martial arts recognized only two tiers of rank: master and student. Occasionally, the designation of senior student could be extended as well. This system continues in some arts. The traditional systems of China (e.g., taijiquan [tai chi ch’uan], baguazhang [pa kua ch’uan]) have not formalized ranking further than this. The many conservative *bugei* (Japanese; warrior arts)—those arts designated by the suffix *jutsu* (skills), such as *kenjutsu*—of Japan have maintained the traditional means of ranking members (generally unique to the individual system) of each *ryūha* (style) into the contemporary period.

Kanō Jigorō, in establishing jūdō in the late nineteenth century, developed for students of his art a ranking system by means of the awarding of colored belts worn with practice uniforms. This tradition had a profound impact on the martial arts world, first via adoption of the system by the *budō* (martial ways) of Japan and then internationally, as both indige-
nous fighting systems and eclectic martial arts of other cultures followed suit. In Kanô’s system and others based on it (e.g., karate, taekwondo), distinctions are made between lower levels (kyū [class] in Japanese systems—e.g., nikiyū, meaning “second class”), who wear colored belts (e.g., green, brown) to signify rank, and upper levels (dan [grade]—e.g., shôdan, meaning “first grade”), who wear black belts. In the kyūs there is considerable variation in belt color from system to system, as well as varying interpretations of the symbolic meanings of the various belt colors. In the Japanese model and systems derived from it, progress is denoted by descending order through the classes (signified by white or colored belts). Therefore, sankyū (third class) is lower in rank than nikiyū (second class), for example. The grades (signified by a black belt) denote rank through ascending order from shôdan (first grade) to nidan (second grade) and so forth. It is common to promote through the first ranks of the black belt level on the basis of proficiency in the art; fifth grade is often regarded as the apex for promotion on technical skills. Thereafter, however, promotions in grade are based on contributions to the art. Commonly, the highest grades of an art are bestowed on a teacher by students in recognition of self-mastery, creation or development of the system, or similar unique contributions.

Most contemporary styles that have followed the Japanese lead in indicating rank by color do so by means of the method put forth by Kanô, by the color of a flat cloth belt worn looped around the waist on the outside of the practitioner’s jacket. There are exceptions, however. In the Regional system of Brazilian capoeira developed by Manoel dos Reis Machado in the 1930s, rank is displayed by the cordão (cord), a rope made of braided cords. The cordão is worn through the belt loops on the uniform. In contemporary French savate, rank is indicated by a colored band or patch worn on the gloves used for sparring.

The latter decades of the twentieth century saw the increasing adoption of systems derived from Kanô’s method, not only in Japanese budô,
but also by non-Asian systems and contemporary eclectic systems such as capoeira, savate, American Freestyle karate, and Russian sambo. Many martial arts systems remain, however, that have not converted from traditional student-teacher organizational frameworks.

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See also Jûdô; Koryû Bugei, Japanese

References

Religion and Spiritual Development: Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval West

In every Western society from ancient Greece until the present, soldiers’ needs have entailed the incorporation of ceremonies and rites designed to seek the aid of higher powers on behalf of individual soldiers and, in some cases, the army as a whole. Soldiers in the Western tradition of warfare have always found it necessary to trust in something greater than themselves or even than their armies or nations in order to summon the courage necessary to risk their lives in combat. In the modern world, every Western nation has a chaplain corps whose primary responsibilities include preparing soldiers for the stresses of battle because military planners clearly understand the adage, “There are no atheists in foxholes.”

The Ancient World

Religious piety among soldiers was such a well-accepted norm of behavior in classical Greece that the authors of military manuals took it into account when discussing prebattle preparations. Onasander argued in his Strategikos that “soldiers are far more courageous when they believe they are facing dangers with the will of the Gods” (Aeneas . . . 1923, 309). Many Greek field commanders took this advice to heart when leading their troops into battle. The Spartans routinely brought herds of goats with them on campaign so that sacrifices could be offered not only as a preparation
for every battle, but whenever a major military decision had to be made. Similar sacrifices were performed by most of the other Greek city-states. In his *Anabasis*, Xenophon noted that before the Ten Thousand forced a crossing over the Centrites River, sacrifices were held under a hail of enemy fire. Similarly, Alexander the Great held back from assaulting the fortified city of Gaza until he had received favorable results from animal sacrifices performed by the priests serving with his army.

We are even better informed about the religious rites and ceremonies performed by and for Roman soldiers in the field. Roman soldiers swore sacred oaths to the gods and to the emperors upon entering service and renewed these oaths according to a regular daily and yearly schedule. They participated in the cultic life of the official army religion by attending sacrifices at camp altars. The soldiers also participated in a yearly liturgical cycle, which corresponded to the rites celebrated by the colleges of priests at Rome. The unit standards and eagles that led the army into battle were imbued with sacred power (*numen*) from which Roman soldiers drew strength and courage. In addition, the Roman State held public religious celebrations intended to secure the support of the gods for Roman military victory.

One of the most important symbols of the Roman army at prayer was the legionary eagle. Religious practice in the army inculcated the belief among Roman soldiers that their military standards were imbued with sacred power. Officers stressed that this power was transmitted to soldiers who venerated their eagles and other unit symbols, including the cavalry banners and cohort standards. Official military practice reinforced the reverence that the men felt for their eagles by utilizing them as a focus of religious rituals. The standards were kept in sacred shrines at the center of military camps. Military regulations also demanded severe punishments for soldiers who were responsible for the loss of unit standards and even required the removal from service of units that lost their eagles. The importance of the eagles for the morale of the Roman soldiers is neatly characterized by Tacitus in an account of a Roman campaign against the Germans during the reign of Tiberius. Germanicus, the Roman commander, was holding his troops tightly in check because he faced a numerically superior force. But when he saw a flight of eight eagles pass overhead he ordered his men to follow the great birds into battle because they were the protection gods of the legions.

**Late Antiquity**

As the Roman rulers following Constantine pursued policies that transformed the empire into a Christian state, the religious practices of the Roman army also evolved to take on Christian forms. Christian emperors understood that religion had played a crucial role in maintaining both
military discipline as well as morale among the troops. Therefore, the new Christian leadership of the state and army found it necessary to keep the essential forms of the older military religious practices, while changing the content to meet the demands of Christian doctrine. Thus the imperial government modified the traditional oath of military service so that it would be understood as a Christian oath. Vegetius’s military manual, the *Epitoma Rei Militaris* (Epitome of Military Matters), composed in the late fourth century, recorded the basic elements of the oath of service that had been in use during the Roman Republic and had remained virtually unchanged up through the fourth century. Soldiers swore to be faithful to the emperor, never to desert from military service, and not to refuse to die for the good of the Roman State. However, Vegetius’s Christianized text included an additional clause in which soldiers swore to carry out their duties by God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

In addition to adapting the pagan traditions of Roman army religion to fit within the new Christian paradigm, Constantine and his successors also maintained the tradition of mobilizing public religious celebrations on behalf of the soldiers in the field. Whereas pagan emperors held games and dedicated new temples in order to gain the favor of the gods for their military undertakings, Christian emperors invoked divine aid through Christian rituals. Churches all over the empire were required to say prayers on behalf of the emperor and his army while they were in the field. On one occasion, during the campaign of his general Priscus against the Avars in 593, Emperor Maurice went to Hagia Sophia and personally led the prayers to God.

Military planners and officers of the Christian Roman army also recognized that battle standards had an important role to play as a focus of unit reverence and pride for soldiers. The old battle standards and legionary eagles were tainted by their association with the pagan gods. However, Christians had a perfect substitute in the symbol seen by Constantine at the Milvian Bridge—the Christian cross. Over the course of the fourth
century the cross was introduced wholesale into military usage and was applied to shields and flags. The Roman army also introduced large marching crosses to act as standards for soldiers while they served on campaign. The utilization of the cross as a military standard and marker was meant to identify the Roman army with its new god and the Romans as Christian soldiers—a tradition that was to have a long history in the West.

One further development in the Christianization of the Roman army was the introduction of priests to serve as chaplains for the soldiers. In the old pagan army, officers and centurions had undertaken most of the religious leadership. But the Christian religion demanded that only those with special sacred qualifications presume to serve the holy mysteries and tend the spiritual needs of the men. However, the Roman army of the fourth and fifth centuries was composed of a heterogeneous mix of Nicene Christians, Arian Christians, and various kinds of pagans. In order to accommodate the religious needs of soldiers from these various faith traditions, the army allowed a certain degree of religious freedom to its troops. Prosper of Aquitaine reports in his chronicle that during a campaign against the Visigoths in 439, Litorius, the Roman commander, allowed the Hunnic cavalry under his command to perform their own sacred rites, including using auguries and summoning spirits. In other cases, Nicene bishops were forced to allow Arian troops serving as garrisons in their cities to support Arian clergy. Bishop Ambrose of Milan, for one, complained to Emperor Gratian that he had no control over the Arian bishops serving among the Gothic troops in his city.

Early Middle Ages

As they did with so many other aspects of Roman military organization, the rulers of the Romano-German successor states adopted Christian religious practices. The first surviving statement of Carolingian governmental policy treating the recruitment and service of priests and bishops to serve as military chaplains was issued in 742. The Carolingian government ordered that every unit commander in the army was to have on his staff a priest capable of hearing confessions and assigning penances. In addition, the command staff of the army was to include one or two bishops with their attendant priests who were to form the leadership cadre for the provision of pastoral care. The duties of the bishops included celebrating public masses and bringing sacred relics into the field.

The soldiers in Charlemagne’s field armies relied very heavily upon government efforts to secure the support of God for their military campaigns. In addition to the personal preparations of each soldier, which frequently consisted of confession and communion, the army as a whole benefited from a systematic program of public prayers, fasts, almsgiving, and
religious processions. These public displays of religious behavior carried out by the soldiers themselves and by the civilians remaining at home were designed to gain God’s favor for Carolingian arms. Thus Charlemagne wrote to Fastrada, his wife, noting the matrix of religious rites and ceremonies in which his soldiers and priests had participated, including singing psalms, fasting, and singing litanies. He then told Fastrada to mobilize similar prayers and other ceremonies among the leading magnates of the kingdom.

Carolingian military traditions, including religious traditions, were continued in both the eastern and western successor states of the Frankish imperium. During the prelude to the famous battle on the Lech River between King Otto the Great of Germany and Hungarian invaders in 955, the latter laid siege to the city of Augsburg. While preparing his men for the fighting, Bishop Oudalric of Augsburg established an entire program of religious rites and ceremonies that were designed both to bolster the morale of the individual soldiers and to obtain God’s support for the defense of the city. To this end the bishop organized processions of nuns around the inner walls of the city. These religious women carried crosses and prayed to God and the Virgin Mary to bring safety and victory to the defenders. Oudalric also celebrated a public mass and ensured that each of his soldiers received the Eucharist. He then preached to his men, assuring them that God was on their side. A very similar program of religious ceremonies was organized for William the Conqueror’s army in 1066 before the battle at Hastings. William of Malmesbury reported in his Deeds of the Kings of the English that the Norman soldiers spent the entire night before the fight confessing their sins. In the morning, the men went to mass and then received the host. While the soldiers were securing their own personal salvation, William’s priests prayed to God on behalf of the army as a whole. They spent the entire night in vigils singing psalms and chanting litanies. Then during the battle itself the priests continued to pray for victory.

The Crusades
Much like their fellow soldiers fighting in profane wars, soldiers serving in crusading armies against the Church’s enemies in the Holy Land, Spain, southern France, and Prussia required a panoply of religious rites and ceremonies to maintain their morale and military cohesion. From the very early stages of planning for the great armed pilgrimage to the East, Pope Urban II and his advisors were concerned about the pastoral arrangements for the army. The soldiers required priests to hear their confessions, assign penances, celebrate mass, intercede with God on their behalf through prayers and public religious rites, bless their weapons and battle flags, and carry holy relics along the line of march and into combat. These were the standard elements of Western military religion before Pope Urban preached
the mobilization of an expedition to liberate Jerusalem, and they continued to play a fundamental role in the religious experience of crusaders during the entire first century of crusading warfare.

Fulcher of Chartres recorded in his *Jerusalem History* that during the battle of Dorylaeum (June 30, 1097) the crusaders were convinced that they would all die during the fighting against the superior Muslim force. They crowded around the priests, including Bishop Adhemar of le Puy, the papal legate, in order to confess their sins and prepare themselves for death. Similarly, at the battle of Antioch, priests dressed in their white vestments moved among the crusaders and comforted them. They poured out prayers on behalf of the soldiers while singing psalms and openly weeping before the Lord. In the aftermath of the battle, the crusade commanders, including Bohemond, Count Raymond of Toulouse, and Duke Geoffrey of Lotharingia, wrote a letter to Pope Urban in which they explained their victory as a vindication of their trust in God and their actions as good Christians. In particular, they emphasized that the army did not go into battle until every soldier had confessed his sins.

The religious behavior of the soldier during the First Crusade is reflected in the exceptionally popular epic poem, *The Song of Roland*. In both the Latin and vernacular traditions of this famous story, the poets consistently emphasized the prebattle religious preparations made by soldiers about to fight the Muslims in Spain. Roland is depicted confessing his sins and receiving communion. The narrator commented that Roland acted in this manner because it was customary for soldiers to fortify their souls before going into battle. After preparing himself with the sacred rites of confession and communion, Roland with the other soldiers sang psalms and prayed to the cross so that God would give them victory in battle and accept them into heaven if they died in the field.

One major benefit that accrued to crusading soldiers and which was not available to their contemporaries fighting in profane wars was the indulgence. Popes offered indulgences, or remissions of sins, to those soldiers who volunteered to fight against the enemies of the Church. In its more limited sense the indulgence was meant to serve as an alternative to penances that a soldier already deserved for sins he had previously committed. However, from the very outset of the crusading movement soldiers believed that the indulgence freed one from both purgatory and hell and that it further served as a kind of direct pass to heaven if one died in battle. A large corpus of canon law was developed to treat the various ramifications of indulgences in relation to the Christian economy of salvation, much of which debunked the more generous popular beliefs about the power of indulgences. Nevertheless, throughout the Middle Ages most soldiers and their families believed that indulgences were a guarantee of salvation.
In 1215, Pope Innocent III summoned the largest religious council held up to that point in the Western world for the purpose of reforming the Church and organizing a crusade to save the Holy Land—a crusade that was launched in 1218. As a result of Pope Innocent’s efforts, the papal government imposed norms of behavior on the crusading movement, including such areas as finance, military organization, and religious care for soldiers. In addition, Pope Innocent III and his successors began to launch “political crusades” against their Christian opponents in Europe. The combination of these two factors led to a breakdown in the distinctions between crusading and profane warfare.

The most obvious example of this breakdown was the granting of indulgences to soldiers who participated in wars that by contemporary standards had all the attributes of profane conflicts. During the late 1220s and early 1230s the bishops of Utrecht consistently utilized the promise of remission of sins as a tool for recruiting soldiers to serve in a war of aggression against their neighbors. Their recruits were very eager to accept promises of heavenly reward and guarantees of salvation in return for fighting against the temporal enemies of Utrecht. The author of the Deeds of the Bishops of Utrecht recorded that Frisian troops received their indulgences from Bishop Willibrand of Utrecht with great reverence and devotion for their spiritual father.

A further consequence of the deterioration of the boundaries between holy and profane warfare was the effort by secular rulers to have their military campaigns declared to be crusades. Papal crusades against Christian princes, including Emperor Frederick II, helped to eliminate the former standards that had constrained the targets of crusade campaigns. Now Christian princes could appeal to the pope and obtain moral justification for their campaigns, which not only permitted extensive taxation of the Church but also offered a significant bundle of religious benefits to their soldiers. Count Charles of Anjou, the brother of King Louis IX of France, used this system to exact enormous concessions from both the pope and the French Church in support of his campaign against the papacy’s traditional Staufen enemies in southern Italy. Count Charles refused to go to war unless Pope Urban IV declared his campaign to be a crusade, with all of the spiritual benefits that accrued to such an undertaking. His men received full indulgences for their services. In addition, the pope issued order to both the Dominican and Franciscan orders that they were to send brothers to serve as chaplains for the French troops.

**The High Middle Ages**

While the papal government’s efforts to control the crusading movement helped to dissolve the boundaries between holy and profane warfare, the
desire of Christian princes to maintain their power vis-à-vis the popes led to a virtual nationalization of the Church in a wide spectrum of European polities. The kings of France and England frequently used their increased power over their respective national churches to mobilize an extensive array of religious rites and ceremonies on behalf of troops in the field. These ceremonies included public masses, liturgical processions, almsgiving, and special prayers. During the series of wars that he fought against Scotland in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, King Edward I of England ordered that every parish priest in the kingdom preach to his congregation about the justness of this war and then lead the parishioners in public processions in support of the troops. Edward also ordered the archbishop of York to offer indulgences to every layman or -woman who would participate in liturgical rites and pray on behalf of the army in the field. Furthermore, the English king authorized the service of parish priests as chaplains in his army for the purpose of celebrating the sacraments in the field and in garrisons throughout Britain as well as in Edward’s continental holdings.

The English royal government also launched a successful effort to free the chapels in royal fortresses and the priests serving in them from the oversight of both local bishops and papal authorities. This freedom permitted English kings to appoint the most suitable candidates to serve as garrison chaplains, rather than being forced to accept priests belonging to the networks of episcopal or papal patronage.

King Philip IV of France, King Edward’s leading competitor for leadership in Europe, also pursued religious policies that allowed him to mobilize clergy all over his kingdom in support of the French army. Philip issued frequent edicts ordering his bishops to hold special religious services on behalf of troops in the field and requiring that special litanies be celebrated in royal abbeys for the same purpose. Philip also commissioned an entire series of sermons to be preached across the kingdom in which French military actions in Flanders were compared to the Maccabean holy wars against their Hellenic oppressors.

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See also Chivalry; Knights; Orders of Knighthood, Religious; Orders of Knighthood, Secular

References


Religion and Spiritual Development: China

Chinese historical records and other writings over the centuries reveal that the martial arts were practiced among all elements of society, including religious groups. However, there is little evidence that there was any significant religious influence over the martial arts or that they were a product of religious experience. On the contrary, they were the product of a clan society intent on protecting group interests and of the existence of widespread warfare among contending states during China’s formative period.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a strong current in modern martial arts circles, especially outside China, to associate the martial arts with religion, mainly Zen (in Japanese; Chan in Chinese) Buddhism, religious as opposed to philosophical Daoism (Taoism), and various heterodox groups such as the White Lotus and Eight Trigrams sects. That individuals from all these groups practiced the martial arts is undeniable. That some individuals in all these groups may have tried to integrate these arts into their belief systems is almost certain.

However, that these arts are inseparable from a religious or spiritual context is simply unfounded. On the other hand, martial arts concepts are clearly based on a Daoist philosophical worldview, and this includes psychological as well as physical aspects. This worldview predated the establishment of popular religious Daoism and strongly influenced later Confucian and Buddhist, especially Chan (Zen), thought. It appears that many individuals have mistaken this worldview as necessarily being religious or spiritual. Because of the omnipresence of Daoist thought in Chinese culture and society, the psychophysiological nature of martial arts practices, and the dearth of serious, factual writing on the subject, it is perhaps understandable that misunderstandings have arisen in modern times concerning the nature and origins of the martial arts and their place in society. Added to these factors is the disproportionate amount of attention paid to the role of Shaolin Monastery and, by association, the perceived connection between Chan (or Zen) Buddhism and the martial arts.
The martial arts probably more often entered monasteries and temples from the population at large rather than vice versa. The residents of Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples and the followers of heterodox religious groups practiced martial arts to protect themselves. Along with forms of qigong (cultivation of qi [chi; vital energy]), the martial arts also served as a form of mental and physical cultivation for those so inclined.

The population in Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples comprised a mix of regular residents and transients, some of whom were individuals seeking to escape the law. For instance, one Ming period official describes Shaolin monastery as a hideout for rebels, including White Lotus sect members seeking to escape the authorities during times of unrest. Two of the main characters in the early Ming period popular novel, Outlaws of the Marsh (also known as Water Margin or All Men Are Brothers), known for their martial prowess, are in this category. One, Lu Zhisheng, a carousing “monk,” enters a monastery to escape punishment for killing an official. The other, Wu Song, disguises himself as a wandering monk to avoid detection.

The Martial Arts and Buddhism
Buddhism’s earliest adherents in China were the rich and aristocratic (including a significant number of high-level military patrons) and, under the Northern Wei dynasty (A.D. 386–534), it was adopted as the state religion, with an organized church and bureaucratic structure, and, as such, it was beholden to the state. Monasteries had large landholdings and, like secular owners of landed estates, organized to protect their wealth with manpower from within their ranks. These men came from the local citizenry, some of whom may have been in the military or have learned the martial arts in some other way.

Young acolytes also let off steam with wrestling and acrobatics. For instance, an apocryphal story of one Shaolin monk, Zhou Chan, who lived during the Northern Qi period (A.D. 550–577), relates how his compatriots bullied him at first because of his frail appearance. According to the story, he ran into one of the halls, bolted the doors shut, threw himself at the feet of a guardian image, and prayed for six days that he be given the ability to defend himself. On the sixth day, the guardian image appeared with a large bowl full of tendons and told Zhou Chan to eat them if he desired strength. He reluctantly ate them (good Buddhists are supposed to be vegetarians) and returned to his compatriots, who began as before to harass him. They were surprised, however, when they felt the incredible strength of his arms. He then ran several hundred paces along the wall of the large hall, leapt so high his head reached the ceiling beams, lifted unbelievably heavy loads, and put on a display of strength and agility that even frightened inanimate objects into moving.
The exercise value of martial arts practice as part of daily routine was recognized and described by the monk Dao Xuan (A.D. 596–667), in his Further Biographies of Eminent Monks. His description, however, is not of monks but of a devout Buddhist Indian prince, of warrior caste, who practiced after dinner.

The monasteries were powerful institutions—sometimes considered dangerously so. In a persecution in A.D. 446, Emperor Taiwu is reported to have personally led a raid on monasteries in and around Changan (now Xian), which uncovered various activities such as moonshine production, weapons caches, and even prostitution. Emperor Xiaowu (532–534) is recorded as having a contingent of Buddhist monks fight for him during his retreat as the dynasty collapsed.
Shaolin Monastery, established in A.D. 495 by the Indian monk known in Chinese as Ba To, was just one of many monasteries at the time, but its location, historical circumstances, and possibly the disciplined yet individualistic nature of the Zen (Chan) Buddhism that was introduced there resulted in its subsequent fame as a center for martial arts. Built at the foot of Mount Song in today’s Henan province, it was close to China’s social, political, and geomantic center at that time. As early as 140–87 B.C., Mount Song was known as the central among China’s five sacred mountains, and it has been a popular destination for pilgrims over the centuries.

Shaolin Monastery’s singularly strong association with fighting arts can be readily understood in terms of its exposed location between the ancient capitals of Loyang and Kaifeng, which made it extremely vulnerable to the ebb and flow of war and social upheaval, requiring the monks to maintain a self-defense capability.

As a group, the fighting monks of Shaolin Monastery first appear in the midst of the confusion surrounding the collapse of the Sui dynasty and the rise of Tang (A.D. 605–618). Two incidents (both recorded on a stele dated 728) laid the foundation for the fighting fame of the Shaolin monks. In the first incident, the monks managed to repulse an attack by marauding bandits, but the monastery buildings suffered considerable damage in the process. In the second, and most famous incident, the first Tang emperor’s son, Prince Qin (Li Shimin or Emperor Taizong, who ruled between 627–649) requested the heads of the monastery to provide manpower and join with other local forces to fight Wang Shichong, who had established himself in the area in opposition to Tang rule. With Wang based near the monastery and probably eyeing it for its strategic location, the monks readily joined forces against him, helped capture his nephew, and assisted in his defeat. As a result, the monastery was issued an imperial letter of commendation and a large millstone, and ceded land comprising the Baigu Estate. Thirteen of the monks were commended by name, one of whom, Tanzong, was designated general-in-chief. Research has revealed that the primary motive for erecting the stele that records this information was to protect monastery property gains resulting from this incident. And, indeed, with imperial favor, Shaolin Monastery retained its properties while other monasteries in the area were divested of much of theirs. The monks were recognized for military merit. As for the actual martial arts skills of the thirteen monks, the record fails to provide any specifics. Later writers have assumed such skills, some even venturing so far as to refer to them as the Thirteen Staff Fighting Monks of Shaolin Monastery. The monks’ main contribution was more likely in providing the leadership necessary to direct local forces. Martial arts skills were actually fairly widespread in the villages and throughout the countryside, from whence they entered the monasteries.
For nearly 900 years following the deeds of the thirteen monks, there is not a single reference to martial arts practice in Shaolin Monastery. Not that martial arts were not practiced there, just that, if they were, they were likely nothing out of the ordinary—at most a security force from the monastic ranks. During the same period, there are sparsely scattered references to individual monks, not necessarily from Shaolin Monastery, who were involved in military activities. Two of these appear during the Song period when China was invaded by Jurched tribes, who founded the Jin dynasty (1122–1234). One, Zhen Bao, on orders from Emperor Qin Zong (1126), formed an army and fought to the death defending the monasteries on Mount Wutai in Shanxi. Another, Wan An, is recorded as having said, “In time of peril I perform as a general, when peace is restored I become a monk again.” In both these cases, one can see that the leadership role, as with the incident involving the thirteen monks of Shaolin Monastery, was of primary importance. Monks might provide disciplined leadership when needed in perilous times. In addition, the larger monasteries such as Shaolin and those on Mount Wutai were, more often than not, the objects of imperial patronage, and one of their roles would have been to pray for national peace and prosperity, and to support political authority.

The high tide of Shaolin Monastery’s martial arts fame came in the mid-sixteenth century at a time of serious disruption in China’s coastal provinces as a result of large-scale Japanese pirate operations. Two hundred years earlier, in 1368, the monastery had suffered a major catastrophe when over half of its buildings were burnt to the ground and its residents were temporarily scattered to neighboring provinces in the wake of the Red Turban uprising against Mongol rule. This traumatic experience apparently inspired the returning monks to take their security duties and martial arts practice more seriously from then on. In 1517, well after the monastery was restored, a stone tablet was erected that ignored the story of the monastery’s destruction. It claimed that the monastery had actually been spared because a monk with kitchen duties had miraculously transformed himself into a fearful giant with a fire poker for his staff, who ran out and scared off the Red Turbans. Regardless of the mythical aspects of this story, which may have been designed to remind the monks of their responsibilities as well as warn away transgressors, the monks actually had become known for their staff-fighting prowess, and a form of staff fighting was named after the monastery.

Observations by visitors to the monastery during the sixteenth century reveal that popular forms of boxing, such as Monkey Boxing, were also practiced by some of the monks, but none of these forms were named after the monastery. Cheng Zongyou, who claimed to have spent a decade studying staff fighting there, tells us that some of the residents were concentrat-
ing on boxing to try to bring it up to the standards of the famed Shaolin Staff. In any case, during the mid-Ming, the monks had built up their reputation as martial artists, and they responded to a call for volunteers to fight Japanese pirates on the coast. Their everlasting fame as Shaolin Monk Soldiers resulted from their participation in a campaign in the vicinity of Shanghai, where a monk named Yue Kong led a group of thirty monks armed with iron staves. They were instrumental in the ultimate victory against the pirates, but sacrificed themselves to a man in the process.

Ironically, most of Shaolin Monastery and Zen Buddhism’s actual association or lack of association with the martial arts has been obscured by early nineteenth-century secret society activity and subsequent embellishments in popular novels such as *Emperor Qian Long Visits the South* (by an unknown author) and Liu E’s *Travels of Lao-ts’an*. The Heaven and Earth Society (also known as the Triads or Hong League) associated themselves with the monastery’s patriotic fame as a recruiting gimmick. Concocting a story to suit their needs, however, the society members traced their origins to a fictitious Shaolin Monastery said to have been located in Fujian province, where the society had its beginnings in the 1760s. Around 1907, Liu E, in his short but powerful critique of social conditions in late Qing China, refers to Chinese boxing originating with Bodhidharma, the legendary patriarch of Chinese Chan (Zen) Buddhism, who is said to have spent nine years meditating facing a rock in the hills above Shaolin Monastery. Finally, on the eve of the Revolution of 1911, the contents of a probable secret society *hongquan* (Hong fist) boxing manual, *Secrets of Shaolin Boxing Methods*, were published in Shanghai. This manual, more than any other single publication, became a major source for much of the misinformation concerning the association of Chinese boxing with Shaolin Monastery and Buddhism.

**The Martial Arts and Popular Religious Daoism**

While the Chinese martial arts are based on the philosophical Daoist worldview, there is little evidence to show a serious connection to popular religious Daoism, except in that some martial artists must certainly have incorporated Daoist internal cultivation or qigong-type physical regimens into their martial arts practices. However, these regimens were not the unique preserve of Daoists, or any particular religious group for that matter. The Daoist intellectual and onetime military official, Ge Hong (290–370), practiced martial arts in his younger days and concentrated on Daoist hygiene methods in his later years. He did not treat the martial arts as Daoist activities. During the Tang dynasty, one old Buddhist monk in his eighties named Yuan Jing from a monastery in the vicinity of Shaolin Monastery (but not necessarily a Shaolin monk as has often been assumed) involved himself in a rebellion.
He had apparently conditioned his body to the point that attempts by his captors to break his neck failed, so he cursed them and challenged them to break his legs. Failing this as well, they hacked him to death. The famous artist Zheng Banqiao (1693–1765) records a similar case where a friend of his learned the secret of “practicing qi and directing the spirit” from a Shaolin monk (Wu and Liu 1982, 376). Zheng claimed his friend practiced for several years to the point where his whole body became hard as steel and, wherever he focused his qi, neither knife nor ax could wound him. At the extreme superstitious end of the spectrum were the practices of some of the Boxers in the uprising of 1900, who went into trances and mumbled incantations believed to turn them into eight-day martial arts wonders and immunize them from the effects of weapons.

The earliest and single most important document to hint at a martial arts association with popular Daoism is Ming patriot Huang Zongxi’s Epitaph for Wang Zhengnan (1669). Huang claimed that Shaolin was famous for its boxing, which emphasized attacking an opponent, but that there was also an Internal School that stressed restraint to counter movement. According to Huang, this school’s patriarch was a Daoist practitioner from Mount Wudang named Zhang Sanfeng. In the political context of the times, the opposing boxing schools in the epitaph can be viewed as symbolizing Han Chinese (indigenous Daoism represented by Zhang Sanfeng and Mount Wudang) opposition to Manchu (foreign Buddhism represented by Shaolin Monastery) rule. In other words, the epitaph is actually a political statement, not a serious discourse on religion or opposing boxing schools. At the beginning of the twentieth century some boxing teachers attempted to categorize taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan), xingyiquan (hsing i ch’uan), and baguazhang (pa kua ch’uan) as Internal School styles and to identify taijiquan with Zhang Sanfeng and Daoism. Around the same time, and persisting to the present day, a number of newer martial arts forms have come to be identified with Mount Wudang and Daoism.

Conclusion
As can be seen from the foregoing narrative, the connection between the Chinese martial arts and religion is artificial at best. Individuals from all walks of life and all beliefs, including China’s Muslims and other minorities, practiced martial arts of one form or another for individual and collective defense—but the martial arts were primarily secular, not religious, activities. Attribution of a religious mystique to the Chinese martial arts is, for the most part, a very recent phenomenon based on misunderstandings of the past, but reflecting needs of the present.

Stanley E. Henning
In comparison to China and Japan, as well as Thailand and other regions of Southeast Asia, India does not often come to mind as a country with a strong martial arts tradition. Indeed, Indian civilization is most often associated with elaborate ritual codes, abstract metaphysical speculation, and, at least
in modern times, the principle of nonviolence. Even though the so-called classical scheme of social classification known as varna clearly defined the role of warrior princes in relation to other occupational groups and the two preeminent epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are replete with military exploits and martial heroes, Indian civilization has come to be associated with the values of Brahmamic Hinduism and colored by the values of orthodox ritual religiosity on the one hand and contemplative, otherworldly speculation on the other. In both public conception and much of the academic literature, these attributes are conceived of as decidedly noncombative and, very often, abstracted from the body rather than linked to it.

Nevertheless there is a strong tradition of martial arts in South Asia, as D. C. Muzumdar brought out in his Encyclopedia of Indian Physical Culture, published in 1950, and this tradition is not nearly as dissociated from the so-called mainstream of spiritualism and philosophical thought as popular perception would have it. In practice, the martial arts in India are clearly marginalized, and their popularity is sharply limited, but in theory various forms of martial art are closely linked to important medical, ritual, and meditational forms of practice. Moreover, it is somewhat problematic to think of the martial arts in India as a discrete entity upon which an equally discrete entity—spirituality and religion—has a direct effect. When, as in South Asia, the distinction between mind and body is not applicable, other categorical binary distinctions also tend to lose their meaning. As a result, what might be classified as religion shades into metaphysics, which, in turn, shades into physical fitness. Thus, in a sense, devotionalism, meditation, and the martial arts are, perhaps, best seen as part of the same basic complex rather than as interdependent variables.

The concept of shakti (Hindi; power/energy) or its various analogs, such as pran (vital breath), is of central importance to this complex. Most broadly, shakti as a metaphysical concept denotes the active, or animating, feminine aspect of creation. It also means cosmic energy or, simply, the supernatural power associated with divine beings and spiritual forces. Shakti is regarded as a kind of power that pervades the universe, but that does not always manifest itself as such. To the extent that human beings are micro-cosmic, they are thought to embody shakti, and this shakti can be made manifest in various ways under various circumstances.

Most often one is said to manifest shakti when one so closely identifies with a deity that one embodies that deity’s power. Moreover, the performance of austerities, such as fasts and other forms of renunciation, as well as various forms of ritualized sacrifice, produces shakti. Thus, shakti is thought of as something that can be developed through practice, and this, in particular, is what links it to the performance of various martial arts. Most significantly, shakti is at once supernatural and therefore meta-
physical and physical and physiological. The brightness of one's eyes as well as the tone of one's skin is said to be a manifestation of shakti, as is the ability to levitate, on the one hand, or lift an opponent into the air, on the other. In other words, shakti means many different things, which makes it possible to translate across various domains of experience, and the martial arts can be thought of as a critical, if often overlooked, point at which this translation is most clearly worked out.

Whereas shakti can be derived from devotional and ascetic practices, it is perhaps most closely linked, and clearly embodied, through the prac-

An Indian miniature of the defeat of a devil by a prince on horseback and a warrior, Ragnala Bikaner school, 1765. (The Art Archive/Marco Polo Gallery Paris/Dagli Orti)
tice of brahmacharya (celibacy; the complete control of one’s senses). In this way, shakti is directly linked to sexual activity, and the physiology of masculine sexuality in particular. Essentially, shakti becomes manifest when a person is able to renounce sexual desire and embody the energy manifest in semen. As Swami Sivananda of the Divine Life Society, one of the most highly regarded spiritual leaders of the twentieth century, puts it: “The more a person conserves his semen, the greater will be his stature and vitality. His energy, ardor, intellect, competence, capacity for work, wisdom, success and godliness will begin to manifest themselves, and he will be able to profit from long life. . . . To tell the truth, semen is elixir” (1984, 10–11). Semen itself is thought of as the distilled, condensed essence of the body, as the body, nourished by food, goes through a series of biochemical metabolic transformations whereby waste products are purged and each successive metamorphosis is a more pure, refined form of the previous one. In fact, semen is thought of as the purest and most powerful of body fluids, derived from the juice of food, blood, flesh, fat, bone, and marrow; it imparts an aura of ojas (bright, radiant energy) to the body, and ojas is, in essence, the elemental, particulate form of cosmic shakti.

Although the physiology of this transformation is what matters in the context of martial arts training and self-development, the embodied process of metamorphosis is congruent with cosmological mythology and astrology. The underlying model within this cosmology is the flow of liquids and the dynamic interplay of dry solar heat and cool, moist, lunar fluids. The waxing and waning of the moon are conceived of as the drying up and death of the lunar king, but then his subsequent cyclical rejuvenation. Rejuvenation is regarded as a process by which cool, moist, lunar “semen” is replenished. Significantly, this cosmology defines the potential energy of contained semen, and the embodiment of semen, in terms of the negative consequences of its outward flow. In an important way the high value placed on semen/shakti in the Indian martial arts is defined in terms of the danger associated with indiscriminate sensual arousal, and one can note, in the anxious rhetoric of contemporary religious teachers, the underlying mythic symbolism of heat, waning energy, and the violent destructiveness of sex.

Sivananda characterizes this condition in the following way: “Because the youth of today are destroying their semen, they are courting the worst disaster and are daily being condemned to hell. . . . How many of these unfortunate people lie shaking on their cots like the grievously ill? Some are suffering from heat. . . . There is no trust of God in their hearts, only lust. . . . [W]hat future do such people have? They only glow with the light of fireflies, and neither humility nor glory are found in their flickering hypocrisy” (1984, 41).
In terms of formalized religious practice, celibacy is institutionalized in the life stage of brahmacharya, in the sense of chaste discipleship. In this sense a *brahmachari* is not simply celibate, although certainly and primarily that, but also a novice scholar who submits himself to the absolute authority of a guru (adap master). As the first stage of the ideal life course, brahmacharya is roughly congruent with the age through which most children attend school, with marriage when a young man is in his early to mid-twenties. In the idealized scheme, a brahmachari is a high-caste Brahman boy who must learn by rote the Vedic scriptures and all of the formal ritual protocol associated with those scriptures. The concept of chastity is relevant here insofar as a boy who is able to control his desire is not distracted, better able to learn—in the sense that he has a greater capacity for memory—and also in appropriately good physical health, both strong and pure. Although brahmacharya as a life stage is associated with ritual and Vedic learning, it also has much wider pedagogical salience as a model for all forms of instruction, both explicitly spiritual, as when a person submits to the devotional teaching of a holy man, as well as more secular, as when a person learns a craft, a musical instrument, or a martial art from an accomplished teacher. It is significant that these “secular” forms of the master-disciple relationship are only secular in terms of content. The mode of instruction and the attitude of complete submission to authority and total identification with the guru that are incumbent on the disciple stem directly from the idealized Vedic model. Celibacy factors into this attitude because of the extent to which a disciple must be able to focus his whole being on the act of learning and literally embody the knowledge his guru imparts.

Hindu scriptures are replete with references to the link between sex, fertility, and mastery of power, both supernatural and natural—and the link is complex. In many instances, it is also inherently ambiguous, insofar as sex—understood as an analog for divine creation—is the source of great power, but also—understood as an instinctual, bestial, subhuman drive—is regarded as an act through which all power can be lost if it is not carefully controlled. In any case, the deity who is celibacy incarnate, most clearly manifests shakti, iconographically embodies the physiology of ojas, and translates all of this explicitly into the domain of martial arts is Lord Hanuman, hero of the epic *Ramayana*. Although he is most closely associated with wrestling and is known for having performed feats of incredible strength, in fact the nature of Hanuman’s power is more complex. To begin with, Hanuman is a monkey, or the son of a nymph and a monkey, and is thought to possess the nascent attributes of his simian lineage. This is made clear in many of the myths and folktales associated with him that, in essence, depict him “monkeying around.” In one notable instance, as an infant, he flew off intent on eating the sun, manifest as the chariot of the god
Indra, thinking the golden orb was a succulent orange. Indira threw his spear and knocked Hanuman unconscious to the ground. At this, Vayu, god of the Wind and surrogate father of the young monkey, withheld his power and threatened to suffocate the world unless his son’s life was saved. At this moment, the whole pantheon of gods rallied to Hanuman’s side and bestowed on him their respective supreme powers. As a result of this, Hanuman is immortal and invincible. He also has the ability to change form and change size. He—again betraying the subhuman attributes of his lineage—is not conscious of these powers until he is made so by a suprahuman deity, in particular his lord and master, Sri Ram.

Lord Hanuman is one of the most popular deities in the Hindu pantheon, in part because he is a deity whose primary spiritual attribute is his own devotion to Lord Ram. In other words, Hanuman provides human supplicants with a clear divine model for their own devotional practices, and, significantly, it is from these devotional practices that Hanuman is wise beyond the wisest and an expert in the use of all weapons, among many other things. From the act of sensory withdrawal and complete emotional transference, Hanuman derives his phenomenal strength, skill, and wisdom. For the vast majority of supplicants, devotionalism is an end in itself. And, given the metaphorical link between celibacy and fertility, newly married women often pray to Hanuman to bless them with the birth of a son. However, Hanuman is most clearly recognized as the patron deity of akharas (gymnasiums), and in this context he is an explicit link between the domain of spiritual, cosmic shakti, celibacy and the embodiment of shakti, and the performance of martial arts. A shrine dedicated to Lord Hanuman is found in almost all gymnasiums, and in addition to performing rituals of propitiation and offering prayers to him, men who engage in martial arts training attribute their skill and strength to the extent of their ability to embody celibacy and thereby become in their relationship to Hanuman as Hanuman is to Lord Ram.

Celibacy is an integral feature of the martial arts in India, and in addition to being closely linked to Hanuman, it is an important aspect of two other forms of practice that together constitute one of the central coordinates around which Hindu doctrine has been constructed: sannyas (world renunciation) and yoga (the union of the individual self with the cosmic soul). Technically, a sannyasi is a person who has moved through each of the first three stages of the ideal life course—celibate discipleship, ritual-performing family man, and forest-dwelling monk—and has gone in search of moksha (final liberation from the cycle of rebirth). As a sannyasi, a person must have no possessions, no family, no home, and no desire for worldly things. After performing the rites to his own funeral—thereby symbolically dying—he secludes himself to perform tapas (austerities), and
from these austerities is thought to develop phenomenal powers before achieving final liberation. Significantly, the powers that a sannyasi comes to possess through the performance of austerities are embodied, even though the final realization of liberation entails a complete dissolution of the body. In popular imagination, sannyasis can tell the future, read minds, and perform other miracles. Often the act of performing intense austerities is said to generate tremendous heat, referred to commonly as tapas. The heat of tapas is closely linked both conceptually as well as in a theory of physiology associated with the retention of semen. In many respects, therefore, the sannyasi is an ascetic analog of the divine ape, Hanuman, and practitioners of the martial arts in India draw on both models to define the nature and extent of their own strength and skill.

Interestingly, recent scholarship has shown that sannyasis were, in all likelihood, themselves practitioners of various martial arts. Although past scholarship has tended to emphasize the asocial, ascetic, and purely cognitive features of sannyas, it is clear that at various times in the history of South Asia, groups of sannyasis (known tellingly as akharas, a term that can mean either “gymnasium” or “ascetic order, celibacy, and yoga”) have used their power to develop specific fighting skills. These so-called fighting ascetics were retained by merchants, landlords, and regional potentates to defend or extend their various interests. In some instances sannyasis of this kind amassed significant amounts of wealth and exercised considerable political power. A recent permutation of this practice is manifest in present-day Ayodhya, a prominent religious city in north India, where the heads of various akharas have tremendous political clout, as well as in the articulation of aggressive, chauvinistic, communal Hinduism, wherein the powerful sannyasi is seen as the heroic embodiment of idealized Hindu masculinity.

In contrast to East Asia, where the ascetic practices associated with Daoism produced the archetypal martial arts, there is very little known about how the fighting ascetics of India refined their skill. However, it is clear that yoga as a form of rigorous self-discipline is an integral part of ascetic practice, and that yoga makes reference to a theory of subtle physiology that translates very well into the language and practice of martial arts, even though in recent history it has come to be regarded, by most practitioners, as the antithesis of these arts. Although yoga is often thought of as being cerebral, supremely metaphysical, and concerned with such ephemeral concepts as the transmigration of the soul and the dissolution of consciousness, many of the basic or preliminary steps in yoga entail clearly defined codes of conduct, comprehensive ethical standards, and detailed prescriptions for personal “moral hygiene,” as well as the more commonly known methods of asanas (physical postures) and pranayama (breathing exercises). These preliminary steps of yoga are designed to build up a prac-
tioner's overall strength such that he or she is able to withstand the force of transcendental consciousness.

Pranayama is of particular importance. In yogic physiology, a person is said to be composed of a series of body-sheaths, which range across the spectrum from the gross anatomy of elemental metamorphosis at one extreme to the subtle, astral aura of the soul at the other. Pran (vital breath) is said to pervade all of these sheaths, and there is a close relationship, both metaphorical and metonymical, between air as breath and the vital, subtle breath of pran. Not only are they alike figuratively, but one has come to stand for the other. Pran, as cognate with and as related to shakti, is thought to be the very energy of life, and yogic breathing exercises are conceived of as the means by which one can purify, concentrate, and channel this energy. In this regard, a theory of pranic flow through the nadi (subtle channels or meridians of the body) explains how cosmic energy is microcosmically embodied within the individual body.

Most closely associated with the esoteric, self-consciously mystical teachings of Tantrism, nadi physiology is integral to yoga in general. Although subtle and thereby imperceptible to the gross senses, nadi pervades the body in much the same way as do veins, arteries, and capillaries, on the one hand, and nerves on the other. Of the hundreds of thousands of nadi, three are of primary importance in yoga, the axial sushumna, which runs up the center of the trunk from anus to crown, and the ida and pingla, which both start from the anus and intersect the sushumna at key points as they crisscross from left to right and right to left respectively. These key points are referred to as chakra centers, which, among many other things, reflect the energy of pran as the disarticulated pran flowing through all three conduits comes together. The ultimate goal of pranayama is to cleanse the channels, purify pran, and then channel it exclusively through the sushumna nadi such that it penetrates consciousness and yokes—or harnesses as yogic imagery would have it (even though yoke and yoga have a common etymology)—the individual soul to the cosmic spirit of the universe.

In this regard asanas are, technically, “seats” rather than postures, and are designed to anchor, or root, the body in space, thus explicitly facilitating the practice of “yoking.” The classical padamasana (lotus seat) as well as similar cross-legged seated positions such as sukhhasana and sid-dhasana are particularly important, insofar as they enable a person to sit motionless for many hours and also stabilize the subtle body. Thus, before a person engages in the four “higher” stages of yogic meditation, he or she must master these “empowering” ways of sitting. However, apart from these “seats-in-fact,” the relative importance to yoga as a whole of the more “vigorous” stretching, bending, and flexing asanas is unclear, since many of the classical, authoritative works on the subject, such as the Yoga

Religion and Spiritual Development: India  469
Sutra of Patanjali, give scant mention to the subject of this kind of yoga. However, there is no doubt that asanas have become a highly developed form of physical self development, and this development can be traced back to the medieval period of South Asian history and the structured asceticism of the Kanpatha Sect of sannyasis. Although these ascetics were concerned with the embodiment of power, it is difficult to imagine that asanas were, in and of themselves, a form of martial art, given that they do not entail movement as such. However, there is the intriguing possibility that yogic asanas, linked together through a series of connective movements, might have constituted a more active style of martial self-development along the lines of taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan) (cf. Sjoman 1996). Regardless, it is clear that in contemporary practice, asanas are conceived of as a form of physical fitness training for both the subtle and gross bodies, with primary attention given to the locus points at which these bodies tend to affect one another most directly: the internal organ/chakra nexus, the spine/sushumna axes, and, to a lesser extent, the joint/nerve/nadi/tendon complex.

In essence yoga is a method for achieving siddha (perfection) in the whole body-mind complex. Although perfection is meant to lead to a state of complete nothingness, a person who comes close to perfection is able to perform supernatural feats. In the canonical literature of Hinduism, as well as in more popular folk genres, yogis often figure as characters who use their power to perform miracles or, as is often the case when they are disturbed from deep meditation, to curse and otherwise punish those who are less than perfect. Thus, in a very concrete sense, the power associated with yoga is regarded as having an outward orientation and is not only directed inward toward the self and away from others or society at large. Although the power of a yogi can often be destructive, in either a defensive or offensive mode, an adept yogi can embody near perfection, such that the aura of his personality has a positive effect on those with whom he comes in contact. Although this “personality” is not physiological per se, nor is it “martial” in any meaningful sense, the way in which a yogi’s embodied consciousness—his spirituality or the subtle aura of his religious persona—can factor into problematic social relationships should be understood as an extension of the logic behind more explicitly martial arts.

Joseph S. Alter

See also India; Kalarippayattu; Meditation; Thang-ta; Varma Ati; Wrestling and Grappling: India; Written Texts: India

References


Japanese martial arts developed within a multifaceted ethos that aligned human activities with the ultimate forces or principles ruling the cosmos. Warriors drew upon their understanding of these cosmic forces as they disciplined their bodies to acquire or apply physical skills, psychological vigor, and special abilities. Modern authors frequently address aspects of Japanese cosmos and ethos under the Western rubrics of religion and spiritual development. Even in Western contexts, however, the terms religion and spiritual lack consistent and generally accepted definitions. It should not be surprising, therefore, that their application to Japanese contexts is frequently problematic. Nowhere are problems more abundant than in accounts of Japanese martial arts and religion. It is widely reported, for example, that Japanese martial arts constitute paths of spiritual development based on Zen Buddhism [1], the goal of which is to attain a state of no-mind (mushin [2]), characterized by spontaneous action and reaction without regrets. Such accounts not only romanticize the relationship between martial arts and religion, but greatly exaggerate the relative importance of Zen Buddhism and present a distorted image of the nature and aims of Zen training. The following presents an alternative account, one that is more comprehensive and that situates the religious aspects of Japanese martial arts within their historical context.

The simplistic myth of “Zen and the martial arts” has been so uncritically accepted and repeated so often, however, that it cannot be ignored or dismissed out of hand. Indeed it is difficult to gain a more balanced view of this topic without first attempting to understand the origins of this Zen motif and the reasons for its enduring appeal both in the West and in Japan. For this purpose, it is necessary to briefly review the development of scholarly discourses on the nature of religions, on Japanese religiosity, and on the religious nature of European sports and Japanese martial arts. All of these discourses emerged at the same time during a period of recent history when Western powers exerted colonial control over much of Asia and viewed contemporary Asians and their cultures with contempt. Japanese faced this challenge by actively importing Western intellectual methodologies and by fashioning new images of themselves to export to the West. Within this geopolitical context academic theories of religion and descriptions of the religious aspects of Japanese martial arts have never been value-free or impartial. Their development has been shaped by contemporaneous intellectual currents and has served to advance changing ideological agendas. Once these agendas have been assessed, we can turn our at-
A story from the famous series Biyu Suikoden (Handsome Heroes of the Water Margin) of the warrior Takagi Umanosuke undergoing a trial of courage by spending the night in a haunted ancient temple, 1866. (Asian Art & Archeology, Inc./Corbis)
Modern Theories of Religion and Martial Arts

Jonathan Z. Smith provocatively notes that religion “is a category imposed from the outside on some aspect of native culture” (1998, 269). Nowhere is this fact as well documented as in Japan, where a traditional Japanese word for religion did not exist. The concept of religion was forced on Japan during the 1860s by diplomats who employed the theretofore rare Chinese Buddhist technical term *shûkyô* [3] (roughly, “seminal doctrines”) in treaties written to guarantee freedom of religion (*shûkyô wo jiyû* [4]) for newly arrived foreign Christians. Significantly, this occurred just as the term *religion* was beginning to lose its exclusively Christian connotations in the West. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, European universities inaugurated the academic study of religions (in German, *Religionswissenschaft*) to create a new framework independent from Christian theology for the analysis of common elements of evolution in myths, in propitiation of gods and ghosts, in social rituals, in taboos and norms of behavior, in sect organizations, and in psychological aspects of those elements. The founding generation of scholars approached this new field of research from a wide range of academic perspectives, but on the whole they shared several common beliefs: in scientific progress, in the universality of religion, in the common origin of religion, and in the evolution of religion through various stages beginning with the primitive and concluding, depending on the orientation of the scholar, either with Christianity or with secular science.

Belief in the universality of religion forced secular scholars to attempt to draw a distinction between the specific historical features of any particular religion and the general essence shared by all religions, which they then attempted to define. By the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars had postulated more than fifty competing definitions of religion, each one more or less useful in accordance with a given focus of study, theory of origin, or evolutionary scheme. As secular academic approaches asserted ever greater authority over explanations of the objective aspects of religion (e.g., historical accounts of scriptures, anthropological explanations of rituals, sociological theories of sectarianism), theologians and religious thinkers increasingly began to define the essential essence of religion in psychological terms as belief or experience—subjective realms lying beyond the reach of secular empirical critique. This conceptual separation of inner psychological essence from the external forms of religious life (e.g., ritual, dogma, institutions, history) laid the foundation for the popularization in the West of romanticized notions of Zen.

Japan also redefined itself during the latter half of the nineteenth cen-
In 1868 a new regime, known as the Meiji [5], overthrew the 300-year old Tokugawa [6] military government (called the bakufu [7]), opened Japan to the West, and began the rapid modernization and transformation of all aspects of society, especially religion and martial arts. Meiji leaders initiated a cultural revolution in which they attempted to destroy Japan’s religious traditions and to create a new state cult, eventually known as Shintô [8], to take its place. They commanded obedience by identifying their government with a divine emperor who claimed descent from the ancient gods who supposedly had created Japan. To more closely link the gods to Japan, Meiji leaders ordered their dissociation from Buddhism. In other words, all worship halls for gods were stripped of their Buddhist names, art, and symbols and given new native identities. This policy caused the destruction of tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Buddhist temples and the loss of immeasurable quantities of Buddhist artifacts. In 1872, Buddhist monks were forced to register on the census as ordinary subjects with secular names and encouraged to eat meat and raise families. No one knows how many Buddhist monks and nuns were laicized immediately following 1868, but their numbers fell from a nationwide total of 82,000 in 1872 (the year of Japan’s first modern census) to 21,000 in 1876.

Next, the Meiji government began to strip the newly independent Shintô institutions of their ties to popular (i.e., nongovernmental) religious practices. Beginning in 1873 a wide variety of folk religious traditions were officially banned. Shintô shrines came to be defined as civic centers at which all citizens were required to participate in state-sanctioned rituals. When Western nations demanded freedom of religion, Meiji leaders exploited that concept’s lack of definition. They maintained the fiction that State Shintô was not a religion (i.e., not individual faith) but merely a social expression of patriotism, and in 1882 they forbade Shintô celebrants at government-supported shrines to discuss doctrine or officiate at private religious functions such as funerals. To more easily control Shintô activities, in 1906 the government initiated a nationwide program of shrine “mergers,” a euphemism for the destruction of shrines that were too small for direct government supervision. In Mie Prefecture, for example, the total number of smaller shrines was reduced from 8,763 to 519. Nationwide more than 52 percent of Shintô shrines were destroyed, thereby depriving rural villagers of local worship halls.

The vast dismantling of Buddhist temples, laicization of Buddhist monks and nuns, and destruction of Shintô shrines had immediate and far-reaching consequences. First, they rapidly accelerated the forces of secularization that accompanied Japan’s industrialization. Common people were led by the government to reject previous religious practices as corrupt, feudal, and superstitious. Second, because it left ordinary people alienated...
from firsthand knowledge of their own religious traditions, it encouraged their acceptance of new abstract interpretations of Japanese religiosity. Meiji leaders filled this spiritual vacuum with the vaguely mystical State Shintō ideology of emperor worship and ultranationalism. Buddhist intellectuals, many of whom were educated in European thought, sought to create a New Buddhism (shin būkkyō [9]) free from previous institutional ties, which would be scientific, cosmopolitan, socially useful, and loyal to the throne. They actively appropriated contemporary European intellectual trends and presented them to Western and to Japanese audiences alike as the pure essence of Japanese spirituality. Significantly, many intellectuals found this pure spirituality expressed best not in the traditional religious rituals that seemed too superstitious for modern sensibilities, but rather in the worldly skills of poetry, painting, tea ceremony, and martial arts.

In the early 1900s, martial arts became identified not just with new interpretations of Japanese spirituality, but specifically with the mystical aspects of militarism and emperor worship. The government promoted the transformation of martial arts into a particular type of “spiritual education” (seishin kyoiku; see below) and incorporated them into the national school curriculum to inculcate in schoolchildren (i.e., future soldiers) a religious willingness to sacrifice themselves for the state and to die for the emperor. Before martial arts could be transformed into so-called spiritual education, however, Japanese had to develop new forms of martial art education based on recently developed European notions of sport.

Modern sports emerged during the nineteenth century, when Europeans united physical training with nationalism and games with imperialism. The Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815) and their large conscript armies had vividly demonstrated the importance of a physically fit citizenry for modern warfare and for the exercise of national power. In response to this need there developed two competing and, in the minds of many, mutually incompatible methods of providing general citizens with physical vitality: continental gymnastics and English sports. The ardent German nationalist Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778–1852) advocated gymnastics (turnen) to unify the Germanic races (volk) and to develop soldiers stronger than those of France. Adolf Spiess (1810–1858) and other German educators developed Jahn's turnen into a system of group exercises closely resembling military drill, which demanded physical discipline, strict obedience, and precision teamwork. Competitive games (i.e., sports) were denounced for harming moral development (defined as sacrifice for the nation) and for encouraging pride and egoism. This German model was emulated elsewhere on the continent, most notably in Denmark, Sweden, and Czechoslovakia. Militaristic gymnastic societies and their nationalistic ideology were vindicated by Prussian victory over France in the war of 1870–1871,
and they became an integral part of the German empire produced by that victory.

In contrast to the intense nationalism and militarism featured in continental gymnastics, British leaders emphasized acquisition of an individualistic games ethic that they called sportsmanship. While Germans rejected competition as morally corrupting, the British believed that effort to surpass previous performances possesses morally uplifting qualities when tempered by adherence to ideals of fair play and mutual respect. Games, especially cricket, were elevated to the status of moral discipline, and successful competition according to the rules of the game was identified with certain Victorian conceptions of manliness: seriousness, rectitude, courage, honesty, leadership, individual initiative, and self-reliance, tempered by altruism and a sense of duty. Although the Duke of Wellington (Arthur Wellesley, 1769–1852) probably never said that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, most Britons nonetheless believed that their empire had been won through the superior spiritual qualities and moral character inculcated by public school sports. Colonial administrators promoted English games to instill British values and loyalty to the crown. So great was the British transformation of games that historians generally credit England with the invention of the modern concept of sport and its diffusion throughout the world.

In 1892, a French educator named Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937) advocated the creation of a modern Olympiad as a means of combining the team discipline and nationalistic sentiments of continental gymnastics with the individual ethical qualities of English sports. Coubertin believed that the moral discipline of English sports gave England a hidden source of military power. He was especially influenced by the doctrines of “Muscular Christianity” (i.e., teaching Christian ethics through physical contests) as epitomized in the novel *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857) by Thomas Hughes (1822–1896). Based on these ideals, Coubertin argued that sports and the ethical values of sports constituted a modern, secular religion that should supplant the old-fashioned theistic creeds of Europe. He carefully selected religious symbolism to imbue Olympic ceremonies with a sense of spirituality: flags, processions, eternal flames, oaths, hymns, and so forth. Coubertin wrote: “For me sport is a religion with church, dogma, ritual” (Guttmann 1992, 3). Coubertin’s explicit emphasis on the spiritual and religious qualities of competition helped him overcome the skepticism of continental leaders who saw games as incompatible with the altruistic ideals of their own gymnastic drills. In the face of this skepticism, Coubertin’s first Olympiad in 1896 was a small affair with teams from only eleven European countries plus a few contestants from the United States and Chile.

Notwithstanding its shaky start, the Olympic movement quickly
spread throughout the world. It reached Japan in 1909 when Kanô Jigorô (10) was selected to become the first Asian member of the International Olympic Committee. Kanô Jigorô (1860–1938) was the ideal conduit for introducing to Japan the Olympic creed of athletics mixed with ethics and spiritualism. Kanô had initiated the academic study of physical education in Japan when in 1899 he established a department of physical education at Tokyo Teacher’s College (kotô shihan gakkô [11]), an institution he headed for twenty-seven years, from 1893 to 1920. He also founded the Japanese Amateur Athletic Association and served as its president from 1911 to 1920. Kanô’s most famous achievement, though, is his Kôdôkan school of jûjutsu [12] (unarmed combat), from which modern jûdô developed. From his student days Kanô had studied the German-style gymnastics drills introduced to Japan in 1878 by the American George A. Le-land (1850–1924) as well as the new educational theories advocated by the Swiss reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), and he used ideas from both to adapt jûjutsu training to the needs of youth education. He presented jûjutsu in the rational terms of Western thought while emphasizing its ties to Japanese tradition and culture. Kôdôkan grew in popularity in large part because it incorporated the new European sports ethic: innovation and rigorous empiricism, systematic training methods, repetitive drills to develop fundamental skills, high standards of safety and hygiene, public lectures and published textbooks, competitive contests with clear rules and fair judging, tournaments with spectators, all presented as means of ethical and spiritual development.

As early as 1889, Kanô had addressed the Japanese Education Association on the educational value of teaching jûjutsu as part of the public school curriculum. He argued that his methods presented pupils with a balanced approach to physical education, competitive matches, and mental cultivation. This initial attempt to introduce martial arts to the public schools failed. After examining many different styles of jûjutsu and swordsmanship (gekken or gekiken [14]) in 1890, the Ministry of Education ruled that martial arts were physically, spiritually, and pedagogically inappropriate for schools. This sweeping denunciation is important because it documents how methods of martial art instruction at that time differed dramatically from Kanô’s ideals and from modern educational standards. Instead of martial arts, the Ministry of Education devised a physical education curriculum based on military calisthenics (heishiki taisô [15]). The Ministry stated that these gymnastic exercises would promote physical health, obedience, and spiritual fortitude. As many Japanese scholars have noted, the idea that this kind of physical training could promote spiritual values reflected Christian pedagogical theory (see Endô 1994, 51). The next generation of martial art instructors were schooled in this approach.
Eventually, they would adopt textbooks and training methods developed by educators at Tokyo Teacher’s College in the department of physical education that had been founded by Kanō Jigorō.

When the Ministry of Education finally adopted jūjutsu and gekken as part of the standard school curriculum in 1911, Japan’s political situation had changed dramatically. Military victories against China in 1894–1895 and against Russia in 1905 not only demonstrated Japan’s ability to challenge European nations but also gave Japan control over neighboring territories. Nonetheless, Japan’s industrial capacity could not supply armaments in the quantities required by its military ambitions. Faced with this insurmountable economic inferiority, Japanese army leaders decided to rely on fighting spirit (kōgeki seishin [16]) to defeat the material superiority of Western forces. Beginning in 1905 the development of a program of spiritual education (seishin kyōiku [17]) became a top priority. In 1907 the army identified martial arts as one of its basic methods for training the spirit. Thereafter, it became increasingly common for Japanese intellectuals to contrast Japanese spirituality with Western materialism and to link martial arts to spiritual development. In this context, however, the term spirit (seishin) denoted “willpower” as in the well-known phrase “indomitable spirit” (seishin ittō [18]) coined by the Chinese Confucian scholar Zhu Xi (a.k.a. Chu Hsi, Japanese Shushi, 1130–1200). Malcolm Kennedy, a British soldier assigned to a Japanese army unit from 1917 to 1920, correctly captured the true sense of spiritual education when he explained it as “training of the martial spirit.” He notes that it was designed to foster aggression on battlefields abroad and to dispel “dangerous thoughts” (e.g., bolshevism or antidynastic sentiments) at home (54–55, 311, 337).

Public school education played an indispensable role in preparing students for military training. In 1907, therefore, the same year that the army linked martial arts to spiritual education, Japan’s legislative Diet passed a law requiring the Ministry of Education to develop jūjutsu and gekken curriculums. This law explicitly identified martial art instruction with bushidō [20] (warrior ways), and the law’s sponsors argued that bushidō was more important than ever because everyone in the country must become a soldier (zenkoku kaihei [21]).

Significantly, Japanese Christians originally had popularized the concept of bushidō. They had justified their own conversion to Christianity by describing it as the modern way to uphold traditional Tokugawa-period Confucian values, which they referred to as bushidō. The first book ever published with the word bushidō in its title, for example, was Kirisutokyō to bushidō [22] (Christianity and Bushidō, 1894) by Uemura Masahisa [23] (1858–1925), a professor of theology at Meiji Gakuin Academy. In this work, Uemura argued that modern Japanese should rely on Christian-
ity just as warriors (*bushi* [24]) of earlier times had relied on Confucianism. He lamented what he saw as the decline of public morality and cited the Bible and European history to show how Christianity not only endorses heroic deeds but also ennobles them. Uemura's theme of Christian and Confucian compatibility reappeared in *Bushidô: The Soul of Japan* (1900) by Nitobe Inazô [25] (1862–1933), a Quaker. Writing in English for a Western audience, however, Nitobe's goals differed from those of Uemura. Nitobe sought to introduce the newly victorious Japan to the court of world opinion as a civilized nation with a sound system of moral education compatible with but not dependent on Christianity. He asserted that just as “fair play” is the basis on which England's greatness is built, “bushido does not stand on a lesser pedestal” (Hanai 1994, 8–9). Although Nitobe concluded his book by asserting that bushidô is dying and needs to be revived by Christianity, it was his inspirational and idealized account of traditional virtues that most impressed readers. His work was an instant bestseller in New York and London. Soon it was translated into German, French, Polish, Norwegian, Hungarian, Russian, Rumanian, Chinese, and finally (in 1909) into Japanese.

Ironically, whereas Uemura and Nitobe had conceived of bushidô as a bridge linking Japan to Christianity and to the games ethic of fair play, once the term *bushidô* entered the popular vocabulary it tended to be defined in ethnocentric terms as a unique and unchanging ethos that opposed Christian teachings and distinguished Japanese martial arts from European sports. Nowhere was this ethnocentric vision of bushidô emphasized more strongly than at the Dainippon Butokukai [26] (Greater Japan Martial Virtue Association), a quasi-governmental institution founded in 1895 to unify various martial arts under the control of a single national organization. The Butokukai appeared just when Europeans and Americans also were establishing nationalistic athletic associations, and it shared many characteristics with those counterparts. From its very inception the Butokukai’s publications touted martial arts as the best method of inculcating traditional national values (i.e., bushidô) in a modern citizenry. In 1906 the Butokukai defined bushidô as the Japanese spirit (*wakon* or *yamatodamashii* [27]) expressed as service to the emperor, strict obedience to authority, and a willingness to regard the sacrifice of one’s own life as lightly as a feather. It asserted that modern citizens (*kokumin* [28]) must follow a “citizen way” (*kokumin-dô* [29]) based on the bushidô of old (Hayashi).

As seen in the above example, the suffix *dô* of “bushidô” soon acquired specific connotations of duty to the emperor (i.e., imperial way, *kôdô* [30]), an ideal that grew stronger as Japanese society became ever more militaristic. Because martial arts constituted the prime method for instilling this ideology, they too became ever more frequently called “some-
thing-dô.” In 1914 the superintendent-general of police, Nishikubo Hironichi [31], published a series of articles in which he argued that Japanese martial arts must be called *budô* [32] (martial ways) instead of the more common term *bujutsu* [33] (martial techniques) to clearly show that they teach service to the emperor, not technical skills. In 1919 Nishikubo became head of the martial art academy (*senmon gakkô* [34]) affiliated with the Dainippon Butokukai and changed its name from “Bujutsu Academy” to “Budô Academy.” Thereafter, Butokukai publications replaced the terms *bujutsu* (martial arts), *gekken* or *kenjutsu* [35] (swordsmanship), *jûjutsu* (unarmed combat), and *kyûjutsu* [36] (archery) with *budô*, *kendô* [37], *jûdô* [38], and *kyûdô* [39] respectively. Although the Butokukai immediately recommended that the Ministry of Education do likewise, it took seven years until 1926 before the names *kendô* and *jûdô* replaced *gekken* and *jûjutsu* in school curriculums. This deliberate change in names signaled that ideological indoctrination had become the central focus of these classes. Similar “dô” nomenclature eventually was applied to all athletic activities regardless of national origin, so that Western-style horsemanship became *kidô* [40] or *badô* [41], bayonet techniques became *jûkendô* [42], and gunnery became *shagekidô* [43]. By the late 1930s, recreational sports had become *supootsu-dô* [44], the highest expression of which was one’s ability to sacrifice oneself (*sutemi* [45]) and “die crazy” (*shikyô* [46]) for the emperor.

Official attitudes toward sports (i.e., the games ethic) were strongly influenced by German physical education theory, which valued gymnastic drills for their ability to mold group identity and rejected competition as a morally corrupt form of individualism. The goal of this molding process lay in creating new men. Therefore, the ideological content and psychological import of the training were more important than mastering physical skills (see Irie 1986, 122–128; Abe, Kiyohara, and Nakajima 1990). To reinforce this point the Dainippon Butokukai referred to competitive matches as “martial art performances” (*enbu* [47]) and adopted rules that recognized contestants more for displaying proper warriorlike aggression and self-abandon than for winning techniques. Among students, however, the popularity of martial arts derived primarily from the thrill of winning. These contradictory orientations were highlighted in 1922 when the College Kendô League organized a national championship tournament. The Butokukai argued against recognizing a champion on the grounds that kendô must not be regarded as a technical skill (*jutsu* [48], i.e., a means of competition). In response the students composed a petition in which they argued that spiritual training in kendô is similar to the sportsmanship ideal taught in competitive games. Eventually the Butokukai relented and a few years later even staged its own national championship.
To counter the influence of the British games ethic, officials continually devised new ways to more closely identify martial arts with symbols of imperial ideology, especially the religious symbols of State Shintô. In the 1920s, police began inspecting martial art training halls to ensure that they were equipped with Shintô altars (*kamidana* [49]) enshrining officially designated Shintô deities. In 1931 the roof over the ring for professional sumô wrestling matches was redesigned to resemble Shintô architecture. In 1936 the Ministry of Education issued an order requiring Shintô altars in all public school martial art training halls. New rules of martial art etiquette appeared that required students to begin and to end each workout by paying obeisance to the altars. By the 1930s, martial art training halls had commonly become known as dôjô [50], a word that previously had denoted religious chapels. Finally, many Tokugawa-period martial art treatises (including formerly secret texts such as *Gorin no sho* [51], 1643; *Ittôsai sensei kenpô sho* [52], 1664; and *Kenpô Seikun sensei sôden* [53], 1686) were published in popular editions (e.g., Hayakawa et al. 1915). Esoteric vocabulary that originally referred to specific physical techniques was borrowed from these texts and given new generic psychological interpretations to explain the correct mental attitude during practice. These religious symbols and psychological vocabulary helped to disguise the newness of the new elements and gave the entire ideological enterprise an aura of antiquity in a manner similar to what Eric Hobsbawm has termed “the reinvention of tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

During this same period when martial arts were acquiring religious connotations, Japanese Zen Buddhism was introduced to the West as a secularized “pure experience” that, while not itself dependent on religious rituals or dogmas, nonetheless underlies all religious feeling and all aspects of Japanese culture. Most of all, Zen was identified with bushidô and with Japanese intrepidity in the face of death. D. T. Suzuki [54] (1870–1966), the person most responsible for promoting this psychological interpretation of Zen, was not a Zen priest but a university-trained intellectual who spent eleven years from 1897 to 1908 in the United States studying the “Science of Religion” advocated by a German émigré named Paul Carus (1852–1919). Writing in English for a Western audience, Suzuki developed a new interpretation of Zen that combined the notion of pure experience first discussed by William James (1842–1910) with the irrational intuition and feeling that the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) had identified as the essence of religion. Suzuki’s numerous writings illustrate these Western ideas by recounting episodes in the hagiographies of Chinese and Japanese Zen monks and, in so doing, present Zen simultaneously as being a universal human experience and, paradoxically, as Japan’s unique cultural heritage (see Sharf 1995; James 1912; Schleiermacher 1988, 102).
Although Suzuki frequently quoted from Zen hagiographies, he argued that Zen is not the exclusive property of the Zen school, Zen temples, or Zen monks. Rather, Zen is to be found in the Japanese spirit as expressed in secular arts and in bushidô. Suzuki’s very first essay on Zen in 1906 asserted: “The Lebensanschauung [outlook on life] of Bushido is no more nor less than that of Zen” (quoted in Sharf 1995, 121). In 1938 Suzuki wrote an entire book on Zen, bushidô, and Japanese culture based on lectures given in the United States and England during 1936. During the intervening year, 1937, the Japanese Imperial Army invaded China and committed the atrocities known as the Rape of Nanking. Reflecting the zeitgeist of those years, Suzuki portrayed Zen in antinomian terms, as “a religion of will power” that advocates action unencumbered by ethics (Suzuki 1938, 37, 64; see also Suzuki 1959, 63, 84; Victoria 1997, 106–112). This book, revised as *Zen and Japanese Culture* in 1959 and in print ever since, has become the classic argument for the identity of Zen and martial arts. Although Suzuki had no firsthand knowledge of martial arts, he freely interpreted passages from Tokugawa-period martial art treatises as expressions of Zen mysticism. His translations are full of fanciful embellishments. For example, he explains *shuriken* [55, a.k.a. 56], a term that simply means “to perceive the enemy’s technique” (*tenouchi wo miru* [57]), as “the secret sword” that appears when “the Unconscious dormant at the root of all existence is awakened” (Suzuki 1959, 163). This kind of mistranslation, in which a physical skill becomes a psychological experience, rendered the notion of Zen and the martial arts at once exotic and tantalizingly familiar to Western audiences.

Suzuki’s interpretations were repeated by Eugen Herrigel (1884–1955), a German professor who taught philosophy in Japan from 1923 to 1929. While in Japan he studied archery under the guidance of an eccentric mystic named Awa Kenzô [58] (1880–1939). Herrigel continued to practice archery after returning to Germany, and in 1936 he wrote an essay to explain its principles in which he acknowledges that he took up archery because of his interest in Zen and mysticism. Significantly, though, this first account did not equate archery with Zen. Herrigel’s views changed once he read Suzuki’s 1938 account of Zen and bushidô. In 1948 Herrigel wrote a new book (translated into English as *Zen in the Art of Archery*, 1953) in which, in addition to extensive quotations from Suzuki, Herrigel described Awa’s teachings as a Zen practice that has remained the same for centuries. Nothing could be further from the truth. In 1920 Awa had founded a new religion called Daishakyôdô [59] (literally, “way of the great doctrine of shooting”). In his book Herrigel refers to Awa’s religion as the “Great Doctrine” and identifies it with Zen. Awa did not. Awa had no training in Zen and did not approve of Zen practice. Neither Awa nor...
Herrigel spoke each other’s language. Writing from memory almost twenty years after he left Japan, Herrigel placed subtle metaphysical arguments first voiced by Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–1799) in Awa’s mouth. Moreover, subsequent testimony from Herrigel’s interpreter shows that the mystical episodes related in the book either occurred when there was no interpreter present or were misunderstandings based on faulty translations. Regardless of these problems, Herrigel’s account has been uncritically accepted not only in Europe and the United States but also in Japan (where it was translated in 1956) as an accurate description of traditional Zen teaching methods.

During the 1950s, Japanese teachers of martial art readily embraced the “Zen” label because it served to rehabilitate their public image, which had been thoroughly discredited by Japan’s defeat and its occupation by the Allied Powers. In November 1945 all forms of martial arts were banned. Even the word budô (martial ways), with its imperialistic connotations, became taboo for almost ten years. In 1947 school curriculums in “physical training” (tairen [60]) were officially renamed “physical education” (taiiku [61]) to signal that henceforth they would emphasize democratic ideals, individualism, and sports instead of militaristic discipline. Once the Korean War began in 1950, however, occupation policy reversed course. Leftists were purged from official positions, and Japan became a silent partner in the Cold War. This policy shift permitted the revival of martial arts, provided that they assumed the characteristics of Western sports. In 1953, for example, when the Ministry of Education allowed high schools to teach kendô (officially renamed “bamboo-stick competition,” shinai kyôgi [62]) the Ministry stipulated that “it must not be taught as budô, but as a physical education sport (kyôiku supootsu [63]) in exactly the same way as any other physical education sport” (quoted in Nakabayashi 1994, 128). In this environment, some martial art instructors defended their authoritarian teaching methods by identifying them as Zen instead of as a legacy of fascism. This Zen aura enhanced their charismatic power and permitted them to evaluate students on the basis of arbitrary criteria not tied directly to physical performance.

After the 1950s it became commonplace to define the -dô suffix of martial art names (e.g., budô, kendô, jûdô) as denoting Zen-like “ways” of spiritual development. This trend found its most rigid expression in the publications of an American martial artist named Donn F. Draeger (1922–1982), whose numerous books and essays comprise the first comprehensive survey in English of the entire range of Japanese martial arts. In these works, Draeger classified this subject into four distinct categories of classical (ko [64]) or modern (shin [65]) forms of arts (-jutsu [66]) or ways (-dô [67]). Reflecting the postwar sensibilities of his teachers in Japan,
Draeger declared that these activities cannot be correctly understood in terms of the ultranationalistic militaristic training of the 1930s and 1940s. He asserted that martial arts whose name end with the suffix -jutsu (e.g., jujutsu, kenjutsu) are combative systems for self-protection, while those whose names end with the suffix -dô (e.g., judô, kendô) are spiritual systems for self-perfection (Draeger 1973–1974, vol. 2: 19). The former primarily emphasize combat, followed by discipline and, lastly, morals, while the latter are chiefly concerned with morals, followed by discipline and aesthetic form (Draeger 1973–1974, vol. 1: 36). In spite of their rigid reductionism, these definitions have been widely adopted by martial art enthusiasts outside of Japan and even by some within Japan. Indeed, in 1987 the Japanese Budô Association (Nihon Budô Kyôgikai [68]) promulgated a Budô Charter (kenshô [69]) that defines martial arts in a teleological manner reminiscent of Draeger as a unique cultural tradition that has “progressed from techniques to ways” (jutsu kara dô ni hatten shita [70]).

Regardless of how widely disseminated this kind of lexicographical distinction between -jutsu and -dô has become, it must be emphasized that there simply is no historical evidence for it. Martial art names ending in the -dô suffix have a long linguistic history. For example, the first documented appearance of the words budô, kendô, and judô occurred about 1200, 1630, and 1760 respectively (see Nakamura 1994, 13; Tominaga 1972, 19; Oimatsu 1982, 209). Until the 1910s, these terms were used interchangeably with a wide variety of other names, some ending in the -jutsu suffix and some not, with no generally agreed-upon difference in denotation or religious connotations. It was not until the 1920s and 1930s that martial art names became standardized in public discourse as “something-dô,” and they did so precisely because of their association with the militaristic ideology that Draeger excludes from consideration. Draeger’s definitions ignore the fact that one of the goals of this ideological discourse was to disguise its coercive agenda by presenting budô primarily as a spiritual endeavor, distinct from either pure combat techniques or recreational sports. In this respect, these definitions not only depart from linguistic evidence but also obfuscate crucial developments in Japanese martial art history. If or how any martial arts constituted “spiritual systems for self-perfection” prior to the advent of government-sponsored programs of nationalistic spiritual education is the issue that must now be considered.

Religion and Martial Arts before 1868

Prior to 1868 the kind of nationwide uniformity achieved by the Ministry of Education and Dainippon Butokukai was impossible. No governmental, religious, or other authorities ever possessed sufficient power to impose standardized definitions, concepts, or practices on the entire population of
Japan. Variation by region and social class was the rule. One cannot even say with certainty when martial arts began. Some recent scholars suggest that codified systems of martial art were not developed until the seventeenth century, when Tokugawa peace and social regulation prompted the appearance of a class of professional instructors. It is more widely assumed that systematic martial training developed throughout the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries, as warrior families (buke [71]) fought one another for governmental authority, and attained maturity during the following two centuries of Tokugawa peace. Over these centuries, however, warrior families changed so much that they cannot be identified by any consistent criteria. Moreover, warrior families (however defined) never monopolized military arts. The centuries of unrest preceding Tokugawa rule saw organized fighting units among other social strata, such as shrine militia (jinin [72]), monastic legions (a.k.a. warrior monks, sōhei [73]), criminal gangs (akutō [74]), naval raiders (a.k.a. pirates, wakō [75]), and peasant rebels (ikki [76]). Even after clergy and peasants were disarmed, Tokugawa-period regulations could not confine martial arts just to officially designated samurai [77] (i.e., senior members of each domain’s military government). Martial arts proliferated among warriors who lacked samurai status (e.g., ashigara [78], kachi [79]), townsmen (chônin [80]), rural warriors (gôshi [81]), and in many cases among peasants. Naturally, between different populations the goals, techniques, and training methods of martial curricula would not have been the same.

The religious scene was no less varied. A few developments selected almost at random can illustrate this point. Exclusive (Ikkô [82]) Pure Land Buddhism grew from an outlawed heretical sect in the thirteenth century into Japan’s largest denomination, possessing armed forces capable of ruling several provinces in the sixteenth century. In 1571 Mt. Hiei [83], the nation’s most powerful Buddhist center, lost its domination over religious discourse when Oda Nobunaga [84] (1534–1582) set it ablaze and killed tens of thousands of Mt. Hiei’s priests, soldiers, craftsmen, women, and children. Next, Oda defeated the Ikkô forces. In the 1590s, Christianity boasted of 300,000 converts, including major warlords (e.g., Ôtomo [85], Ômura [86], Arima [87]) whose armies fought under the sign of the cross, but rigorous persecution eliminated it within a century. In the early 1600s, the first Tokugawa ruler (shôgun [88]), Ieyasu [89] (1542–1616), was deified as the Great Avatar Shining over the East (Tôshô Dai Gongen [90]), a title signifying that he had become the divine Buddhist protector of Japan. Subsequent regulation of religious activities prompted the most rapid proliferation of Buddhist temples in Japan’s history. Ironically, this Buddhist expansion prompted growing anti-Buddhist sentiments among Confucian and Nativist (kokugaku [91]) scholars. New publications of Buddhist scriptures, for example,
fostered the development of textual criticism, which enabled the Confucian Tominaga Nakamoto [92] (1715–1746) to deny their veracity.

Given such wide diversity of combatants and religious developments over such a long span of time, it is impossible to explain interactions between religion and martial arts in terms of any single simplistic formula. Neither the familiar trope of “Zen and/in the martial arts” nor the teleological determinism of “progressing from techniques to ways” can possibly do justice to the variety of practices employed before 1868 to associate martial training with cosmic forces and principles. The complexity of the data is compounded by the fact that few scholars have researched either Japanese religious practices or the vast literature describing premodern martial arts. At this preliminary stage, tentative order can be imposed on this vast topic by surveying it in terms of the three dominant religious patterns of premodern Japan: familial religion of tutelary ancestors, alliances, and control over land; exoteric-esoteric Buddhist systems of resemblances and ritual mastery; and Chinese notions of cosmological and social order. These three systems of meaning usually reinforced one another, but in some circumstances they could just as easily stand in conflict. Even their conflicts, however, never approached the degree of mutually exclusive intolerance historically associated with monotheistic religions. Instead of monotheism, Japanese in those days recognized a hierarchical cosmology populated by deities of local, regional, national, international, and universal significance, each type of which concerned only those spiritual matters appropriate to their station.

Warriors relied on ancestral spirits and local tutelary deities to reinforce their familial bonds, to intensify their military alliances, and to cement their control over lands and over the peasants who worked those lands. Individual warrior families publicly proclaimed their control over estate lands by establishing a religious shrine for the worship of their clan ancestor (ujigami [93]) or local tutelary deity who would assume the same functions. Each male member of the household established permanent links to the family’s tutelary spirits through special coming-of-age ceremonies at their shrine. Obligations to contribute resources for and to participate in the annual cycle of shrine rites forced otherwise estranged branches of the family to cooperate with one another. Lower-ranked warriors who became vassals also were obligated to participate in these ceremonies as a public confirmation of their alliance. The relative positions and assigned roles among participants in these ceremonies clearly revealed each family’s status, and thereby constituted a mutual recognition of each one’s respective hierarchical rank. Before battles the entire warrior band invoked the protection of their leader’s tutelary spirits. During peacetime, warriors invoked their tutelary spirits to threaten local peasants with divine punishment if they failed
to deliver the labor and taxes demanded of them. In this way, local gods symbolized the authority that rulers exercised over people and land.

After the late thirteenth century, it became common for rural warriors to augment their clan shrines by establishing clan-centered Buddhist temples (ujidera [94]), especially ones associated with Pure Land or Zen. Pure Land teachings were especially popular among warriors because they promised that even killers could escape the torments of hell and attain deliverance to the Buddha’s Pure Land. The main appeal of Zen priests lay in their ability to perform Chinese-style funeral rites and elaborate memorial services that enhanced the earthly prestige of deceased warrior rulers and their descendants. These different forms of Buddhism did not necessarily preclude one another. A single family could, for example, sponsor many types of religious institutions simultaneously: an esoteric temple to pray for military success, a Pure Land temple for the salvation of soldiers killed in battle, a Confucian hall to teach duty and loyalty to their living vassals, and a Zen temple for the aggrandizement of their clan ancestors. Regardless of their denominational affiliation, however, Buddhist temples functioned like clan shrines as religious reinforcements for social and political status. In many cases, for example, the abbot of the main temple would be a blood relation of the leader of the local warrior band that sponsored the temple. The abbot’s disciples consisted primarily of kinsmen of the vassals who comprised the warrior band, and these disciples would serve as head priests at affiliated branch temples sponsored by those vassal families. In this way familial, military, and ecclesiastical hierarchies merged or mirrored one another. Peasants found themselves subjected to social domination justified by unified religious and military authority. The deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu served this same purpose for Japan as a whole.

Martial arts were taught by one generation to the next within real or fictional familial lineages (ryûha [95]). These martial art lineages, like warrior families in general, also worshiped ancestral spirits and tutelary deities. Anyone who wished to learn martial curricula was required to sign a pledge (kishômon [96]) requesting membership in one of these lineages. Such pledges usually concluded by stating that any violations of the lineage’s rules would invite divine punishment by their tutelary deities. Members of the lineage observed ancestor rites and participated in religious ceremonies at clan temples and shrines just as if they were related by blood. Group devotion was symbolized by the donation of votive plaques (bônô kaku [97]) to local shrines or temples. These plaques typically proclaimed the historical ties of that particular martial lineage to a religious institution, listed the names of all the lineage members, and requested divine assistance. Donation of a plaque was accompanied by monetary gifts and performance of religious ceremonies, including ritual performance of martial arts. Par-
ticipation in public ceremonies not only reinforced hierarchical distinctions within the lineage, but also constituted public notice of a martial lineage’s assertion of authority within that locality. Anyone who attempted to introduce a rival martial art lineage in that same area would risk retaliation by the established lineage as well as religious sanctions. Acceptance of a martial art plaque by a temple or shrine, therefore, sanctified that lineage’s local hegemony.

Tutelary deities and their institutions functioned as local agents for the Japanese form of East Asian Buddhism usually known—using the designation popularized by Kuroda Toshio [98] (1926–1993)—as exoteric-esoteric (kenmitsu [99]) systems. In premodern Japan almost all Buddhist lineages (e.g., Hossô [100], Nichiren [101], Sanron [102], Shingon [103], Shugendô [104], Tendai [105], Zen [106]), as well as priestly lineages now considered non-Buddhist (e.g., Shintô), taught to greater or lesser degrees variations of these exoteric-esoteric systems. This form of Buddhism integrated exoteric doctrines, especially impermanence (muijô [107]) and no-self (muga [108]) as taught in the Agama scriptures and emptiness (kû [109]) and consciousness-only (yuishiki [110]) as taught in the Mahayana scriptures, with esoteric tantric rituals as taught in Vajrayana scriptures to produce all-encompassing systems of metaphysical resemblances. These resemblances were illustrated by means of cosmogonic diagrams (mandalas) that depict how the single undifferentiated realm of the Buddha’s bliss, knowledge, and power unfolds to appear as infinitely diverse yet illusory realms within which ignorant beings suffer. All the objects, sounds, and movements depicted in these mandala diagrams can be manipulated ritually to transform one level of reality into the other. In particular, mandalas were projected outward to become the physical landscape of Japan, especially the mountains and precincts of temple-shrine (jisha [111]) organizations, and were absorbed inward to become the individual bodies of practitioners. In this way local gods became temporal manifestations (gongen [112]) of universal Buddhas, and all the places and practices of daily life became ciphers of cosmic meaning.

Knowledge of the secret significance of these ciphers allowed priests to define, literally, the terms of public discourse and thereby to control all aspects of cultural production, from religious rituals to government ceremonies, from poetry to military strategies. Enterprises gained respectable through their associations with prominent religious institutions that inscribed them with the secret signs of Buddhas and gods (butsujin [113]). The basis of all social positions, employment, and products would be traced back to divine origins. All activities, even killing, were justified through association with divine models. The tools of all trades were visualized as mandalas that mapped the locations and links between Buddhas.
and gods and all creatures. Success in worldly endeavors was attributed to one’s mastery of these resemblances. The complexity of these systems, with their infinite accumulation of hidden resemblances, could be mastered only through ritual performances, which lent them coherence and consistency. The Buddhist doctrines of emptiness and consciousness-only provided these rituals with an internal logic that admitted no distinction between mind and body nor any differences between the ritual enactment of correspondences and actual relationships among objects of the real world. Therefore, it was commonly asserted that mastery of any one system of ritual resemblances revealed the core principles of every other system, since they all consisted of the same process of merging the individual’s mind with the universal Buddha realm.

These kinds of exoteric-esoteric associations are ubiquitous in the oldest surviving martial art initiation documents (densho [114]). Some documents assert divine origins for martial arts by linking them to bodhisattvas of India, to sage kings of China, and to the founding gods of Japan (e.g., Ōmori 1991, 15). Or they describe how secret martial techniques were first revealed by the Buddhas and gods in dreams at famous temples and shrines (Tominaga 1972, 62; Ishioka 1981, 25–29). Many documents contain simplified instructions for esoteric Buddhist rituals, such as magical spells written in Sanskrit script that supposedly offer protection from enemies or diagrams that show how swords and other weapons correspond to mandalas populated by Buddhas, gods, and sacred animals (Ōmori 1991, 260–267; Kuroki 1967). Tantric rituals to invoke the protection of Buddhist deities, such as Acalanâtha (Fudô [115]) or Marîci (Marishiten [116]), were especially popular among medieval fighting men. Because most warriors were illiterate prior to the seventeenth century, they relied on Buddhist priests (the most literate members of society) to compose these early martial art documents. Priests not only listed the Buddhist names of warrior religious rites, but also used Buddhist vocabulary as names of fighting techniques that lacked any relationship to Buddhist doctrines or practices. The martial techniques themselves consisted primarily of prearranged patterns (kata [117]) of stances, attacks, and parries that students imitated in choreographed exercises. As with Buddhist tantric ritual performances, the internalization of these patterns through constant repetition gave coherence to the curriculum’s apparent complexity.

Assertions of divine origins and use of religious terminology imbued martial arts with a mystical authority that helped to ensure their survival, even after many of their fighting techniques became anachronistic. Students of these traditions in subsequent centuries began their training by signing written pledges (kishômon) to keep secret the esoteric lore they would learn. In many lineages, students who completed their training received
martial art diplomas at pseudoreligious rituals modeled after tantric initiations: The student would perform ascetic practices (shōjin [118]) for a set number of days, after which a chapel (dōjō) would be decorated, a special altar erected, and Buddhist deities such as Acalanātha or Mañci invited; the student would present ritual offerings of weapons to the deities and give a specified number of gold coins to his teacher as a token of thanks. Sanctified in this manner, martial art lore became closely guarded secrets, knowledge of which conferred social status. Many martial art documents equated this lore with knowledge of the “one mind” (isshin [119]) underlying the infinite Buddha realms. Thus, it was widely proclaimed that success in battle depended as much on religious devotions and ritual performances as on fighting skills.

Chinese notions of cosmological and social order became widely incorporated into martial arts during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Establishment of the Tokugawa military government (bakufu) in 1603 ushered in an age of peace and stability that witnessed the spread of literacy and the development of a new class of professional martial art instructors. These professional martial artists for the first time in Japanese history composed systematic martial treatises (of which more than fifteen thousand separate titles still survive) and published many of them for an audience of avid readers. The authors of these treatises drew on systems of Chinese learning concerning cosmology, military theory, Daoist (Taoist) alchemy, and Confucianism to endow traditional kata with a veneer of literary and metaphysical sophistication.

Daoist alchemical practices were widespread because many of them already had been absorbed by established Buddhist systems of resemblances. Chief among these was the Nine-Word Spell (kuji [120]) for warding off evil spirits and enemy soldiers. The earliest Chinese version, as described in the Baopu zi [121] (Pao-p’u tzu, in Japanese Hōbokushi; a fourth-century alchemy manual), involves drawing a cross four times in the air in front of one’s chest while chanting nine words, each one of which corresponds to a Daoist deity. Japanese versions taught in Buddhist, Shintō, and martial art lineages accompany each word with a tantric hand sign (mudra) corresponding to one of nine Buddhas. The Steps of Yu (uho [122]), another Daoist ritual from the Baopu zi, invokes the protection of Pole Star (hokushin [123]) Master of Destinies by means of dance steps that align the body with the Ursa Minor constellation (e.g., Sasamori 1965, 329–331; Ómori 1991, 267–269). These steps have been incorporated into many of the sword dances (kenbu [124]) still performed at Shintō shrines. Daoist rituals such as the Nine-Word Spell and Steps of Yu supposedly concealed the practitioner from his enemies and rendered him safe from their weapons.
Aside from magical spells, the alchemical practice most widely found in Japanese martial arts is embryonic breathing (taisoku [125]). Daoist texts associate breath with a cosmogonic material life force known as qi [126] (chi, Japanese ki) and teach special breathing methods as a means of cultivating the youthful vigor and longevity derived from this force. Martial art treatises teach that mastery of this material force enables one to control and defeat opponents without relying on physical strength. Hakuin Ekaku [127] (1685–1768), an influential Zen monk, helped popularize embryonic breathing by publishing a description of it in his Yasen kanna [128] (Evening Chat on a Boat, 1757; translated by Shaw and Schiffer 1956). In this work, Hakuin describes how he relied on Daoist inner contemplation (naikan [129]) to congeal the ocean of qi within the lower field of cinnabar (tanden [130]; i.e., lower abdomen) and thereby restore his own health after he had become ill as a result of excessive periods of Buddhist sitting Zen (zazen [131]) meditation. Hakuin said that he learned these techniques in 1710 from a perfected Daoist (shinjin [132]) named Hakuyû [133] who was then between 180 and 240 years old. The fact that Hakuin and his disciples gave firsthand instruction in these breathing methods to many swordsmen is often cited by historians as a link between Zen and martial arts (e.g., Ishioka 1981, 180–181). One must not overlook, however, the clear distinction in Hakuin’s writings between Buddhist forms of Zen meditation and Daoist techniques of breath control.

Hakuin’s methods of breath control came to form a core curriculum within the Nakanishi [134] lineage of the Ittô-ryû [135] style of fencing. Swordsmen in this lineage labeled instruction in embryonic breathing the Tenshin (Heavenly True) transmission. Tenshin [136] (in Chinese, Tianzhen) is the name of a Daoist deity who, according to the Baopu zi, first discovered the technique for prolonging life by circulating breath among the three fields of cinnabar and who then revealed these secrets to the Yellow Emperor. A fencer in this lineage, Shirai Tôru Yoshinori [137] (1783–1843), wrote perhaps the most detailed account of how embryonic breathing is applied to martial arts in his Heihô michi shirube [138] (Guide to the Way of Fencing; see Watanabe 1979, 162–167). Shirai defined Tenshin as the original material force (qi) of the Great Ultimate and as the source of divine cinnabar (shintan [139]; i.e., the elixir of immortality). Shirai asserted that his mastery of Tenshin enabled him to project qi out the tip of his sword blade like a flaming aura. His instructions for duplicating this feat, however, are so cryptic and laden with Daoist alchemical vocabulary that they are impossible to understand without direct guidance by a teacher.

While Daoist breathing techniques remain popular to this day, the single greatest Chinese influence on Japanese martial arts undoubtedly was exerted by Confucianism. During the Tokugawa period the study of Con-
Confucian texts spread beyond the confines of the court nobility and of the Buddhist monasteries into hundreds of newly established domain schools and private academies. Confucian scholars adhered to a wide variety of academic approaches: ancient learning that emphasized the original Confucian classics, neo-Confucianism that emphasized later Chinese and Korean commentaries, as well as approaches that linked Confucian teachings to Japanese shrine rituals (i.e., Shintō) or to the study of Japanese history, to name only a few. In spite of academic variations, all these approaches shared a reliance on Confucian texts as authoritative guides to the ideal social norms taught by the sages of antiquity. These sagely norms were said to reflect the order, regularity, and harmonious integration of the universe itself, as revealed by the Book of Changes (Yijing, I Ching [140]; Japanese Ekikyô). Like nature, human society should attain a stable continuity of harmonious integration based on a hierarchy of high and low, strong and weak, within which everyone interacts according to proper etiquette and ritual. Achievement of this ideal society begins with benevolent rulers (jinséi [141]) who teach the people to rectify their own heart-minds (shin, or, in Japanese, kokoro [142]) by properly fulfilling the individual social roles appropriate to their own position within the hierarchy. In turn, individuals must investigate (kyū) the principles (ri) of their roles (i.e., kyūri [143]) and perform them with serious-minded (kei [144], “reverent”) diligence.

Many Confucian scholars during the Tokugawa period were men of samurai status who also wrote about military affairs and about the proper role of military rulers (shidô [145]; i.e., bushidô) during an age of peace. Yamaga Sokô [146] (1632–1685), for example, combined lectures on military science with moral exhortations, arguing that samurai should practice self-discipline so that their rule would serve all members of society. In this way Confucian teachings not only justified military rule, but also helped to humanize the battle-hardened warriors of medieval Japan and transform them into the military bureaucrats required by Tokugawa peace. With no more wars to fight, people born into warrior families found that their assigned social roles lacked any meaningful purpose. Contemporary accounts commonly chastise them for being lazy, corrupt, and bereft of any higher ideals. Government leaders repeatedly sought to improve morale among warrior households by encouraging them to pursue Confucian learning and martial arts. As a result, many types of martial art training, which normally consist of paired student-teacher workouts before other students, gradually became reinterpreted as practical exercises in the investigation of Confucian principles and serious-minded performance. Within larger urban centers, especially, martial art academies functioned more like finishing schools, where instructors lectured on proper moral values and ceremonial decorum.
Over time, the Confucian ideals proclaimed by and for military rulers found an audience among powerful merchants, wealthy landowners (chônin), village administrators, prosperous peasants, and other commoners who aspired to higher status. Yasumaru Yoshio [147] has analyzed how moral virtues (such as serious-mindedness, diligence, thrift, humility, submission to authority, and uprightness) emerged during the Tokugawa period as a new form of public discourse and hardened into a “conventional morality” (tsû-zoku dôtoku [148]) that exerted rigid control over all aspects of everyday life. This morality was extremely idealistic, insofar as it posited limitless possibilities for human development. Mind, or rather the moral qualities of mind, were seen as the source of all forms of success, whether measured in terms of social status, material wealth, or martial art prowess. This same moral discourse, however, justified and rendered invisible to criticism the most atrocious social inequities and contradictions. It reassured the wealthy and powerful of their moral superiority, while teaching the poor and oppressed that their misery resulted from their own moral shortcomings. Since it placed mind above the external world, malcontents were told that they should find happiness not by rebelling against that world but by reforming their own minds.

Seen within this background of conventional morality, it is not surprising that Tokugawa-period martial art treatises devote numerous pages to mind and proper mental attitudes. The example most familiar to modern readers (both in Japan and abroad) is the treatise usually titled Fudôchi shinmyôroku [149] (Marvelous Power of Immovable Wisdom; reprint in Hayakawa et al. 1915) attributed to the Zen monk Takuan Sôhô [150] (1573–1643). Nominally written in the form of a personal letter to Yagyû Munenori [151] (1571–1646), who served as fencing instructor to the Tokugawa family, Takuan’s essay uses examples from fencing to illustrate basic Buddhist teachings and Zen sayings. He does not discuss the techniques or vocabulary of fencing, but rather emphasizes that a Buddhist approach to mental training improves not just one’s fencing but especially one’s ability to serve a lord. Significantly, Takuan rejected both the Daoist practice of concentrating the mind in the lower abdomen (lower field of cinnabar) and the Confucian practice of serious-mindedness (kei, “reverence”), which he likened to keeping a cat on a leash. Instead of constraining the mind through these practices, Takuan advocated cultivating a strong sense of imperturbability, which he described as a type of immovable wisdom that allows the mind to move freely without calculation. Takuan termed this mental freedom “not minding” (mushin [152]) and compared it to a well-trained cat that behaves even when released from its leash. Although “not minding” is sometimes misunderstood as a type of amoral automatic response, for Takuan imperturbability implied a firm moral sense that cannot be swayed by fear, intimidation, or temptation.
In spite of the enduring popularity of Takuan’s essay, his advocacy of a Zen approach to mental training represented a minority opinion amidst the predominantly Confucian inclinations of Tokugawa-period martial treatises. Confucian critics commonly asserted that martial artists could learn nothing useful from Zen monks. Issai Chozan [153] (1659–1741), for example, argued in his *Tengu geijutsuron* [154] (Performance Theory of the Mountain Demons, 1727; reprinted in Hayakawa et al. 1915) that Zen teachings are impractical because Zen monks are unconcerned with society: They “abandon the proper relations between lords and ministers, ignore the rites, music, punishments, and politics taught by the sages, and wish to discard life and seek death” (Hayakawa et al., 1915, 320). Moreover, monks lack military training. Buddhist awakening alone, Issai maintained, cannot substitute for correct technique and suitable drill. For Issai and other Confucian instructors, mental training in martial arts consists of devotion to proper social relations, elimination of selfish private inclinations, acquiring a clear sense of right and wrong, and discipleship under a Confucian military instructor. Otherwise, the freedom of not minding (mushin) will be nothing more than a kind of arrogant vacuity (*gankû* [155], “foolishness”).

Many Confucian instructors advocated quiet sitting (*seiza* [156]) rather than Buddhist forms of sitting Zen (*zazen*) meditation as a simplified method of mental cultivation. Quiet sitting differed from Zen meditation insofar as it eliminated all distinctive aspects of Buddhist ritual, such as sitting in the lotus posture, burning incense, observing fixed periods of time, and so forth (e.g., *Tengu geijutsuron* in Hayakawa et al. 1915, 337). The lack of these features allowed its advocates to portray quiet sitting as more compatible with secular life and less removed from worldly affairs. Noting that both Confucian instructors and Zen monks advocated forms of meditation and discussed the same conventional morality in similar terms, some scholars have referred to Tokugawa-period Confucian teachings as a kind of “popular Zen” for laypeople (e.g., Sawada). The ultimate result of these Confucian teachings, however, was not the popularization of Zen practice but a decline in Buddhist piety as their practitioners came to rely less on the worship of Buddhist divinities.

Adherence both to religious practices and to abstract metaphysics declined throughout the late eighteenth and, especially, nineteenth centuries, due to the widespread adoption of competitive forms of martial training and to foreign threats. Significantly, competition developed first in rural areas outside of the urban mainstream. The spread of martial art training among peasants and other commoners has not been well studied, partially from lack of scholarly interest but mainly because peasants did not write scholastic martial art treatises. Nonetheless it is clear that many rural households maintained or developed family traditions of martial art training and that as rural society became more stratified, they began to practice them openly as
a means of acquiring status. Lacking scholarly pretensions, rural martial artists emphasized mastery of technique and physical prowess, which they tested in competitive matches. In the early 1800s, when rural-trained fencers finally appeared in Edo (modern Tokyo), they easily defeated men of samurai status who had been trained in Confucian theory (or Zen), ceremonial decorum, and prearranged pattern exercises (kata). Thereafter established martial art lineages that had emphasized theory or mental training became subjects of ridicule, while new lineages that taught competition (*uchikomi keiko* [157]) flourished. The abandonment of theory accelerated with the ever more frequent arrival of foreign ships. Suddenly practical application (*jitsuyô* [158]) became more important than mental training or moral development. The Tokugawa government gave its stamp of approval to this change when it decreed that competition alone would be taught at Kôbusho [159], the military training school it established in 1856.

Kubota Seion [160] (1791–1866), one of the directors of the Kôbusho, amply illustrates late Tokugawa attitudes toward religious influences on martial arts. Kubota authored more than a hundred treatises on all aspects of military strategy and martial arts. He edited and wrote the preface for *Bukyô zensho* [161] (Complete Works on Military Education, five volumes) published by the Kôbusho in 1860. He is credited with having trained more than three thousand samurai soldiers. More than any other writer, he can be seen as representing the prevailing military views of government officials. According to Kubota, any martial art instructor who said that the founder of his lineage was initiated into religious secrets, or had learned his skills through an inspirational dream, or had been taught by mountain demons (*tengu* [162]), or had mastered his art through Zen training was simply a liar preying on the religious sentiments of gullible students.

Of course, conventional morality and its religious framework was too much a part of martial arts (and of everyday life) to be so easily abandoned. Many martial artists persisted in religious practices and mental training. Of these traditionalists, none became better known than Yamaoka Tesshû [163] (1836–1888). Yamaoka gained fame for his heroism during the brief civil war of 1868 that overthrew the Tokugawa regime and for his political role in the new Meiji government, first as a councilor and later as one of the emperor’s chamberlains. A natural athlete, in 1856 Yamaoka became an assistant fencing instructor at the Kôbusho. His approach to martial training changed completely, however, when in 1863 he lost a match to Asari Yoshiaki [164], the head of the same Nakanishi lineage of fencing mentioned above. Yamaoka became Asari’s student, and at Asari’s urging undertook an intense regimen of meditation practice under the guidance of several prominent Zen teachers. Yamaoka continued his training for the next seventeen years until, in 1880, he attained certification both in Zen and in the Nakanishi lineage. By that
time, most educated people already had abandoned traditional martial arts as old-fashioned. Four years earlier, in 1876, wearing swords in public had been made illegal. Fencing had lost all practical purpose. Yamaoka, however, was not deterred. He renamed his lineage the No-Sword Style (Mutō-ryū [165]) and announced that he would teach fencing not for the purpose of dueling but for training the mind. His students, he asserted, would learn how to defeat opponents not with swords but with their minds.

Yamaoka died within a few years of announcing his new approach, before it could become fully established. Although many posthumously published texts purport to convey his teachings, they are filled with contradictions and incongruities. We know more speculation than fact about his methods or the extent to which they were based on Nakanishi traditions of embryonic breathing. Nonetheless, it is clear that his own Zen training occurred with monks at Buddhist temples. Zen practice was an external supplement to his fencing, not something intrinsic within it. Yamaoka’s political prominence, the novelty of his methods, and his anachronistic effort to turn back the tide of history and revive the mental training of earlier Tokugawa times, however, ensured that upon his death he immediately became known as the quintessential Zen swordsman. In 1897, when the chancellor of the Japanese consulate in London, England, gave a lecture on “The Influence of Shintō and Buddhism in Japan,” for example, he concluded by discussing Yamaoka’s No-Sword Style (Yamashita). The chancellor argued that Yamaoka’s swordsmanship was a real-life example of Takuan’s Zen teachings, which in turn perfectly illustrated the findings advanced by Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) in his Principles of Psychology (1855). In this way, Yamaoka was more than just a traditionalist who sought to cling to older styles of swordsmanship during a new age in which people no longer wore swords. He also served as a forerunner for the introduction of the now familiar motif of the psychological unity of Zen and the martial arts to the English-speaking world.

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See also Aikidô; Budô, Bujutsu, and Bugei; Form/Xing/Kata/Pattern Practice; Kendô; Koryû Bugei, Japanese; Swordsmanship, Japanese; Warrior Monks, Japanese/Sōhei; Written Texts: Japan

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List of Ideograms

1. Zen Buddhism
2. mushin
3. shinkyô
4. shinkyô wa jiyû
5. Meji
6. Tokugawa
7. hakufu

Religion and Spiritual Development: Japan 501
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8</th>
<th>Shinrō</th>
<th>神道</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>shin bukkō</td>
<td>新仏教</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kanō Jigorō</td>
<td>菅原治平</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>kōtō shihan gakkō</td>
<td>高等師範學校</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Kōdōkan</td>
<td>高等館</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>jūjutsu</td>
<td>柔術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>gekkōen or gekiken</td>
<td>剣術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>heishiki tawō</td>
<td>武士道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>kōgeki seishin</td>
<td>武士精神</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>seishin kyōiku</td>
<td>精神教育</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>seishin ittō</td>
<td>精神一途</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Zhu Xi</td>
<td>朱熹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>bushidō</td>
<td>武士道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>zenkoku kaikei</td>
<td>聖庫會</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Kirisutokyo tu bushidō</td>
<td>キリスト教武士道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Uemura Masahisa</td>
<td>上村正枝</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>bishū</td>
<td>武士道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Nōtoh Inazō</td>
<td>新渡戸稲造</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Dainippon Butokukai</td>
<td>大日本武団會</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>wakōen or yamato-damashii</td>
<td>和魂</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>kokumin</td>
<td>国民</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>kokuminshū</td>
<td>国民教育</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>kōdō</td>
<td>武道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Nishikata Hiroshi</td>
<td>西久保弘道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>budō</td>
<td>武術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>bujutsu</td>
<td>武術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>seimon gakkō</td>
<td>射撃教育</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>kenshutsu</td>
<td>射術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>kenshō</td>
<td>射道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>kyūdō</td>
<td>弓道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>jūdō</td>
<td>射道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>kyūdō</td>
<td>陸道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>kidō</td>
<td>海道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>budō</td>
<td>武道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>ikkōdō</td>
<td>陸道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>shōgakko</td>
<td>射撃道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>suppoatsu-dō</td>
<td>スポーツ道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>yuqin</td>
<td>射道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>shakkyō</td>
<td>武道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>enbu</td>
<td>番武</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>Yasen kanaa</td>
<td>夜船箇話</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>nikan</td>
<td>内観</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>tanien</td>
<td>色田</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>sazen</td>
<td>赤陣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>shinjin</td>
<td>善人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>Hakuyu</td>
<td>白羽</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>Nakamikoto</td>
<td>中西派</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>Itô-ryû</td>
<td>一刀流</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>Tosen</td>
<td>天震</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>Shirai Tôru Yoshinori</td>
<td>白井平繁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Ichizô michi shirabe</td>
<td>兵出未知道綱</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>shudan</td>
<td>神丹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>I Ching</td>
<td>亜經</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>jinnai</td>
<td>善来</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>kokoro</td>
<td>心</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>kyoiri</td>
<td>禅理</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>kai</td>
<td>救</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>shido</td>
<td>士道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Yamaga Sokô</td>
<td>山鹿素行</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>Yasumaru Yoshihito</td>
<td>兵丸長右</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>tsuzuki dôto</td>
<td>達賀達通</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>Fudôchi shumûyôrû</td>
<td>不動智神妙録</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Hakuryû Sôhô</td>
<td>澤理容荷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>Yagyû Munenori</td>
<td>八木宗矩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>moshia</td>
<td>黒EDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>Issai Chozan</td>
<td>一葉朝山</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>Tengu geitatsu</td>
<td>天狗競輪</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>gunki</td>
<td>頭空</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>seiza</td>
<td>臥坐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>uchikona kirai</td>
<td>優進名著古</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>jîryû</td>
<td>実用</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Kôbushô</td>
<td>鷺武所</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>Kubota Seiô</td>
<td>瀧田清音</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>Bûkyô sensho</td>
<td>武教全書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>tone</td>
<td>夢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>Yamaoka Tesshû</td>
<td>山岡 trouvé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Asari Yoshibaki</td>
<td>浅利親明</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>Mutô-ryû</td>
<td>無刀流</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sambo

Sambo is an acronym (in Russian) for “Self-Defense without Weapons” (Samo borona bez oruzhiba or Samozashchitija bez oruzhiba).

Sambo is a Russian martial art that was created by Anatolij A. Kharlampiev, Viktor A. Spiridonov, and Vasilij S. Oshchepkov in the 1930s in the former Soviet Union. It is a fighting style that relies primarily on throws, grappling techniques, and arm and leg locks. In many respects, it is similar to jūdō, freestyle wrestling, and Greco-Roman wrestling. Sambo is a synthesis of traditional wrestling styles and fighting systems practiced by the peoples of the former Soviet Union, as well as Kōdōkan Jūdō. Today, sambo exists as military sambo, sport sambo, and self-defense techniques. It is practiced worldwide as a sport and combat system and is used extensively by Russian police units and armed forces.

Sambo was developed to create both an unarmed combat system for the Soviet military and police units and a sport system for Soviet citizens. Following the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the newly formed Communist government of the Soviet Union attempted to consolidate various cultural elements of the peoples of the USSR into a monolithic cultural entity. The Communist dogma of the period focused on different classes of peoples, rather than nationalities, and one of the stated purposes of the Bolsheviks was the elimination of classes. This was emphasized in the Soviet government’s objective of creating a new “Soviet Man” from the more than 300 diverse nationalities living in the vast country. This led to efforts to create “Soviet” music, literature, art, architecture, theater, and sport.

The creation of sambo was an attempt to create a true “Soviet” fighting art consistent with the government’s objectives of creating one “Soviet” culture from the disparate native cultures of the USSR. To promote this objective, the fighting styles of various cultures were studied, observed, and categorized, sometimes in a scientific manner, sometimes in a haphazard way. Anatolij Kharlampiev, who was recognized during Soviet times as the “father of sambo,” spearheaded some of these efforts. There is controversy
today over which of the three individuals, Kharlampiev, Spiridonov, or Oshchepkov, was most responsible for the actual formation of the art. Given the bloody nature of the Soviet regime during the 1930s, it is unlikely that there is a simple or direct answer to this question.

In part because of the chaotic situation in the post-Revolutionary Soviet Union, combined with the horrific human toll of World War II, the actual history of sambo is a contentious issue in the newly democratized Russian Federation. There are supporters of Kharlampiev, Oshchepkov, and Spiridonov, each advocating their own “founder’s” position. Further, there exist different branches of the art, each often contending with the others as to sambo’s actual foundations. As with many martial arts, even recent ones, the actual development and history may always be a cause for speculation.

Sambo is recognized as a syncretic martial art that borrowed techniques from several styles. The founders of the art were versed in different fighting systems, and attempts were made to integrate them together. From the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, which had extensive ties to Western Europe, Greco-Roman wrestling and freestyle wrestling were observed and studied. From Greco-Roman wrestling, several powerful throws were incorporated into sambo, most notably those using the hips. Leg techniques were added from freestyle wrestling. In the Caucasus Republic of Georgia, traditional jacket wrestling was studied. Jacket wrestling involves the competitors wearing a tight-fitting jacket, which can be grasped to throw a person. The jacket is supposed to represent clothing and thus help develop a person’s ability to defend oneself in a street situation. This practice may have influenced the sambo uniform and taught sambo practitioners how to use the clothing of an opponent for techniques. Ossetian grappling arts were also studied. Ossetia is another region of the Caucasus where wrestling is intensely practiced for both sport and self-defense.

Other arts that may have been incorporated into sambo included the Turkish wrestling practiced in Azerbaijan. Azeri/Turkish wrestling resembles the Icelandic sport of Glima in many respects, most notably the pants that are worn by the competitors, which can be grasped for throws (in Glima, the pants are represented by a belt). This practice may have led to the idea of grasping the belt in sambo for use in throwing the opponent. Khokh, the national Armenian wrestling system, was probably also studied. In addition, native Russian techniques were also incorporated into this system, including arm and leg locks.

Armlocks are attempts to hyperextend the elbow joint beyond its capacity. If this is done, the opponent’s arm is broken. Leg locks are similar in that they attempt to hyperextend the knee joint or twist the opponent’s ankle into a break. This can break the leg. These combat techniques may have
developed as a result of the harsh winter environment of Russia, where people dress in several layers of clothes. Often, arms and legs are the only areas that can be attacked because of this heavy clothing; chokes are impractical because of the protection around the neck. Many Russians also claim that arm and leg locks are easier to apply and more effective than chokes.

In addition to these European and Central Asian arts, Russia has a significant East Asian population. This population practices various Chinese and Mongolian wrestling systems, including shuaijiao (shuai-chiao), and it is likely that techniques from these systems were also included. Kôdôkan Jûdô, as taught by Vasilij Oshchepkov, was also blended into the system. It is likely that the choke holds taught to military sambo practitioners came from this system.

In addition to these grappling arts, striking arts were added to the military sambo curriculum. Both Spiridonov and Oshchepkov were familiar with the basics of Japanese atemi-waza (vital point technique), in which practitioners are taught to strike at the weak points of the human body. In addition, boxing techniques from English boxing were added. French savate was practiced in the Russian Empire before the Revolution of 1917, and it is likely that some of the kicks from this art were incorporated into sambo as well. Although striking is not permitted in sport sambo, it is used in military sambo and self-defense techniques.
The development of sambo was an attempt to create a native fighting system for the new nation. Although it did not supplant the native styles from which it emerged, sambo did provide a unified system of grappling that enabled all citizens of the USSR to have a common ground on which to compete. In addition, military sambo and self-defense techniques gave the military and police forces a tool that they could use in their respective professions.

The creators of sambo were successful in creating an effective martial art that was able to cut across the ethnic barriers that affected all levels of Soviet life. Today, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and emergence of the Russian Federation, sambo is recognized as a Russian art that was developed during Soviet times.

Russians have a long and distinguished wrestling tradition, and sambo is an outgrowth of this dedication. Its development was a way for Soviet authorities to have both a true “native” sport as well as an effective means of self-defense. Sambo was promoted during the Soviet period as the “official” self-defense art of the USSR, and for a time was the only martial art that could be practiced legally, with the exception of jûdô. This suppression was due to the paranoid fears of the Soviet government that Asian martial arts would expose Soviet citizens to Asian religions and philosophies in an officially atheist state. In addition, there was concern that the youth of the nation would study unsupervised unarmed combat and become a menace to the society. Although jûdô was considered a non-Soviet martial art, its practice was allowed because jûdô was an Olympic event and the Soviet government was hungry for medals. With the fall of the USSR, martial arts of all styles were once again allowed into the Russian Federation. At the present time, martial arts of all styles are freely practiced in the Federation and the now-independent former republics, but sambo still is very popular and continues to be practiced in all areas of these nations. Although jûdô was considered a non-Soviet martial art, its practice was allowed because jûdô was an Olympic event and the Soviet government was hungry for medals. With the fall of the USSR, martial arts of all styles were once again allowed into the Russian Federation. At the present time, martial arts of all styles are freely practiced in the Federation and the now-independent former republics, but sambo still is very popular and continues to be practiced in all areas of these nations in three forms: military sambo, self-defense sambo, and sport sambo.

Military sambo is the branch of the art that was taught to select army units and agents of the former KGB and GRU. The notorious KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvenoj Bezopasnosti; Committee for State Security) was the Soviet secret police responsible for both foreign espionage and internal repression of Soviet citizens. The GRU (Gosudarstvenije Razvedivatelnije
Upravlenije; State Intelligence Agency) was the military secret police responsible for military espionage and intelligence operations. Today military sambo is still the self-defense system taught to select army units and to agents of various intelligence services of the Russian Federation. It is a martial art designed for combat situations.

Military sambo includes choke holds, strikes with the hands and feet, disarming techniques, and elbow strikes, in addition to sport sambo techniques, described later in this entry. Choke holds are attempts to cut off the air supply, blood supply, or both from the torso to the head. This is usually achieved through blocking the windpipe or squeezing the carotid arteries. Although not legal in sport sambo, these devastating techniques can be very effective in combat situations.

Although striking is secondary in sambo, military sambo practitioners are taught strikes and how to use them to their advantage, especially when setting up for a throw or a hold. A strike by the elbow into the face or a stomp with the edge of the foot along the shin can often disrupt an opponent enough to allow a finishing hold. In addition, practitioners are taught unarmed combat techniques against knives, clubs, and firearms. Learning how to disarm an opponent is critical in combat situations, and military sambo practitioners are expected to be proficient in this skill.

Self-defense sambo is taught to the city police (“militia”) and civilians interested in protecting themselves. It is not as involved or complex as sport or military sambo, and consists primarily of techniques to handle certain types of physical attacks. An analogy would be that of a person taking a basic self-defense course or rape-prevention course.

The rules of sport sambo were codified during the 1930s, and the art was formally recognized as an official sport of the Soviet Union in 1938. In 1939, the first sambo championships in the USSR were held in Leningrad (St. Petersburg). In 1968, the art was recognized by the International Amateur Wrestling Federation (FILA) as a discipline of wrestling, and in 1973 the first world championships were held in Teheran, Iran. Sambo was also a demonstration sport entry in the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Sport sambo continues to grow as an international sport and is practiced worldwide. Although it is most popular in Russia, Eastern and Western Europe, and nations of the former Soviet Union, the number of sambists in the Americas, Japan, and the Middle East is growing. Sport sambo can be seen in the United States in Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) competitions and is also an event in the Pan-American games. There are also All-European sambo championships as well as All-Russian and World Cup championships. The growth of sport sambo has provided impetus for discussions of its inclusion in the Olympic Games as a medal event.

Sport sambo is similar to jûdô in many respects. Sambo practitioners
wear shorts or a wrestling singlet, wrestling shoes, and a tight-fitting jacket
known as a kurtka. The kurtka is tighter fitting than the traditional jûdôgi.
In addition, the kurtka has epaulets or shoulder cuffs for grasping. Sambo
practitioners also wear a belt that can be grasped by competitors and used
for throws. The kurtka has rings to hold the belt in place, which is intended
to simulate actual street clothing.

A sambo match is two periods of three minutes each with a one-minute
rest interval between the two periods. The goal of the competitors is a total
victory. This occurs in one of three ways: after a throw when the thrown
lands on his back and the thrower remains standing, when the opponent
taps the mat twice after being locked into a submission hold, and when one
competitor has twelve points over the opponent’s total. Failing total victory,
the competitor with the most points wins. It is important to note that sambo
matches are won by the awarding of points; there are no pins or throws that
can directly end a match, as in most other wrestling systems.

Sambists have four methods to gain points in a match. The first is by
throwing the opponent. Points are awarded by examining the final posi-
tions of both the thrower and the thrown after the throw is completed. The
second is by a takedown. The attacking sambist must unbalance the oppo-
nent and take him to the mat, similar to Greco-Roman and freestyle
wrestling. The third method is by a hold. The attacking sambist must hold
the opponent’s back toward the mat in a danger position of less than ninety
degrees, with both chests in contact, to score. The fourth method is by a
submission hold. Submission, or torture, holds are pressure holds exerted
against the arms or legs. Examples include arm bars, leg locks, joint locks,
and ankle locks. Note that there are no choke holds in sport sambo. A
women’s division was added in 1987 to Soviet sambo competition.

Sambo has a belt ranking system that is similar to some Asian martial
arts, but its legitimacy is a subject of controversy. Some organizations rec-
ognize this system, while others do not. Belts begin with first degree, a
white belt, and go up to eleventh degree, which is gold with an FILA em-
blem and honor band. Practitioners are awarded rankings exclusively
based on competition. The first three belts are awarded at the regional
level. Fourth and fifth degrees are awarded by regional coaches with ap-
proval from a country’s national sambo federation. Sixth and seventh de-
grees are awarded to national champions. Eighth degree belts are awarded
to champions who place third in an international event. Ninth degree rank-
ings are for those who place second in an international event, and tenth de-
gree is for those who place first. The eleventh degree is reserved for sam-
bists with formidable competitive records or for those judged as
“international masters” of sambo. Sambo coaches can be awarded belts
based on the records of their students.
In addition to this ranking system, the USSR Sports Federation had its own internal system of sambo ranking. Sambists who were actively competing in the USSR were considered to be “sport candidates.” Those sambists who won a national title in their class were awarded the title “master of sport” and were licensed to teach the art. There were different classes of sport sambo competition, including armed forces sambo competitions, KGB competitions, amateur competitions, and youth competitions.

Today, sambo is regulated by the International Amateur Sambo Federation (FIAS), which is further developing an international system of rankings and rules. This may lead to changes in sambo grading and proficiency examinations. It is likely, however, that the rules for competition and the method for awarding points in tournaments will remain the same.

Soviet films sometimes showcased sambo. There are three films that may be familiar to Western filmgoers. The first, *The Undefeated*, is a film about the life and travels of Anatolij Kharlampiev in his development of sambo. The second, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears*, was the 1980 Oscar winner for Best Foreign Film and features a whimsical display of the art, as a sambist engages the Soviet version of juvenile delinquents. The final entry, *The Individual Swimmer*, features Soviet commandos and spies incorporating sambo techniques as they attempt to avert a war.

Sambo champions and trainers are well known and respected in the former Soviet Union and Russia. Anatolij Kharlampiev is a hero of the former Soviet Union for his work. Russian figures such as David Rudman and Laishev Renat are as well known in their home country as football and baseball players in the United States. With the advent of events such as the Ultimate Fighting Championship and international no-holds-barred events, sambists such as Oleg Taktarov and Igor Zinoviev have become recognizable figures worldwide.

Sambo was, for fifty years, the exclusive martial art for more than 300 million people. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and free flow of information now occurring from the Russian Federation, the popularity of sambo continues to grow. As martial arts of all styles continue to grow in popularity worldwide, sambo can rightfully take its place as one of the most influential and effective fighting styles of the twentieth century.

*Gene P. Tausk*

**References**


Samurai

Japan’s famous warrior order arose during the early part of the Heian period (A.D. 794–1185), a product of the same trend toward the privatization of government functions and the delegation of administrative responsibility that distinguished the Heian polity from the Nara-era (710–794) predecessor. Its roots came from a shift in imperial court military policy that began in the middle decades of the eighth century and picked up momentum in the ninth.

Around the turn of the eighth century, the imperial house and its supporters had created an elaborate battery of military institutions modeled in large measure on those of Tang China. Contrary to popular belief, these institutions were not simply adopted wholesale, they were carefully adapted to meet Japanese needs. The various goals and requirements of the state, however, were often in conflict with one another, with the result that the imperial state military apparatus incorporated a number of unhappy compromises. Problems inherent in the system at its inception, moreover, were made worse by changing conditions as the principal threats the state armies were designed to meet—invasion from the continent and regional challenges to the new, centralized polity—dwindled rapidly.

By the mid-700s, the court had begun to reevaluate its martial needs and to restructure its armed forces, tinkering and experimenting with mechanisms for using and directing a new and different kind of soldiery, until a workable system was achieved around the late tenth century. Bit by bit, the government ceased trying to draft and drill the population at large and concentrated instead on co-opting the privately acquired skills of militarily talented elites through a series of new military posts and titles that legitimized the use of the personal martial resources of this group on behalf of the state. In essence, the court moved from a conscripted, publicly trained military force to one composed of privately trained, privately equipped professional mercenaries.

As it happened, government interest in the martial talents of provincial elites and the scions of lower-ranked central noble families dovetailed with growing private demands for these same resources spawned by competition for wealth and influence among the premier noble houses of the court. State and private needs served to create continually expanding opportunities for advancement for those with military talent. Increasingly, from the late eighth century onward, skill at arms offered a means for an ambitious young man to get his foot in the door for a career in government service or in the service of some powerful aristocrat in the capital—or both. The greater such opportunities became, the more enthusiastically and the more seriously such young men committed themselves to the profession of
A portrait of three men in Japan dressed as samurai warriors, wearing armor and carrying naginata (halberds) and katanas (long swords), ca. 1890. (Michael Maslan Historic Photographs/Corbis)
arms. The result was the gradual emergence of an order of professional fighting men in the countryside and the capital.

Superficial similarities between the samurai and the knights of northern Europe make it tempting to equate the birth of the samurai with the onset of “feudalism” in the Japanese countryside, but such was not the case. While the descendants—both genealogical and institutional—of the professional warriors of Heian times did indeed become the masters of Japan’s medieval and early modern epochs, until the very end of the twelfth century the samurai remained the servants, not the adversaries, of the court and the state.

This situation, so enigmatic in hindsight, seems much less so when considered in the context of the times. For the nascent warrior order of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries was constrained from without by the same public (state) and private (court noble) policies that encouraged its development, and from within by the inability of its own members to forge secure and enduring bonds among themselves. Like the landholding and governing systems of the same era, the Heian military and police system readily responded and adapted to changing circumstances in the capital and the provinces, while the court jealously guarded its exclusive right to oversee and direct it. Then, in 1180, Minamoto Yoritomo, a dispossessed heir to a leading samurai house, adeptly parlayed his own pedigree, the localized ambitions of provincial warriors, and a series of upheavals within the imperial court into the creation of a new institution—called the shogunate, or bakufu, by historians—in the eastern village of Kamakura.

The first shogunate was in essence a government within a government, at once a part of and distinct from the imperial court in Kyoto. Its principal functions were to oversee eastern Japan and the samurai class, based on authority delegated to it by the court. But the establishment of this new institution set rolling a snowball that expanded until it bowled over and completely destroyed Japan’s classical polity. In the twelfth century, shōgunal vassals across the country discovered that they could manipulate the insulation from direct court supervision offered them by the Kamakura regime to lay ever stronger and more personal claims to the lands (and the people on them) they ostensibly administered on behalf of the powers-that-were in the capital. Through gradual advance by fait accompli, a new warrior-dominated system of authority absorbed the older, courtier-dominated one, and real power over the countryside spun off steadily from the center to the hands of local figures.

By the second quarter of the fourteenth century, this evolution had progressed to the point where the most successful of the shogunate’s provincial vassals had begun to question the value of continued submission to the Kamakura regime. Thus when a deposed emperor, posthumously known as
Godaigo, issued a call to arms against the shogunate, among those who answered him were Ashikaga Takauji and Nitta Yoshisada, both descendants of Minamoto Yoritomo and sometime commanders of Kamakura armies. In 1333 Yoshisada captured Kamakura and destroyed the shogunate. Two years later Takauji broke with Godaigo and drove him from the capital. In 1336, after annihilating Yoshisada’s army in the Battle of Minatogawa, he established a new shogunate, under himself, headquartered in the Muromachi district of Kyoto. Under the new regime, warriors not only dominated the countryside, but overshadowed the imperial court as well. Yoritomo’s snowball was not, however, done rolling or growing yet.

Fifteen Ashikaga shōgun reigned between 1336 and 1573, when the last, Yoshiaki, was deposed; but only the first six could lay claim to have actually ruled the country. By the late 1400s, while both the court and the shogunate remained nominally in authority, real power in Japan had devolved to a few score feudal barons called daimyo, whose authority rested first and foremost on their ability to hold lands by military force. There followed a century and a half of nearly continuous warfare, as daimyo contested with one another, and with those below them, to maintain and expand their domains. The spirit of this Sengoku (literally, “country at war”) age is captured in two expressions current at the time: gekokujō (the low overthrow the high) and jakuniku kyōshoku (the weak become meat; the strong eat).

But the instability of gekokujō could not continue indefinitely. Daimyo quickly discovered that the corollary cliché to “might makes right” is “he who lives by the sword, dies by the sword,” and that many were spending as much time and energy defending themselves from their own ambitious vassals as from other daimyo. During the late sixteenth century, the most able among them began searching for ways to reduce vassal independence. This in turn made possible the creation of ever larger domains and hegemonic alliances extending across entire regions. At length, the successive efforts of three men—Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu—eliminated many of the smaller daimyo and unified the rest into a nationwide coalition. In 1603 Ieyasu assumed the title of shōgun and established Japan’s third military regime. The new polity, a kind of centralized feudalism, left most of the country divided into great domains ruled by hereditary daimyo, who were in turn closely watched and regulated by the shogunate.

The advent of this new polity and the ensuing Pax Tokugawa marked the transition from medieval to early modern Japan, which brought with it profound changes for the samurai. In the medieval age, warriors had constituted a flexible and permeable order defined primarily by their activities as fighting men. At the top of this order stood the daimyo, some of whom
were inheritors of family warrior legacies dating back centuries, while others had clawed their way to this status from far humbler beginnings. Below these were multiple layers of lesser lords, enfeoffed vassals, and yeoman farmers, whose numbers and service as samurai waxed and waned with the fortunes of war and the resources and military needs of the great barons. The early modern regime froze the social order, drawing for the first time a clear line between peasants, who were registered with and bound to their fields, and samurai, who were removed from their lands and gathered into garrisons in the castle towns of the shōgun and the daimyo. The samurai thus became a legally defined, legally privileged, hereditary class, consisting of a very few feudal lords and a much larger body of retainers on stipend, whose numbers were now fixed by law. Moreover, without wars to fight, the military skills and culture of this class inevitably atrophied. The samurai rapidly evolved from sword-wielding warriors to sword-bearing bureaucrats descended from warriors.

The Tokugawa regime kept the peace in Japan for the better part of three centuries before at last succumbing to a combination of foreign pressure, evolution of the nation’s social and economic structure, and decay of the government itself. In 1868, combined armies from four domains forced the resignation of the last shōgun and declared a restoration of all powers of governance to the emperor. This event, known as the Meiji Restoration (a name given to the calendar era 1868–1912), marked the beginning of the end for the samurai as a class. Over the next decade, they were stripped first of their monopoly of military service, and then, one by one, of the rest of their privileges and badges of status: their special hairstyle, their way of dress, their exclusive right to surnames, their hereditary stipends, and the right to wear swords in public. By the 1890s Japan was a modernized, industrialized nation ruled by a constitutional government and defended by a Westernized conscript army and navy. The samurai were no more.

Karl Friday

See also Budō, Bujutsu, and Bugei; Japan; Sword, Japanese; Swordsmanship, Japanese; Written Texts: Japan

References


Savate

Savate (from the French for “shoe”) is an indigenous martial art of France and southwestern Europe that developed from the fighting techniques of sailors, thugs, and soldiers. Although it has a reputation for being a kicking style, savate also includes hand strikes and grappling, as well as weapons. Two separate sports have derived from savate, the first a form of sport kickboxing called Boxe Française, the second a form of fencing with sticks called la canne de combat. Two related arts, called chausson (French; deck shoe) and zipota (Basque; boot), also existed but today are considered part of the style of savate called “Savate Danse de Rue.”

The use of kicking techniques in Western martial arts like boxing and wrestling probably started with the Greeks and Romans in the art known as pankration. The early history is often vague, but sword manuscripts from the 1400s, such as Talhoffer Fechtbuch, also included sections on wrestling that included kicking and striking techniques along with grappling. Several of these manuals were recently collected together in a German book on wrestling that shows what appears to be the continuation of savate-like techniques from 1447 to 1700. The earliest references to savate itself come from literature and folklore: In the 1700s a poem describes a savateur (practitioner of savate) as part angel and part devil. In Basque folklore, the heroic half-bear, half-man Basso Juan uses zipota, the Basque form of savate, in his fights. In the mid-1700s, the term chausson, from the type of shoe worn on board ship, was being used to describe the fighting techniques of French, Spanish, and Portuguese sailors. As time passed, the more northern style of foot fighting was called savate while the southern style was called chausson. Chausson was more a form of play or sport, while savate was more combative.

In 1803, Michel “Pisseux” Casseux opened the first salle (training hall) of savate in Paris. He had codified the techniques of savate into fifteen kicking techniques and fifteen cane techniques. About the same time, Emile Lamand began teaching savate in Madrid. Lamand adopted the local style of knife fighting (called either navaja, for a type of knife, or saca tripas [gut
puller]) into his savate. As the popularity of savate increased, more savatiers (old spelling) began teaching formally. Due to the poor reputation of savate at that time, the word sabotage was used in French for the act of mugging someone and a savateur was considered a brutal thug.

Some of this disapproval changed during the time of the Lecour brothers. The banning of swords within the city limits of Paris to restrict dueling caused a great increase in interest in savate by the nobility and upper class. The use of la canne (the cane) and the baton (walking stick) for self-defense and to settle disagreements became common, and many noted swordsmen took up la canne and savate. Hubert Lecour was a professional soldier and maitre d’armes (master of arms) as well as a savateur who had taught lancers in Spain the techniques of baton for defense when unhorsed. His skill and ability to popularize the art gained him many students, such as Alexander Dumas, Lord Seymour, and the duke of Orleans. The latter, a noted duelist, is credited with introducing many rapier, saber, and court sword techniques into la canne. Savate became so popular that Napoleon III mandated its use in training soldiers. During this period, the sport of canne de combat developed from the techniques of canne d’armes and fencing.

The association of savate with the French military led to savate’s exportation to many of the French colonies. In addition, French and Basque emigrants to North America carried the art with them. Depending on the length and strength of the influence, savate survived in formal salles (Ivory Coast, Algiers, French Indochina), as an informal art associated with boxing or wrestling (South Texas, Idaho, Quebec) or as a local preference for using one’s feet (Louisiana). The survival of zipota in South Texas among the Basque settlers is well documented: Zipota maitre Isdro Chapa was a retired boxing champion as well as a noted boxing coach in Laredo, Texas, who trained his fighters in zipota for use in the streets. This art had been passed down in the local boxing gyms for generations until one of his students, his nephew Paul-Raymond Buitron III, renewed the ties to the European lineage by studying in France. There is compelling evidence of its influence in South America, as well. The high arcing kicks of chausson and its practice of kicking with one hand on the floor for balance are believed to have been incorporated into Brazilian capoeira. Great similarities are seen in the techniques, salute, and dress of the old practitioners of chausson and capoeira. The presence of chausson players among the sailors in Salvador, Brazil, has been established, and French cultural influence was strong in Brazil in the 1900s. Capoeira master Bira (“Mestre Acordeon”) Almeida said in a 1996 personal communication with the author that the connection between the arts is probable and “that Chausson is one of the grandparents of Capoeira.”

Hubert Lecour’s brother, Charles, like one of his teachers, Michel Casseux, was fond of fighting and accepted challenges from fighters of any
style. One should note that at this time the differences between boxing, wrestling, and savate were less defined than today, and many fighters competed in all three. Charles Lecour’s fight with the boxer Owen Swift of England ended in a draw, with Swift’s legs wrecked and Lecour’s face battered. Lecour then spent two years with Swift in England learning and adapting the punches of English boxing to savate. From this, the sport of Boxe Française, the first sporting form of kickboxing, began in 1832. Charles Lecour also challenged a maitre of chausson, Joseph Vingtras, over his comments that savate lacked malice. Chausson was still practiced as a separate art at the time. The bout was well attended. Vingtras’s loss to Lecour led to the absorption of chausson’s techniques into savate.

Due to the popularity of savate, the police in Paris requested and obtained a new law that sentenced anyone caught fighting with hands or feet in the street to immediate long-term enlistment in the army. The savateurs’ response led to the development of Lutte Parisienne (Parisian Wrestling), a form of grappling that hides its techniques as much as possible. Hubert LeBroucher and Louis Vigneron were the savateurs most responsible for codifying these techniques. Vigneron techniques emphasized powerful projection throws and pinning techniques, while LeBroucher emphasized choking and neck-breaking techniques. At the same time, the savateurs in the police force began actively developing Panache (literally, plume; used to mean swagger, flourish), the use of clothing and other everyday objects to gain a quick advantage in a fight.

By the late 1870s, savate had become very popular in France. During this time Joseph Charlemont, a former legionnaire exiled to Belgium for some indiscretions, systematized the teaching of Boxe Française, la Canne et Baton (cane and walking stick), and Lutte Parisienne into grades. He also
developed the glove system to rank his students. Colored sashes or colored cuffs on the gloves were used. Panache was taught only to silver gloves as a final polish reserved for the highest ranks. His son, Charles Charlemon, became perhaps the greatest savateur of the time. Charles Charlemon fought and defeated the boxer Joe Driscoll in a bout called “the Fight of the Century” in 1899. This victory led to the exportation of savate to other countries, like the United States and the United Kingdom, where it was taught to the armed forces as “Automatic Defense.” Even cartoon and fictional characters such as Batman and Mrs. Peel of The Avengers television series and 1998 motion pictures have used savate in their martial arts arsenals.

The period of the two world wars was as devastating to savate as the preceding times were beneficial. By the end of World War II, it is estimated that 40 percent of France’s men had been killed in combat. Because of savate’s popularity in the military and police forces, the percentage of savateurs killed was even greater. After World War II, one of Charlemon’s senior students, Comte Pierre Baruzy, could only find thirty-three silver gloves remaining from the over 100,000 savateurs known before World War I. This remnant led to the rebirth of savate in the modern world. However, the social conditions in Europe led to an increased emphasis on the sporting forms. Two organizations were formed after World War II, a Savate and a Boxe-Française Federation. Originally, jūdō was also one of the arts affiliated with these federations. As savate spread to other countries with similar martial traditions, an International Federation formed. In the 1970s, the two French Federations merged, and the dominance of the sport form within the association began. In the late 1970s, Lutte Parisienne was removed from the normal course of study. In 1982, a special committee for la canne and the other weapon arts was formed. While many instructors, including Comte Baruzy, opposed this and continued to teach the entire system, savate was being broken into individual disciplines with little overlap. This fragmentation continued until the 1990s when the la Canne et Baton practitioners finally developed their own organizations separate from the Savate–Boxe Française Federation. During this time, savate as a complete combat art was still taught in isolated salles like that of Maitre Jean-Paul Viviane and in the police and military clubs like that of Maitre Robert Paturel. In 1994, a young American professeur (senior rank instructor), Paul-Raymond Buitron III, was charged by his maitres with developing a curriculum that requires mastery of all of the disciplines of savate as well as the formation of the International Guild of Savate Danse de Rue. Buitron was already trained in zipota when he studied savate in France, and he became the first American to earn his silver glove in France as well as the first American licensed to teach savate’s disciplines. Maitre Buitron III reintegrated the disciplines and developed a series of training sets to
teach the techniques and logic of all of savate. By this effort, he preserved the full martial dimension of savate and has been called “the second Baruzy” in recognition of the amount of effort this required.

Savate Danse de Rue today trains students in the traditional disciplines of savate as one system. For technical ranks, a glove system is used: blue, green, red, white, yellow, and three grades of silver. Red is considered equal to a first-degree black belt. The basic body movements are taught from Boxe Française and chausson. A pivoting of the body generates power, and kicks are focused on the toes, heel, or sole of the shoe. The trademark kicks of savate are the fouette, a spiraling kick that is vaguely similar to a roundhouse kick, and the coup de bas, a low-hitting kick. Seventeen different kicks are recognized, as well as their spinning, jumping, and main à sol (“hand on the floor”) variations. Officially, fourteen hand strikes are used, but this is a low number, as all open-hand strikes are basically considered as one type. Head, shoulder, elbow, knee, and hip strikes are also taught. After mastering bare-handed techniques, the student is introduced to the weapon system, called la canne et baton or canne d’armes. The savateur is taught in the following order: la canne (walking stick), couteau (knife), larga (cutlass or bowie), double canne, baton (heavy staff), rasoir (straight razor), firearms, and fouet (whip). The weapons are practiced against similar weapons, as in canne versus canne, against other weapons, as in canne versus couteau, and against unarmed foes. All of the weapons can be and are expected to be combined with the striking or kicking techniques as well as with grappling. The savateur’s goal is to flow between these techniques smoothly. Along with the weapon techniques, the grappling techniques of Lutte Parisienne are introduced through a series of two-person exercises. The techniques of Lutte Parisienne, derived from Western wrestling, use both projecting and breaking techniques. However, the techniques are done in such a way as to damage, not restrain, the opponents, allowing the savateur’s speedy escape. In addition, many techniques are designed to look accidental or to be hidden from witnesses. Later, the techniques of zipota are introduced to teach one how to handle multiple opponents. Zipota teaches a variety of infighting techniques and rapid changes of direction. Finally, when preparing for the first silver glove, the student studies Panache. Panache uses any available object to gain an advantage in a fight, giving it the name of “the art of malice.” For example, hats, vests, overcoats, scarves, and briefcases are used to distract or damage an assailant. The upper two grades of silver add more complicated lutte sets. In addition, familiarity with the sporting forms of Boxe Française and canne de combat is required.

Despite the training of a silver glove, savateurs of that rank are not considered capable of teaching on their own. A separate teaching ladder
exists that can be started at green glove. Specialized training in how to
teach, the logic behind the methods of training, and the techniques are re-
quired. The colored sash recognizes teaching rank: orange for coach, pur-
ple for initiateur (one who initiates), maroon for aide moniteur (assistant
monitor), and black and green for moniteur (monitor). Those who hold the
honorable titles of professeur, maître, and grande maître wear black and
red, red, and white or pure white respectively. Of the technical ranks, sil-
ver gloves wear a black and blue sash.

Students are also classed as élèves (students), disciples (disciples), and
donneurs (teachers). Anyone below the silver glove is an élève unless he has
earned a teaching rank. The silver gloves and instructors below moniteur
are considered disciples, or apprentices. This implies a personal relation-
ship with a professeur who trains them in the art. Moniteurs and higher are
called donneurs, as they give back to the art.

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See also Boxing, European; Capoeira; Dueling; Europe; Masters of Defence;
Pankration; Stickfighting, Non-Asian; Swordsmanship, European
Renaissance

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Silat

This Southeast Asian martial system is known variously as silat (Indonesia,
the Philippines), silek (Indonesia), and bersilat (Malaysia). The term silat is
generally agreed to mean “combat” or “fighting” and is commonly cou-
pled with a modifier such as ber (Malay; to do) or pencak/pentjak (In-
donesian; translated by Draeger and Smith as “regulated, skillful body
movements” [1980, 178]). The system is based on indigenous Indonesian
combat arts, with primary influence from India and China. Silat employs
striking with both hands and feet, throws, and locks. A variety of weapons
are integrated along with unarmed techniques in silat curricula. Techniques
are launched from very low stances, deep crouches, or even creeping positions. These stances are regarded as “signatures” of silat.

Most sources contend that silat originated on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, located just across the Strait of Malacca from the Malaysian peninsula. The art originated in Sumatra during the period of the Menangkabau Empire. The art developed and proliferated from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries, becoming a network of systematized arts by about the fourteenth century. The art was exported to Malaysia to the Malaccan court and undoubtedly influenced bersilat, which enters recorded history in about the fourteenth century.

Silat is an amalgam of indigenous Indonesian martial traditions and imported traditions from India, China, and the Middle East. In contemporary Indonesia the Japanese arts (e.g., jūdō and karate) and weapons (e.g., the katana, the classic Japanese single-edged, curved sword) have exerted an influence on some schools. The earliest non-Indonesian influences are likely to have been introduced in the area of the Sumatran seaport of Palembang during the period of the Mahayana Buddhist Srivijaya Empire (seventh to twelfth century A.D.) by Indians and Chinese who landed at the seaport. In noting the variety of influences on silat from abroad, Donn Draeger asserts, “In pentjak-silat can be found Nepalese music, Hindu weapons and combative styles, Siamese costumes, Arabian weapons, and Chinese weapons and combative tactics” (1972, 32). From Chinese wushu, silat derived its circular movement patterns, weapon names (e.g., pisau, a type of knife), and probably the use of animal forms in its various styles; Draeger and Robert Smith contend that both wushu and silat animal forms were inspired by early Indian combatives, however. Hindu culture can be seen in silat’s grappling tactics, and the prototype of the tjabang (a short metal truncheon roughly in the shape of a blunt trident, resembling the Okinawan sai) is probably the Indian trisula. With the arrival of Islam in the archipelago, the Arab jambia probably provided the prototype for many Muslim pentjak silat blades. In the twentieth century, contemporary Japanese martial arts influenced modern silat tactics, techniques, weapons, and belt ranking (Draeger and Smith 1980, 32–33).

On the other hand, the most common oral traditions attribute the origins of the art to a native Indonesian inventor. Legend claims that a western Sumatran woman created the art after watching a fight between a snake and a bird or, another variant states, a large bird and a tiger. This is a legend that silat holds in common with other non-Indonesian martial arts such as taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan). If not of independent origin, this narrative may have been passed along with the animal styles common to the various systems of silat as an element of the Chinese heritage. This borrowing would be consistent with Draeger and Smith’s arguments noted above.
Until relatively late in the twentieth century the styles of silat, even in Indonesia, were extremely localized, with each village or master teacher having a distinct style within the general pattern. Draeger and Smith refer to 157 recorded styles in Indonesia in the 1960s, while others would label this as a conservative estimate. Given the absence of a standardizing governing body for this combative art, the real number of styles is actually unknowable. While most of these styles survive on the island of Java, silat is preserved not only among Muslims, but in Hindu populations (most notably in Bali) and Christian communities as well. Noting that there is not a random distribution of techniques and tactics (e.g., predominance of hand strikes over kicks), Draeger argues for the development of particular char-

Kelantan silat master Haji Su and his son Mat Noor. (Courtesy of Joe Svinth)
acteristics in regional styles of pentjak silat because of the physical characteristics of inhabitants and socioeconomic factors.

Within the virtually infinite variety of styles, however, there are elements in common among Indonesian silat and its derivatives of Filipino silat and Malaysian bersilat. In general, silat is characterized by the following. While all systems are based on the use of weapons, training begins with instruction in empty-hand tactics and progresses to armed techniques. A wide variety of weapons are incorporated into the systems. Although bladed weapons are particularly favored, sticks of various lengths, polearms, and projectile weapons are found among the various styles. The weapons used, although their prototypes may have originated outside Southeast Asia, are regarded as specifically Indonesian and Malayan, for example, the kris (a double-edged stabbing dagger) and the \textit{tjabang} (branch; a short, trident-shaped weapon similar to the Okinawan sai).

In order to embark on training with a traditional teacher, students were required to offer gifts, which symbolized the path about to be taken. According to Draeger and Smith, these were: “1. A chicken whose blood is spread on the training ground as a symbolic substitute for blood that might otherwise come from the student; 2. A roll of white cloth in which to wrap the corpse if a student should be killed during practice; 3. A knife, which symbolizes the sharpness expected of a student; 4. Tobacco for the teacher to smoke during rest periods; 5. Some money to replace the teacher’s clothes if they are ripped in practice” (1980, 180). Following acceptance, a bond that extended far beyond a business arrangement developed—and indeed still does; students and teacher are regarded as sharing a blood relationship.

With variation from system to system, training includes learning the etiquette that governs practice sessions, basic natural weapons of the body and the targets that these techniques attack, stances and movements from posture to posture, sparring, vital-point striking (similar to Japanese \textit{atemi}), weapons, and training in esoteric supernatural methods of attack, defense, and healing. The transmission of knowledge is less by direct instruction than by observation of the teacher and senior students with periodic correction, especially at the lower levels of the art. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, silat remained strictly combative, avoiding the compromises needed to make the transition to sport. Outside self-defense situations, silat has been an element of local celebrations (e.g., weddings, village festivals). According to Kirstin Pauka, among the Menangkabu at least, the common term for such “non-serious” use of the art is \textit{main silek} (“playing silek [silat]”). The playful dimension allows silat to be subjected to both functional (self-defense) and aesthetic (performance) criteria. The criteria are, according to Pauka, for the functional qualities, effectiveness,
precision, control, speed, and focus, and for the aesthetic, balance, effortlessness, light-footedness, and fluidity.

The prominence of aesthetic factors in silat and its close association with genres of Southeast Asian dance-drama have caused pentjak silat to be mistakenly categorized as dance by outsiders. Donn Draeger offers the following reasons for the confusion. Pentjak (regulated movements) silat (defense) consists of two separate components, each of which can be practiced separately. The agility and graceful movements inherent in the system manifest artful qualities (cf. Pauka); the practice of silat may be accompanied by music, and Indonesian dance forms (e.g., randai) have utilized silat movement patterns (Draeger 1972, 36). Rather than positing a one-way street, he suggests that there may have been cross-influence, in that dance movements may have been appropriated for use as silat. Pauka writes with certainty, in the case of randai among the Menangkabu at least, that the dramatic form evolved out of silek via the teaching method for basic moves that places students in a circle observing the movements of a teacher.

In traditional styles of silat, the concept of supernormal power coexists with the physical techniques. Although the primary contemporary reli-
gion of Indonesia and most of the practitioners of silat are Islam, supernat
aturalism in this area has been influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism (partic
ularly in Bali), and especially animism. Animism (the concept of an out-
side power that can be tapped by adepts, which dates from the pre-Islamic
period) is a particularly important principle in the supernaturalism that
permeates silat. The principle of animism is fundamental to shamanism,
and in the region shamans often practice silek. A form of power roughly
similar to the Chinese concept of qi also potentially comes from an inner
source (tenaga batin) and it may be generated through silek and spiritual
exercises. Mantras and amulets are used for protection, and in some styles,
the self-stabbing “kris dance” associated with the Balinese ritual drama of
Rangda is practiced. These principles are reminiscent of Chinese and Indian
yogic traditions as well as animism. Further, Islamic Sufism supports the be-
lief in Ilmu (Indonesian; science, esoteric knowledge), a supernatural power
that allows silat practitioners at higher levels to induce a form of posses-
sion by animal spirits that James Wilson regards as the heritage of animism.
Ilmu is related to but not same as tenaga dalam. This traditional esoteric
power is not “recognized” in “official” silat circles. In fact, schools that
utilize tenaga dalam are not allowed membership in IPSI—Ikatan Pencak
Silat Indonesia (Wilson 1993, 23).

Certain styles of silat rely exclusively on supernatural power rather
than physical methods. Opponents can be struck by the power of the adept,
or one can use power to defend against strikes from attackers. Tenaga
dalam can also be used for healing (Wilson). These styles, such as the Bali-
inese Joduk style as characterized by Draeger and Smith, are secretive arts
that prepare initiates for combat by means of hypnotism, autosuggestion,
and trances. The sources of inner strength tapped are similar to those man-
ifested in the Balinese kris dance, in which participants attain a frenzied
state in which they turn their daggers on themselves.

During the period of Dutch colonialism, the practice of pentjak silat
was repressed, but not extinguished. During the Japanese occupation dur-
ding World War II, silat, as a potential tool for resistance, enjoyed a revital-
ization. When the Dutch attempted to return to control, natives of the ar-
chipelago turned to silat as a “secret weapon” for liberation—often
because of the supernatural powers it was said to develop. Among practi-
tioners of the art, at least, the successful transition from colony to nation
was attributed to the power engendered through the practice of silat. Some
silat systems both in Indonesia and Malaysia continue involvement in po-
litical action.

The last half of the twentieth century saw efforts to standardize pent-
jak silat. Modern federations such as Persatuan Pentjak Silat Selurah In-
donesia (PPSI) attempted to standardize pentjak silat. Bhakti Negara (which
Bersilat

On the Malay peninsula the arts labeled silat in Indonesia are grouped under the label of bersilat. The name bersilat is best translated by breaking it into its two components: ber (“to do”) and silat (“fighting”). While this is the most straightforward explanation for the derivation of the name, practitioners often cite an origin legend focusing on a woman named Bersilat who learned the art through her dreams. While bersilat is regarded by some as distinct from Indonesian silat, there is a close relationship between the two systems, dating from at least the fifteenth century. Like Indonesian pentjak silat, bersilat manifests almost infinite variation, with each village or teacher passing along a variant style. Moreover, Malaysian bersilat utilizes hand and foot strikes, throws and locks, and attacks to vulnerable points in the body, as is the case with Indonesian silat. Also, a wide range of traditional Malay and Indonesian weapons are taught. Emphasis on particular techniques varies from style to style, however.

Bersilat, like pentjak silat, was originally a combat art. Modern bersilat, however, exists in two forms: silat pulut, a dancelike performance that may have derived from kuntao (see Southeast Asia), and silat buah, a combat form not publicly displayed that was probably influenced by Menangkabu pentjak silat, according to the small body of scholarship devoted to the art. Oral tradition also gives the art a Sumatran origin. The latter form, according to most sources, has virtually disappeared in favor of the more performance-oriented silat pulut. Public performances of bersilat suggest that in its modern form of silat buah the system lacks combat reality. Clearly the emphasis in modern bersilat is on physical exercise, performance, and sport.

Filipino Silat

According to Ronald Harris, silat (in Pilipino, kidlat) means “lightning,” referring to the speed of execution of the unarmed striking and weapon use of Filipino silat. As is the case with both Indonesian and Malaysian styles, the kris is the most commonly used weapon. The Filipino type is often labeled kuntao-silat.

In the Philippine Archipelago, there are competing claims as to whether silat is indigenous under Muslim influence or blended with Chi-
Chinese martial arts. The latter theory is supported by the waves of immigration that are thought to have occurred in Filipino history, causing considerable cross-cultural influence. From the seventh century on, for the next 700 years, the central region of the Philippine Archipelago was subjected to the Hindu influence of the Sri Vishayan Empire. The Visayan Islands, in fact, were named after this empire. Later, during the period of the Majapahit Empire, 1292–1398, the southern region of the Philippine Archipelago came under Muslim control.

Moreover, Chinese merchants were historically active in the Philippine Archipelago. Many settled in the islands, where they remain a separate social class today. Chinese immigrants seldom intermarry with native Filipinos and continue to dominate in business. However, some proponents of Filipino silat claim that there is no Chinese influence. They argue, instead, that kuntaw (often translated as “kung fu” or “fist way”) developed and was preserved within the isolated Chinese communities.

Regarding kuntaw in the Philippines, Ronald Harris notes that kuntaw is the art of the Samal people from Jolo, Mindanao. They are rivals of the Tausug tribe. Their primary weapons are fingernails tipped with poison. Traditionally, they grew long fingernails, but now they wear fingernails made of aluminum or other materials such as carabao (water buffalo) horn. The forms of kuntaw contain strikes with hands, feet, knees, and elbows. Harris further notes that in appearance, the forms resemble taijiquan. There are also acrobatic applications—rolling falls and cartwheels. Sparring is practiced after the mastery of forms. The highest kuntaw rank is the yellow belt. Kuntao has many up and down movements (langkas) that require great leg strength. As has been noted elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Filipino kuntao movements are lethal and do not adapt well to the confines of competition.

Thomas A. Green

See also Philippines; Southeast Asia

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Social Uses of the Martial Arts

Individuals study martial arts for a variety of reasons. Examples include body sculpting, bullying, curiosity, personal empowerment, and redemption through pain. Societies use martial arts similarly, and some examples of common social uses follow. To avoid giving undue priority to any single use or motivation, the following arrangement is alphabetical.

**Agonistics.** Agonistic behavior is aggressive social interaction between people. Such interaction can be mental, physical, or both, and participants can be actors, spectators, or both. Although participation can provide intrinsic pleasure, people more often use agonistic behavior less as recreation than as a conflict resolution model or to teach methods of trickery, deception, and divination not otherwise taught in school. Thus physical agonistics such as boxing essentially mimic dueling, while team agonistics such as football essentially mimic small-unit warfare.

**Character development.** “Whatever does not kill us, makes us stronger,” said Nietszche, and for his part, Confucius said, “By the drawing of the bow, one can know the virtue and conduct of men.” What constitutes good character depends on the society and subgroup, and changes over time. Thus the Romans thought good character meant the willingness to watch gladiators kill criminals, while before World War I the YMCA taught that it was abstinence from masturbation.

**Carrying divine favor.** At various times, most major cultures have conceived martial art as an appropriate religious activity. (Examples of monastic warriors include Zealots, jihadists, Crusaders, Rajputs, and Shaolin monks, and to this day the Salvation Army sings, “Onward, Christian Soldiers.”) The motivation is often the belief that God will grant victory to the person or side that is rightly guided. (“Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life,” said the medieval Knights Hospitaller.)

**Exorcising demons.** Sympathetic magic is at work here. For example, during the fourth century A.D., Daoists (Taoists) began using quarterstaffs during exorcisms. The idea was that when the priest pointed his staff toward heaven, the gods bowed and the earth smiled, but when he pointed it at demons, the cowardly rascals fled (Lagerwey). On the other side of the world, as recently as the seventeenth century, European medical texts urged physicians to treat the sword with the same salve as the injury. Often percussion (for example, drums and firecrackers) is associated with such activities, sometimes to help the ritual specialists enter the necessary trance states, sometimes to frighten the demons or inspire observers.

**Funerary rituals.** Homer described funerary games in *The Iliad,* and as George MacDonald Fraser said in *Quartered Safe out Here* about a division of dead men’s property in 1945, “It was not callousness or indifference or lack of feeling for two comrades who had been alive that morning...
and were now names for the war memorial; it was just that there was nothing to be said” (1995, 88–89).

Group solidarity. Immigrant groups often encourage their children to participate in national games as a way of keeping them in touch with national traditions. Examples include German American Turnverein (German; gymnastic associations; see Chronology, 1811) and Japanese American jûdô clubs. At another level, as early as the fourteenth century Ibn Khaldun identified the role group that group solidarity played in combat, and more recently William H. McNeill noted that “keeping together in time” (that is, marching, drilling, and performing kata in groups) is one of the ways to develop such solidarity.

Honor and reputation. According to Homer, the Fates gave Achilles, golden-haired son of Peleus, the choice between a short life crowned by everlasting fame and a long life that no one would remember. The youth
chose the former, and as a result became the short-lived (but famous) hero of Homer's Iliad. Meanwhile fights, duels, and homicide about matters of honor or masculinity are so common as to almost need no mention.

Invented tradition. Invented traditions (a term introduced by E. J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in 1983) establish social cohesion, legitimize political institutions, and sell commercial products. Examples of invented traditions include George Washington chopping down cherry trees, fat white-bearded Santas wearing red suits, and the Korean art taekwondo owing more to the warriors of ancient Silla than the college karate classes of Imperial Japan. Much (perhaps most) martial arts history is invented tradition; as Thomas Green has written, a system’s official past is more frequently the product of dialogue and imagination than chronology (1997, 159).

Lord of disorder. Basically, people get together and hold festivals in which the normal order of the world is turned upside down. Thus feasting follows fasting. Energetic dancing follows heavy drinking. Women dressed as men abuse men dressed as women. Trickster becomes Warrior-King, and The Fool becomes the Sage. During these times, the authority of the state is always at risk: Something happens when people move out of the house or yard or dōjō and into the street with their martial activities. There is a subtext to the word street-fighter. Martial examples include stickfighting being associated with Carnival in the Philippines, fairs in Ireland and China, and harvest festivals in Africa, and wrestling being associated with fairs in Britain and the festival of Duesshera/Muharram in India.

Military training. In traditional society, preparation for military service often involves archery and stick games, energetic dancing (Indian tandava, Brazilian capoeira, Spartan pyrrhiche), and horse or canoe races. However, in industrialized societies, the focus often has shifted to shooting and wrestling games. Not everyone agrees that wrestling and dancing are worth the effort, however. For example, in a biographical sketch called
“Philopoemen,” the Roman moralist Plutarch wrote that the athletic body and lifestyle were different in every way from the military. The diet and the exercise were particularly different, as the athletes slept and ate regularly, while the soldiers trained to endure wandering, irregularity, and lack of sleep. This being the case, Plutarch viewed athletics as something that distracted a man from more important things, such as waging war or earning fame. Either way, organizing contests and meets was arguably the most important part of the process, as in war the prowess of the individual warrior is rarely as important as command, communication, and logistics.

Monetary gain (aethlon [Greek; prizes given Hellenic athletes for victories during gymnike, or funeral games]). Monetary motivation clearly applies to individuals selling belt rankings or requiring students to purchase long-term contracts, but also applies to athletic and professional associations, equipment manufacturers, and tourist bureaus.

Muscular development. Although individuals often play for fun or narcissism, the purpose of school physical education programs is not so much to build beautiful bodies or help anyone have fun as to ensure that children grow up healthy. (Through vigorous exercise, participants grow stronger and therefore become more productive workers.)

Nationalism. Governments patronize martial arts and combative sports as a form of muscular theater; the idea is that our national method produces better fighters than their national method. Thus in the sixteenth century, Indian rajahs, Japanese shôgun, and European princes had stables of professional wrestlers, while in more recent times the Communist Chinese have patronized taijiquan (taи chi ch’uan) and the South Koreans have patronized taekwondo. Nationalism leads to many invented traditions, in part because governments can afford to pay people to create them.

Paramilitary training. When used by police, paramilitary training typically emphasizes control methods that are not intended to kill or maim healthy adults and teenagers. Sometimes called nonlethal, such methods can kill or injure if they are misused or if the recipient is unlucky. However, when used by political factions and antigovernment activists, paramilitary training typically emphasizes lethal methods using everyday implements.

Political theater. “Dueling nobles,” Robert Drews has written, “are essential for the poet’s story, but in reality the promachoi [dueling nobles] were much less important than the anonymous multitude in whose front rank they stood” (1993, 169). While true, stories featuring deeds of derring-do teach history and morals to semiliterate masses, and it is not coincidence that the word mystery originally meant “to minister.” Martial examples of political theater include the Water Margin stories in China, the Robin Hood stories in England, and the ballads about Jesse James in the United States.

Potlatch. Our group sets out to embarrass another group by putting
on fancier games than they could possibly afford. Thus Romans staged gladiatorial contests in which expensive slaves were killed, and alumni groups buy new uniforms and team equipment.

**Preposterous violence.** Humans take pleasure in imagining a world in which bad things happen to worse people, and James Twitchell has defined theatrical efforts in this direction as “preposterous violence.” (Some examples of what he means include religious iconography featuring tortured saints and deities, Punch-and-Judy shows, comic books, kung fu theater, and professional wrestling.) Preposterous violence is voyeuristic rather than participatory, and as a result it usually bolsters rather than threatens the status quo.

**Rites of passage.** Here the emphasis is usually less on combat effectiveness than on learning to take one’s lumps like a man. Thus gangs have beatings-in, schoolboys have hazing, and assorted cultures have youth games involving mutual flagellation. Military organizations and martial art classes typically invoke similar rites of passage: “I once studied a martial art that offered ‘special training’ twice a year,” recalled a martial arts practitioner during personal correspondence with the author of this entry. “I don’t believe I ever really learned anything at these events, but the bonding and the testosterone boost, even among the women in the group, were palpable for the next few weeks.”

**Status.** A belt is just a belt, and as any decent philosopher or religious leader will affirm, it is pointless to claim to be a grand master when one has yet to master one’s carnal self. Nevertheless, the human desire for status (also called “ego”) explains why teachers frequently take enormous pride in grandiloquent titles while their students pay hundreds, sometimes thousands, of dollars for what are, after all, nothing more than clothing accessories.

**Vice.** In most societies, vice is a crime only if one gets caught, and as early as 388 B.C., boxers were being paid to lose in the Olympics. The more commercial the society, the more likely vice is to flourish, and in the postmodern world, casino owner Donald Trump has found “a direct relation between a high roller in the gaming sense and a boxing fan.” (Specifically, a boxing championship meant an extra $15 million a week in business, and almost $2 million a week in profits.) (Berger 1993, 193).

There are doubtless more than the twenty categories listed. Of note, however, is the fact that each category contains the potential for both good and evil. So regardless of why a society (or individual) patronizes an activity, it is what the society (or individual) does with the activity that ultimately matters most.

*Joseph R. Svinth*

**See also** Duelling; Folklore in the Martial Arts; Political Conflict and the Martial Arts
References
Southeast Asia consists of contemporary Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. These countries occupy both peninsular and island landforms, with China to the north and India to the west. Many of the distinctive cultural institutions, including the martial systems, were shaped by Indian and Chinese civilizations. The influence of Indian religions, in particular, is highlighted by the labeling of Southeast Asian civilizations as Hindu-Buddhist.

Although information regarding the earliest cultures in the area is sketchy at best, archaeological evidence indicates that the area was populated gradually and undramatically. Early immigrants of Malayan stock formed the core of the indigenous population. The earliest cultures owe a debt to southwestern China, and the religions were animistic. Much later with the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism (Mahayana, followed a few centuries later by Hinayana) from India and, beginning in the thirteenth century, Islam, many of these indigenous practices were absorbed into the imported religions. Animistic principles may still be seen in Southeast Asian martial systems.
The earliest history of the region (from Chinese sources) notes an Indian presence in Annam (coastal “Indochina”), Cambodia, and Thailand and on the islands of Java, Sumatra, and Celebes by at least the third century A.D. Although influence came in from various regions of India, Indian cultural features were restricted to the elite members of society, exerting no more than minimal influence on the culture of the folk until the popularization of Hinayana Buddhism in the thirteenth century.

The major cultural centers, dating to the second century A.D., were located in the Mekong Delta (Funan, in the Chinese rendering of Khmer), along the eastern coast of modern Vietnam (Champa), and in northern Malaya (Sriksetra).

Indianized Funan comprised the dominant sea power of the era. From their stronghold south of contemporary Hue, the Chams (an Indianized culture of Annam, Vietnam) waged virtually constant land and sea campaigns against their Chinese neighbors, which were met by retaliatory campaigns. The Vietnamese in the tenth century entered into a struggle with the Chams over the territory south of Tonkin. With the eventual Vietnamese victory, the Indianized Cham culture was supplanted by the Chinese-based Vietnamese culture.

In the area of modern Indonesia, the early cultural influences came from India. The process of Indianization can be traced to approximately A.D 450 and to Taruma in west Java.

Sriksetra (in central Burma) was the capital of the Pyu. This state was destroyed by invading Thais from Nanchao in the northeast before the Burmans appeared on the scene in the ninth century. To the east lay the territory of the Mons, whose sphere of political influence spread into the area of contemporary Thailand. Eventually, Mon cultural influence extended to the Burmans, Khmers, and Thais.

After the fall of Funan to the Khmer in the sixth century, Srivijaya in southeast Sumatra became the dominant sea power in the region. Maintaining strong ties with India, while cultivating the favor of China as well, the kingdom built a commercial empire by controlling the Strait of Sunda and the Strait of Malacca.

The Tibetan Burmans, who ruled from the city-state of Pagan, arrived in central Burma (now Myanmar) in the ninth century by way of the Shan hills. After absorbing the surviving Pyus, whose state had been crushed by Thai invaders just before the Burman arrival, they eventually subjugated the dominant Mon culture, absorbing from it both technology and Hindu-Buddhist culture.

The thirteenth century brought turmoil to the region due to Kublai Khan’s conquest of China and subsequent expansionist agenda. Chinese campaigns into Burma, Vietnam, Champa, and even Java led to the col-
lapse of empires such as the Pagan and realignments such as those in Indonesia that gave rise to other states such as the Majapahit political entity of eastern Java, which retained preeminence in the area through the fifteenth century. The growth of the Islamic sphere of influence on the Malay peninsula, especially in centers such as Malacca, and into Java led to Majapahit’s demise in the sixteenth century.

On the mainland, the thirteenth century saw the development of the Thai into a major political force. By the end of the next century, unification of Siam (now Thailand) and the establishment of the kingdom of Laos had
been effected. Struggles between Siam and Burma continued well into the nineteenth century, while within Burma itself the Thai Shans strove to conquer upper Burma. Internal struggles between Burman and Thai groups continued into the sixteenth century, when the Burmans ultimately prevailed.

Most Indonesian rulers had become Muslims by the end of the sixteenth century, with the exception of Pajajaran in eastern Java (until the seventeenth century) and Bali. Bali resisted Islam, remaining the only Hindu-Buddhist civilization in the archipelago. In the areas that have become contemporary Indonesia and Malaysia, Islam absorbed previous influences (particularly indigenous animism), which appear in popular religious practice and the martial arts.

In mainland Southeast Asia, notably in what became modern Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, Hinayana Buddhism remained dominant. Even more than in the Islamic states, the absorption of indigenous practice produced lingering effects on many native combative systems.

The intrusion of European colonialism into the region had minimal impact on traditional combative systems, beyond driving them underground in some cases. In the period following Japanese incursions in World War II, some practitioners incorporated that nation’s martial arts (e.g., karate and jūdō) into native martial systems.

The martial arts in Southeast Asia coexist with dance and drama in some cultural traditions. Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand, for example, maintained at least into the late twentieth century dances that incorporate forms also seen in their combative arts. Among the Shan tribes of Myanmar in the early twentieth century, dance embodied and was likely to have been a vehicle for the practice of the indigenous boxing and weapons systems, and traditionally both Muay Thai (Thailand) and lethwei (Myanmar) boxing matches were preceded by martial dancing. Pentjak silat (Indonesia) and bersilat (Malaysia) utilize musical accompaniment during practice and exhibition. The role of silek (silat) as an element of west Sumatran folk drama as recently as 1998 has been well documented.

Cambodia
Archaeological evidence in the form of physical representations of human combat from the Khmer Empire (A.D. 802–1431) that have been found in the thousands in association with the Temple of Angkor Vat (Angkor Wat), built in the first half of the twelfth century by Suryavarman II (r. 1113–1150), and the walled city of Angkor Thom and its Bayon Temple, built late in the same century by Jayavarman VII (1181–1219), suggests a long history of martial arts. Although contact from India came early on in Khmer history and exerted profound cultural and religious influence, the statues and relief figures portrayed more closely resemble Chinese boxing
stances than any known arts of India. While it is clear from the historical record that Chinese contact began as early as the state of Funan, the early history is murky enough to render the Chinese images a continuing mystery.

Contemporary martial arts in Cambodia remain uninvestigated. The logical assumption is that, given the flow of peoples throughout the area and Cambodia's strong associations with Thailand and Vietnam, nations whose martial roots (primarily Chinese) and traditions are more well known, Cambodia shares a common heritage.

Similar points can be made about Laos, whose founders trace their origins to the migrations, beginning in about the eighth century A.D., from the Thai kingdom of Nanchao in southwestern China. Kublai Khan's incursions in the thirteenth century prompted mass migration of the Lao into the area of the modern state of Laos. Despite the absence of research, it is possible to speculate that indigenous martial systems based in Chinese wushu and Thai arts survived into modern times.

Indonesia
Silat is the primary martial art of Indonesia. The system is based on indigenous Indonesian combat arts with primary influence from India and China. Silat employs striking with both hands and feet, throws, and locks. A variety of weapons regarded as specifically Indonesian and Malayan (e.g., the kris—a double-edged stabbing dagger) are integrated with unarmed techniques in silat curricula.

Most sources contend that silat originated on the Indonesian island of Sumatra during the period of the Menangkabu kingdom. It then developed and proliferated from the seventh through the sixteenth centuries, becoming a network of systematized arts by at least the fourteenth century. Ultimately, silat is an amalgam of indigenous Indonesian martial traditions and imported traditions from India, China, and the Middle East. The earliest non-Indonesian influences are likely to have been introduced in the area of the Sumatran seaport of Palembang during the period of the Srivijaya Empire (seventh to twelfth centuries A.D.) by Indians and Chinese who landed at the seaport. Until relatively late in the twentieth century, the styles of silat were extremely localized, with each village or teacher having a distinct style within the general pattern.

Within the variety of styles, however, there are elements in common among Indonesian silat and its derivatives of Filipino silat and Malaysian bersilat. In general, silat is characterized by the following. While all systems are based on the use of weapons, training begins with instruction in empty-hand tactics and progresses to armed techniques. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, silat remained strictly combative, avoiding the compromises needed to make the transition to sport. Outside self-defense situa-
tions, silat has been an element of local celebrations (e.g., weddings, village festivals). The prominence of aesthetic factors in silat and its close association with genres of Southeast Asian dance-drama often have caused silat to be mistakenly categorized as dance by outsiders.

In traditional styles of silat, the concept of supernormal power coexists with the physical techniques. Although the primary contemporary religion of Indonesia is Islam, and most of the practitioners of silat are Muslims, supernaturalism in this area has been influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism (particularly in Bali), and especially animism. Also, Islamic Sufism supports a belief in Ilmu (Indonesian; science, esoteric knowledge), a supernatural power. The last half of the twentieth century saw efforts to standardize silat through modern federations such as Persatuan Pentjak Silat Selurah Indonesia (PPSI).

Kuntao is most commonly considered to be a generic term for Chinese martial arts practiced in the archipelago and on the Malay peninsula. The most common translation of the term is “fist art” or “fist way,” although there is no standard written form for the art among Chinese ideograms. Donn Draeger and Robert Smith trace the term to Hokkien dialect from the southeastern coastal province of Fujian.

Kuntao was developed and has remained largely confined to Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. Secrecy has traditionally been an element of the training. Therefore, kuntao and silat have pursued separate lines of development despite the proximity of the practicing communities.

Kuntao encompasses the range of traditional Chinese combat philosophies, from the “hard” Hokkien and Shantung styles to “soft” Thay Kek (Taijiquan [Tai chi ch’uan]). In general, however, the movements are circular rather than linear, and the practice of imitating animal movements and attitudes has been preserved from Chinese boxing. The systems incorporate both unarmed and armed techniques utilizing traditional Chinese weapons. Kuntao is strictly combative; there is no sport dimension.

Malaysia
Malaysia’s principal martial art is bersilat, the form of silat practiced on the Malay peninsula. While bersilat is regarded by some as distinct from Indonesian silat, there is a close relationship between the two systems dating from at least the fifteenth century. The Indonesian origin is reinforced by tradition, which attributes bersilat to the Malayan folk hero Hang Tuah, who moved from Menangkabu in west Sumatra to Malacca, Malaya, in the late fourteenth century, bringing with him both the kris and silat.

Like its parent art, bersilat is subject to considerable local variation. Also like Indonesian silat, Malaysian bersilat utilizes hand and foot strikes, throws and locks, attacks to vulnerable points in the body, and traditional
Malay and Indonesian weapons such as the kris. Modern bersilat, however, exists in two forms: *silat pulut*, a dancelike performance that may have derived from kuntao, and *silat buah*, a combat form not publicly displayed, which was probably influenced by Menangkabu pentjak silat, according to the small body of scholarship devoted to the art.

**Myanmar (Burma)**

The primary combative arts of this area, beyond certain modifications required to enable practitioners to survive practice sessions, have retained their martial character rather than having been converted to sports or martial “ways” for achieving self-improvement. The systems are not discrete, but actually are elements of thaing (generic for “defense” or “all-out fighting”) rather than separate disciplines. Grappling and striking, even techniques disallowed in other martial arts (e.g., biting and eye-gouging), are incorporated into thaing.

*Bandō* may be loosely translated as “way of steel discipline” (Dunlap 2000). The term commonly is used to refer to unarmed fighting arts. There are nine primary styles of bandō, each associated with a major ethnic group: Burmese, Chin, Chinese, Indian, Kachin (or Jinghpaw), Karen, Mon, Shan, and Talaing.

The styles are composed of animal systems or forms. Generally twelve animals are incorporated into the style, but there are exceptions, such as the Kachin system, which uses sixteen. Each system incorporates both striking and grappling developed in imitation of the characteristics of the animal that inspired the system. The tactics of each animal may be used separately or fused, as called for in a given situation.

The animism that is an important element of many of Burma’s religious systems (especially that of the Kachin) has been given as an explanation for the organization of combat techniques around animal characteristics. Given the long influence of both Indian and Chinese cultures on Burma, however, and the presence in both of animal forms of martial arts, there are alternative explanations.

*Banshay* refers to traditional Burmese systems of weapons use. The training embodies both unarmed techniques against weapons and the means of wielding weapons in combat. The most common weapons are stick, sword, and spear. The sources of banshay are said to be both India and China. Among the Shan, weapon systems appear as “fight dances”; one type uses a pair of Burmese swords and the other a stick with flaming ends. The latter is sometimes practiced in pairs. History records that in about 1549, Burmese soldiers practiced sword dances in their encampment while laying siege to the Thai forces at Ayuthia. The nature and purpose of the dances were not recorded, however.
Lethwei/lethawae (Burmese “boxing”) shares many characteristics with Muay Thai (Thailand). As in Muay Thai, kicks, including knees, are used along with hand and elbow strikes. Unlike Muay Thai, however, competitors fight without gloves, using only hand wraps as protection for the fists; head-butts and grappling are permitted. A sport form of the system has existed since at least the eighteenth century. Currently there are matches divided into four rounds, judges, rankings from youth to professional grades, and even a national governing body. Matches traditionally have been associated with festivals and held in sandpits. Musical accompaniment is sometimes used; in fact, in the past at least, the Shan dance called Lai Ka (fight dance, or defense-offense) was a form of training for bare-knuckle fighting. According to Faubion Bowers the assumption is that dancing and fighting are so closely related that ability in one entails ability in the other. Boxing was popular among the hill tribes: the Kachin, Karen, Shan, and Wa.

Rather than existing as a separate art, Burmese wrestling, called naban (grappling), is integrated into other combatives. Grappling is most developed among the Chin and Kachin tribes, who are Himalayan in origin, and is said to have been derived from Indian wrestling rather than from Chinese grappling.

An advertisement for Burmese boxing found in Sagaing, Myanmar (Burma), in November 1996 illustrates the revival of interest in traditional martial arts. (Michael Freeman/Corbis)
Thailand

Muay Thai is the most widely recognized of the martial arts of Thailand. In its contemporary form Muay Thai, or Thai boxing, is known as an international sport. Precise information is lacking on the system’s origins because of the destruction of Siamese records in 1767 during one of their continuing conflicts with Burma (now Myanmar). As a combative system, however, it has figured prominently in the legends surrounding the centuries of conflict between the two countries. For example, in the late eighteenth century, a tradition maintains that Thai boxer Nai Khanom Tom (also Nai Khanom Dtom) was given the opportunity to fight for his freedom after being captured in a battle against the Burmese. He effected his release by defeating a dozen Burmese boxers. Other versions of this legend vary in their particulars, but in all versions, the Thai triumphs. In documented contemporary encounters, on the other hand, Muay Thai experts have fallen to the larger Burmese fighters.

One proposed date for the origin of Muay Thai is 1719, the year Prince Phra Chao Sua (also Seua) established martial competitions at Ayudhya. Prior to this time, it has been suggested that the empty-hand techniques of the art were embedded as military defense (likely to be synonymous with lerdrit, a military unarmed system) in the armed system of Krabi-krabong. Thai martial tradition claims Phra Chao Sua was himself a Muay Thai fighter who saved the country from invasion by defeating an opposing army’s champion.

During this early period, hands were wrapped, but no gloves or other protective equipment were used. In fact, on occasion wrappings were gummed and broken glass was embedded in the surface. Rounds, weight classes, gloves, and groin protectors were added early in the twentieth century. Rules covering fouls, such as the prohibition of throws, biting, or striking a downed opponent, have changed little over the past two centuries.

Krabi-krabong is at present the most vital Thai armed tradition. The Thai developed armed combat skills both in their own campaigns and as mercenaries for the Khmer Empire.

By the early sixteenth century (1503) the Thai had developed “military science,” as demonstrated by the compilation, at the orders of Siamese King Rama Tibodi II, of a “Treatise on Victorious Warfare” that outlined military strategy and military tactics. Almost a century later (1593) the extremely successful Thai king Naresuan, who led his forces into Burma, Cambodia, and Laos, appended twenty-one rules of combat to “Victorious Warfare.” Naresuan was a legendary swordsman, having allegedly single-handedly routed Burmese forces by killing the Burmese crown prince with a sword thrust. It is tempting, therefore, to suggest that his tactics influenced Krabi-krabong. Naresuan’s rules, however, focused on mass warfare,
and unlike contemporary Krabi krabong practitioners, he fought while mounted on an elephant.

The curriculum of Krabi-krabong consists of training in six different weapon categories: staff, gnow (bladed staff), single sword, double sword, mai saw (wooden club worn on the forearm), and the combination of spear and shield. In addition, Krabi-krabong utilizes empty-hand techniques that are said to be the battlefield ancestors of modern-day Muay Thai. Practitioners train in pairs, using full contact and live blades.

Before each training session, match, or demonstration, it is required to perform the dancelike Wai Kru ceremony. The Wai Kru are ceremonies that show respect for the master teacher (Kru, Khru, or guru). Although the dances’ structures and names vary from locale to locale, all are an integral element of Thai culture and permeated by the Thai variant of Buddhist beliefs. There is, as Faubion Bowers notes, an intimate connection between dance and combat throughout Thai tradition.

Vietnam
The likely origin of the Vietnamese people was southern China. Throughout the country’s turbulent history, contact with and interference by China have been a fact of life. The Chinese Han dynasty overthrew the Vietnamese Trien dynasty, itself probably a Chinese family, in 111 B.C. In A.D. 39 a revolt led by the Trung sisters gave a brief respite from China’s dominance. Chinese rule resumed in 44. Eventually, in 939, Vietnam regained independence, although China held sway over Vietnam’s rulers until the French era.

Vietnam’s history has been one of southward expansion, of internal geographical division (either because of formal administrative divisions or because of informal power assumed by regional viceroy), and of attempts to assert the control of the central government over the actions of local leaders. There has been little peace in Vietnam’s evolution.

The political situation in Vietnam, therefore, both kept the martial arts systems in the nation closely tied to Chinese fighting arts and prevented the kind of systematization and nationalization that have prevailed within many other traditions. One effect has been considerable confusion about the martial arts of Vietnam and a dearth of knowledge, particularly in the West, regarding the history of the subject.

The Vietnamese martial arts (vo thuat) have remained responsive to local imperatives, as distinct from the standardization developed in Japan or in the People’s Republic of China. Even after the reunification of the north and the south, a universally accepted body for the classification and standardization of martial arts has yet to emerge publicly in Vietnam. Thus, there are an indeterminate number of schools, some practicing family traditions, others based in regional tradition, most clothed in secrecy,
with skills perpetuated orally by transmission from teacher to student. The aura of secrecy that often attends martial arts was intensified when Vietnam was conquered and colonized by France (1859–1954). During the colonial period, martial arts were driven underground and were taught secretly (primarily within families, some maintain), transmitted with caution from teacher to student.

There is considerable discussion among Vietnamese martial artists themselves as to whether any of the Vietnamese martial arts truly developed independently of Chinese influence. Confucianism and its Mandarin civil service influenced military arts at the elite levels by the institution of formal military training in an eleventh-century academy of martial arts in the capital, Thang Long City (now Hanoi). In order to graduate in the military sciences, candidates had to pass entrance exams, followed by a minimum of three years’ study before graduating. This climate also produced, in the sixteenth century, treatises such as *Linh Nam Vo Kinh* (On Vietnamese Martial Art).

In the eighteenth century, major schools of Chinese boxing, primarily Cantonese, were noted in Vietnam by names such as *Hong* (Hung)-gar, *Mo-gar*, *Choi-gar*, and *Li-gar*. It is claimed that these styles elaborated on the styles of various monasteries; among these the most commonly mentioned was Wo-Mei Shan Pai.

In twentieth-century Vietnam, *Vovinam*, *Kim Ke*, and *Vo Binh Dinh* have been regarded as the most popular systems. In addition, numerous Sino-Vietnamese styles have been reported, such as *Bach My Phai* (Bak Mei Pai or Baimeiquan, Chinese for “White Eyebrow Style”), *yongchun* (wing chun or Ving Tsun), and *Meihuaquan* (Plum Blossom Boxing). These styles were popular among Chinese who lived in Vietnam, especially in the Cholon section of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon).

When discussions of native martial arts arise, Tay Son boxing is often cited as indigenous to Vietnam. The system came to national attention in a late eighteenth-century peasants’ revolt in Vietnam. In 1773, three brothers, the Tay Son, led a revolt and divided the country between them. Their victories were attributed in part to *Vo Tay Son* (Tay Son Fighting Style), often known as *Vo Binh Dinh* (Binh Dinh Fighting, or sometimes translated into English as Binh Dinh Kung Fu). Each of the three brothers contributed to modern *Vo Tay Son*, and contemporary practitioners trace their martial lineages to one of the three. *Vo Tay Son* remains an aggressive combat art encompassing both unarmed and weapons forms. There are eighteen weapons in the curriculum, with an emphasis on bladed weapons, particularly the sword.

A less well-known system is *Kim Ke* (Golden Cock). As the name implies, the system adopts combative features of the cock. There are strikes
modeled on the spurring talons of the fighting cock, as well as high-jump kicks to the upper torso or head, a feature that appears in other Vietnamese systems also. Actions are fast and aggressive, with attack preferred to defense. Practitioners of Kim Ke even utilize biting attacks. It has been noted that Kim Ke fighters prefer lateral attack angles.

Family systems have been described that simply use the family name (e.g., Truong Vo Thuat, Truong Family Fighting Style) as a label. Such systems are developed within lineages and generally utilize both Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese (especially Chinese) martial arts as sources of armed and unarmed techniques.

The most familiar of Vietnam’s martial arts are Vovinam-Viet Vo Dao and Quan Ki Do. Both systems were synthesized from a variety of preexisting arts in the twentieth century.

Vovinam (later renamed Viet Vo Dao) was founded by Nguyen Loc (1912–1960) in the late 1930s. Traditional history within the system states that Nguyen, while in his twenties, combined elements of local schools of Shontei province, other Vietnamese styles, principles from the “Linh Nam Vo Kinh” treatise, traditional Chinese wushu, Japanese jûdô and related wrestling systems, and Japanese karate to create Vovinam. Nguyen began teaching his eclectic system to a group of friends in 1938 in the capital city of Hanoi. The system was developed with the practical intent of providing, after a short period of study, an efficient means of self-defense. Further, as a distinctive national art incorporating what supporters have called “the best of Vietnamese martial arts,” Nguyen hoped to establish a basis for national identity and patriotism among his hard-pressed people. A spectacular element of the art is the existence of leg techniques in which the practitioner uses both legs to kick, grasp, and trip an opponent. The “flying scissors” techniques are the most recognizable of these Vovinam tactics. Tradition holds that these maneuvers were developed as a means to allow Vietnamese foot soldiers to attack Mongol cavalrymen during the Battle of the Red River Delta in 1284. From its creation until several years following the founder’s death, the system was called Vovinam. The name Vovinam blends two words: Vo (martial arts) and vinam (a shortened form of Vietnam) to signify “martial arts of Vietnam.” In 1964, Viet Vo Dao (“the philosophy of Vietnamese martial arts”) was added to the name to produce the modern form Vovinam-Viet Vo Dao.

Quan Ki Do (also Qwan Ki Do, Quan Ky Do), which can be translated as “Fist and Qi (energy) Way,” was established by Pham Xuan Tong (ca. 1981). One tradition holds that the roots of the art are in the Chinese boxing system of Wo-Mei (a Southern Shaolin style). The main techniques derived from Chinese martial arts are based on the animal forms of the tiger, crane, and praying mantis. A Vietnamese system, Quan Ki, is re-
ported to have been incorporated into the art to supplement this fundamentally Chinese structure.

A countertradition maintains that Tong obtained the knowledge from which he synthesized Quan Ki Do elsewhere. According to this tradition, Quan Ki Do is based on the Vietnamese styles of Vo Bihn Dinh (see “Tay Son,” above), Vo Quang Binh, and Vo Bach Ninh. At least some of the elements of these arts were inherited through an uncle.

The difficult issue of origins aside, Quan Ki Do encompasses both grappling and striking, as well as a variety of stick, pole-arm, and bladed weapons. The Vietnamese sword art of Viet Lon Guom is included along with traditional Chinese weapons in this arsenal. Also, meditation and breathing techniques are used to cultivate qi. Tong left Vietnam in the late 1960s and ultimately based his Quan Ki Do organization in Toulon, France.

Thomas A. Green

See also Ki/Qi; Muay Thai; Philippines; Silat; Thaing; Vovinam/Viet Vo Dao

References
Stage Combat

Stage combat is broadly used to define any physical confrontation that is performed on stage. These confrontations can range from a slap to a massive battle sequence, and they can be performed by as few as two people (as in a duel) or by large groups (as in a bar fight). Unlike conventional martial systems, stage combat is meant to function as entertainment, not as a series of defensive and offensive techniques. Its main objective is to create an entertaining and exciting experience for the audience.

During the English Renaissance (in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) the London Masters of Defence (a professional organization of British fencing masters) rented out playhouses to test their students publicly. Men who could afford to do so were trained in the ways of swordsmanship with one of the recognized masters of this organization. Also, there were opportunities to train with foreign masters if one was so inclined. At this time, however, the foreign masters ran serious risks in order to teach in London because of the monopoly that the Masters of Defence held in the city; if, however, they could find a powerful enough patron to offer them protection, it was possible. By the 1580s, Italian and French styles of swordplay had come into vogue, and several Italian schools were in operation in London. During this time, duels settling a private difference through combat were extremely common; therefore, these fencing masters had no shortage of students eager to learn their skills. Thus, sword fighting was so prevalent at this time that everyone had some personal experience with it, either as a participant or an observer. Thus, theatrical sword fighting was a popular form of entertainment, and the fights themselves were spectacular displays.

Like any acting apprentice in the sixteenth century, William Shakespeare would have spent considerable time training with at least one master swordsman, until he himself was an accomplished fighter. The weapons found in Shakespeare’s plays—the buckler, dagger, rapier, long-sword,
short-sword, staff, target, and poniard—are a good indication of what he was taught at his “school of fence” (Martinez 1996). The rapier and dagger, which are displayed in works such as Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet, were undoubtedly the most popular weapons of the time. Richard Burbage, a member of Shakespeare’s company, was a highly skilled swordsman as well as a renowned actor. In fact, some theater historians believe that the role of Hamlet, whose fencing match brings the play to its tragic conclusion, was written specifically with him in mind. Along with Richard Tarleton (another member of the company as well as a member of the London Masters of Defence), Burbage was probably the creative force behind some of Shakespeare’s greatest duels. Due to the fact that professional actors in Elizabethan England were trained swordsmen, stage combat consisted of the actors’ choreographing the fight out of their own knowledge and drawing on the fashion of the time. If a certain style had recently come into favor, Shakespeare may have very likely written it into his play. For example in Romeo and Juliet, Mercutio describes Tybalt’s fencing with the lines, “The immortal passado, the punto reverso, the hay!” (2.4). All of these are Italian and Spanish fencing terms, which describe moves that were likely to have been in vogue at the time.

The fight director or fight choreographer arose out of the modern theater’s need for someone who could create a safe and effective fight. This represents a contrast to the Elizabethan period, when swordsmanship was commonplace. In the modern world, it is necessary to have someone who can build, for example, a bridge from the past of Shakespeare’s plays into the present. J. D. Martinez defines the fight choreographer as “a highly specialized theater artist who assumes primary responsibility for the safety of the performers entrusted to him. Beyond all creative consideration, the professional stage fight choreographer places safety first” (1996, 3).

The job of the fight director is to make the fight accomplish its goals within the confines of the play. To do this effectively, the fight choreographer needs to be well versed in a diverse range of elements of the theatrical performance. Along with having extensive training in various forms of armed and unarmed combat, the professional fight director should have knowledge of acting techniques, lighting design, costumes, weapons maintenance, firearm safety, and, of course, first aid. The fight choreographer not only creates the fight, but also makes sure it is safe for both the performers and the audience, exciting to watch, and appropriate to the needs of the play. Because the modern theater does not require actors to be trained in professional swordplay, a fight director is just as likely to come upon someone who has never picked up a sword as to find a consummate swordsman. For this reason, fight directors have become an indispensable part of the modern theatrical world.
In planning a stage fight, the choreographer must consider the experience and physical stature of his performers, the needs and style of the characters, the concept of the play, rehearsal time, set and prop placement, characters’ costumes, lighting design, historical accuracy, and how the fight fits into the telling of the story. By doing research in these areas, the fight director comes to the rehearsal room with a solid base on which to build a staged fight. The fight choreographer may arrive with a completely choreographed action or with a generalized idea of what should happen, but an open mind and willingness to adjust these ideas to the abilities of the actors and to the wishes of the director must be maintained. Consideration must be given not only to what the fight will look like, but also what it will sound and feel like to the audience. By adding vocalizations, different tempos, and specific character traits, a fight director can transform an otherwise boring set of moves into an exciting segment of an evening of theater.

Patrick Crean, one of actor Errol Flynn’s fight choreographers and sword-fighting doubles, once said: “Thoughts fast, BLADES SLOW.” This statement is the essence of stage combat training: Take it slow! By begin-
ning training in slow motion and gradually increasing the speed, the student learns the moves more accurately and has more control over them when the speed is increased. This teaching concept is similar to that employed in many Asian styles of martial combat.

Stage combat is a collaborative process; by working together students learn the fundamentals and help each other in understanding the material. With both partners taking care of each other and doing their best to make each other look good, a fight will be safe and effective. As in any physical activity, it is important to warm up before beginning exercises, and it is very important to breathe and stay relaxed while executing the techniques. Certain rules should be followed. In any fight there is a victim and an attacker. The victim is the person being attacked and the attacker is the person trying to injure the victim. To avoid actual injury, stage combat has devised a system whereby the attacker cues the victim before attacking. Dale Anthony Girard has distinguished two kinds of cues: “a) A placement of the arm and/or weapon that reads as a specific attack to a specific target. Leaving no question as to the direction of the attack from its point of origin to its intended target. b) A prearranged signal for someone to perform a specific action” (1997, 483). The victim then reacts in an appropriate way (e.g., if he is supposed to duck, he does), and only then does the attacker finish her move (e.g., trying to cut off the victim’s head). This process is called Action-Reaction-Action: the initial action of the attacker, the reaction of the victim, the remaining action of the attacker.

During any stage fight the victim is always in control. For example, if someone is being pulled across the floor by the hair, the victim is moving, and the partner performing the role of assailant is creating the illusion of doing the work. Turning again to Girard, “It is important to remember that the physical conflict on stage is an illusion; at all times each combatant should be fully in control of themselves and their weapons” (1997, 6). Since safety is the most important aspect of stage combat, students should always work at their own speed. Only when one is comfortable with the techniques and routine one has learned should the tempo be increased. A slow accurate fight is much more interesting and exciting to watch than a fast, sloppy, and essentially dangerous one. Nothing breaks an audience member’s suspension of disbelief quicker than the thought that one of the actors may actually get hurt. A good fight is a safe fight. As William Hobbs, fight director for The Three Musketeers (1973), The Princess Bride (1987), and many other films, once said, “One cannot make rules regarding creativity, but only regarding technique and safety” (1980, 65).

Stage combat at its worst is a set of moves performed by actors on a stage. At its best, it is a living confrontation between characters in a struggle for supremacy within the life of the play. To make a fight more than just
moves, the actors and the choreographer must fill the fight with an outside life. To do this, the actors must decide on details about their characters. What physical attributes or limitations do the characters possess? Why are they in the confrontation? Do they want to be there? Are they scared, excited, showing off? Do they want to kill or simply humiliate their opponents? What is the playing field like? Is it evening, early morning, raining, foggy? How does this affect the way the characters fight? These are just a few of the many questions an actor must answer in order to give the fight an inner life. At the same time the actors are doing this, the choreographer must be thinking about how this fight fits into the overall concept of the play. Why did the playwright put the fight at this point? How will the fight add to the whole production? By researching the time period in which the play is set and studying the entire play to find out the fight's purpose, the choreographer can give the actors a fully realized battlefield. At the same time, the actors can arrive as the complex characters they are portraying, giving the audience a glimpse into something real. The early fight scene in *The Princess Bride,* for example, perfectly represents a technically easy fight that appears to be something quite extraordinary, because of the performances of actors Mandy Patinkin and Carey Elwes.

Fight directors are often asked about the historical accuracy of their fights, and though historical accuracy is kept in mind, it is not the primary focus for most choreographers. This is a theatrical art; therefore, “selling” the fight to the audience is more important than creating a picture-perfect replica of the past. Many fight directors will consult old fencing manuals in order to construct a scene; Domenico Angelo’s *School of Fencing,* Giacomo di Grassi’s *His True Arte of Defence,* and George Silver’s *Paradoxes of Defence* are particular favorites. Even when they use these resources, however, modern production requirements inevitably outweigh historical accuracy. Therefore, fight choreographers must be aware of what moves may be unsafe on the modern stage (e.g., any move that drags a blade across the face would be considered unacceptable) and what moves will be most effective for the given performance.

Stage combat has become a significant feature of the entertainment world. Not only can it be seen on the stage of live theater and in commercial films, but it is also a major component of some of television’s most popular shows. Many of the series of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—*Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* *Angel,* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*—contain a strong element of stage combat. With the increase in popularity of stage combat, many schools have appeared that offer training in this theatrical art. The Society of American Fight Directors is the oldest organization for stage combat directors in this country and is the best place to find further information on this subject, including listings of certi-
fied teachers and schools, literature, and annual conferences. England, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have similar organizations.

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See also Masters of Defence; Performing Arts

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Stickfighting, Non-Asian

The use of a stick, club, or staff as a weapon in combat or in combative sports is called stickfighting. Today these uses can be classed into two types. First, there are those arts that developed for use with a stick, such as makila in the Basque highlands, shillelagh in Ireland, quarterstaff in Europe, and bōjutsu in Okinawa. Second, there are those arts that developed from the use of another weapon like the sword or spear. These arts would include la canne d’armes in France, singlestick in England, and arnis de mano in the Philippines. To say the use of the stick in fighting is one of man’s earliest weapons is a relatively obvious statement supported by archaeology. A broken branch, an antler, or a large leg bone makes an excellent impromptu club. Stickfighting systems have developed around the world and many survive today in the forms of sports, folk dances, and cultural activities as well as fighting systems. Many others systems did not survive the introduction of reliable, personal firearms and sport forms of fencing.

At one time, each country in Europe seems to have had its own system of stickfighting. Fighting with sticks or cudgels was accepted for judicial duels in medieval Europe, and several records of these fights survive. In the fifteenth century, Olivier de la Marche told of a judicial duel between two tailors fought with shield and cudgel. According to ancient custom in Burgundy, the burghers of Valenciennes were allowed to participate in a judicial combat with cudgels. These civilians of the middle class had their shield reversed (upside down), as they were commoners and hence not allowed to use a knightly shield. The loser was then taken and hanged upon
a gibbet immediately outside the lists. Other judicial combats with clubs are reported in England, Germany, and France. In Shakespeare’s King Henry VI, Part 2, a trial by combat between a master and his apprentice with cudgels is based on a historical case (act 2, scene 3). In Ireland, the use of the walking stick, the shillelagh, and the staff were common, as the British occupiers restricted access of the population to weapons. The association of the shillelagh with the Irish in the United States is so strong that the shillelagh has become one of the symbols of St. Patrick’s Day. Several other weapons were used, and there are some attempts to preserve or recreate these systems under the name of brata (stick). The United Kingdom had several native systems, associated not only with the Welsh, the Scottish, and the English in general but also with local regions. By the nineteenth century, two systems seem to predominate: the quarterstaff and the single-stick. Quarterstaff, a 6-foot stave about 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 inches in diameter, goes back to earliest times. Mentioned in the stories of Saxons and Vikings, it became the preferred weapon of the yeoman or peasant. It is mentioned in George Silver’s Paradoxes of Defense, and in the late 1600s, a British sailor defeated three opponents armed with rapiers in a bout before a Spanish court. It was played as a sport by the British military up into the twentieth century and was taught to the Boy Scouts in the United Kingdom and United States up until the late 1960s. Quarterstaff techniques were taught to the police in the United Kingdom, the United States, and India for use with riot batons, and the lathi, an Indian police staff about 5 feet long, shows considerable influence from it. Currently, it is still used for military training, and several groups are preserving or recovering it, along with other English martial arts.

Cudgel or singlestick was originally used to train soldier in sword technique, but later became its own martial art. Civilians played it as a sport and as a method of defending oneself with a cane. As a rough sport, it was taught and played in colleges, schools, and county fairs. Cudgel play was a distinct descendant of the short-sword and dagger play of Silver’s time, which gladiators of James Miller’s and James Figg’s day still recognized. Miller, himself a noted Master of Defence, published a book in 1737 with plates detailing the weapons of the craft, including the cudgel. James Figg was considered the greatest Master of Defence and a well-known teacher in the same period. As the use of the traditional weapons had faded from the battlefield, the masters earned money by having exhibitions and public matches like the gladiators of old. Those professionals fought some of their duels on the stage with a Scottish broadsword in the right hand, and in the left a shorter weapon, some 14 inches in length, furnished with a basket hilt similar to that of their swords, which they used in parrying. The cudgel players copied these weapons in a less dangerous form, the steel
James Figg teaches men the art of self-defense with the use of a backsword and quarterstaff in a trade card engraving by William Hogarth. (Hulton Deutsch Collection/Corbis)
blades being replaced by an ash stick about a yard in length and as thick as a man’s middle finger, with hilts (known by the name of pots), usually made of wickerwork or leather. Cudgel players were often used to warm up the audience for the main event. The original purpose appeared to have been training for use of the backsword.

Singlestick was simply the use of the one larger stick instead of two. To prevent any unfair use of the left hand, that hand was tied in various fashions, according to the local rules. The men, when engaged, stood within striking distance, the legs being kept straight or nearly so. Cuts and thrusts were performed as with the saber or backsword. There was no lunging in the earlier forms, but thrusts were allowed, and later texts mention the lunge as acceptable. A considerable amount of movement of the feet and body was permitted, and overall several similarities are seen with the German fraternity sport of schlager. Several fictional characters, such as Sherlock Holmes and Tom Brown, were skilled at it. Under some rules, bouts continued until one participant was bleeding from the head an inch above the eyes. Schools that taught to more genteel customers, such as Angelo’s school in the 1750s in London, used leather jackets and cagelike headgear. Singlestick was taught in the military and police as a way of training for both the sword and nightstick. Spread throughout the British Empire, it appears to have influenced the Sikh art of gatka, in which the basic practice sword and its cuts closely resemble those of singlestick. In England, it was played in private schools until the 1930s. Attempts to revive singlestick with the use of padded jackets and fencing masks for increased protection are ongoing today.

Eire was also a center of stickfighting, and the best-documented style is that of the faction fighters of the nineteenth century. Irish stickfighting used either a single long stick of walking-stick length called the bata or a pair, with a shorter stick carried in the off hand. This short stick is what became associated with the Irish in the United States as the shillelagh. The term actually was used for a grade of oak exported to Europe. The longer stick was held in the middle, similarly to the coulisse (involving changing the striking end of the baton) techniques of baton (walking staff) in savate, so that the lower half lay along and protected the forearm. Strikes were done with the head of the stick. When used, the shorter stick served to block, as in the cudgel play described above. Techniques for longer staves (called wattles) and cudgels are also known to have existed. Fighting took place almost everywhere, and men trained from youth in the use of the stick, with each faction having its own fencing master. Faction fights took place with up to a thousand men participating, and ritual challenges existed. Fights occurred at wakes, county fairs, and dances, as well as by arrangement. The women joined in, not with sticks, but with a rock in a...
sock or scarf. Needless to say, the authorities did not at all approve of these fights. Fights were often not deadly duels, but they were looked on as a rough but good-natured contest of skill. G. K. Chesterton, writing while memories of the faction fights were still fresh, said: “If you ever go to Ireland, you will find it truly said, that it is the land of broken hearts and the land of broken heads” (1980, 261).

The Scandinavian countries also had various styles using the walking stick and the quarterstaff. One still exists today called Stav (staff) that claims a 1,500-year descent in a familial line. In addition to stickfighting, this system includes training in the use of the sword and the ax. Many systems existed in the Germanic and central European lands. Of these, two German stickfighting styles, stochfechten (stickfighting) and Jaegerstocken (hunting or walking stick), appear to have survived to today. In addition, a wooden practice sword called the dusack was a popular weapon among the tradesmen in the later Middle Ages. Records of stickfighting techniques are found in the sword-fighting manuals of Europe, in which a stick or short staff (about three to five feet in length) is shown used against a sword. In addition, many swordsmen used wands to train with more safely, so it is easy to see how sword techniques would become intertwined with stick techniques. In the Netherlands, cane and cudgel systems existed similar to la canne et baton of today. The Bretons developed a stickfighting art that uses a 3-foot stick that is forked or hooked on the top like a cane. It appears to be associated with Lutte Breton (Breton wrestling), and the hooked end is used to trip or trap an opponent. The Basques have systems for using the makila (a walking stick that separates into two equal pieces with a small blade concealed inside one side) as well as the shepherd's crook, a light 5-foot stick. Both are used in zipota (Basque; kickfighting) as well as folk dance. Tribal leaders also carried the makila as a sign of authority. Spain had similar arts, mainly performed today as folk dance. These appear to be closely related to the canne et baton of savate. One order of Spanish knights (The Order of the Band) were required to play at wands six times a year to maintain their status. Undoubtedly, the art was familiar to Spanish soldiers in the Philippines, which allowed the rapid assimilation of Spanish techniques into the local arts of kali or arnis along with the techniques of espada y daga (sword and dagger). A local fencing teacher in Maryland, now in his seventies or eighties, taught the sword-and-dagger techniques he learned along with the modern fencing weapons as a child in the Philippines as a son of a member of the American forces. In Portugal, the art of jôgo do pau still exists as self-defense, cultural tradition, and sport.

France has the most organized and widely practiced form of stickfighting in Europe: the fighting art of la canne d’armes and its sport form, la canne de combat. These are closely associated with savate. Stickfighting
Techniques have been part of savate since its codification by Michel Casseux in 1803. He listed fifteen kicking and fifteen cane techniques. *Danse de rue Savate* (Dance of Savate Street) actually has several types of stickfighting systems: la canne d’armes, using a cane or dress walking stick; its sport form of canne de combat, using a baton (a 65-inch walking staff); and the stickfighting system of *Lutte Parisienne* (Parisian Wrestling), using a crooked cane. La canne d’armes is the street combat system that developed with the cane during a ban of carrying swords within the city limits of Paris under the Napoleonic laws. The cane is handled much like a sword, and many fencers took to practicing it as a legal alternative to the sword. This crossover of practitioners led to the introduction of many court and small-sword techniques into la canne. The sport form, la canne de combat, utilizes a limited set of six techniques. These six cuts are called brisse (overhead), crosse brisse (backhand overhead), lateral (side), crosse lateral (backhand side), enlève (uppercut), and crosse enlève (backhand uppercut). Thrusts and the other cuts are banned as too dangerous. The cuts must be chambered (hand “cocked”) behind the shoulder, and the legal targets are the lower leg, the body, and the head. A padded suit and headgear are worn. Bouts consist of four two-minute rounds. The sport is regulated in France by the Comité National de Canne de Combat et Baton and in the United States by the USA Savate and Canne de Combat Association, which is part of the International Guild of Danse de Rue Savate. The baton is a 64-inch staff that developed from the walking stick and a sign of authority carried by certain officers and nobles in France. The art of using it was taught to cavalrymen as a method of defending oneself with the lance when on foot and appears to have developed from pole-arms. It is sometimes erroneously referred to as *grand baton* or *moutinet*. Unlike the quarterstaff, the baton is held so the thumbs of both hands face each other (the lead hand is pronated). Finally, the crooked cane is also taught. Coming from Lutte Parisienne, this is an impact weapon whose hooked end can be used to trap, to tear, or to trip.

In Russia, stickfighting is called *shtyk* and uses a 5-foot stick called the *polka*. One of the stories of the origin of shtyk attributes it to the pre-Christian priests of the thunder god Perun. It is closely associated with the use of the pike, one of the big four of Russian medieval weapons (sword, ax, pike, and war-hammer). The emphasis in both shtyk and Russian pike fighting was the unbalancing of the opponent. As the arts were designed for mass combat, the ideal was to overturn an opponent, creating an opening in his line and leaving him for one’s comrades to finish off. This emphasis on overturning is also seen in individual combat, in which to overturn or unbalance an opponent without injury is considered a sign of high skill. Later these same techniques were adapted to the bayonet. Shtyk is closely
associated with the Golitsin family, which was one of the branches of the royal family before the Russian Revolution. Movements with the polka include swinging and thrusts, but more emphasis is placed on levering and screwing (a twisting type of thrust). Parries are ideally stringering, a kind of sticky contact in which you keep control of the opponent’s weapon. The Russian Martial Arts Federation (ROSS) is currently sponsoring the development of a sport form of the art.

In Upper Egypt (actually the highlands to the south), there is a centuries-old martial art system using stick and swords, called tabteeb. In fact, it can be traced to the time of the Pharaoh, as drawings on the walls of the ancient tombs of kings from that era show figures practicing the art using kendô-style postures. Nowadays, members of the Ikhwaan-al-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) practice it at their religious schools. Another style using a longer walking staff is found among the Bedouin and is called naboud. Other Middle Eastern, Arabic, and North African countries appear to have had similar stickfighting systems, which were normally derived from the sword.

In North and South America, the majority of stickfighting systems are imported forms or variations thereon. The original native tribes used various wooden clubs and swords in combat, but little or nothing is known about systematic approaches to training. In North America today, the closest thing to a national system is the collection of techniques of police and military baton use. This appears to be developed from singlestick, quarterstaff, and la canne. Recently, tremendous influence from arnis, kali, and jô (Japanese; staff, which is approximately 4 feet long) techniques can be seen. Certain ethnic groups have preserved, to a greater or lesser extent, the stickfighting arts of their homeland. The Basques in South Texas and Idaho still retain the makila and shepherd’s staff, at least in dance. The Ukrainians in western Canada preserve some stick techniques in folk dance, as do Russian groups across the United States. The Quebecois have traces of la canne, and Czech settlers in the Midwest and central Texas retained parts of Sokol (falcon, the wrestling and physical training of Czechs, as well as the name of their social hall) in their gymnasiums. However, most of these remnants are of limited influence and are fading as the children become more Americanized. The most popular stickfighting arts appear to be the arnis or kali systems from the Philippines and the staff techniques from aikidô. Recent attempts to reintroduce la canne de combat are still limited in scope, and quarterstaff and singlestick, despite their importation with the Boy Scouts, are mainly extinct.

In South America and the Caribbean, the picture is brighter. Several Caribbean nations have stickfighting associated with the festival of Carnival (just before the start of Lent). Trinidad and Tobago actually adver-
tises that stickfighting competitions are held during Carnival. The stickfighting appears to be based on quarterstaff and baton techniques using the pronated grip. Interestingly, associated with the stickfighting is the use of the whip by pierrots (clowns), paralleling the association of la canne et baton with le fouet (the whip) seen in savate. Bois (wood) is practiced in what were once the French colonies in the Caribbean and appears to be la canne blended with African traditions. In South America, capoeira has maculêlê, a dance form and style of fighting that uses sticks called grimas, which looks very much like the Basque folk dances using the makila. The sticks are used in place of machetes to reduce risk and hide the skill from the authorities, and the local machete fighting style is known by the same name.

Kevin P. Menard

See also Capoeira; Dueling; Masters of Defence; Philippines; Savate

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Sword, Japanese

The actual history of Japanese swords is divided into ten periods, as indicated in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nara</td>
<td>650–793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heian</td>
<td>794–1191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamakura (Kotô)</td>
<td>1192–1336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoshino-Nambakucho</td>
<td>1337–1392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muromachi</td>
<td>1393–1573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azuchi-Momoyama</td>
<td>1574–1602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edo (Tokugawa)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early (Shintô)</td>
<td>1596–1780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late (Shinshintô)</td>
<td>1781–1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern (Gendaitô)</td>
<td>1868–1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Modern (Shinsakutô)</td>
<td>1950–present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to the Nara period there is, in sword history, an era variously referred to as the Historical, Ancient, or Dolmen period. Although swords were made during that time, they are not of the style the West has come to know as Japanese swords. The blades of this early period are mostly straight edges without *sori* (curvature) or *shinogi* (ridge-line), and the few that do have sori are those made after the Taiho era by such smiths as Amakuni and his followers in Yamato province. Smiths such as Amakuni are more legendary than they are historical.

Many smiths from the Kofun (Ancient Mounds) era (the third to the sixth centuries) are mentioned in the very early Japanese chronicles such as the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*, but these smiths are undoubtedly mythological. More likely, blades from these early years were brought into the archipelago from the mainland by invaders, immigrants, pirates, traders, and others who had intercourse with mainland Asia in that period. This phase of sword study is best relegated to the archaeologist, with this one notation:
Blades of that era are almost straight-edged, as evidenced by treasures within the Shōsōin Repository at Nara, and in a few examples in temples, such as Shitenōji in Osaka, Komuro Shrine in Kōchi, Kashima Grand Shrine at Ibaraki, and Konogoji in Osaka. These blades have temper lines, suggesting that forging methods were already highly developed at that time.

At the start of the Nara period, the erratic locations of the emperor were converted to a permanent capital within the village of Nara in Yamato province. The arts of swordsmithing were still primitive, but in order to equip the national army, there arose a demand for a better killing sword. There is but one tachi (long, slung blade of the Kotō, literally “old sword,” period, as a reference for the period prior to 1596) attributed to this period, the famous Kogarasu-maru. Once the heirloom of the Taira family, who controlled the country during the late Heian period, this sword has been greatly shortened (ōsuriage)

Very little is known concerning battle techniques within these two periods, but there must have been activity, else why the change from a straight stabbing blade to a curved slicing blade? Woodblock prints surviving from
This period show only nobles and courtiers carrying swords, not warriors using them in combat.

During the Heian period the capital was moved to present-day Kyoto in Yamashiro province, and power shifted from the imperial family to the Fujiwara clan. About the year 900, two powerful warrior clans—the Taira (Heike) and the Minamoto (Genji)—arose. These clans vigorously fought against each other (and even, on occasion, among themselves), stimulating tremendous progress in the art of swordsmithing, which reached its zenith during the closing years of the Heian period. The Yamato and Yamashiro schools of swordsmithing predominated, with the Bizen style introduced around year 990. These blades had an elegant shape, a narrow width combined with a very deep koshi-zori (curvature at its deepest near the hilt), and a great amount of fumabari (enlargement near the base) with small kissaki (point). Usually the first 8 or 9 inches from the tip was straight.

The Kamakura period saw the imperial family becoming nothing more than pawns of the warriors. As a direct result of the Genpei War between the Genji and the Heike (which becomes pei when it follows the n of gen), a Seii-Taishôgun (Barbarian-suppressing Commander-in-Chief) established his bakufû (literally “tent-government”—a junta) at the village of Kamakura in Sagami province. The swordsmithing schools of Yamato, Yamashiro, and Bizen dominated the craft with the introduction of the Shoshû style in 1249 and the Mino style in 1320. These schools were the “Five Traditions” of the Kotô period.

During 1274, Mongols—those fell horsemen whose depredations extended as far afield as Poland, Palestine, and Persia and who had even defeated the Teutonic Knights of Germany—crossed the Korea Straight and invaded the Japanese islands. In all of Mongol experience, defending warriors fled away from them, but the Japanese bushi (warriors) ran toward them. However, the incredible bravery of a samurai in the face of death, in some ways his greatest strength, now proved to be his weakness. The tradition of being first into battle and challenging a worthy opponent was completely inapplicable to this foreign enemy.

The Japanese quickly learned that their swords literally bounced off the tanned hide armor of the Mongols. One of the reasons was that Japanese sword blades of those times had a good amount of ha-niku (meat-of-the-cutting-edge), and their edges resembled miniature hatchets in cross section, enabling them to whack through the stone-dust–encrusted lacquer of armor. It must also be noted that pre-invasion times were peaceful, which always has a tendency to stifle weapons technology. Finally, during the previous Genpei War, swords were considered of secondary importance—a sort of sidearm, subordinate to the bow and lance, the main weapons of battle. Hence these blades tended to be rather lightweight. All this soon changed dramatically.
As a result of the first invasion, warriors began ordering polishers to grind off the ha-niku, making a sharper edge-profile. During this time, the Soshû school of sword-making came into its own. In this new tradition, a piece of steel plate was welded to an iron rod and beaten to a thin rectangle, marked across, and folded. This was beaten again to the same dimensions as before, the folding and beating process repeated up to fifteen times. Next, four such pieces were welded together to create a thicker plate, and again the cutting, folding, and beating process was carried out, this time for five repetitions. In this manner the individual layers being worked fifteen times gives 32,768 laminations in geometrical progression, the final number
of the combined plates folded five times yielding a sword with 4,194,304 laminates. Such a sword could be made wider and with a longer point than before, and with all this mixing of soft iron and hard steel, the sword did not require the strengthening “meat” of niku and could be made very sharp.

Lessons learned during these invasions completely changed the structured battle formations of the Japanese, along with their weapons. Henceforth, massed foot soldiers wielding sharp swords took the field, supplanting the mounted bushi with his yumi (bow) and nagamaki (a type of halberd used primarily by mounted troops, consisting of a tachi mounted on a pole slightly longer than the tachi itself).

The invasions also sapped the life from the shogunate, paving the way for the return of imperial rule, and so the Kamakura period was brought to a close. But before its closure the emperor was betrayed, and again the imperial family was set up as puppets to the regency of the Ashikaga clan. Emperor Godaigo escaped to Nara and set up a northern court that opposed the southern puppet court. The new methods of combat learned from the invasions were put to the test and further developed during the next fifty-five years of contention.

In the new Muromachi period feuding provincial daimyo (warlords) led tens of thousands of foot soldiers (ashigaru) into altercations. The situation became so terrible that a name was placed upon this era, confirming it as the Age of the Country at War (Sengoku jidai). Combat techniques developed of one man on foot against another, both armed with swords that by now had about a 33- to 44-inch cutting edge.

This period witnessed the introduction of the katana (long sword) and wakazashi (short or “companion” sword). These new blades tended to have the general Kamakura shape, but without the elegance of the former period—the only difference was the introduction of sakizori (curvature greatest in the upper third of a blade) into the shape. This sori was to facilitate a draw by a man on foot. Naturally, sword production all over Japan increased, and at the forefront was a new school of sword construction created by the fusion of Bizen and Soshû styles known as the Mino tradition.

Another important development concerning, and deeply affecting, the samurai was the introduction of Zen Buddhism. Zen differed from the Pure Land and Pure Mind sects in that it emphasized self-reliance. The ultimate goal of Zen was the attainment of enlightenment—Zen Buddhists desired to enter reality, not simply to come into contact with it. According to the teachings of Zen, a really good warrior must free his mind of all thoughts of death while in combat. Although Zen is Buddhism and therefore ostensibly opposed to the shedding of blood, Zen masters quickly became the leading elaborators of Japan’s cult of the sword.
Zen masters, however, did not themselves teach the physical details of fencing; instead they laid their stress on correct moral attitude. When the swordsman unfetters his mind in combat he will not watch his enemy’s blade, as such an action would be fatal in itself, causing his reflexes to be slow. Instead he must make his mind fluid and free of all stops; then his sword will become fully alive and give him the victory. In short, Zen provided an ideological framework ideally suited to the emerging samurai.

During the year 1574, Oda Nobunaga, a minor daimyo in central Japan, marched to the capital, ostensibly as the champion of a rival claimant to the title of shōgun, and proceeded to establish himself as an “advisor” to a virtually puppet shōgun. This was the beginning of the Azuchi-Momoyama period, and mass warfare was employed with the goal of unifying Japan. His two successors, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, of peasant birth, elevated to a general through his ability, and Tokugawa Ieyasu, a daimyo of medium wealth and power in western Japan (whose claims to descent from the Minamoto clan have been discredited by modern historians), fulfilled his dream—but only after fielding hundreds of thousands of sword- and matchlock-wielding foot soldiers against their enemies. Eventually, all opposition (including the remnants of the Toyotomi clan) was decimated by the Tokugawa, and peace descended upon the land.

During the peaceful times known variously as the Edo or Tokugawa period, massed battle between provincial lords ended, and the time of wandering swordsmen was ushered in. These itinerant stalwarts would journey from province to province, seeking to improve their knowledge by challenging the local master. Sword blades shrunk to about 26 1/2 inches with a shallow tori-zori (greatest curve in the center) in order to facilitate a quick draw, and the art of iaijutsu came into being.

Swordsmanship had developed all the way from being a technique utilized as a secondary measure on the battlefield into the primary method of combat. The shape along with the length of the sword changed to accommodate the changed function.

The Japanese sword evolved from the delicate tachi with its blade of 28 or more inches in the Heian period to the wide, bold blades of 34 or more inches in the Yoshino-Nambokucho period, and eventually arrived at a standard length of about 26 1/2 inches during the late Muromachi period, a standard maintained well into the Edo, Gendaitō, and Shinsakutō periods. Combat techniques ran the gamut from mounted individual combat, to massed melees of infantry battles, and back into individual combat on foot sans armor and horse. Combat training finally made a transition into “fencing,” in which practitioners, using bamboo and hardwood “blades,” honed their skills against others, while reserving the honorable heirlooms for cutting pseudo-bodies manufactured of rice-straw. Finally,
the Japanese sword of World War II was the last and only sword of the major combatants designed specifically to be used in physical combat.

Carl L. McClafferty

See also Japan; Religion and Spiritual Development: Japan; Samurai; Swordsmanship, Japanese

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Swordsmanship, European Medieval

The fighting implements and talents of medieval European peoples were the products of vigorous, technically skillful, heterogeneous cultures. These highly martial societies shared an impressive legacy from both the savage dynamism of Germanic and Celtic warrior tribes and the ordered might of the Roman war machine. This experience spans roughly 500 to 1500—a thousand years of warrior cultures. The nature of medieval warfare through the centuries was not static and fixed, but had diverse and evolving patterns. There is considerable difference between earlier medieval fighting in the age of mail (with lighter leather and chain armors, 500–1300) and fighting in the later “age of plate” (1330–1530).

Medieval combat was by no means untutored or devoid of mastery—far from it. The methods were not very subtle and the techniques were not flashy or showy but focused solely on utility. Individuals from these years seriously practiced and mastered the warrior craft. This age was primarily the time of mail-clad warriors armed with ax, spear, long knife, and sword. The feudal system pressed free men into military service; thus, the medieval knight was by no means the sole practitioner of swordsmanship or user of swords and shields. Foot soldiers, including spearmen and archers, had virtually equal roles, and mounted knights were not as dominant over footmen and archers as is commonly believed.

The simple, powerful techniques of medieval swords were those that the natural biomechanics of the human body allowed and for which the tools were shrewdly designed. Their techniques and tactics were a matter of physiology and psychology. There can be no doubt that although
strength, stamina, and ferociousness were valuable factors, the same could be said of quickness, coordination, and nerve.

Medieval swords existed in great varieties over more than nine centuries. Today, they are greatly misunderstood, regularly misrepresented, and handled incorrectly. For example, the popular misnomer broadsword is commonly misapplied in reference to medieval blades although the term is historically incorrect. Over the medieval centuries experimentation in sword designs was almost constant. The generic medieval sword has a thin, straight, fairly wide blade 32 to 38 inches long, with two parallel edges and a simple cross-guard (or “cruciform” hilt). Their blades ranged from wider cleaving ones to thinner, stiffer, and acutely pointed ones. Many were longer than 42 inches and suited to use by either one or two hands, while still others could only be handled in both hands. Such specialized designs were sophisticated and inventive responses to the hazards of battle against the arms and armors of a range of adversaries. Warriors might even own several kinds of sword, being expert in the subtleties of applying each.

Medieval swords were sturdy weapons with thick, flexible blades slanting to fine edges. They were durable steel weapons capable of withstanding the blows of other finely tempered blades. They were sturdy enough to beat or chop on thick pole-arms and metal-rimmed shields. They were designed with the understanding that armor of many types could be encountered and had to be defeated. European armors in particular were tough and highly sophisticated. Medieval weaponry was practiced with almost constant regard to the armor (typically mail) that would be encountered. Though produced by relatively simple technology, medieval swords were indeed sophisticated weapons. Thus the concept of the “medieval sword” does not really mean that there was only one type.

Beyond the characteristics noted above, most medieval swords were two-edged blades either nipped at the point or gradually tapering. The 2- to 3-inch width of the blade allowed for repeated sharpening and grinding to remove gouges and nicks. Although their lengths and widths varied, these blades could deliver a shearing cut that made a large, devastating wound. They generally had to be wielded with one hand. When used from horseback, they needed to be long enough to strike standing targets. When used on foot, they needed to be long enough to reach up to mounted adversaries. When used facing a shield, they typically had to be able to reach an opponent’s legs, head, and weapon arm. Contrary to what is depicted in most films and television sword fights, medieval swords were not at all heavy (less than three and a half pounds on average); they had to be light enough to be used all day in combat.

As with the weapons themselves, the manner in which swords were
used was not uniform throughout the Middle Ages. Many schools of fighting even developed different methods for armored and unarmored combat. Most medieval combat, however, pitted mail-clad warriors armed with shield, spear, ax, and sword against one another. It is important not to characterize all medieval combat by means of the cliché of the knight in shining armor. Throughout the period, plate-armor was the exception, not the norm, and represented only a fraction of armor types worn. Used primarily by knights and wealthy men-at-arms, plate-armor existed in countless varieties, and the later style of fully encasing, fully articulated plate-armor must be distinguished from the earlier forms. Much medieval European plate-armor is ingenious and unequaled anywhere in the world. Although the use of plate-armor did decrease speed and agility, its use was not nearly as debilitating or restrictive as popular belief suggests.

The shield, among the earliest and most obvious forms of personal defense, served as an adjunct to armor for most of the Middle Ages. In the crowded clash of battle with spears and arrows, holding a deflecting cover makes great sense for a warrior. In the push and shove of mass warfare there might be fewer opportunities to employ one’s weapon, but a shield will get almost constant use. In closer combat, the utility of the shield is evident in the way it allows a warrior to block slashes and thrusts while still allowing counterattacks. With the many classes of medieval shield and the highly developed methods of employing them, these ancient tools were represented in a highly effective form. Like the medieval sword, medieval shields are familiar objects that frequently have been undervalued. Like the sword, medieval European shields were by no means uniform or universal. They ranged from larger oval and round forms to long teardrop and triangular kite shapes, and small hand-bucklers. Due mainly to the rise of heavy cavalry and the coming of plate-armor, shields underwent several changes during the Middle Ages.

Weapon blows were devastating in their effect, and armor alone was simply not sufficient protection (at least not until the later advent of full plate). In all its varied forms, the medieval shield could be used passively...
and actively, defensively and offensively, whether mounted or on foot. For hundreds of years, the sword and shield were considered integral.

Medieval shields were generally tough and well made. They were designed to withstand repeated blows and generally could not be purposely attacked and destroyed by any sword. The coming of firearms and massed pike-formations eventually rendered the shield obsolete as a practical implement of war. But prior to this, it was a highly prized tool. Study today of this most simple yet formidable instrument can be a fascinating martial exercise. The medieval sword and shield never employed a “wham-bam, whack-whack” style, or mere brutish hacking. This combination was employed with a dynamic skill that took coordination and intense practice. The conditions under which they effectively operated required subtle and tight movements more than aggressive hitting. The effectiveness of a properly handled medieval shield and sword is formidable. A shield considerably enhanced a warrior’s defense, especially in the case of unarmored or lightly armored fighters. At the same time, it scarcely diminished a warrior’s offense. A shield could eliminate almost half the body’s targets and allow a weapon to remain hidden and ready to strike from an indirect position, particularly against an adversary’s legs. A fighter using a shield could step right up with virtual impunity and deliver a wicked and swift blow, seemingly from out of nowhere. A shield allowed a fighter to close in against pole weapons such as pikes and charge or stand under assault by arrow and spear. It could also be a weapon in itself, and it is likely that no medieval warrior thought of it only as an implement of passive protection.

Historically, a warrior would avoid hitting his enemy’s shield in favor of feigning attacks to provoke openings that permitted cuts at the head, neck, hand, forearm, and especially the shin and ankle. Other targets were the face, throat, underarm, and groin. The feint was not the only means of creating an opportunity for a cut. Swords could cut into the edges of untrimmed shields. The bare wood let a blade bite into it a few inches, and for an instant, the sword would stick. Until it was pulled free, an attacker was left quite vulnerable. For this reason, shields without metal rims were actually sometimes favored over trimmed shields. Therefore, no purpose was served by intentionally hacking away at the edges of an opponent’s shield and in the process creating an opening for a counterblow. Instead, the idea was to force the adversary to react, move his shield in defense, and become vulnerable.

Medieval shields blocked with both their flat face and their edges. The flat surface of a shield naturally acts as its own area defense. Even in the case of untrimmed shields, the edge of the shield was also used, not just the flat. The shield was not held so close to the body that maneuverability was lost. It did not just hang, but moved to hit the adversary’s shield or to divert
an incoming weapon simultaneously with a countercut. Motions such as
ducking, sidestepping, and leaping forward or back were employed as
needed. Fighting effectively with a shield did not entail dancing about un-
necessarily, but neither was it about merely standing one’s ground.

The sword and shield positions were offensive. As with any hand
weapon, a shield is an extension of the arm. It dramatically increases the
ability of the forearm to block and the fist to hit. The medieval shield was
held at a slight angle to freely deflect blows away from the body with the
companion weapon ready to strike.

Each shield shape lent itself to particular tactics and conditions of bat-
tle. The familiar round shield offered excellent coverage and mobility. The
unique teardrop, kite-shaped shield offered superb coverage with little
movement. Its lower end could strike out by being thrown against the op-
ponent’s thigh, knee, or shin, or at the opponent’s shield to beat or knock
it. Its extended length could parry low attacks at a safe distance without
lowering to expose the head or shoulders. Smaller, thicker, more triangular
shields allowed cuts and thrusts to be delivered from all around them with-
out loss of protection. Such small shields were better suited to fighting in
plate-armor and also allowed warriors to get in closer to their adversaries
to stab at them. Plate-armor eventually led to the decline of the use of
shields and to modifications of sword types, as well.

As armor gradually changed, newer forms of swords were devised.
Improvement in armor altered the effectiveness of swords, and a process of
reaction and response ensued. These changes in sword forms affected ap-
plication. A change occurred from wider blades with parallel edges to nar-
rower tapering ones, with a significant change in handling and cutting.

Narrow, tapering, sharply pointed blades have a balance and center of
gravity somewhat closer to the hilt, and this encourages greater speed and
agility in certain techniques. A narrower blade shape (1–1 1/2 inches wide)
has slightly less weight and a better balance that allows for a quicker switch
from a cutting angle of attack to a more horizontal stabbing motion and
back again. When thrusting or parrying, shorter, quicker (and therefore
more deceptive) movements of the arm were possible. Long-swords and
great-swords equipped with such blades allowed for powerful thrusting
against heavier armors.

The adoption of plate-armor as defense against heavier swords and
pole-arms and powerful archery caused less need for a shield. It also left the
second hand free to use on a larger sword. Longer grips capable of being
used in two hands had first come about because of the need for giving more
forceful blows against increasingly tougher armors. A double-hand method
of gripping allowed still heavier blades to be handled, which in turn further
required better armor. Larger swords were needed that were sturdy enough
to stand up against increasingly heavy weapons (e.g., poleaxes, halberds, war-hammers, etc.).

The medieval European long-sword is seen in countless adventure and fantasy films, but the use of a longer blade gripped in two hands was actually not all that common during the medieval period. A long-sword style only became practical during the 1300s and 1400s, when plate-armor became tough enough to discard a shield in favor of using both hands on a longer sword that could make stronger blows yet still allow a free hand to reach out to grapple.

A variety of blades may be categorized as “long-swords” (German *Langenschwert* or Italian *spada longa* and *espadon*), which were characterized by both a long blade and a long handle for use in two hands. They range from war-swords and great-swords to the *estoc* or *tuck* (a form of long, rigid, pointed, triangular or square-bladed, and virtually edgeless sword designed for thrusting into plate-armor). Each kind has its own subtle characteristics. All were wielded and handled in the same general manner but with particular differences among them depending upon length, blade cross-shape and taper, balance point, center of percussion, and handle/grip configuration.

Long infantry blades that could not be used in a single hand, being weighty enough to demand a double grip, were “great-swords.” Their blades might be flat and wide or, later on, more narrow and hexagonal or diamond-shaped. These larger swords capable of facing heavier weapons such as pole-arms and larger axes were devastating against lighter armors. Long, two-handed swords with narrower, flat hexagonal blades and thinner tips (such as the Italian *spadone*) were a response to plate-armor. Against plate-armor such rigid, narrow, and sharply pointed swords were not used in the same chop and cleave manner as the flatter, wider swords. Instead, they were handled with tighter movements that emphasized their thrusting points and allowed for greater use of the hilt. Those of the earlier parallel-edged shape were more apt to be known as war-swords, while later the thicker, tapering, sharply pointed form were more often called bastard-swords. Some were intended more for cutting while others were better for thrusting. The term *two-hander* or *two-handed sword* (épée à deux mains) refers to specialized forms of Renaissance weapons, such as the Swiss/German Dopplehänder (both-hander) or Beidenhänder (double-hander). These immense blades, up to 6 feet long, were used primarily for fighting against pike-square formations, where they were used to hack paths by lopping the tips off the pole-arms. During the mid- to late 1400s, swords of all lengths began to adopt guards with various protective rings and bars on their hilts. The addition of these extra guards was the result of a new method of gripping, which came into use as a result of the need for increased thrusting attacks.
There was a significant but subtle difference between the handling and action of wider, flatter, parallel-edged medieval swords and the narrower, thicker, tapering kinds, although each type of long-sword followed the same basic mechanics of use. The earlier form could make a greater variety of strikes and deliver more effective cuts, but the later was more agile and easier to guard and parry with. It could also more easily employ its versatile cross-guard in binding, trapping, and striking. The later, tapered, more rigid, diamond-shaped or hexagonal blade did not cut as strongly as the earlier type, but it could thrust superbly and was more agile on the transition from offense to defense. This sharply pointed blade was a versatile weapon that could be used as a short staff, club, or spear, and could hook and trap with its guard.

Methods for skillfully using these weapons were practiced for centuries and have survived in the illustrated fighting manuals produced by medieval Masters of Defence. Much of this material comes from German and Italian teachers of the early 1300s to early 1500s. Some, however, survives from English, Spanish, French, Dutch, and other sources.

The German masters had a rich store of terminology to describe the techniques, actions, and concepts of their fighting systems. Kunst des Fechtens, the German Art of Fighting, consisted of the arts of the Langensichwert (long-sword), the Messer (a sort of large cleaver), and Ringenkunst (wrestling). Unarmored combat was known as Blossfechten. Combat in heavy armor was known as harnisch Fechten (harness fighting). Fighting on foot also was distinguished from Rossfechten (mounted combat). Italian sword masters made similar distinctions.

Medieval masters worked out numerous guards and fighting postures best suited to their weapons in offense or defense. For the medieval long-sword there were fourteen fighting postures overall (Leger in German). They are all guards or wards from which to launch an attack or parry. Not all the masters taught set stances or guards, just obvious positions for striking. These fighting postures consisted of such positions as the middle position of Kron (crown guard), known also as Pflug (plow guard); Oberhut (Hawk), the high guard; the low guard, called Alber (fool’s guard); the tail guard (also called serpentino and leopardo); the hanging-point or Ochs (ox guard); the finestra (the window guard); and others such as the boar’s tooth, the iron door, and many more.

Virtually innumerable combinations of basic cuts, thrusts, parries, beats, binds, and feints applied with stepping and closing actions were taught within the many styles and schools, which constantly refined their techniques as the weapons and armor changed around them over the generations. Techniques were closely guarded by masters and not readily disclosed. In general, however, the German schools of swordsmanship taught
there were three principal actions called *drey Wunder* (three wonders): the thrust, the cut, and the *Schnitt* (a slicing or drawing cut). They taught that the thrust naturally was used primarily at longer range, the cut at medium range, and the slice more at close range.

Also, the German *Fechtmeisters* often divided sword combat into separate phases and distinguished opportunities for an attack, for example, *in des fechten* (attacking in the middle of the adversary’s attack). A fundamental tenet of their style was the *nachraissen* (attacking after), in which rather than taking the offensive, the swordsman invites the opponent to attack first and then counterattacks, either in the middle of a cut or just after a cut has missed. This is the familiar idea of the timed countercut.

The German grand master Hans Liechtenauer called these prized techniques *meisterhau* (master cuts). These were techniques in which the swordsman strikes in such a manner that his sword deflects the incoming blow while simultaneously hitting the opponent. However, the grand master Liechtenauer taught that a superior swordsman seeks the initiative by going on the offensive. According to his teaching, passively accepting attacks by merely parrying blows without responding was inferior and led to defeat. The German masters also expressed the ideal of *stuck und bruch* (technique and counter), the concept that every technique has a counter and every counter a technique.

German fighting guilds also knew the technique of throwing the point, or making a false cut that suddenly and deceptively turns into a forward thrust. When used with armored gloves or gauntlets, the blade itself could be gripped by the hand. This allowed for a wide range of offensive and defensive actions known as *halb schwert* (half-sword). Italian schools might have called them false-point blows. Using the left hand to hold the blade allows the right to grip more strongly near the hilt, but some used the right hand in order to grip the pommel in the left. These moves were suited to plate-armor fighting, when gauntlets were employed and cuts were less effective against the opponent, but the *Fechtbuchs* show them practiced by unarmored students.

Techniques for infighting were detailed in the surviving manuals as well. Attacks made while maintaining constant pressure on the opposing blade in a sticking, binding manner were known as *am schwert* (on the sword). Fighting close allowed the opportunity for striking with the pommel or guard, or binding with the guard. It also allowed for throws, grappling, and grabbing actions, referred to as wrestling at the sword (*Ringen am Schwert*) or disarming moves known as *Schwertnehmen* (sword-taking). They were sometimes known as *unterhalten* (holding down) in the German systems of fighting. Italian masters labeled their methods of close fighting and entering techniques *gioco stretta* (close playing). In the English
systems, these were known as *gryps*. All were based on a handful of key actions: reaching out to grab the opponent’s hilt or arm; striking with the pommel or guard; slipping the blade against or between an opponent’s forearms; using the second hand to hold the blade while binding, striking, or slicing; and of course tripping and kicking. Wrestling or grappling moves were included, along with swordsmanship, in the curriculum of every master and school.

Today, Hollywood theatrical sword fights and displays arranged by professional stunt-actors and stage-combat performers typically present a form of medieval swordsmanship that bears only superficial resemblance to the nature of the historical craft. The proper martial use of sword and shield or long-sword is all but absent in most movie and theatrical combat presentations and live-action performance shows, as well as in fantasy role-playing societies. The subtle differences in style of use between handling wider flatter blades and thicker tapering ones are also rarely depicted with any accuracy in movies and film fights. Yet, historically the diverse forms of medieval European swords were skillfully employed with a deliberate methodology. Specific techniques were developed appropriate to the environment of the period.

Sophisticated methods for the use of swords were perfected and practiced for centuries, and their martial legacy was influential and long-lasting. Today, these arts consist of a collection of reconstructed techniques based on analysis of surviving historical manuscripts and fighting manuals, plus conjecture and analysis of historical arms, armor, art, and literature from the period. Today, the modern replication of weapon arts from the Middle Ages has its own distinct character. In many ways, modern replication and practice are still in their infancy. It is a martial art form that must be viewed within its own historical and cultural contexts. No historical schools of medieval fighting arts exist today to pass on their learning or tradition, and enthusiasts have had to rediscover these skills on their own. The chief tools for this are examination of historical arms and armor; extensive training and test-cutting with historically accurate replica weapons; research in the surviving historical manuals and texts; and earnest, realistic contact sparring with safe simulated weapons. Through physical exercises, academic research, and pure supposition, many dedicated individuals and groups are working to rebuild these lost skills and reclaim our Western martial heritage.

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See also Dueling; Europe; Knights; Masters of Defence; Wrestling and Grappling: Europe

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Beginning in the 1490s and early 1500s there arose across Western Europe a distinction between those swords intended for war and those for personal self-defense. Changing social and technological forces allowed commoners to be able to afford and legally own swords, and to wear them in the expanding and newly crowded cities. The transformation of warfare by firearms and the breakdown of the old feudal order limited the avenues both for redress of personal grievance and for exhibition of martial skill. The result was an explosion in the popularity of dueling. This in turn caused a renewed interest in the personal Arte of Defence, to use the spelling of the English Renaissance, and the civilian use of the sword. Combined with the new sciences then coming into vogue, a systematic approach to studying swordsmanship swept Western Europe. The swords of the Renaissance then developed methodical styles in an age when swordsmanship on the battlefield had begun to lose its relevance and dominant role. This was to climax later in the methods of the military cut-and-thrust sword and the development of its innovative cousin, the slender thrusting rapier with its unique manner of fighting. But there were many types of Renaissance military swords, including assorted cage- and basket-hilted riding swords, the cleaverlike medieval falchion, the single-edged backsword, the Italian schiavona cutlass, the machete-like German messer, and the “s”-hilted Swiss katzbalger short-sword.
Symbiotically, with the spread of fencing schools came a significant increase in both street fighting and private dueling. As has been well documented, the years between 1500 and 1700 alone saw thousands of nobles, and even more commoners, killed in private duels. The rapier, formidable in this context, came into fashion as the weapon of choice. The nature of urban combat encounters and private quarrels changed with the introduction of the rapier. Rather than satisfying bravado and honor through a “stout exchange of manly sword blows,” it became far easier to slay an opponent outright with a quick, short stab of the rapier. This had a profound effect on both the attitude with which individuals approached such encounters and the techniques utilized in a fight. Men could no longer engage in assorted nonlethal brawls and impromptu “swashbuckling” without risking quick death at the hands of the opponent skilled in the rapier.

Under these circumstances, sword blades changed. The focus shifted to urban self-defense as opposed to battlefield or tournament utility. Following from earlier medieval traditions, new schools of swordsmanship sprang up all across Europe in the new environment of the Renaissance. Many schools of fence had unsavory reputations as hangouts for ruffians and hoodlums. Others were prestigious and renowned. Many well-respected and highly sought-after instructors, called in England Masters of Defence, became famous for their martial skills. Various Schools of Defence and fighting guilds specializing in styles and weapons held public exhibitions and contests and vied for influence with rival groups. Examination of the armaments, historical fencing texts, artwork, and literature of
the period clearly demonstrates that European swordsmanship at the time was a systematic and highly dynamic art.

The Renaissance Masters of Defence were highly regarded specialists who published their methods in numerous illustrated technical manuals. Dozens of these manuscripts still survive. The various manuals describe fighting stances and guards (or Wards), attacks, evasions (or Voids), parries, and numerous kinds of counteractions. They also instruct on principles such as recovery, timing, distance, and judgment as well as the ethics and philosophy of personal armed conflict and dueling. These invaluable works present a highly developed and innovative aspect of Renaissance martial culture.

The cut-and-thrust swordsmanship of the early Renaissance consisted of a sophisticated and effective system of armed combat that evolved from medieval swords. This was a battlefield method that increasingly found use in personal single combat or private quarrel. These swords were used mainly by lightly armed foot soldiers (as well as in civilian self-defense) in the 1500s and 1600s and were employed against a range of armored and unarmored opponents. The weapons were popular for sword-and-buckler and sword-and-dagger fighting—which provided the foundation for the emergence of the thrusting rapier.

During this time, the use of the thrust began to dominate over the cut in civilian fighting. This is a consequence of the environment in which the weapons were employed as well as certain mechanics of use. The more refined techniques of Renaissance cut-and-thrust swords provided a foundation for those of later centuries, such as cutlasses, hangers, and spadroons. These in turn provided the basis for European stickfighting martial sports during the 1700s and 1800s (such as cudgeling, singlestick, backswording, and, in France, la canne). Other forms of cut-and-thrust swords, more closely related to medieval blades but with basket and cage hilts, emerged for mounted combat during the late Renaissance. These were held in a single fist grip and employed similarly to earlier medieval swords.

The forms of swordplay espoused in Italy by early Renaissance masters employed slender edged blades used in a slashing and stabbing style that developed from earlier military methods. These styles, applied in urban personal combat, served as a foundation for the development of the civilian thrusting style of the true rapier. Among the most famous and influential masters of the earlier cut-and-thrust method were German masters such as Joerg Wilhelm and Italian masters Antonio Achille Marozzo and Francesco Altoni. Some of the earlier medieval German fechtbuchs (fight books) also discuss elements of cut-and-thrust techniques. Among the most noted practitioners of the versatile and practical cut-and-thrust method was the Englishman George Silver. Other advocates of such weapons included masters such as Joseph Swetnam and Germans Jacob Sutor and Joachim Meyer.
A number of the masters reveal in their cut-and-thrust methods the thrusting techniques that were to later develop into the specialty of the thrusting, or “foining,” rapier. Early rapier masters were themselves adept with common military cut-and-thrust swords as well as staff weapons, daggers, shields, and grappling and wrestling. Among the most famous and influential works were some of the first to fully define the new rapier method, and it is with this weapon that many are closely associated. These include Camillo Agrippa’s treatise in 1553 and Jeronimo De Carranza’s in 1569, Giacomo di Grassi’s from 1570, Vincentio Saviolo’s 1595 work, Luis de Narvaez of 1599, and Francesco Alfieri of 1640 and 1653. Some of the most useful dealing with the development of the true rapier include Salvator Fabris’s of 1606, along with Ridolfo Capo Ferro’s of 1610. Each developed particular techniques exclusively for the effective use of a long, slender, thrusting sword. Reflecting a diversity of approaches, such works by Masters of Defence offer unique insights into their distinct styles.

Renaissance cut-and-thrust swords were transition swords that had developed from wider medieval blades. They are invariably confused with rapiers, since their compound hilts (made up of assorted defensive rings and swept bars) are very often identical to those found on rapiers, and the transition between the two kinds of swords is not completely definite or precise. Rapiers were generally characterized by thinner, more pointed blades and complex guards consisting of various side-rings and knuckle-bars. These helped trap and bind opposing blades but also prevented blows from striking the hand. Fundamentally, the two types of weapon have different blade shapes and, as a result, different methods of use. Cut-and-thrust swords usually had straight, double-edged blades that allowed for a versatile and well-balanced combination of penetrating stabs and drawing slices with more classical cutting strikes. Their one-handed style also allowed for fast, agile transition from thrust to cut and back again, particularly when using a second weapon in the other hand. Through use of an extended arm and passing and traversing steps, the cuts can have considerable reach over a longer weapon held with both hands or shorter weapons held in two hands. These swords were often complemented by a buckler (a sturdy metal shield held in a fist grip) used for deflecting rather than direct blocking. Often with 6-inch spikes projecting from their faces, bucklers were weapons in themselves. Some later bucklers had metal hooks or bars to trap the point of an opponent’s rapier.

Cut-and-thrust swordsmanship developed into a methodical style during an age when swordsmanship on the battlefield had begun to lose its dominant role. Such swords were still basically military weapons. They can be distinguished both from those swords of the earlier medieval period and from the later slender, thrusting rapier. The rapier at first developed in re-
sponse to the use of cut-and-thrust swords, and only later did it find use against other rapiers. Although a cut-and-thrust blade can be used in some ways like a rapier, a true rapier cannot be used like a cut-and-thrust blade. They were separate weapons with distinct methods. The cut-and-thrust sword also utilized the unique gripping method of fingering the ricasso (the thicker dulled portion of the blade just above the hilt), in which the index finger wraps around the guard to allow for superior point control and agility as well as ensuring a better hold. This highly effective manner of gripping followed from the ring hilts developed on late medieval swords and also was crucial to the later use of the rapier.

Most of these swords were capable of slashes, draw-cuts, and thrusts. Practice was conducted with wooden versions (wasters) and non-edged steel versions (blunts). With its practicality, the Renaissance cut-and-thrust form presents an effective and well-reasoned approach to swordsmanship. Although Renaissance cut-and-thrust swords continued to find use as field weapons in war, they became eclipsed as personal weapons of urban self-defense by the dueling tool par excellence, the vicious and elegant rapier. However, as a military armament the cut-and-thrust sword was also eventually to be replaced by the handgun and the curved cavalry saber, both more suitable for the primarily mounted armies of later ages.

The rapier lent itself to a highly effective form of personal combat—it was vicious as well as elegant in its lethality. It was strictly a personal weapon, never used, nor intended for use, on the battlefield. Originally, starting about 1470, any sword worn only in civilian dress was often referred to as simply a rapier (or espada ropera [Spanish; sword of the robe]), but the word rapier quickly took on the meaning of a slender civilian thrusting sword. Rapiers had slender, acutely pointed blades, and varied considerably in length, thickness, cross-sectional shape, and edge sharpness. True rapier blades ranged from early flatter, triangular blades to thicker, narrow hexagonal ones. For most sophisticated gentleman, the use of the rapier became a popular martial skill to study. Its introduction as a weapon was a gradual process that was highly controversial at the time and often violently disputed. The sword is considered to be of Hispano-Italian origin and was the first true civilian weapon. It became the premier weapon of urban self-defense and private dueling from roughly 1540 to 1690. It was eventually surpassed in this role only by the widespread use of handguns.

As a weapon, the rapier is extremely fast, and its extensive reach is formidable. Some blades could be as long as 50 inches. Its powerful, quick thrust was lethal in its penetrating power. A simple stab wound of only a few inches could prove instantly fatal, and it intentionally targeted the eyes, the heart, and the lungs. A rapier’s thrusting attack was difficult to parry and could not simply be knocked aside. It had the unique capacity to make
incredibly deceptive and agile attacks and the dangerous capacity to renew continued attacks at unpredictable angles, even after parrying slashes of wider cutting swords. Its sturdy blade was not easily broken or cut and was capable of blocking heavier cutting blades with either its own blade or its particularly strong hilt. Metallurgy in Europe at the time had improved to allow for slender, more flexible, yet superbly tempered high-carbon steel blades.

As a sword that emphasized agile stabbing attacks, most rapiers had little to no edge, although some were capable of limited slashes, harassing tip cuts, and lacerating scratches. The rapier’s blade was usually a narrow hexagonal or flattened diamond shape, incapable of the angle necessary for holding a particularly sharp or deep cutting edge. A rapier was virtually always used in conjunction with, in the free hand, a parrying dagger, buckler, or cloak. The parrying dagger was made with an elaborate guard specially designed for trapping and parrying, and was held sideways in order to parry or catch the opponent’s blades. A formidable method of dueling with two rapiers also developed.

The nature of rapier fencing did not leave the user vulnerable to oncoming cuts. Instead, many cuts were outmaneuvered or outtimed. As with cut-and-thrust swords, a rapier duel was fought “in the round” and not linearly as in modern sport fencing. In back alleys, taverns, and street brawls, anything was acceptable—kicking, punching, grappling. The rapier produced a lethal method of personal swordsmanship that emphasized agility and finesse over strength and ferocity. The rapier represents one of the most innovative and original aspects of European martial culture. As a weapon for personal single combat, it was unequaled for almost 200 years until the advent of the dueling pistol.

With the ascendancy of rapiers over older swords in personal duel and private quarrel, there were many attempts to combine the slashing and cleaving potential of traditional military swords with the quick, agile thrust of a dueling sword. This led to a great number of experimental blade forms, many of which were dismal failures, with neither the cutting power of wider swords nor the speed and lightness of true rapiers. These are sometimes mistakenly called cutting rapiers and sword-rapiers or assumed to be some form of transition blade.

Eventually, the long rapier lost favor and declined, as times grew more civilized and orderly. By the late 1600s and early 1700s, it was slowly superseded and replaced by the shorter small-sword, more suited to urban wear. The small-sword was a vicious tool in its own right. The elegant manner of swordplay developed for it led directly to today’s Collegiate and Olympic sport fencing. Sometimes known as a “court-sword,” “walking-sword,” or “town-sword,” the small-sword developed from the rapier in
the late Renaissance as a personal dueling tool. Most popular in the 1700s, they are sometimes confused with rapiers. They consisted almost exclusively of a sharp pointed metal rod with a much smaller guard than the rapier and finger-rings. The blade was typically a hollow triangular or lozenge shape much thicker at the hilt and tapering to a hardened needle-like point. Most had no edge at all, and were merely rigid, pointed, metal rods. They were popular with the upper classes especially as decorative fashion accessories, worn like jewelry. However, in a skilled hand the small-sword was an effective and deadly instrument. Until the early 1800s, it continued to be used even against older rapiers and even some cutting swords.

The small-sword rather than the rapier led to the épée and foil of modern sport fencing. The small-sword was a more poised, somewhat formalized, dueling weapon. It became the gentleman’s weapon of choice in duels of honor during an age when the sword as a weapon of war was well past its prime and an exclusively thrusting style of swordsmanship had become a combat form in its own right. In the middle of the nineteenth century, this combat system was transformed into the genteel “sport of fence,” and the small-sword was adapted into the light, flexible, modern sport versions. The classical small-sword, though often disregarded as a weapon of martial study, is a deceptively violent and effective little tool, exceptionally quick, accurate, and easy to underestimate. It was intended primarily for codified dueling and not for facing other weapons in freestyle brawling (although such combats did occur).

Modern sport fencing has far more in common with this humble weapon than it does with rapiers or any earlier Renaissance swords. Modern fencing “weapons” were never real swords. Modern fencing tools are much lighter, softer, and faster than these historical weapons. The contrived rules of play create a specialized sport that observes its own rules and constraints and has very little to do with any elements of Renaissance swordsmanship. Real rapiers, being heavier, stiffer, and sturdier than today’s sporting weapons, cannot be used in the same manner as the implements of modern sport fencing—and vice versa.

Despite the emphasis on the rapier from the mid-sixteenth through the late seventeenth centuries, the early Renaissance weapons should not be viewed exclusively as primitive “proto-rapiers” around which developed a less sophisticated or less effective fighting art. Renaissance cut-and-thrust methods were complete systems in their own right. The systems of personal combat described by early Renaissance Masters of Defence and the swords they favored were practical, fully developed, highly effective, and successful.

Renaissance fighting men were required to face the cold reality of violent death, and their lives very often depended upon the sudden and immediate use of personal skill at arms. From literary, artistic, and archaeo-
logical evidence it is clear that their blades and the skills for employing them were not haphazard, ad hoc, or simplistic. Renaissance fencing styles must be considered within their own historical contexts. Later manners of fence developed out of them but one should not speak of them as evolving—as if Western swordsmanship were some linear progression toward an ideal form. Instead, changes in civilian European swords and their systems of use have always resulted from a process of adaptation and change. Fencing instructors of later centuries did not build upon or extend the skills of earlier centuries in an “evolution” of knowledge so much as continually discard, reject, refine, and innovate methods to meet contemporary conditions and circumstances.

**Contemporary Status**

Due to historical and social forces, the teachings and skills of the Renaissance Masters of Defence fell out of common use, and no actual traditional schools of their instruction survive. Only a fraction of their extensive martial knowledge remains in the refined sport of modern fencing. Renaissance fighting arts in general and swordsmanship in particular, whether of the cut-and-thrust form or using the true rapier, cannot be practiced from the limited nonmartial perspective of a modern sporting game or nineteenth-century upper-class duel. Modern fencing itself owes far more to the later small-sword style of the early 1700s than to anything that came before it. Though the essential physical mechanics of its techniques follow from the earlier rapier and the small-sword, much of modern sport fencing’s formalities and etiquette arose in the 1800s and were not fully established until the turn of this century.

While the methods, ideas, and concepts of the rapier’s civilian thrusting swordplay were to form the foundation for the later gentlemanly style of small-sword play, such a poised, aristocratic context bore little resemblance to the back-alley ambushes of the urban rapier. The instructors of later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century small-sword schools were in a sense heirs to the rapier Masters of Defence, but they practiced in a very different world and under very different social and martial circumstances. Accordingly, even though the physical mechanics and tactical elements of both rapiers and small-sword fighting are closely related, they differ in significant ways. To equate the gentlemanly duels of honor and courtly reputation and aristocratic life to the encounters of Renaissance street corner and footpath is misleading. To suggest similarities between rapier fighting and modern sport fencing is even less accurate.

The Victorian-era bias featured in so much literature of heavy, cumbersome chopping blades slowly evolving into the refined, featherweight, slender small-sword is inaccurate. In the “scientific” approach to the game,
classical fencing and sport fencing have never entirely escaped this biased view. Today a “classical fencing” movement has developed that is concerned with the practice of Western fencing prior to the advent of electric equipment and international competitive rules. The movement represents an attempt to return to dueling as “A Gentlemen’s Pastime.” Unlike the study and practice of earlier historical Western swordsmanship, a gentlemanly art of self-defense as practiced with either épée or the eighteenth-century small-sword is not the equivalent in either method or conditions to the historical use of the rapier. Although the members of this movement are making a beneficial and worthwhile effort to pull sport fencing back to its pre-electric classical roots, working with épée, foil, and saber is no substitute for understanding earlier weapons and methods.

Serious interest in practicing Renaissance rapier fencing has been growing for over a decade now, and a variety of methods for doing so safely have appeared. Among the most common and popular means is to simply use normal sport épées and associated equipment. Also popular are the use of wider theatrical épées with historical-style replica hilts, and some historical-fencing enthusiasts can even be found using sport foils and sabers. All of these practices are common in recreational and living-history organizations such as the SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism) or with Renaissance festival performances. Several fencing clubs also offer forms of “classical fencing” or historical “swordplay.” This choice of using épées, whether of the competition or theatrical variety, is very natural and at first thought makes perfect sense. They are familiar, safe, fairly easy to obtain, and compared to reproduction weapons, inexpensive. Recently, a better alternative has appeared. Del Tin practice rapiers, whose “flexi-rapier” blades safely bend and give yet are still rigid and thick enough to simulate the original, resemble real ones closely in shape (taper and cross-section) as well as balance and weight.

European swordsmanship of the Renaissance and its practice today have a distinct character. Their unique martial spirit is neither that of modern fencing with its sporting conventions and refined etiquette nor that of Asian fighting arts with their cultural and metaphysical components. As a Western martial art form, it also differs from its Asian counterparts in many ways. It is much less structured, involves no ritual and less etiquette, and has no established hierarchy. It historically focused on utility rather than philosophical intangibles. However, it maintains the modern humanistic ideals that are usually associated with the modern practice of popular Asian martial arts. Indeed, such elements were an intrinsic part of Renaissance ideas and the code diello (Italian; code of dueling). Being concerned with the practical use of archaic weapons, Renaissance swordsmanship arguably has only a small application to modern unarmed self-defense or
street situations. Although it can include numerous disarms and grappling actions, that is not its primary purpose. It is a martial art form intended for an age when most citizens openly went about armed.

Today’s historical fencers and students of Renaissance swords who are reconstructing and practicing forms of Western swordsmanship practice and train as true martial artists in ways far different from those of sport fencers or theatrical and stage performers. They learn and train through handling historically accurate replica blades. They practice test-cutting and indulge in forms of intense free sparring. It may be argued that more has been learned in the past three decades about the actual functioning of European arms and armor than has been known for the past two hundred years. There is no doubt that the skills of Renaissance swordsmanship are slowly becoming again a legitimate martial art. Today, practitioners of historical Renaissance swordsmanship, or “the Arte of Defence” as it was known, are reviving and reconstructing the knowledge and skills of these once sophisticated and highly effective martial arts. They are not trying to reinvent or merely interpret, but to replicate and rebuild them. In the process they have succeeded in creating a new standard for scholarship and study.

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See also Dueling; Europe; Masters of Defence; Savate

References


Swordsmanship, Japanese

Japanese swordsmanship since ancient times has been a unique martial discipline of wielding a straight or curved sword using one or two hands. It
evolved over more than two thousand years as an integral part of the martial culture of Japan, over time becoming an important symbol of the Japanese spirit and tradition. Swordsmanship has been practiced by court aristocracy and warriors of various affiliations as a fundamental form of fighting, together with mounted archery and halberd and spear fighting. It was first practiced to supplement other battlefield fighting methods, when close combat was inevitable. Later, it gained primacy over other forms of fighting, and eventually became transformed into a competitive sport in the modern period. The survival of swordsmanship over the centuries, and through significant transformations in the characteristics of warfare in Japan, is due to the place of the sword in Japanese culture.

The Japanese sword has always been to its bearers more than an instrument of war, marking status, social affiliation, and position or serving as a weapon with mystical powers for religious rituals. The compilers of Japanese mythology established its association with religion in the early eighth century when they recorded a battle between a fierce deity, Susa-no-o-no-mikoto, and a dragon. After slaying the dragon, the deity found an unusually long and sharp sword embedded in the dragon’s tail. He took the sword and presented it to his sister, who became the ancestral goddess of the Japanese islands and the imperial dynasty. The goddess Amaterasu (Sun Goddess) presented the sword as one of the three sacred regalia (i.e., mirror, beads, and sword) to the god who descended from the heavens to the islands. The three regalia became legitimizing symbols of the imperial dynasty’s connection to Amaterasu, marking the dynasty’s authority to rule. As such, the sword, regardless of other more practical weapons, became the symbol in the Japanese psyche of a pure heart, indomitable mind, and a sharp and decisive spirit—the ideal yamato damashii (Japanese spirit and soul).

Sword fighting in Japan began in the Jōmon period (ca. tenth–third centuries B.C.), with crude stone-carved swords of approximately 50 centimeters in length that, judging from their shape, were effective for striking more than for slashing or piercing. Little is known about these prehistoric swords other than what has been unearthed in archaeological sites. Based on these findings, archaeologists have concluded that these stone-made swords were used for hunting, as symbolic instruments in religious rituals, and as instruments of warfare in actual fighting. Since they lacked the qualities of the later metal swords and those who used them were at an early stage in social development, it is highly unlikely that Jōmon people developed any kind of methodological sword-fighting skills. On the other hand, having been a society of hunters and gatherers, they probably developed techniques for hunting in a group, and shared knowledge of how and where to strike various animals. Nevertheless, whatever fighting and hunt-
ing skills the Jōmon people developed, it was not until later periods that techniques were developed for the use of iron swords.

Early contacts with the continent in the Yayoi period (ca. third century B.C.–third century A.D.) resulted in the introduction and importation of straight double-edged Chinese swords made of bronze. From the few remaining bronze swords most commonly found in tombs, it is clear that the quality of these swords was rather poor. Bronze swords were used to indicate the status of their holders as well as to serve in their capacity as weapons, or for religious purposes. It is interesting to note that bronze swords were shaped differently according to their function. For example, swords designed for fighting were more massive and crude, while those marking the status of its bearer were carefully crafted and designed. Furthermore, the number of battlefield bronze swords found in archaeological sites far exceeds the number of swords of the aristocracy. Based on this evidence, combined with what is known from early Chinese records of Japan, it is clear that swords and spears were used extensively in warfare associated with the consolidation of power of the Yamato king.

With improvements in metallurgy, most importantly iron casting, iron blades replaced the unsatisfactory bronze swords. The Kofun period
(third–fifth centuries A.D.), when the Japanese acquired the knowledge of iron casting, marked the first significant turning point in the making and wielding of swords. By the Asuka period (fifth–sixth centuries), the Japanese were making good-quality, straight, single-edged swords that were placed in a decorated scabbard. These swords were by far more effective in cutting down an opponent than anything the Japanese had previously produced. The production and use of the sword as an effective weapon required warriors to practice wielding and stabbing. The precision with which a warrior had to wield his sword required more definite, predetermined movements, thus marking the first true swordsmanship, unsophisticated though it may have been.

The transition from sword techniques for the straight sword to those for a curved sword necessarily occurred at the same time that such curved swords were first produced. This transition occurred gradually during the tenth century, when straight swords were still used by warriors but curved swords had begun to appear. In the tenth century, Japanese makers were already experimenting with single-edged curved swords and were producing some double-edged curved swords as well. By the tenth century, with the rise of the two most important warrior families—Taira (also Heike) and Minamoto (also Genji)—and consequently, with improvements in military technology, Japanese warriors chose the single-edge curved sword. The preferred curved blade allowed for only one effective cutting edge at the outer side of the blade, while the inner side of the curvature was no longer sharpened, leaving it thick. The Japanese preference for a curved blade resulted from the nature of Japanese armor and the development of equestrian fighting skills. The hard leather or metal Japanese armor vis-à-vis the light Chinese armor, together with limitations incurred due to the seated position on a horse, gave the curved sword a better cutting power, and it was easier to draw while on horseback.

The use of swords was first recorded in the Nihon Shoki and in the Sujin-ki, where the term tachikaki to refer to sword fighting first appeared. These records provide only fragmentary information on the use of swords. More specific information on sword fighting in ancient and premodern Japan appears in the Gunki (War Tales), namely the Hōgen monogatari (Tale of the Hōgen), Heike monogatari (Tale of the Heike), and Taiheiki (Record of Great Peace). These and other sources indicate that from the late Heian period until the late Kamakura period, swordsmanship on the battlefield was secondary to mounted archery, which was the primary method of warfare, and to wielding halberds (naginata) and spears (hoko). Furthermore, it is clear that swords were mostly used after the warrior dismounted from his horse to engage in close combat. Mounted swordsmanship is only recorded in some picture scrolls, which rarely show warriors...
holding a sword while on horseback. An examination of picture scrolls further indicates that until the late Kamakura period the sword was held in the right hand only, since the design of the handle (tsuka) kept the handle short, the material hard, and the profile narrow, thus making it difficult to grip. By the Nanbokuchô period (fourteenth century) the design of the sword changed to allow a better hold, making the sword more practical in battle. Descriptions of sword fights, as recorded in the Taiheiki, and examination of remaining swords from that period attest to their superior quality and to their increasing importance on the battlefield, though mounted archery seems to have maintained its primacy.

From the mid-fifteenth century, following the Ônin War, Japanese swordsmanship entered an important period that lasted a century and a half. During this time, sword techniques were developed by warriors who focused their martial training on swordsmanship. The Ônin War between the Yamana and Hosokawa clans on one side and Shiba and Hatakeyama clans on the other was only the beginning of almost a century of civil war, starting in Kyoto and its neighboring provinces, and later spreading countrywide. Continuous and intensive warfare, the need to keep a constant state of military readiness, and above all, the necessity of maintaining a technological advantage and a level of fighting skills higher than those of neighboring armies prompted a significant change in the approach to military training, taking it to a higher, more sophisticated, and systematic level.

Continuous civil strife brought two developments that were consequential for the formation of early schools of swordsmanship. First was the interest of the daimyo (provincial lord) in protecting his military prowess by having efficient fighting methods developed for and acquired by his army. To protect the integrity of his army, the daimyo was interested in keeping these fighting skills unique to his domain, thus being able to maintain a leverage of surprise over his enemies. Second, guarded borders and limited mobility made the intermixing of military knowledge less likely (though not impossible), as teachers of swordsmanship were now more clearly identified with and served under a single daimyo. Though distinct schools of swordsmanship, each with an identifiable skillful and charismatic founder, did not develop until the late sixteenth century, the factors mentioned above set the stage for this development in the 1500s.

Battlefield swordsmanship reached its highest level and produced a number of schools of swordsmanship during the last three decades of the sixteenth century, when civil war intensified dramatically in what is known as the Sengoku period (late sixteenth century), a period in which Japan was in a state of gekokujô (those below overthrow those above). Though expert swordsmen had been assigned to teach swordsmanship since the late Heian period, and some fourteenth-century swordsmen even formed what may be
considered systematized teachings, it was only in the Sengoku and early Tokugawa (seventeenth-century) periods that these experts formed clearly defined schools, with written records, sets of techniques, and established genealogies.

The formation of schools was possible because warriors who participated in battles and were able to achieve high skills in swordsmanship as a result of their extensive battlefield experience could rely on the name they created for themselves to attract the attention of potential patrons and followers. Indeed, patronage by prominent warriors was not hard to find because of the demand for such teachers. Ultimately, the cause for a new emphasis on sword fighting was the result of the new firearm technology, which rendered mounted archery especially inferior and vulnerable, thus making foot soldiers carrying swords replace the mounted warrior. In addition, a culture of specialized schools of art, theater performance, and craftsmanship was already in place and operating long before the formation of distinct schools of swordsmanship. Consequently, when Sengoku and early Tokugawa warriors sought to establish swordsmanship traditions, they relied on those existing schools for a model.

Two more factors contributed to the formation of specialized schools of swordsmanship. First, social mobility during the Sengoku period provided almost anybody with an opportunity to achieve recognition and advance to a higher social status. For many, swordsmanship was the way to realize their ambition. Those who mastered swordsmanship and made names for themselves on the battlefield or in challenge duels, even those of peasant origin who served as low-ranking foot soldiers, could look for re-
warding positions such as being sword instructors in the service of a daimyo. Thus, self-training and perfection of techniques became essential, and they were achieved by embarking on a *musha shugyô* (warrior training), an increasingly popular practice since the Sengoku period. The second reason was social and political reconstruction following the erection of castle towns as domain headquarters. The large population of warriors, now removed from the countryside and relocated in these towns, was fertile ground for the sword master, who could target a large number of potential disciples without having to travel. Furthermore, sword teachers hired by the daimyo were given a residence, a place to teach, and a stipend. The benefits of becoming a teacher included prestige and a stable income, which were especially valuable later in the Tokugawa period when many samurai had lost their stipends.

The Tokugawa period (seventeenth–nineteenth centuries), during which Japan enjoyed countrywide peace and a single warrior government, had a dual effect on swordsmanship, making swordsmanship a more refined and complex martial discipline while detaching it from its battlefield context. As a result, it was transformed into a martial discipline for small-scale combat. Under new military and social conditions created by the Tokugawa shogunate, samurai were required to carry two swords, but mounted warfare or even fighting in full armor was for the most part completely abandoned. Warriors began wearing long and short swords tucked in their sashes in a tight and stable fashion as a status marker, which separated samurai from the rest of the population. Carrying swords for the purpose of engaging in battle was no longer common among Tokugawa samurai.

In addition, formation of a rigid samurai class, removal of the samurai from the countryside and placing them in urban centers or domain headquarters, and changing their function to administrators significantly reduced the need to acquire high skills in any form of fighting. Nevertheless, though many samurai became administrators, others became part of a police and inspection force. They did not abandon their martial training. Instead, they had to develop methods and techniques to solve new problems and challenges. As a result, schools of swordsmanship had to adjust existing fighting techniques and develop new ones, such as fast drawing, to accommodate much greater maneuverability on one hand and violent encounters associated with urban life on the other.

The consequences were far-reaching, as swordsmanship was no longer simply one martial discipline among others used in warfare for the sole practical purpose of survival. Tokugawa swordsmanship took on multiple forms to fit within the Tokugawa social and military context. One form of swordsmanship focused on predetermined codified sets of movements against an imaginary opponent (kata) and developed into modern *iaidô*. 

594 Swordsmanship, Japanese
Another form subscribed to combat simulation by conducting duels using wooden or bamboo swords in sportslike duels, which included exhibition matches and formal recognition of winners, eventually evolving into modern kendo. Yet other schools chose to try and preserve swordsmanship in its early Tokugawa form, that of a real battlefield fighting skill. Though schools of swordsmanship combined all of these forms in their teachings, individual schools emphasized one form over the others, allowing for a clear separation of swordsmanship forms after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the abolition of the samurai class.

Another important feature of Tokugawa swordsmanship was the association of swords and swordsmanship with divinities and related religious practices. As mentioned earlier, the establishment of a school was accompanied by compiling written records concerning its origins. These records normally included the founder's biography and some historical information relating to the school, but often they also included legends and myths of sacred secret transmission of knowledge from legendary warriors, supernatural beings, or from the divinities themselves to the founder's ancestors. Such divine connection provided the school with authority and "proof" of superior skills in an increasingly competitive world of swordsmanship. More importantly, the divine link to Japan's history and mythology, in addition to the symbolic role of the sword as a mark of a samurai's identity, instilled the notion of the sword as the mind and soul of the samurai. Practicing swordsmanship, then, took on the added importance of being a way to bring back and strengthen samurai ideals of earlier generations of warriors.

The Meiji Restoration (1868), which marked the end of warrior rule and the start of civil government in Japan, declared the Tokugawa practice of wearing two swords illegal. Centuries of warrior rule and culture came to an official end, sending traditional schools of swordsmanship into a decline, while swordsmanship itself evolved into a modern version in which the practitioners use sturdy protective gear and bamboo swords and follow prescribed rules of engagement in competition. When the Taishō (1912–1926) government added this modern swordsmanship (eventually called kendō) to the school curriculum, it immediately set it on a course to become a national martial sport. However, to preserve swordsmanship in its pre-kendō form, some schools of swordsmanship emphasized the sole practice of kata using metal swords that resemble real blades.

The practice of swordsmanship by focusing on kata is now known to many as iaidō. Some kendō practitioners who reach advanced levels in kendō turn to iaidō as a higher, more realistic form of swordsmanship. At any rate, the preservation of swordsmanship in kata practice follows the example of many other traditions, namely ikebana and Kabuki, among
others. By attempting to perfect a predetermined set of movements, practitioners can focus on their own body movements and state of mind without being distracted by real opponents. Thus, the kata provides a vehicle for what many Japanese have always valued highly—self-improvement and character building. Even when the iaidô practitioner performed the kata with a practice partner, the emphasis remained on perfection of movements and attaining a spiritual connection between the practitioners. Nevertheless, the use of wooden or metal practice swords did allow for the preservation of the combative nature of swordsmanship in kata practice, and when iaidô was evaluated by the American occupation forces after World War II, it was indeed classified as a method of warfare.

Under the American occupation following the Pacific war, Japan went through a social and cultural transformation that, in the decades that followed, popularized sports competition. The American command in Japan restricted any form of martial art practice, including kendô, in official educational institutions. In response to this policy, the Japanese made a radical change to the nature of kendô by placing strong emphasis on the use of bamboo swords, which were unlike weapons of war, and re-forming kendô as a competitive sport devoid of its martial essence. Permission to practice kendô in schools in its new form was granted only in the early 1950s. For almost a decade and a half of American occupation, teachers and students who were devoted to the preservation of martial traditions and who, in many cases, were also hard-line nationalists practiced swordsmanship behind closed doors. Shortly after the Occupation ended, the Japanese government lifted the restriction on kendô, and it quickly became part of schools' curricula once again. Similarly, kendô practice in the police force was resumed, leading to the revival of what is commonly referred to as “police kendô.” Although post-Occupation kendô includes both sports competition and traditional forms, it is much more a sport than a practical martial art. Consequently, the increasing popularity of kendô as a competitive sport, together with diminishing interest in premodern martial traditions among younger Japanese, has made old-style swordsmanship anachronistic. Moreover, the concept of swordsmanship as a fighting skill of premodern warriors has lost its meaning for the common Japanese. Therefore, the image of kendô in contemporary Japan is that of bamboo swords, body protection, rules, umpires, and tournaments. Nevertheless, it is still viewed as a practical way for building stamina and perseverance, which are viewed by Japanese as the heart of true Japanese spirit.

Currently, kendô is one of the most widely practiced forms of competitive martial sport. It remains part of school education, and is a popular choice of practice for Japanese policemen. Premodern forms of swordsmanship are gradually becoming a thing of the past, or a feature of enter-
tainment that belongs in samurai movies. At any rate, the remaining schools of swordsmanship that teach traditional kata, or those schools where the emphasis is on actual sword fighting and less on rigid forms, have been pushed aside under the pretext of not being practical in a modern lifestyle. However, in a society where traditions die hard, it is still possible to find old forms of swordsmanship living together with the new.

Roy Ron

See also Form/Xing/Kata/Pattern Practice; Japan; Koryû Bugei, Japanese; Samurai; Sword, Japanese

References

Swordsmanship, Korean/
Hankuk Haedong Kumdô

Hankuk is the old name for the country of Korea. Haedong refers to the East Sea (Sea of Japan). Kumdô refers to the Way of the Sword. Hankuk Haedong Kumdô, therefore, explicitly denotes sword forms that are of Korean origin. Fantastic claims abound concerning the origins of many Korean arts, but more especially Haedong Kumdô. One reason for the confusion surrounding the origins of Haedong Kumdô is that the art remains obscure, even in Korea.

Korean History
On August 29, 1910, Emperor Sunjong abdicated the throne of Korea and officially relinquished control of the country to the Japanese. Japan immediately set about the systematic destruction of the Korean culture, including making it illegal to teach Korean history. A revisionist history, written by the Japanese, replaced the traditional subject matter in the public schools. Korean martial arts were banned, and eventually supplanted by Japanese forms. Ssirûm, a form of wrestling that the Koreans probably learned from the Mongols, was replaced by sumô. T’aeuk’kyôn, a form of unarmed self-defense that included extensive use of kicking techniques, was replaced by jûdô. And Korean (Hankuk) kumdô was replaced by Japanese

Swordsmanship, Korean/Hankuk Haedong Kumdô
kendō. The Japanese ban on Korean martial arts was, however, simply another obstacle in a long line of obstacles that hindered the transmission of Korean muye (martial arts).

In the latter part of the Chosun dynasty (1392–1910), military skills such as kungdô (archery) and kumdô fell into decline among the yangban (hereditary aristocracy), who embraced the philosophical notions of neo-Confucianism. And although radical Confucianism advocated the use of force as a practical means to achieve a political end, government by intellectual force was advocated over government by physical force. Ironically, the preservation of Korea’s martial heritage may have been the result of a scholarly movement known as Sirhak (Practical Learning), undertaken during the latter part of the eighteenth century by literati who sought to enact social reform. The Sirhak scholars sought the model for a perfect society in ancient Chinese texts, while, at the same time, examining events in Korean history that had led to their social and political dilemma. The emperors Yungjo (1727–1776) and Chungjo (1776–1800) encouraged these studies and even established the Kyujanggak research institute on the palace grounds, for the purpose of preparing and disseminating texts for government administration. The Ming Chinese military classic, Jixiao Xinshu (New Book of Effective Discipline), may have been among the documents that were researched and used to create the Sok Pyungjang Tosul (Revised Illustrated Manual of Military Training and Tactics). The Sok Pyungjang Tosul was probably the basis for the Mu Yei Do Bo Tong Ji (Manual of Martial Arts Training), the document that contains the sword forms used in Haedong Kumdô.

The Mu Yei Do Bo Tong Ji

The Jixiao Xinshu was a text on wuyi (Chinese martial arts) written by the Ming general Qi Jiguang in 1561, and history suggests that the Koreans acquired the document by dubious means during the latter stages of the Imjin War (1592–1598), which was fought with the assistance of the Ming against the Japanese forces of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. It is doubtful that the Ming would have freely given up such an important military document to the Koreans, especially when a mere thirty-six years later, in 1636, the Qing (Manchu) Chinese forced the capitulation of King Injo and demanded Korean troops to assist in the subjugation of the Ming. The Sok Pyungjang Tosul was probably based on a copy of the Jixiao Xinshu, while the Mu Yei Do Bo Tong Ji, composed in 1790 and containing sections on armed and unarmed combat, as well as cavalry and infantry tactics, is a copy of the Sok Pyungjang Tosul. The sword forms used in modern Haedong Kumdô were gleaned from those contained within the Mu Yei Do Bo Tong Ji.
Hankuk Haedong Kumdo students Glen Koen and Ron Mottern from the Round Rock (Texas) Kwan practice techniques from Sangsu Kumbup and Yedo Kumbup. (Courtesy of Ron Mottern)
Methods of Using the Sword in Haedong Kumdô

Haedong Kumdô uses various kumbup (methods of using the sword), which are composed of different pumsae (solo forms). The kumbup historically used different types of swords and taught different skill sets.

_Ssangsu Kumbup_ is a method of using the sword with two hands and primarily focuses on techniques against a single opponent. This is the beginning method of practice. _Shimssang Kumbup_ is a more advanced form and teaches the practitioner how to draw an opponent into his strategy and defeat him. _Yedo Kumbup_ traditionally used the Chinese straight sword (_jin_) and lighter, shorter swords (_hwandô_ and _dando_), and contained many techniques for close fighting against multiple opponents. _Bonkuk Kumbup_ refers to forms that were indigenous to Korea and contains techniques that were representative of the Korean method of swordsmanship. _Chedok Kumbup_ used a very long, heavy sword with a straight blade. _Wuisu Kumbup_ is the method of using the sword with the single hand, and is prerequisite for learning _Ssang Kumbup_, the double sword method. Ssang Kumbup uses two short swords, a long and a short sword, and two long swords. _Wae Kumbup_ is the method of using the Japanese sword. Most modern practitioners use swords similar to _waegum_ (Japanese swords), which are more readily obtainable. There are, however, certain groups within Korea that still create and train with the traditional swords. _Jangbaek Kumbup_ is a highly advanced form that contains many indigenous techniques.

Formation of the Hankuk Haedong Kumdô Yunmaeng

Modern Haedong Kumdô is represented by the Daehan Haedong Kumdô Yunmaeng (Republic of Korea Haedong Kumdô Federation) and the Hankuk Haedong Kumdô Yunmaeng (Korean Haedong Kumdô Federation). The Daehan group is led by Kwanchang Nim (Grand Master) Kim Jung Ho, and was the parent organization of the Hankuk group. In 1962, Kim Jung Ho began his training in Haedong Kumdô from Jang Baek San. In 1982, he opened the first Haedong Kumdô dojang (training hall) in Anyang, Kyunggi province. In 1990, Kwanchang Nim Nha Han Il and Kwanchang Nim Kim Yun Chae left the Daehan organization and formed the Hankuk Haedong Kumdô Yunmaeng. The split was cordial, and students of the two organizations continue to exchange techniques, ideas, and opinions in the pursuit of _Shimgum_ (the Way of the Sword).

Shimgum

Contrary to popular opinion, martial arts are not static paradigms. Those martial arts that exist today are dynamic systems of human interchange, an eclectic synthesis of adaptive forms that have been handed down through generations of teachers and students, all of whom have influenced the styles
through their perceptions, understanding, and communicative abilities. Martial arts are reflections of the cultures that create them, and as the cultures change, so do their martial arts. They are modified to meet the needs of the cultures as they grow and interact with other cultures. Martial combative forms are adaptive to pressures that exert themselves on and threaten a culture from without and from within.

Warfare between the Ming and Qing dynasties of China; the invasion of the Mongol hordes; Japanese encroachments on the Korean peninsula; political strife between the Three Kingdoms of Koryo, Paekje, and Silla; and constant battles with Chinese and Japanese pirates helped to shape muye do, generally, and Haedong Kumdô, specifically. However, while all of these forces exerted some form of influence on what is now called Haedong Kumdô, to say that Haedong Kumdô is Chinese or Japanese is incorrect. The Koreans have a propensity for assimilating things from alien cultures and making them uniquely Korean. This is true of kumdô. The Koreans combined their own indigenous sword forms (Bonkukgum) and philosophies with those of external origin to create Shimgum.

Shimgum is the soul of Korea, a way and manner of wielding the sword that reflect the hearts and minds of the Korean people. It is the distilled essence of the collective martial experiences of the Koreans throughout their long history. But Shimgum is more than a philosophy and a training method. It is the external expression of the Korean soul and character. What is contained within the heart and mind is reflected without through Shimgum.

Paldo/Chakgum

An example of Shimgum is the practice of paldo/chakgum. Paldo/chakgum is the practice of drawing the sword, cutting, and returning the sword to its scabbard (kumchip). In Haedong Kumdô, paldo are used to open the pumsae and chakgum are used to close the sets. Paldo/chakgum are also taught as individual pumsae, outside of the kumbup. Most of the paldo/chakgum used in Haedong Kumdô are derived from Japanese iaidô kata (forms). It must be remembered, however, that while the origins of these forms are alien to Korea, they are studied as a part of Shimgum. Iaidô is an art form and kendo is a sport. While these arts are the legacy of martial forms, they have long been divorced from their practical martial heritage. The All Japan Kendô Federation did not formalize the seitai gata (representative forms) for iaidô until 1968. Additional forms were added to its curriculum in 1980 as a result of dissatisfaction among kendo practitioners who felt the required forms were inadequate to learn true swordsmanship. Haedong Kumdô has made a concentrated effort over the years to avoid becoming solely an aesthetic art form or a popular sport. Shimgum is a martial art.
Although its movements are aesthetic, they are naturally so, deriving their grace and fluidity from the flow of martial ki (energy) throughout the body and the sword. The techniques used within Shimgum retain their martial purpose and effectiveness.

With the adoption of the chukdô (bamboo practice sword) for use in kendô, martial techniques were usurped by sporting pressures. Techniques began to evolve around the point-scoring possibilities presented by the lighter bamboo sword, techniques that could not be performed with the real steel sword. Haedong Kumdô uses the chukdô as a training device in yaksuk kyukgum (sparring) for the purpose of safety. The techniques are not, however, altered from their proper form when employing the chukdô. As the practitioner advances, the same kyukgum are performed with the mokgum (wooden sword) and, eventually, with the chingum (real sword). The essence of Shimgum is contained within chingum kyukgum (sparring with the real sword). Emphasis is therefore placed on combat effectiveness and on the correct handling and control of the sword. As used in Haedong Kumdô, paldo/chakgum fosters Shimgum by retaining martial techniques and mindset while facilitating an understanding of the true nature of the sword and of man.

The Future of Hankuk Haedong Kumdô
Under the leadership of Kim Yun Chae, of the Hankuk Yunmaeng, and Kim Jung Ho, of the Daehan Yunmaeng, Haedong Kumdô continues its expansion across the globe. There are currently several hundred dojang teaching Haedong Kumdô throughout the world. The American Federation of Hankuk Haedong Kumdô was established in February 1997 in Round Rock, Texas. In March 1998, the American Federation of the Daehan Haedong Kumdô was established in New York. Kim Yun Chae and the Hankuk Haedong Kumdô Demonstration Team have made several visits to the United States over the past few years in preparation for expanding operations into the United States. There are plans to begin development of a Haedong Kumdô instructors’ training center in the United States in 2001.

Ron Mottern

See also Korea

References
T’aek’kyŏn

T’aek’kyŏn is a Korean martial sport that emphasizes foot and leg techniques. In the modern game, a player can win by making an opponent fall down with a sweep, trip, or throw, or by kicks to the head or face. It is distinguished by its evasive and dancelike footwork. In the twentieth century it has come to be seen as a living link with Korea’s past, distinct from foreign influence. It has also provided a historical reference point for modern martial arts in Korea. T’aek’kyŏn was recognized by the Korean government with the title of Intangible Cultural Asset in 1983.

The origins of t’aek’kyŏn are highly speculative, though it probably has its roots in Chinese practices imported to Korea. If so, it is so far removed from those sources that it does not resemble anything identifiably Chinese. The name t’aek’kyŏn does not appear in Korean records until the latter part of the Yi dynasty (1392–1910), though there are many prior references to something called subakhi, “hand strike contest,” which specialized in hand and fist techniques. There are comparatively few references to t’aek’kyŏn. The first that is known is in the Chaemulpo, or Book of Treasures, written by Yi Sŏng-ji ca. 1790. It includes a passage that states that Subakhi had come to be called Tak’kyŏn by the time the book was written. Though there is no direct evidence, it seems reasonable to assume that Tak’kyŏn and t’aek’kyŏn are identical. Other historical references to Tak’kyŏn describe something that greatly resembles modern t’aek’kyŏn.

Concerning the possible connection of Subakhi to t’aek’kyŏn, besides the statement in the Chaemulpo, other evidence points to a relation. Among the t’aek’kyŏn techniques that have been preserved, there are several variations on punching techniques. A number of these are designated under the category of yaet pŏp, or “old skills.” This seems to fit in with the notion that Subakhi changed over time, its preference for hand techniques being replaced with foot and leg skills, thus requiring a different name. The name “old skills” itself seems to suggest an awareness of this process.

Current knowledge of t’aek’kyŏn comes from two general sources: ref-
ferences to it in literature and art of the Yi dynasty and the memories of those who learned and practiced t’aek’kyŏn in the first decade of the twentieth century, before the Japanese colonization of Korea. There are only two written sources that convey the specifics of t’aek’kyŏn before the twentieth century. One source is Korean Games, by the American anthropologist Stuart Culin, published in 1895. The other is Haedong Chukchi, or East Sea Annals, a work of history by Choi Yŏng-nyŏn, published in 1921. There is also a painting by Yu Suk, completed in 1846, called Tae K’wae To (Scene of Great Cheer), which appears to be showing a t’aek’kyŏn match.

Based on conclusions drawn from the extant material, t’aek’kyŏn was an activity of the common people. Also, it was practiced primarily as a game or sport, although it did have combat applications. The poem in the Haedong Chukchi conveys a clear sense of admiration for the skills involved and implies that those skills were not minor. Probably because it was associated with entertainment in a broadly social context, a notion arose that Tak’kyon promoted, or at least coexisted with, vice, disorder, and dissipation, which led to its formal prohibition. That this prohibition was not, and probably could not have been, complete accounts for the survival of t’aek’kyŏn to modern times.

Living knowledge of t’aek’kyŏn comes almost exclusively from one man, Song Tŏk-ki. Song was born in Seoul in 1893. He began learning t’aek’kyŏn around 1905, at the direction of his father. According to Song Tŏk-ki, t’aek’kyŏn was practiced almost exclusively by the common people: shopkeepers, farmers, peasants, and gangsters. Its practice was restricted to the area of Seoul.

T’aek’kyŏn at that time was practiced in two general ways: as a game and as a form of combat. In its play form, it could resemble a sport, with teams, rules, and an organized procedure, or it could develop as a simple match between two people. It was most common on the occasion of large social occasions. Along with ssirum, t’aek’kyŏn was an important part of seasonal festivals in Seoul. T’aek’kyŏn also could be employed as a fighting system. As such, it existed primarily among gangsters, or their precursors. Song had experience in both types of t’aek’kyŏn.

There was no conventional training system for t’aek’kyŏn. It had no formal ranking structure, and there were no prearranged patterns to aid in learning or personal practice. Given its status as a social, public activity, people were probably able to learn t’aek’kyŏn piecemeal, at random times and places with different teachers. One who wished to learn might imitate those he saw practicing and eventually participate in games, without ever having had any formal instruction. According to Song Tŏk-ki, however, serious students learned t’aek’kyŏn in organized groups under specific teachers, as in his experience. Most importantly, t’aek’kyŏn itself clearly had a
distinct identity, with a common form and hence common techniques: *pumbalki*, triangular footwork; *hwalgaejit*, general hand and arm movements for deception, blocking, and grabbing; *sonkisul* (or *sonjil*), hand and arm techniques, including both open- and close-fisted strikes, traps, grabs, and grappling moves (head-butting is included in this category, presumably because one grabbed an opponent behind the neck to pull his head forward); *palgisul* (or *paljil*), foot and leg techniques, including both striking and pushing kicks, trips, sweeps, stamping, and others.

T’aek’kyôn was entirely a standing art. In the game, techniques were performed with pushing instead of striking force. When it was used for fighting, however, all techniques were used with power.

In 1910, Korea was annexed by Japan. Although the Japanese discouraged the practice of t’aek’kyôn, for several years Song still managed to practice with smaller groups, but pressure from both his family and the police finally compelled him to quit. Though there was some surreptitious practice during the occupation, it was rare and involved very few people. It would seem, however, that though its practice was formally prohibited, it was not actively suppressed. It did not disappear so much because of harsh repression as because its practitioners needed to look after themselves during a harsh time and hence had neither the leisure nor the inclination to practice their skills.

Korea was liberated in 1945. The Korean War followed in short order, from 1950 to 1953. The first opportunity Song Tôk-ki had to demonstrate t’aek’kyôn after Korea’s independence was on March 26, 1958. This was the birthday of Yi Sŭng-Man, then president of Korea. For this occasion, Yi wanted to see displays of Korean fighting arts. Song heard of this and accordingly volunteered to give a demonstration. Because of the event, Song achieved a moderate amount of recognition.

The first step in the development of modern t’aek’kyôn occurred in 1964 when Sin Han-sŭng read a story about Song in the *Hankuk Ilbo* newspaper. Sin was born in 1928. As a child, Sin had seen t’aek’kyôn being practiced at his grandfather’s home, though he himself had never learned it. By 1964, he had experience in *ssiruˇn*, Western wrestling, *jûdô*, and *T’aegwondo* (taekwondo). He had become interested in traditional Korean martial arts, and the newspaper article about Song gave him his chance to learn.

Sin opened his own school in Chungch’u in 1973. Sin’s main goal over the next several years was to get government recognition for t’aek’kyôn as part of Korea’s cultural heritage. He also worked to spread and modernize the art so as to ensure its survival. To this end, he worked on creating a standardized training system for it. This system, when completed, had four parts. The first consisted of individual exercises, both standing and walking. The second consisted of partner exercises, demonstrating the application of techniques in the first set as well as introducing new ones. The third
section consisted of competition, and the fourth a form, which was a compendium of all the fundamental techniques involved in competition.

Sin was criticized for some aspects of his system, particularly the form. Some claimed that it altered the original style of t’aek’kyön, as taught by Song Tök-ki, too much. Several of these critics, who had also studied with Song, went on to establish their own associations. Even so, Sin is generally given credit for having done the most to preserve and spread t’aek’kyön. It would never have attained government recognition without his efforts. Song Tök-ki and Sin Hhan-sùng both died in 1987, twenty days apart.

There are two ways to approach the influence of t’aek’kyön on Korea and Korean fighting arts. The first is the view that it had direct, technical connections with the modern styles. The second is to concentrate on its conceptual influence—that is, the associations and images that the name t’aek’kyön evoked. The first view has generated controversy. The most disputed is the view that taekwondo grew directly out of t’aek’kyön. In Korea, the leaders of the present t’aek’kyön associations disavow any direct connection with taekwondo. Experiential knowledge of t’aek’kyön can be conclusively traced to a very few individuals, and none were linked to those who later went on to establish taekwondo.

T’aek’kyön’s conceptual influence is a much different matter. Those who grew up during the Japanese occupation and immediately after may have heard of t’aek’kyön through older relatives, but probably never saw it. Hence, the notion of t’aek’kyön as the Korean way of fighting grew in the popular imagination, even among those who had never seen it. People knew that at one time there had been a way of fighting called t’aek’kyön that specialized in kicking. References to t’aek’kyön had the effect of calling up associations with Korean life before the occupation and the war, a life of which only traces remained. Song Tök-ki himself, as a survivor from that time, evoked the old life as well. T’aek’kyön still retains these associations. It is this sense of history embodied in the name t’aek’kyön that has most influenced modern Korean martial arts. When the name taekwondo was suggested as the new name for the martial arts practiced by the various Korean schools in the 1950s, it was to connect these arts with the popular memory of t’aek’kyön and the associations that it called up. In these references, Korean fighting meant fighting mostly with the legs, a notion that probably contributed to the emphasis on kicking in modern taekwondo.

Whatever its presence in memory, t’aek’kyön itself is still somewhat obscure in Korea, and there are relatively few schools teaching it. Many Koreans identify the name with taekwondo, associate it with Chinese martial arts, or simply are unaware of what it might be. There are signs that it is growing more popular, with t’aek’kyön clubs in most large universities and competitions broadcast on national television.
Each t’aek’kyōn association in Korea has a slightly different approach to competition, but the differences are largely minor. There are two varieties of the game. One is the kind of informal match that occurs in a gym as part of a class. The other is the more formal competition that takes place at tournaments. It is usually played on mats, identical to the kind typically used for jūdō. Players wear traditional white Korean clothes (hanpok). There are no rounds. A match continues until a player loses or until a time limit elapses. The judges and referee then decide the winner. Hand techniques are restricted to pushes, grabs, and traps. Grabbing the opponent’s clothes is not allowed. Among the associations and even within them, a wide range of contact is permitted. It is typically medium contact, though using higher levels is usually not penalized. No protection of any kind, such as gloves or protective vests, is worn. There are two ways of scoring. One is to cause the opponent’s knee or any part of the body above it to touch the ground. The other is a clean kick to the head or face. For a head kick to score, it must clearly cause the head to move. Only push kicks to the body are formally allowed. Such kicks do not score unless they directly cause the opponent to fall down.

The most distinctive quality of t’aek’kyōn in practice is its footwork, called pumbalki. Players continuously step in a triangular pattern, shifting their weight and position. The object of this footwork is never to have a foot in one place for long and to be prepared to move a foot from its position if it is attacked. Hence, t’aek’kyōn footwork has a rhythmic, dancelike quality. Another reason for this footwork is to facilitate evasive movements in all directions. T’aek’kyōn has very few blocking skills; evasion is preferred. The feet should be kept close, since wide steps provide more opportunities for attacks, particularly sweeps. There are many kinds of sweeps and kicks. A distinctive feature of all kicks in t’aek’kyōn, besides the front thrust kick, which is not allowed in competition, is that they are performed with pushing rather than striking power.

The preferred response to kicks is to trap them, then follow with a sweep to the opponent’s supporting leg. Trapping is accomplished by bringing the hand over or underneath the kick, going with its force. The parts of the body subject to grabs are usually the neck and the shoulders. If a sweep is attempted, a player pulls the opponent’s neck in the opposite direction of the sweep. When attempting a throw, a player grabs an opponent around the neck with one hand, pressing the arm to the side at the elbow with the other hand. There are also pushing moves, usually around the shoulders and ribs; however, the two most common pushes are against the throat.

The old hand strikes come in two categories: strikes against the face and head and against the body. With one exception, strikes to the head are all open-handed. Targets include the nose, front and side of the jaw, cheeks,
ears, and forehead. There is also a hammer-fist strike to the temple. Another technique is to scrape down the face, pushing at the same time. Strikes to the body are always punches, to the solar plexus or armpits, for example. The t’aek’kyŏn repertoire also includes a set of hand and arm motions called hwalgaejit. One can use them to confuse or distract an opponent.

There are currently four t’aek’kyŏn associations in Korea. Each of them was established by people who had studied with both Song tŏk-ki and Sin han-sŭng. They stress different aspects of t’aek’kyŏn, though their differences are minor. Each of them is growing, and it appears that the future of t’aek’kyŏn is ensured.

Michael Pederson

See also Korea; Korean Martial Arts, Chinese Influences on; Taekwondo

References


Taekwondo

Taekwondo (Korean; hand-foot way) is a Korean unarmed combat system whose traditional history traces its ancestry back 2,000 years. It is a native Korean fighting art, although in the latter part of the twentieth century it has been influenced by other fighting systems, most notably Shōtōkan Karate from Japan. In its current form, taekwondo exists in both sport and combat variants. One of the most popular martial arts in the world, it is one of the newest Olympic events and became a full-medal sport in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia.

There is evidence that the ancestors of the modern Korean people settled the peninsula and had developed tribal societies as early as 2000 B.C. By A.D. 500, three distinct kingdoms had emerged in the area: Koryo, Paekje, and Silla. These three kingdoms were often in a state of civil war, with China, the dominant power in the region, offering one side or the other support in an attempt to retain influence over the region. This influence from without became a common theme in Korean history, with Japan and Mongolia making invasion attempts as well in later centuries.

Both armed and unarmed martial arts were practiced by warriors of
these three kingdoms. Silla, despite being the smallest of the three, was eventually able to unify the entire peninsula by 800. Tradition attributes part of the success of the Silla kingdom to the practice of martial arts by a specific branch of the military known as the hwarang, which can be defined as the “flowering of manhood.” Hwarang soldiers were expected to be proficient in all areas of the martial arts, both armed and unarmed, as well as to demonstrate loyalty to the ruler and uphold the Confucian values of a civilized society. Tradition has compared the hwarang to the samurai of Japan and the knight from the medieval period of Western European history, both of whom were expected to follow warrior codes of behavior. The collective martial arts of the hwarang were known as hwarang-dō (the way of the flowering of manhood).

The country fell into disunity again in 900, but was later unified under the Koryo dynasty and became known as Koryo by the beginning of the millennium. From the time of the unification of the nation until about 1400, the Korean martial arts entered into a period of expansion, experimentation, and development. Oral tradition maintains that hwarang-dō continued to be practiced and expanded by the hwarang warriors. The martial arts of t‘aek‘kyon, primarily a kick-oriented martial art, and subak, a fist-oriented
martial art, also became popular with the aristocracy and commoners alike. These two martial systems were to endure into the twentieth century. Despite repeated invasion attempts and influence by the Chinese, and a successful invasion by the Mongols, Korea maintained a large degree of independence and continued to develop its own unique culture.

During this time period also, the traditional history maintains that Chinese martial arts exerted a major influence on the Korean systems. Most important for the development of taekwondo, the contacts with China also included contacts with experts in northern systems of Chinese boxing. These northern systems were famous for their kicks, many of which were incorporated into Korean systems. Perhaps the most famous of these kicks is the so-called flying kick, known today as a jumping side kick.

In 1392, following the expulsion of the Mongols, the final Korean dynasty was established, the Yi dynasty. The Yi rulers began a systematic program of eliminating martial arts from society, with the result that martial arts practitioners and the hwarang are alleged to have taken their arts to remote locations, such as Buddhist monasteries, for continued study and practice. Korea also entered an isolationist period. So successful were the results that Korea eventually became known as the “hermit kingdom.” Toward the end of the nineteenth century a vigorous and expansionistic Japan made inroads into Korean sovereignty and eventually annexed the nation outright in 1910.

The harsh Japanese occupation lasted until 1945. The use of the Korean language was banned, Korean citizens were forced to take Japanese names, and Korean institutions of learning were closed. However, this repression created a backlash of renewed interest among Koreans in traditional Korean arts, including martial arts, which were often practiced secretly. However, Koreans also studied Japanese martial arts during this time period, including karate, jūdō, and kendō.

With the end of the occupation, Koreans began to reassert their sovereignty and identity, and an understandable resurgence of Korean martial arts took place. With the division of the peninsula into the Communist-dominated north and the American-supported south in 1948, and the beginning of the bloody Korean War in 1950, there began an even greater push for reinstatement and development of Korean martial arts.

The Korean martial arts received a massive boost in popularity when several Korean stylists, including t’aek’kyŏn practitioners, gave a demonstration of these arts before South Korean president Syngman Rhee in 1952, during the height of the Korean conflict. So impressed was Rhee with the demonstration, he immediately ordered all Korean troops to be trained in these arts. There also began a push for the unification of these fighting arts.
In 1955, General Choi Hong-Hi, known as the “father of modern taekwondo,” unveiled the art of taekwondo to the Korean public. General Choi and several other practitioners took the fighting arts of several schools, or kwons, and unified them into a single fighting art. Some kwons (e.g., Tang Soo Do) did not participate in this unification. General Choi also took several of the kata from Japanese karate, most notably Shôtôkan, and adopted them into taekwondo. General Choi took the name taekwondo, in part, because of the resemblance of the name to t’aek’kyôn.

The Korean conflict brought many United States military personnel into Korea and exposed them to the art. Some Americans remained in Korea after the end of the conflict in 1953 and received teaching certification in taekwondo, later returning to America to teach the art.

Jhoon Rhee formally introduced the art to America in 1956, founding the first taekwondo academy in San Marcos, Texas. By the 1960s, the art had spread worldwide, into the Middle East, Taiwan, Canada, and Western Europe. With the outbreak of the Vietnam War, many more Americans were exposed to the art while stationed in Korea, which helped to account for a surge in popularity in the 1970s, when returning American service personnel brought the art with them. Taekwondo continued to expand worldwide in the 1980s, moving into the newly open societies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Taekwondo received exposure when the art was entered as a demonstration sport at the 1988 Olympics in South Korea. Today, it is practiced by an estimated 20 million persons worldwide.

Information on the fate of taekwondo in North Korea is sketchy at best. It is known that North Koreans do practice taekwondo, along with other Korean martial arts, but given the highly secretive nature of the
North Korean regime, it is impossible to tell at the present time the popularity and development of the art in this region.

Taekwondo practitioners wear a uniform that resembles a karate gi, namely, loose cotton pants and a jacket. The Korean term for the uniform is *dobakh*. The major difference between a gi and a dobahk is that the dobahk is a one-piece vest that does not tie together, but rather is worn like a shirt. There is black piping around the edges of the uniform to help distinguish them from karate uniforms. They also tend to be made of very light material, since there is no grappling in taekwondo and thus no need for the uniforms to be sturdy enough to be grabbed. A belt is worn signifying rank. Their are ten ranks below that of black belt, known collectively as the *gup* ranks. Beginners start as white belts, until finally the black belt, or *dan*, ranks are attained. There are ten levels of dan rankings.

Taekwondo is, as the name suggests, a striking art and is characterized by an emphasis on kicking techniques. Taekwondo is one of the few martial arts in which practitioners are expected to execute kicks to high targets, most notably the head. While sometimes criticized as being ineffective for street or combat situations, these kicks form an essential element of the art. For Olympic-style training, kicking is emphasized above punch-
ing, as it is successful kicks that will give a competitor the most points and help to achieve a knockout.

Taekwondo kicks can be divided into six major types of kicks. The first type, usually the first learned by beginners, is the front kick. As the name suggests, this kick is delivered when the front of the body is facing an opponent. The striking areas on the foot are the ball of the foot or the instep, depending on the target. The leg and foot are positioned vertically, so the kick itself will travel vertically.

The second type of kick is the side kick. A practitioner kicks to the side, lifting the leg horizontally and thrusting the leg out. The entire bottom surface of the foot is used as a striking instrument, although sometimes in competition only the ball of the foot will be used. This kick can also be directed to the front. This is accomplished when a practitioner turns his body ninety degrees to the front while delivering the kick, thus adding the impetus of the rotation of the hips to the kick.

The third, most commonly used type of kick in taekwondo is the roundhouse kick, comprising approximately 70 percent of the kicks thrown in taekwondo competition. The striking area of the foot most commonly used is the instep of the foot, although the ball of the foot can also be used if greater striking power is desired. The practitioner will throw a roundhouse kick in the same manner as a side kick. However, instead of throwing the foot straight out, the kick is thrown by swinging forward the lower portion of the foot. The kick therefore travels horizontally.

The fourth major type of kick is the ax kick, sometimes known as the falling kick. The ax kick is thrown when the practitioner is facing his opponent. The leg is lifted straight up, almost vertical, with no bend at the knee. When the kick reaches its maximum height, it is brought down with tremendous force. The striking power of the entire bottom of the foot is used, although for extra power the heel alone can be employed.

The fifth and sixth major kicks used in taekwondo, the back kick and wheel kick, are the kicks for which taekwondo has become famous worldwide. Both of these kicks employ the spinning of the body, only unlike the type of spinning for roundhouse and side kicks described earlier, these kicks spin backward. This torquing effect produces an extremely powerful force that, when added to the momentum of the kick itself, produces a tremendous striking force. For a back kick, the body is turned 180 degrees, and the striking leg is lifted up and then driven straight back. The entire bottom of the foot is employed as the striking surface, with the stomach and solar plexus as the main targets. For a wheel kick, the body spins in the same manner as for a back kick, only in this case the leg is snapped out and held straight and the spin is completed for a full 360 degrees. The entire bottom of the foot is used as a striking surface, although for extra
power the heel alone can be used. Thus, the spinning motion of the body and the snapping motion of the leg combine to create the energy for the strike. The primary target for this kick is the head, and most knockouts in competition occur because of this kick.

In addition to these kicks, which are performed with one foot on the ground, taekwondo adheres to a philosophy that any kick that can be performed while one foot is on the ground can also be performed while jumping. Thus, in addition to the kicks that have already been described, there are jumping versions of the kicks. These jumping kicks are extremely powerful, as the force and momentum of the leap itself are added to the power of the kick. These kicks are obviously more difficult to employ than the basic kicks, but advanced practitioners are expected to be able to throw jumping kicks as well as the standing variants. Advanced taekwondo practitioners routinely employ these kicks in competition and combat, despite their inherent difficulty.

One of the most remarkable kicks used in taekwondo is the 360-degree roundhouse kick. With this kick, the practitioner jumps and spins the body a full 360 degrees while simultaneously snapping the foot out horizontally.

Reliance on kicking as the primary source of attack is the trademark of taekwondo. The major philosophy behind this martial art is that the feet can be used as dexterously as the hands for attacking an opponent, and because the legs are stronger and have greater reach than the arms, the feet are ideal as attacking weapons. This philosophy is reflected in the tremendous variety and variations of kicks that are available to a taekwondo expert.

Hand techniques are also taught, although they are sometimes secondary to the kicking techniques. The most utilized technique is the straight punch, much like the type of punch used in many systems of karate. With this technique, the punch is thrown straight, beginning from a “cocked” position at the chest with the fist pressed next to the body, knuckles facing the floor. The arm is then extended and the fist rotates so that the knuckles are pointed toward the ceiling at the completion of the technique. This turning motion increases the power behind the technique. Other hand techniques include knife-hand blows, made with the edge of the hand; spear-hand strikes, made with the four fingers of the hand extended so that the strike uses the points of the fingers; and clawing attacks, made with the hand in a claw formation.

There are currently various organizations and rules for sport taekwondo competition worldwide, but the most well known are Olympic style and non-Olympic style. Olympic-style rules are rules of competition used in international and Olympic events. Olympic-style competitors are required to wear head protection, which covers the head but leaves the face exposed; chest protectors, which protect the sternum, stomach, solar
plexus, and ribs; and groin protectors. Although the amount of protection is extensive, knockouts and injuries still occur in Olympic-style competition, which attests to the power of the kicks used in the art.

Olympic-style competition consists of three rounds of three minutes each. Competitors enter a fixed area in the shape of a square with four corner judges and one center referee. This box is referred to as the “ring,” a term borrowed from boxing. The center referee has complete authority over the match; at his word the competition will begin and end. The four corner judges will keep track of points earned by the competitors for a technique and will also determine whether a point is “clean” or not at the request of the center judge. There is no stopping the clock in Olympic-style competition; competitors will continue until one is knocked down, until the center referee stops the match (in which case the time is halted), or until the clock runs out.

In Olympic-style competition, competitors must throw all kicks at waist-high and above. The only hand techniques that are allowed are punches, and these are only allowed to be thrown at the chest; punches to the face or groin area are not allowed. All types of kicks, so long as they are at waist height or above, are allowed. Any punch or kick that is thrown must have enough power behind it to force the recipient back from the force of the blow. “Touch” hits or hits that stop short of the target without impact are not permitted in this type of competition and will not be scored. The judges will make an inventory of points scored by a competitor. Strikes to the head from a kicking technique are worth more than kicks to the chest. The six types of kicks described earlier in this entry compose the vast majority of the kicks used in Olympic-style competition. Spinning kicks are used extensively because of their knockout power. The competitor with the most points at the end of a match, or the competitor who knocks out his opponent, is the winner. Competitors are not allowed to run out of the competition ring; those competitors that do so run the risk of having points taken away if these actions continue. Olympic-style competition is similar to amateur boxing in many respects.

Non-Olympic-style competitors usually must wear the same equipment as Olympic-style players. The major difference between the two systems is that under non-Olympic rules, after a hit is scored against an opponent, the clock will be stopped while the technique is evaluated. If the majority of judges agree that a technique scored, the competitor will be awarded a point and the match will continue. Kicks to the head are worth more than kicks to the body, just as in Olympic-style competition. When an opponent has accumulated three points, the match is ended. If the clock runs out, at three minutes, the match ends also and the person with the most points wins. In case of a tie, a “sudden death” overtime is played, and the first person to
score a technique wins. As in Olympic-style competition, running out of the ring is not allowed. In some forms of non-Olympic competition, competitors do not wear protective gear (although groin protection is required), and practitioners are only allowed to make light contact when striking.

Forms competition is also an event in some taekwondo tournaments. The forms are known as hyung or poomsae. Competitors perform a form, and a panel of three judges scores the competitor. Factors that are used in awarding points include the precision of techniques, especially kicks; the condition of a competitor (indicated by not being winded after the end of a sequence); the focus of techniques; and mental attitude. Obviously, forms judging is more subjective than sparring, with the judges having much more input into how and when points are awarded.

Taekwondo also places an emphasis on breaking. Practitioners are expected to be able to break wood and, at higher levels, concrete. Although breaking techniques are emphasized in other martial arts, most notably Kyokushinkai Karate, taekwondo practitioners are expected to be able to break at least one board with every type of kick. Thus, taekwondo practitioners will learn breaking techniques not with just a few techniques, such as a punch, but rather with all of the types of kicks. A student who climbs the ranks is expected to be able to break boards with advanced kicks, including jumping wheel kicks and back kicks. This is designed to teach the student accuracy and power in kicking techniques.

Taekwondo, perhaps more than any other martial art, has been featured in countless movies and television productions. Bruce Lee studied and copied taekwondo kicking techniques for incorporation into his movies, most notably Enter the Dragon. Chuck Norris, although a Tang Soo Do practitioner, made the kicks of Korean systems famous worldwide with his movies from the 1970s and early 1980s and his long-running American television series, Walker: Texas Ranger. There is now scarcely a Hollywood action film that does not include some sequence or fight scene that features the art.

Taekwondo has emerged as one of the major martial arts of the twentieth century. It is likely that as the art becomes an established Olympic sport, it will continue to grow in recognition and popularity. However, the art has been criticized as having become too much of a sport, with the predictable result that many of the techniques that enabled taekwondo to become an effective martial art in the first place, such as strikes to the vital points of the human body, will become forgotten as taekwondo practitioners instead focus their energies on how to score points in tournament fighting. This has already led to the development of what some have termed traditional taekwondo, in which emphasis is placed on hyung (forms) practice and self-defense, and equal weight is given to the practice and development of punches and kicks, as compared to Olympic-style taekwondo, in which
emphasis is placed on tournament fighting, especially kicking. Whether this new development will prove successful is as yet unknown.

Whatever the eventual fate of taekwondo, it is likely to remain one of the most popular martial arts. The spectacular kicks of the art are now almost synonymous with the term martial arts. Taekwondo, since its formation in the 1950s, has always been eager to accept new techniques, especially kicks, that fit into the philosophy of the system. It is likely that more varieties of kicks and combinations of kicks will be developed as the art continues to evolve, thus making it a martial art in constant development.

Gene P. Tausk

See also Korea

References

Tai Chi Ch’uan

See Taijiquan (Tai Chi Ch’uan)

Taijiquan (Tai Chi Ch’uan)
Taijiquan is a profound and varied Chinese martial art and health regimen with a set of core principles, movements, and exercises. Because it has had popularity in various parts of China for several centuries and has broad appeal even today, it represents many things to many people. Taijiquan is a health regimen based on traditional Chinese medicine. It is also considered by many as the ultimate martial art with smooth, fluid, graceful movement that represents Daoist (Taoist) concepts of naturalism.

A member of the neijia (internal) school of martial arts, taiji is appreciated as a form of meditation and centering in motion. Some devoted practitioners value taiji as a metaphor upon which to model Daoist attributes as a base philosophy to attain control over their lives. Some seek out taiji as a means of restoring lost health or controlling chronic illness. For many, it is just playful recreation or a way of socializing. Finally, for others, it may serve any combination of these functions.

Taijiquan’s origins are not easily outlined. Myth, legend, and oral tradition link a body of philosophical thought going back many centuries to a distinct set of physical movements and training practices that can be
traced to the seventeenth century. Written texts attributed to the eighteenth
century, discovered in a salt shop in the nineteenth century, are augmented
by the then-current scholarly thought of martial artists living through tur-
bulent times in Yongnian, located in Hebei province. When taiji became
popular in Beijing at the turn of the twentieth century, these writings, per-
ceptions, and practices were solidified and adopted by all major styles and
branches of the movement.

The very term *taiji* comes from the Zhou dynasty and an anonymous
text, the *Yijing* (*I Ching*; the Book of Changes). Over three thousand years
ago, the author wrote, “In all changes exists taiji, which cause the two op-
posites in all things. The two opposites cause the four seasons, and the four
seasons cause the eight natural phenomena.”

Laozi, in about the fourth century B.C., wrote the Dao de Jing (*Tao-te
Ching*), a text explaining the Dao, the nature of things and underlying prin-
ciples. Through applying the principle of noncontention, one learns to mas-
ter others.

Others labeled as contributors to the philosophic transmission include
the philosopher Fu Xi, and even the reclusive poet and explorer of mysteri-

Another famous Daoist, Zhang Sanfeng, is said by many to have been
the actual founder of taiji. What is confusing is that records from Wudang
Mountain, a stunningly beautiful place that has been the center of Taoism
since the seventh century, include two Zhang Sanfengs—one from the twelfth
century and another from the fourteenth century. Legends first written down
in the 1867 *Ma Tungwen* manuscript, and adopted for many years by the
Yang Family, credit Zhang Sanfeng as creator of taiji. In fact, most taiji man-
uals from 1921 on credit Zhang Sanfeng as the founder without research.

According to legend, Zhang Sanfeng of the twelfth century was on the
road while besieged by bandits and took refuge on Wudang Mountain. The
spirit of Wudang Mountain came in a dream and taught him a new method
of fighting, taiji, and he easily defeated a hundred bandits. The Zhang San-
feng of the fourteenth century is said to have been a “mad” alchemist
searching for immortality by observing tortoises and cranes, two long-lived
creatures. One day he observed a crane and snake fighting, and from this
graceful battle he came up with the Thirteen Postures of Taiji.

Both Zhang Sanfengs have been the subjects of many popular books
and motion pictures. Both men combine the spiritual cultivation of Taoism
with the skills of *wushu*, but historians have found no direct clear links.

What is clear is a body of skills from Wenxian County, Henan
province, that represents the beginnings of all major forms of taijiquan.
This includes physical forms and training practices stemming from the sev-
enteenth century and some clear writings and supporting historical data.
Tang Hao (1897–1959), after research in the 1930s, determined that Chen Wangting of Chen Village created much of what we know now as taijiquan. A garrison commander in the 1640s, who successfully led his local troops into battle “beating back bandits” (Zhaohua Publishing 1984, 3), he was a famous and successful martial artist in his day.

After the downfall of the Ming dynasty, Chen Wangting retired from warrior life and withdrew from society. According to a poem he wrote before he died, he did “field work when the season came, created boxing forms when depressed, and in leisure time taught disciples and children to be worthy members of society.” He also mentions the book Huang Ting, a Daoist text on breathing, mind, and movement (Zhaohua Publishing 1984, 3).

In addition, a book by General Qi Jiguang, The Canons of Boxing, constituted a significant influence. The general lived a half century before Chen Wangting, and compiled a book from sixteen popular fighting styles. Twenty-nine of the thirty-two movements from the book are found in the various Chen Family routines, and the first two movements are the first movements of the Chen bare-handed forms.

Chen Wangting’s contributions, which distinguish Chen Family boxing from external styles, include the yi lu (the long sequence that is the basis for traditional Yang, Wu, Hao, and Sun style sequences) and tui shou
push-hands, a type of sparring using light touch and redirection of force, developing greater efficiency and sensitivity). This type of sparring allows the development of important fighting skills without injury; it may also be applied to weapons, for example, “sticky” spear techniques. Chen Wangting’s other contributions are the incorporation of qigong exercises (called “silk reeling”), the use of spiraling movement, and the application of concepts of traditional Chinese medicine.

Some recent scholars have suggested another source for taiji’s origin besides Chen village: nearby Zhaobao village and the mysterious Jiang Fa from Shanxi province, whose heyday was a quarter century before Chen Wangting’s. There has been a further attempt to link Jiang Fa back to Zhang Sanfeng. Whether Jiang Fa’s martial arts influenced Chen Wangting’s, or Jiang Fa had a relationship dating back to the well-known Daoist, most scholars agree that Wenxian County is the origin of the original routines and training methods.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, a young man named Yang Luchan went from his home of Yongnian, Hebei province, to Chen village as a servant. There he learned taijiquan, and later returned home, where he became known as “Yang the Invincible.” Several of his students include the three Wu brothers, two of whom were local magistrates and scholars, Wu Chengqing and Wu Ruqing, and one a superior martial artist, Wu Yuxiang. All loved martial arts, and unlike Yang, were literate. Wu Yuxiang was briefly a student of Yang, and then, because Yang held back teaching, he went back to Chen village and Zhaobao village for training with Chen Qingping.

Yongnian was a breeding ground for great martial artists, and this was a turbulent time. The eldest Wu brother found a text in a salt shop, attributed to Wang Zongyue from the turn of the nineteenth century. It was entitled A Treatise on Taijiquan. Prior to that time, taijiquan was referred to as Changquan (long boxing), or the Thirteen Movements. Wu Yuxiang, his brothers, and a nephew, Li Yiyu (and later Yang Banhou), worked on this manuscript to produce what are now known as the Classics. This body of work, consisting of approximately forty texts, expounds the philosophical and practical methods that most taijiquan schools claim as basic, common, and uniting. It includes, among other discussions, commentaries on sparring, the eight gates and five steps, the thirteen postures, the taiji circle, and qi circulation.

Yang later moved to Beijing, taking a post with the Qing government teaching martial arts. He simplified some of the Chen movements. His sons, especially Yang Banhou, continued his work, and later Yang Luchan’s grandsons (from his son Jianhou), Yang Shaohou and Yang Chengfu, became famous for their skills, and their additions to the art, too.
Yang Chengfu made the form smooth, large, and broad, popularizing it for young and old. It is his style of performance that is most popular today internationally. His style is most often referred to as Yang Style, although there are still scattered pockets of people performing sequences that are attributed to earlier members of the Yang family.

Back in Yongnian, Wu Yuxiang created what is now known as Wu (or Hao) style from his studies with Yang, his training with Chen, and his study of the classics. This style is compact, simple, small in frame, and quite upright. Li Yiyu taught Hao Weizhen (1849–1920). In the capital, Wu Quanyou, a Manchu by birth and a student of Yang Banhou, created an elegant, medium-framed style referred to as Wu (different character and tone from Wu/Hao). It was passed on through Wu Jianquan (1870–1942) and is also quite popular.

Hao taught the famous Sun Lutang (1861–1932). Already a well-known martial artist at the turn of the century, the latter created a new style of taijiquan, Sun, incorporating xingyiquan (hsing i ch’uan) and baguazhang (pa kua ch’uan), which, like taijiquan, are considered internal arts based on similar principles. The Sun is a very distinctive style, still being taught by his daughter, Sun Jianyun, and gaining popularity.

In 1928, Yang Chengfu traveled to Nanjing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, and Hankou and taught taiji. This trip, plus the many people taught by the Yang Family in Beijing who migrated to other parts of the country, helped to popularize taijiquan throughout China. It was also in 1928 that Chen stylist Chen Fake (1887–1957) moved to Beijing and began teaching.

By far the five most popular styles of taijiquan are Yang, Wu, Wu/Hao, Sun, and Chen. Other, less popular, styles include Five Star, Buddhist, and Fu Style.

In the 1950s, the People’s Republic of China sponsored committees that designed easier, shorter forms to bring taiji, and especially its health effects, to the masses. The first of these forms is the Simplified Twenty-Four Form, based on the Yang form. It eliminates repetitions of sequences and cuts difficult movements. It takes only five minutes to perform, versus twenty minutes for the traditional form. Later forms include the Eighty-Eight Movement Form strictly based on the Yang form, the Sixty-Six and Forty-Eight Movement Combined Forms with elements from the five popular styles, and Thirty-two Sword. Also, because of government sponsorship, taijiquan is an official division of sports wushu. Competition in forms, like the International Forty-Two Empty-Hand and Sword Forms, has become popular, and it appears probable that taiji will be a demonstration sport in the Olympics of 2008.

As one effect of this government sponsorship, many traditional
schools have changed training methods and are now using simplified shorter forms first, to encourage beginners’ progress. Some have even developed their own shorter competition forms. The results are evident, as taiji has gained tremendous popularity in China. Japan, Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe, the United States, and Canada have ever-growing numbers of taiji practitioners.

Taiji is generally practiced as forms or sets consisting of a series of connected and continuous postures performed very slowly. The slow practice of the art results in technique becoming refined, balanced, and strong. Fast sets also are performed, but only in certain schools, and only after one has gained some degree of proficiency at the traditionally slow sets. Both empty-hand and weapons forms are practiced individually, but may be practiced with a partner as well.

Training in push-hands is taijiquan’s form of sparring. It is the logical extension of the solo forms of taijiquan. The principles learned in taijiquan are applied in push-hands. Push-hands practice allows a person to perfect the ability to yield and to let go of all that is nonessential in any interaction or confrontation.

Other individual practices include Zhan Zhuang (Standing Post Meditation) and sets of qigong, including the popular Eighteen Movement Taiji Qigong. Some modern schools repeat individual movements as a set of basics. A few schools practice seated meditation and breathing exercises, which they later apply to forms.

Although not all schools still teach weapons, as they have fallen out of favor, most traditional styles still retain the weapons as part of the curriculum. They are used at upper levels of skill to improve balance, coordination, strength, and the correct use of jin (force). The gaze of the eyes, with concentration (or focus), forms the yi (otherwise known as intention). This in turn directs flow of qi (internal energy), which in turn manifests as jing (physical force/action). Training in weapons clarifies the use of legs and waist, which reinforces the empty-hand training. Weapons are beautiful, and exhibit a power that demands attention and appreciation. All taiji weapons techniques have certain common denominators: continuity and smoothness, power from legs and waist, and “stickiness” once in contact with the opponent’s weapon.

The major weapons include the jian, a double-edged straight sword. It is the most popular, but the most difficult of weapons to do well, and the favorite of aristocrats in years past. Quick, smooth, and accurate, it is said to be like a flying phoenix. The dao (broadsword or saber) is a curved single-edged weapon. Less sophisticated and more strength-oriented, it is the favorite of the common people. A chopping weapon, the dao is said to be like a fierce tiger. The gun (staff or cudgel) is a common weapon that uses
powerful larger, sweeping, striking movements. The spear is a poking, stabbing, long-distance weapon, the major weapon of the common foot soldier in ancient times.

Minor weapons show up in various styles and include the fan, a graceful, beautiful, and artful weapon of courtly life. The stick is a common walking traveler’s weapon. The fire wheel (or ring) is an old weapon making a resurgence in popularity.

Taijiquan and the other internal martial arts, called neijia, are to be considered with the external martial arts, waijia, among the various styles popularly referred to as gongfu (other spellings include kung fu and gung fu) and wushu. Wushu refers to the martial arts of China in general (but it can be meant as a specific modern sport). This term is inclusive of taijiquan. Kung fu, though popularly and erroneously referencing the martial arts of China, in point of fact simply means “excellence.” The character for the word kung fu consists of the characters for time and energy.

Though there is some dispute regarding the origins of the term internal martial arts, the internal martial arts have characteristics that distinguish them from the “external” styles, waijia. The “big three” internal arts, taijiquan, xingyiquan, and baguazhang, have the characteristics of being grounded, rooted, and balanced while expressing all techniques. The emphasis is on relaxation, calmness, and control. Since these arts are shaped by Daoist philosophy, yin and yang are clearly distinguished and yet harmonized in all movement. The mind’s intention, yi, directs internal energy, qi, manifesting as force, jing. Striking techniques tend to inflict internal injuries, less conspicuous to the eye, as opposed to the more obvious externally apparent injuries of the external arts.

External martial arts are much more numerous, and they are often those associated with the Shaolin Temple, Buddhist origins, and India (i.e., a source outside China). The most profound difference is that external styles emphasize developing as much speed and power as possible through training the body. This training includes developing speed in footwork and learning long-range techniques and specific strategies and timings. Double weighting (distributing the weight equally on both feet) is a feature of the external school of martial arts, whereas double weighting is virtually taboo in the internal schools.

The internal martial arts feature all of the techniques of the external arts, including punches, kicks, grappling (ch’in na), throws, breaks, locks, and sweeps, but the application of power is different. Taijiquan (sometimes translated as “grand terminus boxing”) is better adapted for short- and medium-range fighting than for distance fighting. This is in part as a result of its emphasis on utilizing the opponent’s own energy against the opponent.
Taijiquan is composed of a wide range of styles, and many variations are evident even within each particular style. Yang Chengfu outlined the Ten Basic Tenets of Taijiquan. Though his formulation of these tenets postdated Chen-style taijiquan, they still apply to the earlier Chen style and to all styles subsequent to Yang Chengfu’s Yang style. These ten basic tenets are in essence a summary of the Taiji Classics.

Styles vary in the depth of the stances, the size of the movements, flourishes, and the appearance of the release of power. In Chen style, for instance, emphasis is placed on the explosive release of power, referred to as fa jing. Despite these differences, the basic characteristics and tenets are a constant.

Kicks tend to utilize the heel of the foot rather than the ball of the foot. Hand strikes more often employ the palm, compared with the fist in most hard styles. Though the fist is an important weapon in taijiquan as well, the fist is closed loosely. The theory is that energy gets locked up in a consistently tightly clenched fist and steals energy from the punch. The view is that for every show of strength, there is resultant weakness. For strikes, more of the body is employed in taijiquan. For example, one of the essential actions of taijiquan is kao (bump) energy. Utilizing this force, one may use the shoulder, back, entire torso, or hip as a weapon.

Taijiquan was originally called the Thirteen Movements, but this does not refer to specific techniques of blocking or attacking. These are instead thought of more as eight energies and five directions. The energies are peng (ward off), lu (roll back), Ji (press), an (push), cai (pull down), lie (split), zhou (elbow), and kao (bump).

The first four of these energies are referred to as the “essential energies.” The latter four are the “four corners,” referring to the directions of the compass, northeast, southeast, northwest, and southwest. The remaining five directions are advance, retreat, gaze right, look left, and central equilibrium.

The jing (power) of these techniques is manifested by the propagation of qi (internal energy) from the ground, into the leg, gathered at the dan-tian, passing up through the spine, and then manifested out through the relaxed weapon, be it the hand, elbow, shoulder, sword, or other channel. This energy travels in a spiraling fashion, often referred to as silk-reeling. Ultimately, the body acts as a whip with the handle of the whip being the foot, rooted to the ground.

This root, as it is called, is the foundation of a taijiquan practitioner’s stability or balance. It is accomplished by relaxing all of one’s weight into one of the lower extremities, thus allowing gravity to do the work of stabilizing the body. The Chinese character for song (relaxing) is best interpreted as “sinking.” It is by sinking into the lower extremity that root is es-
The earth’s energy/force is then transmitted up through a point in the center bottom of the foot just behind the ball joint of the third toe, a point called the yong quan (bubbling well). Root is established by taking on the configuration of a triangle with its base on the ground; thus, the emphasis turns to developing the lower extremities, especially the thigh muscles. This is as opposed to external styles, where there is more emphasis on developing strength and power in the upper body.

Though relaxing/sinking into a leg (a yin activity) may appear passive, it illustrates paradoxical concepts and realities working in conjunction with one another, so very typical of taijiquan, which has its origins in mystical Daoism. Sinking or relaxing into the leg is a physical metaphor of the spiritual concept of “action without action,” wuwei. Though there is no active muscle contraction when the player relaxes into the leg, the muscles of the leg are contracting on their own in a balanced and natural fashion, without conscious intent. Wuxin (no mind) is a core principle of all martial arts. The yin activity of sinking is counterbalanced by the yang activity of suspending the head. The result is stability elicited by the top of the spine being pulled up (to heaven) and the bottom of the spine pulled down (by the earth’s gravity). The spine then serves as an individual’s axis being pulled from above and from below, and from which all actions and forces emanate.

The peng (ward-off) energy of taijiquan is construed by some as the most basic of all of the energies in the martial art, giving taijiquan its character. Peng energy distinguishes taijiquan from all of the martial arts in the external school. Master Hong Junsheng, a Chen stylist, states, “Taiji (Quan) is Peng Force” (Wu 2001). Taijiquan, contrasted to the external styles of martial art, is notable for its softness and roundness rather than a hard and linear character. Peng energy is expansive and round (like an inflating sphere), spiraling up from the ground. The energy spiraling up from the ground is accomplished by compressing into the yin leg, followed by decompressing the leg, as in the case of a wound-up spring being released. The energy is then transmitted, with the skeleton and its ligaments and joints serving as the conduit for the energy. It is the slight concavity of the chest with the upper back slightly rounded, along with the opening of the joints in the upper extremities, that gives the taijiquan player the sense of holding an expanding sphere. If someone were to push on or place the arms around someone exhibiting peng force, there would be the sense of contacting an inflated rubber ball. This force serves to deflect or bounce off incoming force. This is the nature of peng.

In Daoism, it is said that from the wuji (Void) comes the One manifested creation—Taiji. The One begets the Two (yin and yang), and the Two beget the Three. From the Three come the Ten Thousand Things, the

Taijiquan (Tai Chi Ch’uan) 625
myriad of manifestations in creation, that is, the realm of all possibilities. In taijiquan the other action energies and applications of the various postures are to be viewed as points along a continuum of an infinite number of possible responses to an opponent. One is never committed to any particular action or application, and like water, one can change in an instant, depending on circumstances. Water—with its soft, formless nature—is considered by the Daoists to be the strongest force in nature, able to blend, following the path of least resistance, and to wear away even the hardest of objects without itself being harmed. In metaphorical fashion, the taijiquan fighter strives to follow the example of water.

The mainstay of partner practice is push-hands (tui shou), a type of sparring exercise. Kicking, punching, striking, and joint-locking, although implied, have been removed to eliminate serious injury. The setup of unbalancing, throwing down, or projecting the opponent away is emphasized and cultivated. Because this safe method of martial skill development uses little space and no protective gear or special clothing, this martial art is easily pursued by two persons at any place and at any time.

This practice may take many forms that range from quite fixed, gentle, and cooperative routines to an aggressive “freestyle” that may resemble smooth, standing forms of judô or wrestling. Initial training should always be cooperative, safe, and prearranged, and emphasize sensitivity and sticking to the partner’s movement. One learns to “feel” the partner’s force—whether it is weak or strong and where it is solid or empty—so that one may react properly, placing the partner at a disadvantage.

Popular push-hands practice forms include:

*Stationary Two-Hands.* This deals with basic lead-hand pushing and neutralizing, coordinating hand pushes with body movement, especially from the waist. These are fairly square-on attacks.

*Four-Hands Practice, both stationary and stepping.* This deals with the actions of peng (ward off), lu (roll back), Ji (press), and an (push), the first four of the eight energies previously mentioned. It is more difficult to learn, and more interesting to practice. Again, it develops skills against attacks from the front.

*Big Roll-Back (Da Lu)* This deals with an opponent attacking from the corners, and is a method of practice of the other four of the eight energies: cai (pull down), lie (split), zhou (elbow), and kao (bump).

*Freestyle Push-Hands.* This may also be done stationary or moving. It refers to a wide range of practice, from skilled players running through the previous routines in a spontaneous and lively manner to actual competition of unbalancing, projecting, and throwing down the opponent. Some schools, such as Chen style, practice a very vigorous, competitive form of this push-hands practice.
Choreographed two-person sets are also considered a form of stepping push-hands. Some taiji schools include an intricate eighty-eight-movement set, some have shorter sets, and others have no choreographed sets, believing this to be an ineffective training method for the time involved in learning.

In push-hands, a confrontation is balanced out, and complementing rather than matching or superseding an opponent’s force negates an aggressor’s action. This “yielding” is not passive. Just enough force is used to maintain contact with the opponent, allowing for the neutralization of the aggressor’s force. Though one gives up what is nonessential, one maintains one’s root, center, and integrity. (It is also the total relaxation of the body involved in yielding while maintaining structure that allows qi to circulate fully through the body and thus to stimulate optimal health in the process.)

By blending with the opponent and matching the opponent’s force, that is, by balancing yin and yang, the defender becomes one with the opponent. This is accomplished by zhan nian jin (sticking energy) and ting jin (listening energy). Utilizing these energies, a defender can sense what is going to happen before the actual occurrence. One is also then more sensitive to and more aware of the position and characteristics of one’s own body at any instant in time. The result is a state of pure awareness, and without judging the situation, one knows oneself and has knowledge of one’s opponent.

As a function of push-hands practice, taijiquan emphasizes blending rather than speed, softness (“like steel wrapped in cotton”) and roundness rather than hardness and linearity. Change is harnessed rather than controlled and created. In taijiquan a defender uses the attacker’s force to unbalance the opponent, then strikes, pushes, or in other ways attacks the opponent. The taijiquan defender utilizes the aggressor’s energy against the aggressor by “enticing the opponent to advance, causing the opponent to fall into emptiness, uniting with the opponent, and then throwing the opponent out”—Yin jin, luo kong, he ji chu.

Once an opponent enters into the defender’s space and finds momentum allowed to continue on, it is difficult for the opponent to change intent and action. The result is the aggressor becoming uncentered, uprooted, and off balance, allowing for defense with minimal effort: wuwei (effortless effort).

Taijiquan is an art of coming to terms with paradox (yin and yang) in accordance with Daoist mystic traditions (as well as others). As Laozi put it in the Dao de Jing (Tao-te Ching): “Yield and overcome: Bend and be straight.” The Taiji Classics reiterate in one form or another, “Seek stillness in motion and find motion in stillness.”

With the arrival of morning light, tens of millions of Chinese head to parks and squares, by lakes, near trees, even in free spaces between buildings, to practice taijiquan, other styles of wushu, and qigong. It is a com-
mon sight for visitors to China, and one that is slowly becoming more common in the West, and not just in Chinatowns.

The strikingly odd yet calming images of slow-moving groups in perfect synchrony have permeated the Western consciousness as well. Senior citizen centers, martial arts schools, and health clubs throughout North America are developing taijiquan programs. Even Madison Avenue advertising firms have recognized the power of taijiquan. Using images of taijiquan players in the background to attract our eye, they pitch their products in the foreground, even during the halftime of the heavily watched Superbowl.

Yet, though we are exposed more and more, there is much confusion here in the West, and sometimes as much in the East. As taijiquan gains popularity as exercise, self-defense, and healing art, researchers in both the East and West are delving into the origins of the art, its healing nature, its martial nature, and the effects of practice.

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See also Boxing, Chinese; External vs. Internal Chinese Martial Arts; Ki/Qi; Medicine, Traditional Chinese; Meditation; Religion and Spiritual Development: China

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Thaing is a Burmese term used to classify the indigenous martial systems of ancient Burma (now Myanmar). The word thaing loosely translates as “total combat.” Moreover, as the loose translation stipulates, the label encompasses the range of combatives that have been systematized in Burmese martial tradition: bandô, banshay, lethwei, naban, and other ethnic or tribal fighting systems native to the region. Beyond the martial elements of thaing, practitioners are enjoined to incorporate ethical principles such as humility, patience, tolerance, integrity, loyalty, courage, knowledge, physical and spiritual strength, and love of family.

Traditional styles of thaing are associated with specific ethnic groups. Styles that have been identified in the literature include Burmese, Chin, Chinese, Kachin (or Jinghpaw), Karen, Mon, Shan, and Talaing. Forms of thaing have been reported among hill tribes such as the Wa, but little is known of their characteristics except that they have a shared worldview with the Kachin.

Traditional styles are subdivided into systems or forms named for (and adopting the mythical characteristics of) animals such as the boar or the python. Generally twelve animals are incorporated into a given style, but there are exceptions, such as the Kachin system, which uses sixteen.

Records of conflict among the various ethnic groups that have resided in the area of Myanmar (Burma) abound both in oral and written accounts. Accounts of this fierce competition for territory and resources begin with the Pyu in antiquity but start becoming historic rather than legendary during the eleventh century A.D., when King Anawrahtar organized lower Burma into a sovereignty as the Pagan Empire (after its capital at Pegu, not its religious beliefs).

In the Pagan Empire, martial arts were one of eighteen subjects mastered by aristocrats. Warfare was endemic, so ethnic groups also began to systematize the combat tactics appropriate to their environment and cultural heritage. Variation was introduced by differences in language, culture, geography, and religion. For example, some cultures were animists. So, after killing a living being, either human or animal, the head was removed to free the spirit and honored as a trophy. (This practice persisted at least into...
the beginning of the twentieth century among the Wa and well into the mid-twentieth century among the Kachin.) Others were Buddhist, and so there were prohibitions against unnecessary killing.

Accordingly, the development of thaing needs to be viewed in the context of movements of ethnic groups such as the Shan, Mon, Karen, Arakanai, and Kachin through the mountainous area where Tibet, Yunnan, Burma, and India meet. The Kachins, for example, have a well-developed oral tradition of migration from their ancestral home, the Majoi Shingra Bum (Naturally Flat Mountain), which was possibly located in eastern Tibet. The Karens also have a tradition that they passed through the mountains on their way to lower Burma. Meanwhile, in neighboring Manipur, India, the Meiteis (who comprise 60 percent of the population) are of Tai origin and famous for their practice of martial arts. While this may owe more to Hindu than to Tibetan influence, the primary Manipuri art thang-ta is closely tied to dance and ritual practice. Likewise, the equally Tai hill tribes of Nagaland (north of Manipur) have related martial traditions.

Traditions from Yunnan province, which is where the Tai had an empire into the thirteenth century, also may have links with thaing. For example, as recently as 1928, Miao doctors were reported as boxing, fighting with sticks and knives, and practicing qigong (exercises for cultivating internal strength often associated with martial art training). While much more research is required into the subject, the historical connections among martial arts in the area are intriguing.

How these interconnections probably came about is that during the thirteenth century, Kublai Khan overthrew the Nanchao, or Tai, states in Yunnan. This caused Tai refugees to retreat into Manipur, Nagaland, and the Irrawaddy and Menam valleys, and over time they established a number of states, including one that later became Thailand. Moreover, the Naga who entered the Kachin state were often assimilated into Jinghpaw clans. Jinghpaw oral narratives suggest a natural affinity between the two groups.

Meanwhile, King Narathihapate of Pagan executed a Mongol ambassador carrying Kublai Khan’s demands to Burma and even had the audacity to directly attack China. So for the next 150 years Burma and Mongol China were almost constantly at war, either with one another or with the various Tai states.

That said, lethwei only entered the oral traditions of this struggle during the eighteenth century. Specifically, according to Thai tradition, in the 1770s a Thai prisoner of war, Nai Khanom Tom, was awarded his freedom after he defeated a dozen of his Burmese captors in boxing matches. In contrast, Burmese tradition maintains that Nai was the consummate politician, ingratiating himself at the Burmese court to such an extent that he was al-
lowed to train in the royal fighting arts. This dedication to learning, his negotiating skills, and a perceived pro-Burman attitude (which induced his captors to believe he could further their cause among the Thai) led to his release.

From 1811 to 1815, Burmese rebels hiding in British India led raids into Burma. The British did little to prevent this, so between 1819 and 1823 the Burmese sent military forces into British-controlled Assam, Manipur, Cachar, and Bengal. In 1824, the East India Company had had enough, and responded by declaring war on Burma. Rangoon was occupied without resistance, the Burmese agreed to pay indemnities, and in 1825 the British withdrew.

However, this defeat embarrassed the Burmese government, and revolts followed. Meanwhile Anglo-Burmese relations continued to deteriorate, and there was a second Anglo-Burmese war in 1852–1853. During this war the British East India Company annexed Pegu province. Finally, in 1878, Burmese insurgents attacked Manipur, and this led to a third Anglo-Burmese war in 1885. That in turn led to the British annexation of all Burma in 1886, followed by a decade of guerrilla warfare.

British rule over Burma lasted until World War II; its most famous policeman was probably Eric Blair, who in 1934 published the novel *Burmese Days* under the pseudonym George Orwell. During their administration, the British outlawed headhunting and instituted a campaign intended to
stop guerrilla warfare; this included prohibiting training with swords and spears. Thus the British occupation started a progressive decline in the Burmese fighting arts.

Ironically, however, in 1933 the British-supervised Ghurka Rifles attempted to revive unarmed systems of Burmese traditional fighting. Forming the Military Athletic Club, nine Gurkha officers combined knowledge of the Burmese arts with what they knew of the Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and Nepalese martial arts (i.e., the native arts of the countries from which the Ghurkas were recruited into the British army). The result was called bandô.

During World War II, the Japanese occupied southern Burma, but the British and Indians continued to fight in the mountains using Chinese military and American logistical assistance. (This area was home to Claire Chennault's Flying Tigers in 1941, and subsequently the famous “Burma Road.”) During the war, the mountain tribes were generally loyal to the Allies, and in the process demonstrated formidable military skills. The Jinghpaw, for example, who fought with American troops during the war, in spite of retaining hostility toward the British, cooperated with them out of a greater hatred for the Japanese occupation forces.

The role played by the Jinghpaw (still known to the Allies as Kachin) is representative of that played by the hill tribes. OSS Detachment 101 worked with a force of 11,000 Kachin tribesmen who reportedly killed 10,000 Japanese at a loss of only 206 of their own. U.S. military personnel came to appreciate the Kachins as natural guerrilla fighters. So great was their skill (developed, in part, through practice of thaing), that the Kachin method of attack and ambush came to be emulated in the tactics of U.S. special forces teams such as the SEALs and Green Berets.

In 1946, nine survivors of the Military Athletic Club formed the National Bandô Association (NBA) in Burma. Their eclectic background is indicated by the ethnicity noted following their names: Abehananda (Indian), C. C. Chu (Chinese), Has. K. Khan (Pakistani), U Zaw Min (Burmese), G. Bahadur (Ghurkan), U Ba Saw (Karen), Duwa Maung (Lisu), Boji Mein His (Arakanais), and U Ba Than [Gyi] (Burmese). As the senior military officer, U Ba Than (1883–1968) was elected president.

In 1948 the British granted independence to Burma. The new government refused to join the Commonwealth, and shortly afterwards both Karens and Communists led rebellions. Although it was at first a close contest, the central government retained power. Nevertheless student unrest in the cities and guerrilla warfare in the countryside have continued into the present. Given this ongoing turmoil, reliable information on the state of thaing in Myanmar in general and among the Kachins and Karens in particular is difficult to obtain.
Branches of Thaing

Bandō, the most widely known of the various subdivisions of thaing, means “way of discipline.” Practitioners train to master physical and psychological strategies that develop hardness. Physical hardness is developed by rigorous conditioning exercises, including punching lightly padded tree trunks with the intent of punching through the object rather than stopping at physical contact. Other exercises include tearing through bags of rice and rock to condition the hands for gouging. Controlled competition is encouraged because it allows the practitioner the opportunity to use techniques at full speed, to get used to the physical demands of combat, and to simulate the stress and uncertainty of real conflicts. And, while adaptable for the ring, bandō’s fighting tactics are based in the concept of a life-and-death struggle. Therefore, a traditional curriculum includes various aggressive techniques typically banned from sport.

Mental hardness is created through a philosophy that encourages the acceptance of death. The process of accepting and embracing the worst is said to lead to liberation from fear and to the willingness to fight for total victory.

Toward this end, students are taught from the beginning that there is no substitute for physical fitness. They are further instructed that movement through or around threats and attacks is almost always the safest strategy. As a consequence, mobility skills (stepping, slipping, dodging, and rolling) are primary tactics. Blocking, parrying, and breaking are practiced as methods of defense. Offensive methods include a variety of striking and grappling methods.

Banshay, the Burmese term used to describe armed methods, is an integral element of thaing. Handheld traditional Burmese weaponry includes a variety of wooden and bamboo armaments. Examples include a small, pocket-sized stick held in a closed hand with a portion either jutting from the underside or top of the fist, short and midsized batons (dhot), walking staffs, clubs, spears, and shields. Also utilized are hosts of edged weapons, including knives, machetes (including the kukri, with its angled, curving, forward-weighted blade), swords (dha, whose blades vary from thick, Malay-style blades to sleeker versions similar to those used by other Southeast Asians), battle-axes, and fighting spears.

Projectile weapons such as the bow and crossbow also play a role. For example in the Glass Palace Chronicle, a Prince Sawhti, who was trained in archery by a hermit bow master, rescues the kingdom of Pagan from four giant monsters (a bird, a boar, a tiger, and a squirrel) by means of his skills as an archer.

Ropes, chains, belts, whips, shoes, and clothes also are included in the banshay arsenal.
Lethwei is the Burmese boxing system. Its repertoire includes all manner of unarmed techniques, and practitioners claim that it is a more complete system than the similar Muay Thai. Weapons include elbow and fist strikes; foot, leg, and knee blows; head-butts; and trips, sweeps, throws, and ground strikes.

Although Muay Thai converted to boxing gloves during the 1930s, hand wraps continue to be used in lethwei. Tradition plays a role in this. For example, among the Kachin the fighters’ hands are traditionally bound in hemp cloth wraps used to wrap deceased relatives.

Lethwei contests are often associated with festivals and generally are accompanied by music. Matches are decided by a competitor’s being knocked out or submitting, or by the referee stopping the match. The rules have remained very much the same since the eighteenth century.

Suppressed during British rule, lethwei experienced a renaissance in the 1990s. Not simply a sport, lethwei has practical defense applications and is used to develop a foundation for thaing.

Naban is the Burmese grappling system. It utilizes palm and foot strikes along with grappling techniques (including joint locks, pressure points, and chokes) to control and thus render an adversary unable to continue fighting. Commentators have characterized naban as practical in its tactics and strategies because it stresses compliance and eventual submission. Attacks are allowed to any part of the body, and there are no illegal targets in naban.

Thaing contests traditionally allow any strike or submission technique, with the exception of biting (this was probably because of the rate of death due to infection from bites), and matches have ended in death or disability.

Contemporary Developments
Two traditional styles of thaing survive in Myanmar—the Karen “School of Seven Arts” and the Mon “School of Nine Arts.” With government approval, tournaments and exhibitions have been held regularly since the 1990s. National student sports festivals, along with European and Asian imports such as boxing, karate, and taekwondo, regularly include thaing, with both men’s and women’s divisions. Information on the nature of these competitions is not readily available, but it is likely that the style is based in the eclectic NBA system.

In addition, lethwei was resurrected in Yangon (Rangoon) in the 1970s. Described as a “vicious combination of wrestling, boxing, jūdō, karate and gymnastics with its most deadly technique being the high kick” (“Burmese Boxing . . .”), its matches are nonetheless accompanied by music. Therefore these events probably resemble Muay Thai matches, without the formalities of rounds or weight classes.
Outside Myanmar, thaing is represented by two styles: the eclectic American Bandó Association and the Kachin style.

The American Bandó Association (ABA) system, founded and currently headed by Dr. U Maung Gyi, incorporates not only traditional thaing, but also a range of Asian and Western combat systems. This eclecticism, of course, characterized the NBA, parent system of the ABA, as well.

In keeping with the general practice, the NBA/ABA animal systems incorporate both striking and grappling techniques. In this style, the animal forms are said to teach the psychological (rather than exclusively the physical) attitudes of the animal after which the system is named.

The following animals with their characteristics represent the NBA/ABA style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Form</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Boar</td>
<td>courage, rushing, elbowing, kneeing, butting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bull</td>
<td>charging, tackling, power striking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cobra</td>
<td>attacking upper vital points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Deer</td>
<td>alertness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Eagle</td>
<td>double-hand blocking and striking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Monkey</td>
<td>agility, confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Paddy Bird</td>
<td>rapid flight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Panther</td>
<td>circling, leaping, tearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Python</td>
<td>crushing, strangling, gripping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Scorpion</td>
<td>pinching and seizing nerve centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Tiger</td>
<td>clawing, ripping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Viper</td>
<td>attacking lower vital points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Draeger and Smith 1981, 157–158)

Unlike the NBA/ABA style, the Kachin style, currently headed by Phil Dunlap (inherited through his grandfather, William O’Shaunessy) has not consciously sought to incorporate nonindigenous elements into its curriculum. At least initially, the relative purity of the style was because of the isolation of the Kachin (also known as the Jinghpaw) territory. Moreover, the Jinghpaw intensified this separation by actively refusing to accept outside domination throughout the British colonial period and into the present. Due to decades of rebellion and drug wars (the rebellions are financed in part by opium sales), the current state of Kachin martial arts is unknown.

Nevertheless, the Kachin style is best understood from the perspective of the traditional Jinghpaw worldview, which includes their animistic religion. For example, the Kachin preservation of sixteen animal systems (as compared to the twelve cited by Draeger and Smith and the nine commonly taught by the NBA/ABA) is likely due to this animism.
Kachin animal systems embody both the physical and mental attributes of the animal described. Systems are further tied into human attributes as well, because it is believed that a fighting method must fit the individual’s nature rather than force the individual to conform to the system. As an example, the Bull system with its “charging, tackling, [and] power striking” is for a big, strong, aggressive person who likes to deliver punishment to an opponent and does not mind receiving punishment in return.

In a confrontation, the Bull will attempt, as far as possible, to remain at a distance from an opponent until the opportunity to deliver a devastating attack arises. The Boar is a smaller, quicker version of the Bull, for someone who attempts to get inside and work from clinching range. Lethwei is therefore said to be a combination of the Bull and Boar sets. Nevertheless, neither Bull nor Boar is simply a form of stand-up striking; they incorporate ground fighting as well. However, the ground fighting in these sets seeks less to grapple than to pin the enemy to the ground to be struck at will. Thus, during a takedown, body weight drives through the opponent’s legs and torso along with twisting and lifting slams.

In contrast, there are several Snake systems that are very supple, quick, and relaxed. For example, the Python subset is mostly grappling. Here the purpose of strikes is to stun so that the opponent can be taken to the ground for the finishing techniques. Python takedowns rely primarily on imposing one’s body weight on an opponent.

The Kachin style also includes a Monk system, which utilizes internal martial methods. Given the qigong practice reported in the histories of related groups such as the Miao, a Chinese heritage for this system is a tempting hypothesis. Practitioners, however, with backgrounds in yoga, xingyi quan (hsing i ch’uan), acupuncture, and qigong contend that the Monk system demonstrates more affinity to Indian yoga than to the Chinese internal arts.

Each method (“animal”) is a martial art in its own right, with its own techniques, specific exercises, and weapons. Before specializing, the practitioner trains for about five years in lethwei. Upon completion of this period, the student then trains in an animal system for the rest of his career.

Each animal, however, is part of a much greater whole. Nonfamily members learn an individual animal, but the family of the lineage holder learns an overall system that teaches the underlying concepts of each system. This makes it possible to exploit weaknesses inherent in a given animal or to fuse the combat techniques of the various subsets, ensuring that the family line of the lineage holder will be able to defeat all others in the group.

Summary
Via bandô, thaing has had an impact on martial arts in North America and Europe. It is (at least as conceived by contemporary Western society) a mixed
martial art. As a result, its methods adapt well to self-defense applications (civilian, military, and law enforcement) and the no-holds-barred circuit.

*Phil Dunlap*

**See also** Muay Thai; Southeast Asia

**References**


**Thang-Ta**

*Thang-ta* (Meiteilon; sword-spear) is the popular Manipuri name for a set of armed and unarmed fighting techniques developed by the Meitei people of the state of Manipur, India. The formal name for this martial system is *Huyen Lallong* (Meiteilon; art of warfare).

Bordered on the east by Myanmar (Burma), the state of Manipur (total area: 8,456 square miles) in northeastern India consists geographically of an oval valley of about 700 square miles surrounded by densely forested mountain ranges. Each of the various communities residing in the valley possesses its own distinct religious practices. The Meiteis have long been
the principal inhabitants of this valley. Their history is characterized not only by interclan and intertribal warfare and conflicts with Myanmar, Assam, and other neighboring kingdoms but also by long periods of stable government. Thang-ta, with its long and energetic practice sessions, allowed Meitei warriors to hone their combat skills in times of peace as well as war.

The story of the origins of thang-ta is embedded in the religious mythology of the Meitei community. In the mythology of the Meitei, the limbs and bones of the community’s progenitor, Tin sidaba (also called Pakhangba), are said to have turned into various swords and tools, some of which are used in thang-ta; others are used in certain rites. Tin sidaba’s ribs turned into the thangjao (broad sword) for instance, while one of his fingers became the heijrang (kitchen knife). Even today, each of the seven clans of the Meitei owns a distinctively shaped traditional sword that must be laid out during any event of ancestor worship. Leishemlon, the story of creation in Meitei mythology, records Pakhangba as the originator of thang-ta.

During the reign of King Khagemba between the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries A.D., thang-ta reached its zenith. Chainarol, a manuscript written in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries that contains glimpses of the prevailing war customs, suggests that warriors were expected to adhere to a strict code of conduct. For instance, when an unarmed man was challenged, he had the right to fetch weapons and to fix the date for the fight. During the fight, when blood oozed from a scratch or wound on any part of a combatant’s body, that combatant was declared the loser. Afterward, the combatants shared food and wine supplied by their wives. Then, the victor cut off the loser’s head and, if the loser had requested this service, cremated the loser’s body. Heads usually were preserved by victors as trophies of prowess.

Manipur, after losing the Anglo-Manipuri War, was annexed to the British Empire in 1891. In recognition of the heroism and skill of the Manipuri army, which was ably led by Major General Paona Brjabasi, the British immediately made it illegal for a citizen of Manipur to possess a weapon and outlawed the martial arts of Manipur, including thang-ta. Thang-ta went underground and was kept alive by only a few expert practitioners. After India gained independence in 1947 (Manipur became a territory of the Indian Union in 1949 and a constituent state in 1972), thang-ta slowly reemerged. Considerable controversy surrounds modern differences in thang-ta techniques taught by the various gurus (teachers); these differences may be attributable to the long suppression of this martial art by the British colonial power.

Today, thang-ta is popular in Manipur both as a martial art form and
as a technique used in theater and dance. Therefore, it receives support from the state and has gained widespread popularity. Across Manipur a number of martial arts academies train men and women in thang-ta, and many dance and theater schools include thang-ta among their course offerings. The performance of thang-ta techniques, as in the solo decorative sword dance or a choreographed thang-ta duel on the stage, has become common in Manipur. In fact, the professional Manipuri dancer is quite likely to have taken a few thang-ta workshops, and well-known Indian choreographers such as Astaad Deboo and others have collaborated extensively with thang-ta artists.

The traditional repertoire of thang-ta is divided into four broad categories. These categories are Ta-khousarol (art of spear dance), Thanghairol (art of swordplay), Sarit-sarat (unarmed combat), and Thengkourol (art of touch and call).

Ta-khousarol consists of nine extremely demanding and sophisticated movement sequences: Maram Nungshetpa, Maram Achouba, Maram Macha, Tangkhul, Athou Achouba, Thel, Maram Nungirongba, Kabui, Athou Chumthang. Each involves a series of moves executed in a specific order—salutation, removing stakes, watching the foe, battle, and so forth. The martial artist holds the ta (spear) in the right hand and the chungoi (shield)
in the left. The spear is made of bamboo, approximately 5 feet or more in length, with a blade attached on both sides. The spears used in present times are decorated with colored thread. The chungoi measures about 3 feet in length and 1 1/2 feet in breadth. It is usually black in color, with a motif painted on top.

Today, the spear dance is a popular solo performance piece for the expert martial artist, and Ta-khousarol techniques are used widely by drama directors and dance choreographers in Manipur.

Thanghairol encompasses two kinds of swordplay: Leiteng-thang (decorative swordplay) and Yanna-thang (combat swordplay). The expert swordsman carries a chungoi (shield) and three swords, namely, a yet-thang (right-hand sword), an oi-thang (left-hand sword), and a tendon-thang (additional sword); this last is kept at the back and used like an arrow in an emergency. In Leiteng-thang, the swordsman moves either two swords or one sword and the shield gracefully in a show of valor and virtuosity. A typical technique involves twirling two swords around the swordsman’s body so that they trace the path of a figure eight without ever touching one other. In Yanna-thang the swordsman learns to master the various units of Thanglon (language of the sword), which include blade-work and the accompanying footwork, so that the swordsman can defend against all modes of attack and counterattack. The thang is about 2 feet long, straight or slightly curved, with a handle made of brass and wood. In contemporary Manipur, Thanghairol is taught in martial arts academies and also seen frequently in theatrical productions.

Sarit-sarat consists of a series of techniques that must be mastered by every student. The training begins with different types of somersaults and various methods for rolling on the floor and later continues to include strategies of offense and defense without the use of weapons. This tradition focuses on using movements such as punching and kicking in strategic ways in order to deal with sudden attacks of any kind. It also includes unarmed fighting techniques for fighting an armed opponent. In stage performances of thang-ta, a popular theatrical piece is one showing a woman who defends herself against a male attacker by using the self-defense techniques of Sarit-sarat.

Thengkourol involves ritualistic movements that must be executed in sequence on the symbolic diagram of the paphal (coiled snake). The martial artist’s movements form patterns by connecting the points of the diagram with the feet. Rather than being a system of techniques used for direct combat with another human being or an animal, Thengkourol functions as a magical practice in which the prayer along with the mode of action performed brings about the desired effect on the enemy or the kingdom. The knowledge of Thengkourol is highly valued by the community,
and those warriors who possess this knowledge are believed to possess the ultimate knowledge of the art of warfare.

Very little information is available about Thengkourol. It is a sacred art, the knowledge of which is preserved in secrecy. It is never performed in public. Currently, only a handful of martial artists claim to know Thengkourol.

Although gurus sometimes disagree about the details of a Thengkou (one of the forms of the art), they concur on the overall idea. There are nine Thengkou: Akao, Leiphal, Leichai, Nongphan, Leikak, Leinet, Lankak, Akham, Leisbit.

The records of Manipur document occasions on which a series of Thengkou were performed to bring victory. For example, during the reign of King Garibniwaz, in the first half of the eighteenth century, Sarot haiba Toglen Wangkheirakpa, a noble, performed Akham Thengkou. Pandit Gopiram performed the Akham Thengkou during the reign of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra in the second half of the eighteenth century. The revered stories of these occasions have lived for generations in people's memories.

A student must be both the trusted disciple of a guru and over the age of forty before learning Thengkourol because it can bring destruction to others or even kill the performer. These strictures are meant to ensure that the martial artist has enough maturity and discretion to avoid misusing this mystical and dangerous sacred art.

The system of training in thang-ta is strict and bound by tradition. Training begins with the initiation ceremony, Ojha Boriba (teacher acceptance). On the auspicious day selected for the ceremony, the training ground is cleaned and candles are lit in front of the picture of the Pakhangba, the originator and ruling deity of thang-ta. The student is asked to meditate in front of Pakhangba and then to bow down and offer the teacher a gift of fruit, cloth (usually a khudoi, a locally woven garment worn by men at home), betel leaves, betel nuts, candles, and a token remuneration (usually one Indian rupee). The teacher accepts the gift and the student as a disciple, and that day the student officially starts training with the teacher. There are strict codes of conduct in the institutions. The following represent the disciplinary regulations of Hula Sindamsang, a school of thang-ta located in Imphal, Manipur.

1. The student must enter barefoot into the sindamsang (school) or the home of the teacher.
2. The student must bow in greeting to the teacher and elders who are already present.
3. The training floor must be well groomed and sprinkled with water before and after each training session.
4. Pregnant or menstruating women are not allowed on the training floor.
5. Before each training session, the student must bow to Pakhangba with reverence.

6. Before each training session, the student must bow to the partner and salute the partner with the weapon wielded by the student.

7. Before picking up a weapon (whether a sword, spear, shield, or stick), the student must touch it with the fingers and then touch the fingers to the forehead, thus acknowledging the sanctity of the weapon.

8. The student’s feet must never touch the student’s weapon or the partner’s weapon.

9. If any person comes between practicing partners, all practice must be stopped for the day.

10. All students must stand still when receiving the instructions from the teacher.

11. No student shall come to the school intoxicated. Chewing of betel and smoking are not allowed in the sindamsang or in the presence of the teacher.

12. At the end of a training session, the student must bow again to the teacher.

Such regulations ensure that students learn in a disciplined and controlled environment, an important factor given that the slightest lapse in concentration may result in injury or even death. Students learn and execute a rigorous practice routine of different sets of exercises, after having mastered basic exercises that develop balance, flexibility, agility, endurance, and coordination. Beginning students practice with sticks of different sizes. Training in the use of various swords, the shield, and the spear follows once the student is proficient enough to use actual weapons.

Thang-ta provided the basis for two other movement traditions of Manipur: the classical Manipuri dance and the performance techniques of the ensembles of drum dancers and cymbal dancers and singers known as Nata Sankirtana. The decorative, nonnarrative hand gestures and the footwork of Manipuri dance are said to derive from thang-ta. Also, the basic stances of the drum dance and the cymbal dance have been influenced by this martial art.

The ever-present threat of invasion by the warriors of Myanmar and other kingdoms fostered in Manipur a strong martial tradition, which gave impetus to a vibrant physical culture as well. Among the ancient indigenous sports of Manipur are Sagol Kangjei (polo, which the British learned in Manipur), Khong Kangjei (a type of field hockey), Yubi Lakpi (coconut snatching, similar to rugby), Mukna (a style of wrestling), and Kang (a team sport played indoors only between mid-April and June).

Sobini Ray

See also India; Meditation; Performing Arts; Religion and Spiritual Development: India

References


**Training Area**

A training area is a system-specific context in which training in a martial art takes place. The locations considered appropriate for training vary widely across the world’s martial traditions. The choices made may arise from traditional medical beliefs. For example, the masters of some Chinese systems recommend morning practice outdoors in order to promote health.
In other instances, historical and political contexts dictated hiding the practice of martial skills from the politically dominant behind closed doors or in secluded areas; it was for that reason that, according to oral tradition, Brazilian capoeira was practiced in slave quarters or in the bush and was disguised as dance. In India, the ethical concerns of the Northern Kalarippayattu gurus who do not want the dangerous art misused confine teaching to an indoor area at night.

Buildings designated as appropriate locations for martial art instruction are common in both European (e.g., the salles de fence [French; fencing halls] of the Renaissance sword master) and Asian (e.g., the guan of some Chinese boxing teachers) arts. In some traditions, such as the Japanese or Korean, a building (referred to in Japanese as a dōjō and in Korean as a dojang) whose use is restricted specifically to activities associated with martial arts teaching, practice, testing, or exhibition serves as the location for training. On the other hand, although the location for the instruction in and practice of the Indian martial art of Northern Kalarippayattu is also a building, the kalari (Tamil; battleground), this building also may be utilized by the martial arts master as the clinic in which traditional medicine is practiced.

Outdoor areas such as pits or even the shaded area behind the house of a guru are employed as training quarters in the Southern Kalarippayattu system of India, as in some other arts. In yet other arts, the notion of a training area is even more informal. For example, particular parks may provide the training grounds for some of the Chinese arts (e.g., taijiquan [tai chi ch’uan]) in order to allow practitioners to obtain the benefits of fresh air while going through forms, but this is a matter of customary practice rather than the consecration of the site, as is the case with the Japanese or Okinawan dōjō, for instance. In the traditional street capoeira of Brazil, certain public areas (most notably the plaza of the Roman Catholic Church of Senhor do Bonfim in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil) became traditional areas for practice, although these locations were used for a range of other social interactions, as well.

Although this is not universally the case, it is common cross-culturally to make of the training location something in the nature of sacred space, if only temporarily. The space commonly is marked by special behaviors on entering the area. Students bow or perform similar ritual acts when entering. Behavior in the Japanese dōjō (place for studying the way [dō]) represents the height of formality in this regard. Not only is the building itself entered with such special behaviors, but also an area of even higher intensity is created within the building itself. In a traditional dōjō, a kamidana (altar to the spirits) will be found in the front of the room. Photographs of founders of the system, master instructors, or legendary figures are clustered
on the front wall—along with national flags in many contemporary training halls. Hierarchy is signaled by positioning within the dōjō. The higher ranks line up facing the front of the training hall, with lower-ranking students lined up behind them; teachers stand at the front of the room facing students. The dōjō and the behaviors appropriate to it set the model for many other contemporary Asian martial arts and those non-Asian systems influenced by them.

In south India, a dynamic relationship is believed to exist between the students of kalarippayattu and their training hall, in that the building is analogous to a human body, while the students are the body’s animating spirit. One cannot exist without the other. Even abandoned training halls do not lose their sanctity. In ancient times, Howard Reid and Michael Croucher report that landowners commonly owned private kalaris. If the training buildings fell into disuse, rather than destroying them, owners had them converted into temples. Rituals such as lighting a sacred lamp every day marked the abandoned kari as sacred space.

Again, even in those systems lacking formal buildings for the practice of their disciplines, the symbolic use of space is obvious. Even in Southern Kalarippayattu, where outdoor areas rather than buildings are utilized, students of this art, like their northern counterparts, ritually honor deities as-
sociated with the kalari, and particularly Kali (the Hindu martial goddess), before they begin training. In capoeira, the roda, the circle of play formed by capoeiristas awaiting their opportunities to enter, is essentially created by the berimbau (the musical instrument used to accompany the jôgo—the martial contest of the art). The position in the roda occupied by the berimbau and by the mestre (teacher) constitutes a high-intensity area analogous to those noted in the Japanese dôjô. The pe do berimbau (foot of the berimbau) denotes the opening (the “door,” as conceived in this tradition) through which one must enter to play. This door should be approached in a crouch from the outside of the ring. To enter, players kneel, perform ritual gestures (perhaps making the sign of the cross familiar in Roman Catholicism), and enter the roda with an acrobatic flourish (e.g., a cartwheel) before beginning the jôgo. The phenomenon of creating a sacred space without resorting to physical structures suggests that the training areas of traditional martial arts are more properly regarded as conceptual rather than physical.

The martial tradition of framing training and contesting areas as sacred space, while not universal, is widely spread and tenacious. There is a reminder of this custom even in specifically nontraditional combat systems in the formalities that precede bouts.

Thomas A. Green

See also Koryû Bugei, Japanese; Religion and Spiritual Development: Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval West; Religion and Spiritual Development: China; Religion and Spiritual Development: India; Religion and Spiritual Development: Japan

References
Varma Ati

Tamil term literally translated as “hitting the vital spots.” Also known as ati murai (the law of hitting/attacking) and ati tata (hit/defend), as well as chinna ati (Chinese hitting), varma ati is the martial system practiced in the South Travancore region of Kerala and Kanyakumari District, southern Tamil Nadu, India. Traditionally the art is practiced by some Sambavars and, primarily, by Nadars who claim an ancient heritage as warriors; its origins are ascribed to the sage Agasthya in antiquity. Practice typically takes place in the open, or in unroofed enclosures made of palm leaves. Masters are known as asans. As implied in its various names, practice and fighting techniques emphasize empty-hand techniques from the first lesson, and initial steps are immediately combined with attacks and defenses aimed at the body’s vital spots (varmam in Tamil; marmam in Malayalam). Some practitioners include fighting with sticks, especially long-staff. At some point, practitioners also began to take up the use of a variety of weapons—a privilege that at one time might have been the exclusive privilege of Nayars in at least some areas where varma ati was practiced. Asans also traditionally administer massage and physical therapies and set bones, as part of the Dravidian Siddha medical system. Numerous old Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts exist that identify the location, effects of injury, and treatment of the vital spots.

Since the area where varma ati is practiced is one of the main border regions where Tamil and Malayali cultures and languages overlap, it is likely that the varma ati practiced by Nadars and Sambavars was closely related to the styles of kalarippayattu practiced by Nayars in the old Travancore region. Although there are many differences in the systems, it is likely that certain techniques and paradigms of practice were shared. During the past thirty years the mixing of styles and techniques between varma ati and kalarippayattu has increased in direct proportion to mobility. With the founding of the Kerala Kalarippayat (sic) Association in 1958, varma ati came to be known as “southern style” kalarippayattu so that it could
be officially recognized by the Kerala State Sports Council. Although it is in the same association as kalarippayattu, varma ati techniques, rules, competition items, places of training, and so on were recognized as distinct and separate from those of kalarippayattu.

The practice of varma ati involves no preliminary physical training, as does kalarippayattu. Rather, students are immediately initiated into vigorous sets of methods of attack and defense, which can be used directly for self-defense or with a variety of weapons. The basic steps and body movements learned for self-defense are the basis for manipulation of all weapons.
in this system. There are three sets of basic techniques in varma ati: *otta cuvatu*, *kutta cuvatu*, and *watta cuvatu*. What characterizes all these basic techniques is the emphasis not only on lower body control, but on attacks on and defenses of the vital spots with the hands, arms, and elbows.

Training begins with “salutation steps” (*vandana cuvatu*), a salutation to the four directions with one leg, usually the left, in a stationary position, that ends with salutations to the master. Second in the system are *otta cuvatu* (single foot steps). Some masters draw a *kalam* (floor drawing) of five circles on the floor within which the basic steps are taken. One foot, usually the left, remains stationary while the other foot moves in all four directions to defend and/or counterattack from the four basic directions. Included are a variety of kicks, blocks, hits, and evasive moves. Such techniques are especially important for empty-hand fighting, since it is assumed to be better *not* to enter directly into a counterattack, but to wait until one first determines whether the opponent has a weapon or not. By keeping one foot fixed in place, the practitioner can first block or evade, and only then attempt to enter for attack. Most masters teach twelve basic *otta cuvatu* sequences, which form the preliminary body training of the student.

*Vatta cuvatu* are techniques performed with the same basic pattern as *otta cuvatu*, except for different steps. Here the practitioner can directly enter into a counterattack. Practitioners vary from six to twelve in the number of sequences they practice. *Kutta cuvatu* are combination steps that build in complexity of forms. Multiple steps with both feet are taken. These also include a variety of kicks, blocks, attacks, and evasive moves, and especially emphasized are complex combinations of defenses with attacks to the body’s vital spots.

Practice of varma ati clearly centers on the vital spots—those vital places in the body where the life force, in the form of the internal breath or wind, is situated and therefore is vulnerable to attack. The numerous Tamil texts recording knowledge of the vital spots are based on verses that were originally transmitted orally and taught verse by verse as part of an esoteric, mystical, secretive knowledge within the Tamil Siddha tradition, since only someone who had attained accomplishment as a Siddha yogi could be considered a master of the vital spots. In keeping with the commonplace Tamil expression, “Without knowing myself first, I cannot know about others,” the poet who authored one traditional text explicitly states, “Only by practicing the five stages (of yoga) in the six locations of the subtle body will you get a clear understanding of the 108 vital spots.” Tirumular’s classic definition of a Siddha is implicit in this practice—“Those who live in yoga and see the divine light (oli) and power (cakti) through yoga are the cittar” (Zvelebil 1973, 225). As one practitioner explained, knowledge of the vital spots is revealed “like a meditation,” since only a practicing Siddha yogi...
can intuitively unlock the secrets of a text and apply them in locating, attacking, and/or healing the vital spots (personal communication).

Varma ati practitioners usually agree that 108 is the actual number of vital spots first identified by the sage Agasthya. Unlike the 107 vital spots identified in Susruta’s medical treatise as the total number of spots identified by forty-three names, 108 is actually the number of names of the vital spots in this tradition. Since some names identify single spots, and others are double, the number of vital spots may total more than 200. In the varma ati tradition, of the 108 spots, 96 are classified as minor spots (thodu varnam) and 12 as the major deadly vital spots (padu varnam). These most deadly spots are those that, when penetrated enough, cause instant death. The more numerous minor spots are not as dangerous when penetrated, but penetration does cause pain and incapacitation.

Varma ati techniques include a variety of methods of attacking the vital spots with the hands, fingers, elbows, and similar natural weapons. Some masters even provide esoteric explanations of the potentially deadly significance of each part of the hand: “The thumb is the mother finger of the hand. The right index finger is the guru. The second [middle] finger is Saturn, god of death. The third finger is directly connected to the heart, and the fourth is for tantric practice. . . . When you want to kill an opponent use the second finger of death. If you only want to incapacitate your opponent use Saturn supported by the guru finger so that you only penetrate halfway” (personal communication).

When a vital spot is penetrated, the internal wind, or vital energy, is understood to be stopped. As in kalarippayattu, emergency revival techniques for penetration or injury to a vital spot exist, functioning as counterapplications; however, the main revival technique in this system makes use of one of twelve to sixteen adangal—methods of massage and stimulating the revival spots. Since all the vital spots are understood to be connected through the internal channels (nadi) of the subtle-body to these twelve (or sixteen) revival spots, stimulating the appropriate vital spot through application to an adangal, according to one traditional text (Varma ati Morivu Cara Cuttiram), “straightens the channel” so that the internal wind moves freely again, and “brings [the injured] back to consciousness” (unpublished manuscript).

In the popular imagination, especially in the Kanyakumari region of the south, a martial master’s powers of attack and revival using the vital spots can appear miraculous. Stories and lore abound. An account of the life of Chattambi Swamigal, the great scholar-saint of southern Kerala (1853–1924), records how this great holy man was known as a master of many traditional arts—wrestling, healing, yoga, and the “art” of the vital spots. The following narrative illustrates his reputation.
One day [Chattambi Swamigal] was on his way from Kollur to Alwaye with two disciples. When he had reached the spot in front of the church at Edappali, his progress was interrupted by a band of young men who were drunk. Asking his companions to hold him by the back, he held his stick horizontally in front of him and with bated breath he bounced forward. Those who felt the touch of the stick fell to the ground. Thus he continued his journey without difficulty. It was only the next day on his way back, after he had administered the counter stroke that the ruffians were able to get up and move away. (Menon 1967, 134)

The knowledge of the vital spots remains a highly secretive, as well as controversial, subject among contemporary practitioners of both varma ati and kalarippayattu.

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**References**


**Vovinam/Viet Vo Dao**

*Vovinam* (later renamed *Viet Vo Dao*) is a Vietnamese martial arts system that was founded by Nguyen Loc (1912–1960) in the late 1930s. The sys-
tem was developed with the practical intent of both providing, after a short period of study, an efficient means of self-defense and establishing an ideological basis for national identity and patriotism among the beleaguered Vietnamese people.

Nguyen was born in 1912 in Huu Bang village in northern Vietnam. Tradition maintains that when his family moved to Hanoi during his early childhood, Nguyen’s father placed him under the tutelage of an “old master” who instructed the boy in martial arts, both for the boy’s health and for self-defense purposes. The nature of the curriculum apparently has not been preserved, but oral history specifies “wrestling” as well as other martial techniques. The martial styles Nguyen studied at this period have been labeled traditional, but the martial and cultural tradition remains unknown.

From 1859 to 1954, Vietnam was under French rule. During his youth in the early 1900s, founder Nguyen Loc was profoundly influenced by the inequities French colonial rule imposed on his people. Turning to his early training, he concluded that the martial arts could provide a vehicle for freeing Vietnam from outside domination by training both the spirits and bodies of the Vietnamese people. Thus, after researching and practicing many different martial arts, at the age of 26 he added elements of traditional Chinese wushu (martial arts), Japanese jūdō and related wrestling systems, Japanese karate, and Korean taekwondo to his preexisting knowledge to create an early version of Vovinam. Therefore, Vovinam is best described as a modern eclectic system created out of practical necessity. Nguyen began teaching his new system to a group of friends in 1938 in the capital city of Hanoi.

In 1940, Nguyen and his disciples were invited to demonstrate Vovinam in the Great Theater of Hanoi. This exhibition led to an invitation by Dr. Dang Vu Hy, president of the Sport Friendship Association, to begin teaching the new art formally at Hanoi Ecole Normal (Hanoi University of Education). The slogans that arose within the system—“Vietnamese practice Vietnamese martial arts,” “Not a Vovinam disciple, not a Vietnamese patriot”—reveal that Nguyen’s goal of using his system to promote nationalism was attainable.

In fact, members of the Vovinam group led many of the demonstrations against the French during the early 1940s, including demonstrations at the University of Hanoi and the Ministry of Agriculture. At this point, Nguyen Loc’s focus was political; he utilized Vovinam to further the cause of Vietnamese independence. Thus, he created techniques that were simple but practical. The training focused on endurance, speed, and strength. Vovinam instructors were sent to cities throughout the country to promote Vovinam, and most of the training sessions lasted about three months. Vo-
vinam’s popularity is demonstrated by the fact that within the first few years of its public opening tens of thousands of Vietnamese students had participated in the training programs.

At this time, the impulse to overthrow foreign domination gained impetus across Vietnam. In 1940 and 1941, Communist-led revolts erupted in the south, while Tay tribesmen rebelled in the north. From July 1941 to August 1945 Japanese armies occupied Vietnam. Under the Nazi-controlled Vichy French administration, a puppet government maintained figurehead status until March 1945. In 1941, Ho Chi Minh founded the
Vietminh, a nationalist coalition who opposed both French and Japanese colonialism.

In 1942, fearing Vovinam’s potential for resistance, the French puppet regime ordered the closing of all Vovinam schools and prohibited Nguyen Loc from teaching. However, he continued secretly teaching his students. Nguyen’s program maintained a political orientation beyond simple moral and physical improvement.

At the end of World War II, the French were allowed to return to Vietnam in force. By 1946, Vietnam was officially at war with France. Vovinam was utilized in the training of military cadets and to train militias of remote villages. Nguyen Loc led his students to join the war effort, where many distinguished themselves in the field. However, a disagreement with the tactics of the Viet Minh led Nguyen Loc to sever his ties with them and urge his disciples to follow suit. In retaliation, the Viet Minh ordered the capture of Nguyen and placed him in the precarious position of being wanted by both the Viet Minh and the French. He responded by telling his disciples to return to their hometowns to wait for an opportunity. Taking his own advice, he returned to Huu Bang village. There, he helped organize and train local militia units in combative techniques. He also assigned instructors to the Military Academy of Tran Quoc Tuan.

In 1954, in Geneva, Switzerland, an armistice agreement between France and the Vietminh was signed that provided for the temporary partition of Vietnam at about the seventeenth parallel, with North Vietnam under control of the Communist Vietminh and South Vietnam under Nationalist control. Fearing the effects of Communism, Nguyen Loc had immigrated to South Vietnam during the early 1950s, opening a Vovinam school in Saigon and others subsequently. Within ten years, Vovinam became popular around Saigon and its provinces and was introduced into the curricula of the military and police academies. In fact, Vovinam became so popular that the Vovinam association refused to open new classes due to the lack of instructors.

In 1960, Nguyen Loc passed away at the age of 47 because of an illness. Before his death, his senior student, Le Sang, was appointed to lead and further advance Vovinam. After a series of clashes with both the South Vietnamese government and later the Republic of Vietnam, Le Sang was able to preserve the system created by Nguyen Loc and was instrumental in the development of its training curriculum and philosophy.

From its creation until several years following the founder’s death, the system was called Vovinam. The name Vovinam is a blending of two words: Vo and Vietnam. In Vietnamese, Vo means “martial arts,” and Vo Vietnam means “martial arts of Vietnam.” Nguyen Loc shortened Vietnam to vinam. Hence, Vo Vietnam was combined to form Vovinam. Then in
1964, *Viet Vo Dao* was added to the name. *Viet Vo Dao* means “the philosophy of Vietnamese martial arts.” Even though the system is called Vovinam-Viet Vo Dao, many Vietnamese still know the martial arts system simply as Vovinam.

Vovinam was not widely known throughout the world until after 1975, when South Vietnam fell to the Communist forces. As a result, many of the instructors fled from Communism and opened up schools abroad, which led to the dissemination of the art in the latter half of the 1970s.

Unlike the traditional forms of many Chinese combatives, Nguyen Loc originated techniques that are simple and practical. Thus, the forms are readily understandable by any student and can be used immediately. There are no ambiguities or hidden techniques in the forms. The forms are built on exercises that students learn before the forms are actually taught. The students are taught ten exercises that teach specific attack or defense techniques for that rank level. For example, the following comprises one of the basic combination exercises:

1. Step forward with the left foot into a lunging stance. Execute an inward to outward horizontal strike to the opponent's neck with the bottom edge of the left hand. Punch with the right fist to solar plexus. Execute a left open-hand parry to the right shoulder.
2. Step forward with right foot into a lunging stance. Execute an outward to inward elbow strike 45 degrees downward. Execute a left open-hand slap to the right elbow.

Once the students understand the movements of the exercises, they are then taught the forms that combine those ten exercises. Overall, the movements are very practical and linear in nature, similar to karate. However, the movements incorporate more suppleness and relaxed movements than traditional karate.

As Vovinam began to grow in the early 1960s, it maintained its eclecticism, as the instructors combined other useful techniques from a variety of martial art systems. The one aspect that makes Vovinam stand apart from other systems is the special leg techniques. There are many high-flying kicks and scissors takedowns in which the practitioner uses both legs to grasp and trip the opponent. The “flying scissors” techniques are the most recognizable of the Vovinam tactics. Tradition holds that these maneuvers were developed in the thirteenth century as a means to allow Vietnamese foot soldiers to attack Mongol cavalrmen. The student begins by practicing leg techniques starting at the height of the leg. As the student advances, the level gets higher until the student reaches the neck and face. Many of these techniques are very dangerous, and thus the student must know how to control them. In addition, students must master falling and
rolling techniques in order to avoid getting injured during practice.

Vovinam employs a colored belt system to denote rank, with seventeen belts ascending from shades of blue for beginners to the white belt with blue, black, yellow, and red stripes for the grand master. As with many martial art systems, the colors of the belts carry symbolic significance. Blue represents the color of hope, which means that the disciple begins to enter in the life of a martial artist and to perceive the philosophy of martial arts. Black represents the color of water, which means that the understanding of martial arts and its philosophy has started to merge into the body, building a foundation for the character of the Vovinam disciple. Yellow represents the color of earth, which means that the martial arts and its philosophy have permanently become a part of the Vovinam disciple. Red represents the color of fire, which means that the martial arts and its philosophy develop into a torch that guides the path for the Vovinam’s disciple. White represents the color of chastity, which means that the disciple’s martial art and its philosophy have reached the absolute level, and the disciple has also become the figure of the martial arts discipline of Vovinam.

The major premise of Vovinam’s philosophy is to strive for the betterment of the students, their families, and mankind. The main goals of Vovinam are as follows: to preserve and develop the martial arts of Vietnam, to improve Vovinam by research and creation of new techniques, and to train students in the strength, techniques, and philosophy of Vovinam. All the functions of Vovinam are based on an established foundation: “Take mankind as the end, take character as the goal, and take invincible will as the means.”

Vovinam-Viet Vo Dao was founded as short-term physical training that was simple and practical as a tool for the Vietnamese people to use for their struggle for liberation from the French. As the system matured, a broader philosophy behind Vovinam was then implemented to become Viet Vo Dao. Grand Master Le Sang systematized Vovinam techniques to prepare the system to progress from Viet Vo Dao (Vietnamese Martial Arts) to Nhan Vo Dao (Martial Arts to Serve Mankind).

Prior to 1975, Vovinam was virtually unknown outside Vietnam. The first Vovinam school outside of Vietnam was opened in Houston, Texas, in 1976 following Vietnamese emigration to the United States after the fall of South Vietnam to the Communist forces in 1975. In 1980, a German school was opened. By 2000, the following countries had Vovinam schools: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Morocco, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States. Vovinam-Viet Vo Dao’s current headquarters are located in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), Vietnam, and Le Sang remains the grand master of the system.

On August 25, 1999, the first woman was promoted to the rank of
senior master of Vovinam. Worldwide, the art gains popularity. With international recognition, Vovinam continues its expansion into the twenty-first century.

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See also Political Conflict and the Martial Arts; Southeast Asia

References

Warrior Monks, Japanese/Sôhei

The sôhei (monk-warriors) have come to represent the immense secular power that Buddhist temples possessed in Japan more than anything else. Although the term itself does not appear in Japanese sources until A.D 1715 (imported from Korea), more than a century after armed monks and their followers had ceased to play any significant role, it has been used to denote a wide range of religious military forces in the pre-1600 era. Today, accounts of monks who engaged in warfare are muffled by and intertwined with literary and artistic representations, making it difficult to discern their origins, role, and changing character in Japanese history.

Taken in its broadest meaning, the sôhei may include not only armed monks but also various servants fighting in the name and under the protection of powerful Buddhist monasteries and affiliated shrines. As such, they appeared as early as the eighth century, when the imperial court sent out forces to combat “barbarians” in the eastern part of Japan. Young monks from central Japan reportedly aided the government troops, although it is unclear whether they actually carried any arms of their own. Chronicles and diaries subsequently indicate that there were sporadic incidents of violence involving monks and their followers in the ninth and early tenth centuries. It should be noted, however, that many of the instigators were not ordained monks but rather local strongmen, who used the cloak of monk robes to escape taxation and to appropriate land for themselves.

It is not until the late tenth century, amidst increasing competition for private estates and power in the capital region, that we find armed men regularly employed in the service of Buddhist temples. One of the earliest and most reliable documentary evidences dates to 970, when Head Abbot Ryôgen of the monastic complex of Enryakuji, located on Mt. Hiei just northeast of Kyoto, issued a set of rules, including prohibitions of carrying arms within the temple compound, in order to restrict the activities of rowdy elements of the clergy. Ryôgen’s edicts notwithstanding, armed clerics became increasingly involved in disputes with governors and warrior retain-
ers of landholding nobles, and even in confrontations with other temples. But the resolution of conflicts by military means was not limited to religious institutions. The imperial family and nobles competing for positions at the imperial court, as well as Buddhist temples, relied more and more on warriors not only to protect and administer private estates but also in factional struggles in the capital. When the equilibrium between these factions broke down in the late twelfth century, armed forces from both the warrior class and influential religious institutions were involved in a five-year-long civil war, leading eventually to the establishment of Japan’s first warrior government (the Kamakura bakufu) in 1185.

The new government was meant to complement the existing imperial court in Kyoto, and its main goals therefore were to preserve order and contain intrusions by the warrior class. However, local warriors continued to make headway by appropriating land and titles from temples, shrines, and the gradually weakening class of nobles in Kyoto. Yet, the most powerful monasteries managed on the whole to retain their independence and assets, owing in part to their armed forces. Indeed, they were so successful that, beginning around the turn of the fourteenth century, war chronicles afford warriors serving religious institutions a reputation for courage and martial skills that rivaled those of well-known samurai heroes. The best known example is Benkei—a giant of a monk who lived in the tumultuous late twelfth century—who symbolizes such characterizations in terms of strength, martial skills, wit, and unselfish loyalty. He is said to have won 999 duels in order to collect swords in Buddha’s honor, before he was beaten by a young aristocratic warrior (Minamoto Yoshitsune), whom he later served loyally until their brave deaths in the face of a much superior force. Furthermore, according to the well-known war chronicle the Heike Monogatari, a furious and violent worker-monk named Jōmyō Meishū balanced on a narrow bridge beam while successfully repelling hordes of warriors during the war of the 1180s. In an effort to convey the dual character of this monk, the tale describes how Jōmyō calmly removed his armor following the battle and counted and treated his wounds before putting on his monk robe and retreating, piously chanting the name of Amida, the Buddhist savior.

Sponsored and appreciated mainly by members of the warrior class, these chronicles praise the heroics of such violent monks, while other works commissioned by capital nobles portray the religious forces of the major monasteries as a negative and disruptive influence on the imperial court. For example, fourteenth-century picture scrolls show groups of armed clerics participating in general monk assembly meetings in order to influence the temple community to stage protests in the capital, and various hagiographies glorifying the lives of founders of new, more populist
sects do not waste any opportunities to criticize the established temples for their secular influence. Regardless of such interpretive discrepancies, the most serious flaw of these accounts is their tendency to neglect the diverse character of the fighting clerics, who are consistently portrayed as a unified group of rebellious, yet well-dressed and easily identifiable, monk-warriors from the lower ranks. In reality, armed religious forces came from various sectors of society, bound together by the protective umbrella of important Buddhist monasteries.

At the very top, there were sons of high- and mid-ranking aristocrats who organized and headed the temple’s armed followers in their capacity as aristocratic clerics. Although some of them were skilled warriors, they were above all educated nobles in monk robes, whose skills, training, and status made them indispensable in the management of private estates and the internal affairs of their temple. On occasion, these monk-leaders even took control of an entire monastery, as was the case with Shinjitsu (1086–?), who earned a reputation as “the number one evil military monk in Japan” for his attempts to increase his temple’s influence in Nara and for his involvement in capital affairs in the mid-twelfth century. By the fourteenth century, imperial princes sought to become head abbots and take control of the forces and landed assets of wealthy monasteries in order to further the imperial cause against the increasingly influential warrior aristocracy. The role of these noble monk-commanders must therefore not be overlooked, for it was their ambitions and factional affiliations that made armed forces a permanent and important presence at the highest-ranking temples in the capital region of premodern Japan.

The bulk of the forces fighting in the name of Buddha came from various segments of the common population. Some of them were lower-ranking monks, as indicated by the contemporary terms used to refer to them—akusō (evil monks), daishu (literally, “clergy”—usually taken to represent the larger entity of people associated with a temple), and shuto (clergy)—which were used in opposition to the more educated and properly ordained ranking monks (often referred to as sangô; the monastic deans), but there were also acolytes and other followers under the protection of affiliated Shintô shrines. For example, we find two types of armed servants within the monastic complex of Köfukuji in Nara. In the northern part of Yamato—the temple’s home province—the armed followers belonged to the community of worker-monks, who were working as local estate administrators. In the south, the armed followers were local strongmen, referred to as “shrine servants” (jinnin), who closely resembled the local warrior in appearance, as they did not wear monk robes.

The armed forces of religious institutions thus had much in common with the emerging warrior class—indeed, many fighting monks are hard to
distinguish from the samurai—although the latter have enjoyed a much more favorable reputation than their religious counterparts. They were both a product of the larger trend of privatization of rulership and land that took place from the tenth and eleventh centuries on, satisfying the need for protection of private possessions for their patrons, who included imperial descendants and other nobles as well as the ranking temples. In fact, the akusō (evil monks) and the samurai have quite appropriately been described as a pair of twins that emerged from the sociopolitical developments of the Heian (792–1185) period. Oddly enough, whereas the samurai often are depicted as valiant and glorious heroes, the military men in monk outfits are still seen as villains.

Further evidence of the similarity between the samurai and the sōhei can be found in their general usage of weapons. Both carried swords for close encounters and were skilled with the bow and arrow as well. In addition, even though militarily inclined clerics might wear religious robes, it was not uncommon to find armor under the monk garments. Helmets also were used, as was the bandanna (hachimaki). However, contrary to their samurai counterparts, the belligerent monks remained primarily foot soldiers, becoming experts with the naginata (a kind of halberd, with a curved blade at the end of a long pole). Although the naginata earned a reputation in one-on-one combats, it was especially effective in combating mounted warriors, indicating that it was originally a preference of lower-ranking soldiers. Eventually, the naginata came to stand as one of the foremost symbolic weapons of armed monks, and a handful of temple-based martial art schools in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came to specialize in its usage. Another attire unique to the sōhei was a hood that many wore to conceal their identity, allowing lower-ranking monks to overcome hierarchical differences among the clergy. As a result, the religious forces came to be regarded as more unified than they actually were, especially since the hoods were frequently used to signify armed monks in chronicles and picture scrolls from the early fourteenth century.

The dual character of the religious forces disintegrated during the high point of the second warrior government, the Ashikaga bakufu, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, but the most influential temples continued to thrive and hold their own against the warrior class. Behind this survival, we find new nonaristocratic military leaders heading their own forces within the monasteries, reflecting the final elimination, in favor of military authority, of the ancient style of rulership based solely on social status. The new composition of the monastic communities thus mirrored developments in society in general, as warfare and violence reached new heights during the chaos of the Sengoku period (1467–1573). While temples that did not adjust to these circumstances were quickly absorbed by re-
gional warlords, those with sufficient forces, joined by religious strongholds in the countryside, participated actively in the wars to defend their assets. In addition, local warriors and peasants gathered under the banner of new populist sects, though rarely in monk robes, to fight in the name of the Buddhist savior to oppose oppressive rule by warrior leaders during this turmoil.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, Japan was gradually pacified by a few powerful warlords who, interestingly, targeted the most powerful and independent monasteries first in their efforts to subdue the opponents to a centralized state. The attacks on and destruction of the last monastic strongholds of Enryakuji in 1571 and Negoroji in 1585 effectively signified the end of the religious forces, as Japan was subsequently restructured into a peaceful and pacified society with the establishment of the third warrior government, the Tokugawa bakufu. The sôhei were thus extinguished, although some temples continued to display the martial skills of the naginata for some time. More important, they remained a part of the cultural production of subsequent centuries, often blamed for the decline of the imperial government prior to 1600 by later scholars. Today, armed monks, without exception in their mythical form, still appear in popular culture both in Japan and the United States, be it in historical dramas or animated comic books.

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See also Folklore in the Martial Arts; Japan; Religion and Spiritual Development: Japan

References
Women in the Martial Arts: 479 B.C.—A.D. 1896

Martial arts do not exist in a vacuum and issues of gender and violence are never unambiguous. As Britain’s Jennifer Hargreaves has written regarding women’s boxing:

> Although strength and muscularity in boxing have symbolically been a source of physical capital for men, the diversity and complexity found in representations of the female body in boxing make it difficult to assess the extent to which the sport is a subversive activity for women or an essentially assimilative process with a radical facade. For now, female boxing remains riddled with contradictory cultural values. (1996, 131)

Therefore, beyond demonstrating female participation in martial activities such as boxing prior to the twentieth century, the following also attempts to place that behavior in cultural context. While the result may please neither moralists nor advocates of gender parity, that too is nothing more than a reminder of the contradictory nature of the study.

**479 B.C.** A Greek woman named Hydne becomes a Hellenic hero by helping her father Skyllis pull up the anchors of some Iranian ships during a storm, thus causing the ships to founder and their crews to drown. While most modern authorities suggest that Hydne and her father were probably sponge-fishers, it is possible that they were upper-class athletes whose training for Dionysian swimming meets had been interrupted by war. Two circumstances support this hypothesis: first, Hydne’s and Skyllis’s subsequent fame (Greek sponge-fishers rarely became Athenian heroes), and second, the paucity of detail and mass of conjecture surrounding the original sources.

**About 460 B.C.** The Greek historian Herodotus describes the practices and culture of some female warriors he called the Amazons. Who the Amazons were is not known, and in practice there were female warriors and
priestesses throughout the Mediterranean world. Also, stories about Amazon mastectomies are likely owed to Hellenistic stage tradition rather than actual practice: Hellenistic actors traditionally bared their right breasts to show that they were playing unmarried females.

396 B.C. A Spartan princess named Kyniska becomes the first woman to win the chariot-racing events at Olympia. While Plutarch wrote that Kyniska personally drove the winning chariot, most other ancient sources suggest that she was the owner of those horses rather than their driver.

About 330 B.C. Etruscan bronze statuettes show men wrestling with women. While the men were naked, the women wore thigh-length, pleated tunics. Accordingly, the art was probably allegorical rather than erotic.

About 322 B.C. Greek writers describe the female bodyguard of a north Indian prince named Chandragupta.

First century A.D. A Chineseannalist named Zhao Yi writes about a woman who was a great swordsman. She said the key to success was constant practice without the supervision of a master; after a while, she said, she just understood everything there was to know. But as immediately after saying this she accepted the job as swordsmanship instructor for the Kingdom of Yue, perhaps this description is lacking some verisimilitude. After all, if one needed no teacher save oneself to become a sword master, there seems no reason why she herself would become one.

18–27 A peasant rebellion rocks Shandong province and leads to the collapse of the Xin dynasty and the creation of the Later Han dynasty. This unrest (called the Red Eyebrow Rebellion after its members’ practice of painting their eyebrows blood red) was led by a woman who claimed to speak with the voice of the local gods. Strictly speaking, this was a case of spirit-possession rather than shamanism.

About 41 Later Han soldiers under the command of the Shensi aristocrat Ma Yuan kill a Vietnamese feudal lord living near Tonkin and publicly rape his wife and sister-in-law. These rapes may have been official acts, as, from the Han perspective, they would have demonstrated the superior-
ity of Chinese patrilineage over Vietnamese matrilineage. On the other hand, they could have been individual acts, as the Chinese did not consider rape a public crime until 1983. Either way, the outrage causes the two women, named Trung Trac and Trung Nhi, to incite a Vietnamese rebellion. This rebellion in turn introduces the Chinese to the giant bronze drums that the Vietnamese mountaineers used to transmit military information and provides a favorite subject for Vietnamese stage and puppet plays.

About 55 The Roman Caesar Nero introduces his notorious Youth Games, which feature, to the disgust of the historian Tacitus, sword fights between women.

About 60 When a British queen named Boudicca (Boadicea) refuses to pay taxes to the Romans, a Roman official has the woman flogged and her daughters raped. The outraged Celts retaliate by killing tens of thousands of Romanized Britons living in what is today Norfolk and Suffolk, and burning the Roman capital at Londinium. When this rebellion was rediscovered through translation in the sixteenth century, it caused Boadicea’s chariot, as the translators called it, to become an integral part of Elizabethan English nationalism. As for the unfortunate first-century queen, she and her daughters committed suicide near Epping Upland after the Romans slaughtered the British men in battle.

About 200 A Christian philosopher named Clement of Alexandria writes that women should be athletes for God. That is, they should wrestle with the Devil and devote themselves to celibacy instead of bowing meekly to their destiny of mothers and wives. However, this was not a universally held view, and wealthy Roman men continued amusing themselves with gymnastic, gladiatorial, and swimming acts featuring scantily clad female competitors.

271 A group of Gothic women captured while armed and dressed as men are paraded through Rome wearing signs that read “Amazons.”

About 535 Korean aristocrats replace female sword dancers with male sword dancers, apparently as a method of limiting the power of female shamans.

585 French churchmen debate whether women have souls. At least that is the postmodern feminist view of the debate, which was actually about whether the Old French word *vir* meant the same thing as the Vulgate Latin word *homo*. (The decision was that it did not.)

590 The Christian Synod of Druim Ceat orders British women to quit going into battle alongside their men. The ban must not have been especially effective, since the daughter of Alfred the Great is remembered as the conqueror of Wales, and the people who taught sword dancing to the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn were female.
Roman Catholic priests prohibit Irish women and children from appearing on contested battlefields. This institutes a cultural change, for in pre-Christian times, Irish women and children had often accompanied Irish men into battle.

About 890 *Beowulf* is written. A villain of the piece is a homicidal crone called Grendel’s mother. Meanwhile, in “Judith,” a much shorter poem written about the same time as *Beowulf*, the poet praises a God-fearing woman who gets a lustful feudal lord drunk and then beheads him with his own sword. Although such a woman was unusual (medieval heroines were usually martyrs rather than killers), the author obviously knew something about beheadings, as Judith, a handsome Hebrew woman, requires two mighty blows to sever the demonic lecher’s head from its neck-rings.

About 970 According to a twelfth-century writer named Zhang Bangji, Chinese palace dancers began binding their feet to make themselves more sexually attractive to men. The crippling practice was widespread throughout southern China by the fourteenth century, and throughout all of China by the seventeenth, and is remarked because foot binding prevented well-bred Han females from effectively practicing boxing or swordsmanship until the twentieth century. (Some were noted archers, though, generally with crossbows.) Still, into the 1360s, Hong Fu, Hong Xian, Thirteenth Sister, and other Chinese martial heroines (*xia*) were sometimes portrayed by women on Chinese stages, and there was a seventeenth-century reference to a fourteenth-century woman named Yang who was said to be peerless in the fighting art of “pear-blossom spear.” But in general such activity ended with the spread of foot binding, and from the fourteenth to twentieth centuries specially trained men played female roles in Chinese theatricals.

About 1020 The Iranian poet Firdawsi describes polo as a favorite sport of Turkish aristocrats. According to the thirteenth-century poet Nizami, aristocratic Turkish women also played polo, which was the Central Asian equivalent of jousting.

1049–1052 A female general named Akkadevi becomes a heroine of west-central Indian resistance to southern Indian aggression.

About 1106 Troubadours popularize pre-Christian legends about an Ulster hero called Cû Chulainn who was so much man that by the age of 7 he already required the sight of naked women to distract him from wanton killing. Further, as he got older, Cû Chulainn became notorious for conquering matristic societies by rape. Evidently Christian patrilinealism was being imposed on Ireland, and the victors were describing how it was being done, as in the earliest forms of the story, Cû Chulainn’s martial art instructors included a woman known as Scathach (Shadowy).

1146 Eleanor of Aquitaine, the self-willed, 24-year-old wife of Louis VII of France (and future wife of Henry II of England), joins the Second
Crusade dressed and riding astride like a man. Although her behavior was doubtless chic (Eleanor never actually entered battle with the Muslims), her disregard for propriety caused the pope to forbid women from joining the Third Crusade of 1189. Like most laws, the ban was widely ignored by the working classes.

**1184** Minamoto soldiers kill a Taira general named Yoshinaka and his wife. Subsequent Japanese accounts portray the woman, Tomoe Gozen, as a mighty warrior.
Thirteenth century Tahitian priests introduce the Huna religion into Hawaii. The martial art associated with this religion was known as Lua, a word meaning “to pit [in battle]” or “two” (i.e., duality; the idea was to balance healing and hurting, good and evil). The methods developed from both military hand-to-hand combat and the ritual killings that were part of the Huna religion, and its practitioners were divided into those who used their skills to heal and those who used their skills to harm. Skill in Lua involved setting or dislocating bones at the joints, inflicting or stopping pain using finger strikes to nerve centers, and knowing how to use herbal medicines and sympathetic magic. Working-class Hawaiians, both men and women, also boxed and wrestled. There were no set rules in these latter games, which were known collectively as mokomoko. Accordingly, players slapped palms upon agreeing to terms or to signify a draw.

1207 King Pedro II of Aragon sponsors the first European tournament known to have honored a woman (his mistress, of course, as Iberian nobles married for land and children rather than love). The construction of prepared stands soon followed, as the lady and her servants could not be expected to stand in the mud like ordinary people.

1228 A woman challenges a man to a judicial duel at the lists in Bern, Switzerland, and wins. Such challenges were not uncommon in Germany and Switzerland during the thirteenth century, particularly during rape cases. To even the odds, such judicial duels were arranged by placing the man in a pit dug as deep as his navel while allowing the woman free movement around that pit. The usual weapons included leather belts, singlesticks, and fist-sized rocks wrapped in cloth. During these duels, if a participant’s weapon or hand touched the ground three times, he or she was declared defeated. Male losers were beheaded, while female losers lost their right hands.

1280 The Venetian merchant Marco Polo describes a Mongol princess named Ai-yaruk, or “Bright Moon,” who refused to get married until she met a man who could throw her. The story may be exaggerated, as it was not written until around 1295, and the writer, Rustichello of Pisa, was never one to let facts stand in the way of a good story. Nevertheless, it is likely that during his travels Polo really did see some Mongol women wrestling.

1292 Northern Italian towns start holding pugil-stick fights, bare-knuckle boxing matches, and cudgeling tournaments. Legend attributes the creation to the Sienese monk Saint Bernard, who taught that fists were better than swords or sticks for deciding arguments, but illustrations show slapping games in which players sat cross-legged on benches, and then took turns slapping one another until somebody fell off the bench. Another game involved slapping buttocks; this was often played between men and women. Mock equestrian battles were also fought in which a girl sat on a boy’s shoulders, and one pair then undertook to knock over another.
About 1300 A secretary to the Bishop of Wurzburg produces a manuscript depicting unarmored German fighters. Known today as Manuscript I.33, the text is in Latin, while the technical terms are in German. Most of the work, however, involves a series of watercolor drawings showing students, monks, and even a woman training in a variety of sword-and-buckler techniques.

1354 The Islamic traveler Ibn Battuta reports seeing female warriors throughout Southeast Asia. Although many of these women were probably sword dancers, others were royal bodyguards. (Southeast Asian princes often preferred female bodyguards to eunuchs.)

1364–1405 Tamerlane’s armies ravage Central and Southwest Asia. Although Tamerlane was a devout Muslim, and non-Muslims took the brunt of the Timurids’ legendary cruelty, his use of female archers in defense of baggage trains appalled orthodox Muslim opponents.

1389 Sixty aristocratic women lead sixty knights and sixty squires from the Tower of London to the lists at Smithfield. The thought of females actually fighting during a tournament was, in the words of a near-contemporary German author, “as impossible as a king, prince, or knight plowing the ground or shoveling manure.” (Contemporary tales of female jousters appear most often in erotic fantasies and satires.) Women did sometimes compete in ball games and footraces. Many wealthy women also enjoyed hunting with crossbows and falcons.

1409 Christine de Pisan, the Italian-born daughter of a French court astrologer, publishes a book called Livre des Faits d’Armes (Book of Feats of Arms), a vernacular study of military strategy and international law. It includes original work, alongside translations of Vegetius and Frontinus, classical authorities in the field. It is also a reminder that medieval females could be as knowledgeable about military and political matters as was anyone else within their social or economic class.

1431 The English burn a 19-year-old Frenchwoman named Jeanne la Pucelle (Joan the Maid) as a witch. Her actual crime was rallying peasants to the French flag. (She and some Scottish mercenaries had won some important battles, thus giving the peasants hope.) Jeanne la Pucelle was renamed Jeanne d’Arc (Joan the Archer) during the sixteenth century. The modern cult of Saint Joan dates to the 1890s, when French politicians decided to use the woman’s martyrdom to create a unifying national holiday. (Bastille Day, which the Catholics viewed as godless, and the Royalists viewed as an insult, was too controversial for this purpose.)

1541 While going up a river in Brazil, the Dominican monk Gaspar de Carvajal reports being attacked by a band of armed females. The story causes the river along which Carvajal was traveling to be called the Amazon.
1541 Pedro de Valdivia leads a military expedition whose members include his mistress, Inés Suárez, overland from Peru into central Chile.

About 1545 Women begin playing female roles on the French stage. The practice spreads to Italy around 1608, and Britain around 1658. The reason for the change was that dowryless females were willing to work for less money than the men and boys who had traditionally played female roles.

1561 Mochizuki Chiyome, the wife of the Japanese warlord Mochizuke Moritoki, establishes a training school for female orphans and foundlings. The skills the girls learned included shrine attendant, geisha, and spy. While Mochizuki-trained geisha are sometimes claimed as the first female ninja, it is more likely that the women were simply prostitutes trained to remember and repeat whatever they heard from their carefully selected patrons.

About 1590 A chronicler named Abu Fazl describes the harem of the Mughul emperor Akbar as housing about 5,000 women. About 300 of these women were wives; the rest were servants and guards. The guards were mostly from Russia and Ethiopia, and were little more than armed slaves. There were exceptions, of course, and one of Akbar’s chief rivals in the 1560s was a warrior-queen named Rani Durgawati.

1601 A Javanese prince named Sutawijaya Sahidin Panatagam dies. Throughout his life, the man’s courage and luck were legendary, and he reportedly forgave would-be assassins by saying that daggers could not pierce the skin of a man who was protected by the gods. He took this belief seriously, too, as his concubines included an east Javanese woman who introduced herself to him by attacking him with some pistols and butterfly knives.

1606 The Iberian navigator Quiros visits the Tuamotus Archipelago, and observes its Polynesian inhabitants wrestling. Both men and women wrestled, and there were sometimes mixed bouts. The audience defined the ring by standing around the participants. The wrestling was freestyle, and hair pulling was allowed.

1611 The Mughul emperor Jahangir falls in love with an Iranian widow named Mehrunissa. The emperor’s fascination is not surprising, as Mehrunissa was a gifted poet, competent dress and carpet designer, and avid tiger hunter. (She hunted from atop a closed howdah, and once killed four tigers with just six bullets.) Her niece was Asaf Khan’s daughter Arjumand Banu, the woman for whom the Taj Mahal was built.

1630–1680 Duelling provides a favorite theme for French playwrights. According to these writers, people (both men and women dueled in French plays) dueled more often for love than honor, and trickery brought victory more often than bravery.

Women in the Martial Arts 671
About 1650 Doña Eustaquia de Sonza and Doña Ana Lezama de Uríza of Potosí, Alto Perú, become the most famous female swashbucklers in Spanish America. At the time, Potosí, a silver-mining town in the Bolivian Andes, had more inhabitants than London, and was probably the richest city in the world.

1688 Following a coup in Siam, women drilled in the use of muskets replace the 600 European mercenaries and Christian samurai who had served the previous government. The leader of these women was called Ma Ying Taphan, or the Great Mother of War. Burmese princes also used female bodyguards inside their private apartments, and European, Japanese, or Pathan mercenaries without.

About 1690 Female wrestling acts become common in Japanese red-light districts. Although Confucianist officials charged that such acts were harmful to public morals, female wrestling remained popular in Tokyo until the 1890s and in remote areas such as southern Kyūshū and the Ryūkyūs until the 1920s.

1697 A 40-year-old Maine woman named Hannah Dustin escapes from an Abenaki Indian war party after hatcheting to death two Abenaki men, their wives, and six of their seven children as they slept. (A third Abenaki woman and a child escaped, although both appear to have been injured.) For this slaughter (which is almost unique in frontier annals), the Puritan minister Cotton Mather proclaimed Dustin “God’s instrument,” while the General Assembly of Massachusetts awarded her a sizable scalp bounty.

1705 Because a Comanche raid covers hundreds of miles and lasts for months, wives often accompany war parties, where they serve as snipers, cooks, and torturers. Unmarried Comanche women are also known to have ridden into combat, although this is considered somewhat scandalous.

1706 A trooper in Lord Hay’s Regiment of Dragoons is discovered to be a woman. At the time, she had thirteen years’ service in various regiments and campaigns. Subsequently known as Mother Ross, she had enlisted after first giving her children to her mother and a nurse. She spent her military career dressed in a uniform whose waistcoat was designed to compress and disguise her breasts.

1707 The French opera star Julie La Maupin dies at the age of 37; in 1834 novelist Théophile Gautier made her famous as Mademoiselle de Maupin. In her time she was a noted fencer and cross-dresser; her fencing masters included her father, Gaston d’Aubigny, and a lover, a man named Séranne. Other redoubtable Frenchwomen of the day included Madame de la Pré-Abbé and Mademoiselle de la Motte, who in 1665 fired pistols at one another from horseback from a range of about 10 yards, and then, after missing twice, took to fighting with swords. And in 1868, two women named Marie P. and Aimée R. dueled over which would get to marry a
young man from Bordeaux. Marie was hit in the thigh with the first shot, leaving Aimée free to marry the young man. (Or so said the popular press.)

1722 Elizabeth Wilkinson of Clerkenwell challenges Hannah Hyfield of Newgate Market to meet her on stage and box for a prize of three guineas; the rules of the engagement require each woman to strike each other in the face while holding a half-crown coin in each fist, with the first to drop a coin being the loser. These rules perhaps suggest how bare-knuckle boxing began, as James Figg was a chief promoter of women’s fighting. For example, in August 1725, Figg and a woman called Long Meg of Westminster fought Ned Sutton and an unnamed woman; Figg and Meg took the prize of £40. Nevertheless, says historian Elliott Gorn, the sporadic appearance of women in English prizefights only “underscored male domination of the culture of the ring” (Gorn 1986, fn. 69, 265).

1727 After his army takes heavy casualties during a slave-raiding expedition against Ouidah, King Agaja of Dahomey creates a female palace guard and arms it with Danish trade muskets. By the nineteenth century this female bodyguard had 5,000 members. One thousand carried firearms. The rest served as porters, drummers, and litter-bearers. These Dahomeyan women trained for war through vigorous dancing and elephant hunting. They were prohibited from becoming pregnant on pain of death. They fought as well or better than male soldiers, and they were said by Richard Burton to be better soldiers than their incompetent male leadership deserved.

1759 Mary Lacy, a runaway serving girl who served twelve years in the Royal Navy, gets in a fight aboard HMS Sandwich. “I went aft to the main hatchway and pulled off my jacket,” wrote Lacy, “but they wanted me to pull off my shirt, which I would not suffer for fear of it being discovered that I was a woman, and it was with much difficulty that I could keep it on.” The fight then developed into a wrestling match. “During the combat,” said Lacy, “he threw me such violent cross-buttocks . . . [as] were almost enough to dash my brains out.” But by “a most lucky circumstance” she won the bout, and afterwards she “reigned master over all the rest” of the ship’s boys (Stark 1996, 137).

1768 After disguising herself as a boy and shipping out with the French navigator Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, Jeanne Baré becomes the first female to circumnavigate the world. Women also served in the British navy. These women avoided discovery because European seamen seldom bathed and invariably slept in their clothes.

1768 In the Clerkenwell district of London (perhaps at the London Spa), two female prizefighters mill for a prize of a dress valued at half a crown, while another two women fight against two men for a prize of a guinea apiece. And at Wetherby’s on Little Russell Street, the 19-year-old rake William Hickey sees “two she-devils . . . engaged in a scratching and
boxing match, their faces entirely covered with blood, bosoms bare, and the clothes nearly torn from them." These “she-devils” were singers and prostitutes, and their prefight preparation consisted mostly of drinking more gin than usual. Other rough venues included the Dog and Duck in St. George’s Fields, Bagnigge Wells on King’s Cross Road, and White Conduit House near Islington (Quennell 1962, 63–66).

1774 During Wang Lun’s rebellion in Shandong province, a tall, white-haired female rebel is seen astride a horse, wielding one sword with ease and two with care. The woman, whose name is unknown, was a sorceress who claimed to be in touch with the White Lotus deity known as the Eternal Mother. An actress named Wu San Niang (“Third Daughter Wu”) was also involved in Wang Lun’s rebellion. Described as a better boxer, tightrope walker, and acrobat than her late husband, Wu has skill remarked mainly because female boxers were unusual in a society whose standards of beauty required women to bind their feet.

1776 According to tradition, a Buddhist nun named Wu Mei (Ng Mui) creates a Southern Shaolin Boxing style known as yongchun (wing chun; beautiful springtime). The tradition has never been proven, and twentieth-century stylistic leaders such as Yip Chun believe that a Cantonese actor named Ng Cheung created the style during the 1730s. If Yip is correct, then the female attribution could mean that Ng Cheung specialized in playing female roles, or that the ultimate master is a loving old woman rather than some muscled Adonis. Still, it is possible that some southern Chinese women practiced boxing in a group setting. During the late eighteenth century, Cantonese merchants began hiring Hakka women to work in their silkworm factories. (While ethnically Chinese, the Hakka had separate dialects and customs. Unlike most Chinese, these customs did not include binding the feet of girls. Therefore their women were physically capable of working outside the home.) To protect themselves from kidnappers (marriage by rape remained a feature of Chinese life into the 1980s), these factory women gradually organized themselves into lay sisterhoods. So it seems likely that Wu Mei was simply a labor organizer or head of an orphanage whose name became associated with a boxing style.

1782 A 22-year-old Massachusetts woman named Deborah Sampson cuts her hair and enlists in the Continental Army, calling herself Robert Shurtleff. She fought against the Tories and British in New York, and she also wrote letters for illiterate soldiers and did her best to avoid rough soldiers’ games such as wrestling. (The one time she did wrestle, she was flung to the ground.) After the war, Sampson married, and in 1838 her husband became the first man to receive a pension from the United States government for his wife’s military service. Sampson’s maritime equivalents during the Revolutionary War included Fanny Campbell and Mary Anne Talbot.
About 1794 According to sociologist Jennifer Hargreaves, a boxing match between two Englishwomen was described: “Great intensity between them was maintained for about two hours, whereupon the elder fell into great difficulty through the closure of her left eye from the extent of swelling above and below it which rendered her blind. . . . Their bosoms were much enlarged but yet they each continued to rain blows upon this most feeling of tissue without regard to the pitiful cries issuing forth at each success which was evidently to the delight of the spectators” (1996, 125).

About 1805 British newspapers start reporting the faction fights that had been occurring at Irish fairs and horse races since the 1730s. Irishmen fought using sticks and brick-sized stones while Irishwomen struck using razors or stones sewn inside knitted socks. Although it was acceptable for a male faction fighter to use his stick to parry a blow from a woman, it was considered bad form for him to hit her with the stick. Fists and feet were another matter; 2.5 percent of deaths associated with the faction fights were the results of kicks administered once the other fellow was down, and 5 percent of deaths were due to infected bites.

1807 After learning that the Polish hussar Aleksandr Sokolov is actually a Russian woman named Nadezha Durova, Czar Alexander I awards Durova a medal for bravery and a commission as an officer in the Mariupol Hussars. Durova continued serving with the Russian army throughout the Napoleonic Wars and retired as a captain in 1816.

1817 The British fencing master Henry Angelo describes a mulatto fencer known as Chevalier de Sainte Georges as the finest fencer in the world. Other noted Afro-European fencers of the period included Soubise, who taught aristocratic women (including the duchess of Queensberry) to fence at Angelo’s London salle.

About 1820 According to Richard Kim, the wife of the Okinawan karate master Matsumura Sōkon becomes known as one of the finest karate practitioners in the Ryūkyūs. As Mrs. Matsumura could reportedly lift a 60-kilo bag of rice with one hand, the reputation may have been deserved. On the other hand, it could be modern myth. For one thing, Matsumura Sōkon was born in 1805. Since Asian men typically marry younger women, this means Mrs. Matsumura was likely no more than 10 years old. For another, Okinawans usually associate female wrestling with prostitutes rather than the wives and daughters of aristocrats. Furthermore, left to their own devices, most Okinawan women take up dancing rather than karate or sumō. Finally, Nagamine Shōshin did not publish the stories upon which Kim based his accounts until June 1952, which was more than a half century after Matsumura’s death. So perhaps some exaggeration crept in over time.

1821–1829 With significant outside assistance, the Greeks free themselves from Ottoman Turkish rule; a heroine of the war is a Spetsiot woman.
named Lascarina Bouboulina, who commands ships in battle against the Turks and Egyptians, and takes pride in taking and discarding lovers like a man.

1822 In London, Martha Flaherty fights Peg Carey for a prize of £18; the fight, which starts at 5:30 A.M., is won by Flaherty, whose training has included drinking most of a pint of gin before the match. Female prize-fighting was a function of the low prevailing wage rate for unskilled female labor. (Assuming she worked as a fur sewer or seamstress, Flaherty’s prize exceeded a year’s wages.) Attire included tight-fitting jackets, short petticoats, and Holland drawers. Wrestling, kicking, punching, and kneeing were allowed. Women with greater economic freedom usually preferred playing gentler games. For instance, although Eton did not play Harrow in cricket until 1805—Lord Byron was on the losing Harrovian side—Miss S. Norcross of Surrey batted a century in 1788.

1829 The Swiss educator Phokian Clias publishes a popular physical education textbook called *Kalisthenie* (the title comes from the Greek words meaning “beauty” and “strength”). Clias favored light to moderate exercise, and rejected ball games for women because he thought they required too much use of the shoulder and pectoral muscles.

About 1830 An Italian woman named Rosa Baglioni is described as perhaps the finest stage fencer in Germany.

1832 Warning that lack of exercise produces softness, debility, and unfitness, American educator Catherine Beecher publishes *A Course of Calisthenics for Young Ladies*; the best exercise for a woman, according to Mrs. Beecher, is vigorous work with mop and washtub. No liberation there. Then, in 1847, Lydia Mary Child, author of *The Little Girl’s Own Book*, became slightly more adventurous, saying that “skating, driving hoop, and other boyish sports may be practiced to great advantage by little girls provided they can be pursued within the enclosure of a garden or court; in the street, of course, they would be highly improper” (Guttman 1991, 91).

1847 Queen Victoria decides that women who served aboard British warships during the Napoleonic Wars will not receive the General Service Medal. At least three women applied, and many more were technically eligible. But they were all denied. Explained Admiral Thomas Byam Martin, “There were many women in the fleet equally useful, and [issuing awards to women] will leave the Army exposed to innumerable applications of the same nature” (Stark 1996, 80–81; fn. 66, 184).

About 1850 After catching her trying to steal their horses, Flathead Indians club to death a Blackfeet war chief called Running Eagle. As Blackfeet men frequently rode naked into battle as a way of showing that they had nothing to lose by fighting, it cannot be argued that Running Eagle masqueraded as a man. Instead, it seems to have been fairly common for
childless Blackfeet women to participate in horse-stealing expeditions. Cross-dressing men (*berdache*) also accompanied Plains Indian military expeditions. The cross-dressers provided supernatural protection, and the women did the cooking. Native Americans were never as sexually obsessed as the European Americans, and ethnographic evidence suggests that most rapes attributed to the American Indians were actually done by European or African Americans. (Although tales of female sexual bondage to the Indians have been a staple of English and American literature, theater, and movies for 300 years, most Indian cultures required warriors to go through lengthy cleansing rituals before having sex with anyone, male or female. These rituals were taken seriously, too, as failure to accomplish them properly could cause a man to lose his war magic.)

1850 Theater manager A. H. Purdy introduces the spectacle of “Amazons,” or uniformed women performing close-order drill, to the New York stage. Female drill teams remained popular with North American audiences for the next 150 years; just look at football halftime exercises.

1854 In New York City, an Englishman named Harry Hill opens a concert saloon at 25 East Houston Street; although prizefights are illegal in New York, Harry Hill’s nightly shows include boxing and wrestling acts. Most pugilists were male—both William Muldoon and John L. Sullivan started at Harry Hill’s—but could be female. In 1876, for instance, Nell Saunders boxed (and beat) Rose Harland for the prize of a silver butter dish. A drawing published in the *National Police Gazette* on November 22, 1879, shows Harry Hill’s female boxers wearing T-shirts, knickers, and buttoned shoes, and showing a scandalous amount of arm and thigh. Harry Hill’s had two entrances. The main entrance was for men, who paid twenty-five cents’ admission. The side door was for women, who paid nothing. Hill’s drinks were overpriced, and the air was a cloud of tobacco smoke. Other than that, Hill ran a respectable house, and his boxers circulated among the crowd to keep it that way. Reform politicians finally caused Harry Hill’s to close in 1886.

1857–1858 Forty-seven battalions of Bengali infantry and several independent principalities rebel against Britain’s Honourable East India Company. Although most rebels were men, the best-known rebel was a woman, the 25-year-old Rani of Jhansi. She rode into battle armed and armored like a man, and died of wounds received near Gwalior in June 1858. Rani’s counterpart on the British side, a woman whom the modern Indians revere much less, was an equally redoubtable Afghan widow from Bhopal named Sikander Begum.

1864 In volume 1 of a text called *Principles of Biology*, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer coins the phrase “survival of the fittest.” Spencer saw nature as a state of pitiless warfare, with the elimination of the
weak and unfit as its goal. People who did not read him closely soon ap-
plied this theory to social dynamics, and called the result Social Darwinism.
Social Darwinism was a very popular theory among white-collar workers
whose masculinity (and jobs) were threatened by women and immigrants.

1865 General James Miranda Barry, the inspector general of the
British Army Medical Department, dies in London, and is discovered after
death to have been female.

1870 In a world where clerks and secretaries are increasingly female,
Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s novel Venus in Chains turns male clerks’ ter-
ror of what Henry James called “damnable feminization” into a fantastic
story of fur-clad, whip-cracking women verbally and sexually abusing men.
Besides creating a stock figure for subsequent pornographic fiction, von
Sacher-Masoch’s conclusion retains some validity: “Whoever allows him-
self to be whipped deserves to be whipped."

1875 Parisian street gangsters are reported shaving their heads and
dressing in metal-studded leather jackets; the press responds by calling such
people “apaches.” Originally, this name referred to a Belgian pepperbox
revolver that had a blade under its barrel and a knuckle-duster in its butt,
rather than to the Athabascan people of the American Southwest, but after
the Apache leader Geronimo became a household word, the revolver was
forgotten. Around 1890, the apache name also began to describe a sadomasochistic
dance genre in which tattooed, scarred women fought knife or
saber duels while stripped to their underclothes, or smiled while men
slapped them around.

1878 J. R. Headington argues in the American Christian Review that
female athletics represent a nine-step path to ruin; for example, a croquet
party leads to picnics, picnics lead to dances, dances lead to absence from
church, absence from church leads to immoral conduct, immoral conduct
leads to exclusion from church (no forgiveness here!), exclusion from
church leads to running away, running away leads to poverty and discon-
tent, poverty and discontent lead to shame and disgrace, and shame and
disgrace lead to ruin. Although many middle-class women heeded Head-
ington’s advice, fewer upper-class women did, causing female athleticism,
especially in golf, tennis, and cycling, to become increasingly common
throughout the late nineteenth century.

1881 Author Charlotte Perkins Gilman of Providence, Rhode Island,
perhaps best known for her short story “The Yellow Wallpaper,” becomes
the United States’ first known female bodybuilder. Besides lifting weights,
Gilman ran a mile a day and boasted of her ability to “vault and jump,
go up a knotted rope, walk on my hands under a ladder, kick as high as
my head, and revel in the flying rings” (Gutman 1991, 124). By 1904,
fencing was also popular with Rhode Island society women; instructors
included Eleanor Baldwin Cass, and students included Marion Fish and Natalie Wells.

1881 A Swedish woman named Martina Bergman-Osterberg becomes the superintendent of physical education for London’s public schools. By 1886, she had trained 1,300 English schoolteachers in the methods of Swedish gymnastics. “I try to train my girls to help raise their own sex,” said Bergman-Osterberg, “and so accelerate the progress of the race.”

1884 The British scientist Sir Francis Galton tests 500 men and 270 women to see how fast they can punch; he finds that the men average 18 feet per second, with a maximum speed of 29 feet per second, while the women average 13 feet per second, with a maximum speed of 20 feet per second. In other words, although some women could hit harder than the average man, most women could hit only 55 percent as hard.

1884 A 20-year-old American woman named Etta Hattan adopts the stage name of Jaguarina, and bills herself as the “Ideal Amazon of the Age.” Whether Hattan was all of that is of course debatable, but she was certainly Amazon enough to defeat many men at mounted broadsword fencing during her fifteen-year professional career.

1887 Circus magnate P. T. Barnum hires wrestler Ed Decker, the Little Wonder from Vermont, as a sideshow attraction, offering to pay $100 to anyone who can pin Decker, and $50 to anyone who can avoid being pinned within three minutes. Despite weighing only 150 pounds and standing only 5 feet 6 inches tall, Decker reportedly never lost to a paying customer. Of course, some matches were harder than others, and as a British sideshow boxer told a reporter a year later, “I still pray, ‘Oh, Lord, let me win the easy way.’” Women also fought as booth boxers. According to Ron Taylor, a Welsh sideshow promoter of the 1960s, “My grandmother used to challenge all comers. She wore protectors on her chest, but she never needed them. Nobody she ever went up against could even come close to hitting her” (undated clippings in Joseph Svinth collection). The most famous of these British fairground pugilists was probably Barbara Buttrick, who was the women’s fly and bantamweight boxing champion from 1950 to 1960. This said, not all the female pugilists were female. For instance, a carnival shill named Charles Edwards told A. J. Liebling about a turn-of-the-century Texas circus that had a woman stand in front of the tent promising $50 to any man who could stay three rounds with her. Once inside the dimly lit tent, the mark then found himself boxing a cross-dressing male look-alike.

1889 Female boxing becomes popular throughout the United States. Champions included Nellie Stewart of Norfolk, Virginia; Ann Lewis of Cleveland, Ohio; and Hattie Leslie of New York. The audiences were male, and the fighters sometimes stripped to their drawers like men. *Savate* fights,
in which kicking was allowed, were also popular. Girls as young as 12 years headed the bills. Cuts were stitched on the spot, and the women often fought with broken noses, jaws, and teeth. There were occasionally matches between female boxers and female savate fighters. In 1902, for instance, a Mademoiselle Augagnier beat Miss Pinkney of England during such a bout. Pinkney was ahead during the first ninety minutes, but then Augagnier managed to kick Pinkney hard in the face, an advantage that she immediately used to send a powerful kick into Pinkney’s abdomen for the victory.

1889 Female wrestling becomes popular in France and England, with Masha Poddubnaya, wife of Ivan Poddubny, claiming the women’s title. Said journalist Max Viterbo of a female wrestling match in the Rue Montmartre in 1903, “The stale smell of sweat and foul air assaulted your nostrils. In this overheated room the spectators were flushed. Smoke seized us by the throat and quarrels broke out.” As for the wrestlers, “They flung themselves at each other like modern bacchantes—hair flying, breasts bared, indecent, foaming at the mouth. Everyone screamed, applauded, stamped his feet” (Guttman 1991, 99–100).

1891 Richard Kyle Fox and the National Police Gazette sponsor a women’s championship wrestling match in New York City; to prevent hair pulling, the women cut their hair short, and to keep everything “decent,” the women wear tights. (Not all matches were so prim, and in 1932, Frederick Van Wyck recollected some matches of his youth that were between “two ladies, with nothing but trunks on” [Gorn 1986, 130].) Fox’s wrestlers include Alice Williams and Sadie Morgan. The venue is Owney Geoghegan’s Bastille of the Bowery.

1895 Theodore Roosevelt hires the New York Police Department’s first female employee. The reason was that Minnie Kelly did more work for less money than did the two male secretaries she replaced. In 1896, Commissioner Roosevelt also gave uniforms and badges to the women who processed female prisoners at police stations. Excepting meter maids and secretaries, police departments used women mainly as matrons and vice detectives until 1968, when the Indianapolis police pioneered the use of female patrol officers.

1896 San Francisco’s Mechanics’ Pavilion becomes the first U.S. boxing venue known to have sold reserved seats to women. (The occasion was a title bout between Bob Fitzsimmons and Jack Sharkey, and Fitzsimmon’s wife Rose was notorious for sitting ringside and shouting advice to her husband.)

Joseph R. Svinth

See also Women in the Martial Arts: Britain and North America; Women in the Martial Arts: China; Women in the Martial Arts: Japan
References


Women in the Martial Arts: Britain and North America

During the early 1900s, feminists often regarded combative sports such as boxing, wrestling, fencing, and jûdô as tools of women’s liberation. Because these sports were historically associated with prizefighting (in Shakespeare’s time, prizefighters were fencers rather than pugilists) and saloons (the Police Gazette was holding “Female Championships of the World” in New York City saloons as early as 1884), the middle classes publicly despised such activities.

Nevertheless, around 1900, combative sports started becoming more fashionable. Fencing was particularly popular with women, partly because of its exercise value, partly because it was said to build character, and mostly because it was not a contact sport.

During the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, jûdô classes became popular with upper-class women. Partly this was due to the Japanese army claiming that jûdô was the secret weapon that made its soldiers invincible in the trench fighting around Port Arthur, and partly it was due to the exaggerated claims of jûjutsu teachers and sportswriters. For example, in The Cosmopolitan of May 1905, a Japanese visitor to New York named Katsukuma Higashi boasted that given six months, he could teach any 110-pounder of good moral character to “meet a man of twice his weight and three times his muscular strength and overcome him under all circumstances.” This was hyperbole rather than fact—within the year the 120-pound Higashi himself proved incapable of beating either a 140-pound professional wrestler, George Bothner, or a 105-pound jûdôka (jûdô player), Yukio Tani. Nevertheless the myth persists. Witness, for example, the enormous popularity of The Karate Kid, a Hollywood film that saw its youthful hero change from chump to champ during the seven weeks between Halloween and Christmas.

Jûjutsu was first introduced to England in March 1892. The occasion was a lecture given by T. Shidachi, secretary of the Bank of Japan’s London branch, and his assistant Daigoro Goh (Smith 1958, 47–62). Seven years later, Yukio Tani introduced jûjutsu into British music halls, and by the time “The Adventure of the Empty House” appeared in Strand Magazine in October 1903, Sherlock Holmes was using a Japanese-based system of wrestling called baritsu to free himself from the clutches of Professor Moriarty. From the 1890s there were also jûdô and jûjutsu practitioners in the United States, several of whom, like Tani, worked as professional wrestlers.

Male reactions to women’s involvement in such activities varied. A few men thought it wonderful, Sam Hill of Seattle even suggesting that all white women living in the South learn jūjutsu for self-defense. Others were appalled, seeing it as contrary to God’s will. Most, however, were simply amused until, during the late 1930s, women’s self-defense was made acceptable by militarization.

Women’s reactions varied, too. Suffragettes and rich women often viewed participation in combative sports as empowering. Working-class women sometimes viewed them as a means toward getting a paying job in vaudeville. Working women and actresses also thought that some method of physical retaliation useful against men who reached under their skirts was handy. On the other hand, many parents had strong misgivings re-
garding all female athletics. The fear seems to have been that “respectable”
boys would not marry girls who could beat them at anything.

But whether mothers and educators liked it or not, by the 1920s huge
numbers of young women were regularly playing baseball, basketball, golf,
tennis, and volleyball. Unable to stem the tide, the educators and physi-
cians sought to turn it by stating that, although nothing preserved female
beauty so well as sport, there were certain sports that were better than oth-
ers and a few (including soccer and boxing) that were downright unlady-
like. Furthermore, competition and the development of unsightly muscles
could be minimized by new rules that made girls’ sports considerably less
exciting than boys’ sports.

These rules could be draconian. In 1922, for example, rules for a girl’s
basketball team at Martinez High School in San Francisco included the fol-
lowing: “No dancing, no soup, no milk, no candy, no ice cream; [hot]
chocolate while resting instead of oranges; two hours rest before each game;
eight hours sleep daily; no fried foods; no pastry; feet to be bathed three
times weekly in tannic acid” (Japan Times, March 29, 1922). Others were
simply inane, such as those requiring girls to essentially stand in one place
while playing basketball. Although the athletes protested (the Martinez
girls, for instance, said no dancing, no basketball team), hardly anyone,
least of all physical education teachers or school administrators, listened.
In the words of a *Scientific American* author in 1936, “Feminine muscular development interferes with motherhood” (Laird 1936).

Despite some loosening of dress codes during the Edwardian era, before World War I most female athletes dressed as conservatively as Iranian female athletes of the 1990s. Afterwards, however, dress codes relaxed, and newspapers started showing pictures of attractive movie starlets dressed in bathing suits. As a result, by the 1930s female athletic attire roughly matched equivalent male attire except in “gentlel” sports such as fencing and golf, where skirts remained the norm into the 1950s. Still, Mrs. Grundies worried about “indecent exposure,” and as a result various elastic undergarments were developed. During the 1910s, for example, some women tried Leo McLaglan’s “Jûjutsu Corset,” and during the 1950s female professional wrestlers supported their rhinestone-encrusted bathing suits with 2-inch-wide elastic bands. The most popular device, however, was the brassiere. First developed by the New York socialite Mary Phelps Jacobs around 1914, its original purpose was not to assist in athletics but to flatten the bust.

Even allowing for hype—vaudevillians and society women both received more than their fair share of media coverage—early twentieth-century women played combative sports for the same reasons as their granddaughters. In short, they did them for one of four main reasons: body sculpting, socializing with friends or business acquaintances, personal empowerment, or physical self-defense.

Another constant over time was the derisive attitude that people—women as well as men—took toward female participation in “unladylike” sports. For example, as recently as 1981, some sociologists in the United States wrote about female karate black belts:

> There was evidence that a psychology of tokenism is operating in Karate as it operates in other domains. The skills of these “tokens” are belittled, and ritualized deference is withheld. The interesting question is whether increasing...
participation and success by women will eliminate the token aspects of responses to them. Or will the cognitive inconsistency be resolved by devaluing the achievement of a black belt (a pattern found in the occupational world). The long-term results are interesting because the issues involved are so fundamental to the ideology of gender typing. (Smith et al. 1981, 20)

Sexual stereotyping—“any woman who boxes must be a lesbian”—was another constant. As recently as May 1994, the Irish boxer Deirdre Gogarty told British video journalists, “I’m always afraid people think I’m butch. That’s my main fear. I used to hang a punch bag in the cupboard and bang away at it when no-one was around, so nobody would know I was doing it. I was afraid people would think me weird and unfeminine” (quoted in Hargreaves 1996, 130).

Still, resistance toward female involvement in combative sports seems to have softened somewhat over the years, especially when the female involvement is amateur rather than professional. Said the father of Dallas Malloy, a 16-year-old amateur boxer profiled in the Sunday supplement of the Seattle Times on August 8, 1993, “We’ve tried to encourage our daughters to do something interesting with their lives, not be a sheep. I have a feeling whatever Dallas does, she will always be different. She’ll do anything but what the crowd does.”

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See also Boxing, European; Jûdô; Wrestling and Grappling: Japan

References
Women in the Martial Arts: China

Chinese women have practiced martial arts from early times. The most significant reflection of this fact is the story of the Maiden of Yue, a legendary swordswoman who is said to have trained the troops of Gou Jian, king of the state of Yue, and whose story contains one of the earliest records of basic martial arts principles. It is even possible that this story of a swords- woman is meant to symbolize the fact that brute strength, which was depicted as a common trait of martial artists in ancient times, was not necessarily most important to defeating an opponent.

Even China’s military examination system, which comprised basic martial arts skills and understanding of the military classics, was established under the reign of a woman, Empress Wu Zetian, in A.D. 702. As fate would have it, the Chinese Empire also met its demise under Empress Ci Xi not long after she encouraged the disastrous antiforeign Boxer uprising of 1900.

During the Eastern or Later Han dynasty (A.D. 25–225), the threat from Qiang tribes to the area now comprising Shanxi province was so great
that women in that region were reported to have carried halberds and bows and arrows, and practiced spear routines alongside the males.

During the Tang dynasty (618–960), one of Chinese culture’s grandest periods, martial skills were valued alongside intellectual pursuits. The poet Du Fu immortalized the skill of a woman in his “On Watching a Sword Dance by Madam Gongsun’s Disciple.” In Chinese, sword dancing has always been synonymous with the practice of actual sword techniques. It was a favorite pasttime of the female revolutionary Qiu Jin, who was executed on the eve of the Revolution of 1911, and whose memorial statues often depict her standing defiantly with a sword.

Popular culture in the capital city (first Kaifeng and then Hangzhou) during the Song dynasty (960–1279) included both male and female wrestling matches in the marketplace. Women demonstrating martial arts routines to draw a crowd preceded these matches. The scholar-official, Sima Guang, derided the spectacle of scantily clad women wrestlers among the entertainers who gathered outside the Gate of Great Virtue during New Year celebrations in 1062. Noting the irony of these public displays in front of this symbol of national decorum, he petitioned the throne to prohibit women’s wrestling.

Throughout the Song period, China was under threat of invasion from various northern nomadic groups, and the Mongols finally conquered
it in 1279. The Song History records a number of heroic personages involved in the fighting against the invaders. Among these was the younger sister of one leader named Yang Aner. She was called Woman Number Four, and the history describes her as clever and fierce, and good at riding and archery. This period also spawned the legend of the woman warrior Hua Mulan, who was also said to have lived prior to the founding of the Tang, but about whom no firm historical record exists. The story of her substituting for her father by joining the military disguised as a man served as a dual symbol of patriotism and filial piety.

Ever since the legendary Maiden of Yue, who supposedly lived around 200 B.C., women martial artists have had roles in popular literature. Of the 108 main characters in the Ming novel Outlaws of the Marsh (also known as All Men Are Brothers or Water Margin), three are women. Stories about women martial artists abounded during the Qing period (1644–1911). Some are about fictional characters, such as the skilled young Buddhist nun in Strange Tales from the Studio of Small Talk and others in various popular martial novels. There are also numerous vignettes about real people in the Stone Studio Illustrated News of the 1880s and 1890s, the Qing Unofficial History Categorized Extracts (completed in 1917), and the official Yongchun County Gazetteer—home of yongchun (wing chun) boxing.

Based on the record in the Yongchun County Gazetteer (Fujian province), one can at least tentatively assume that what is now known as yongchun boxing likely evolved from the skills introduced there by Woman Ding Number Seven between 1644 and 1722. She is said to have come to Yongchun with her father and taught some of the locals. One of these, Zheng Li, supposedly improved the art further with skills he learned from an itinerant Buddhist monk, who had picked up some Shaolin techniques. These skills were then passed on in Yongchun to the twentieth century.

The vignettes in the Categorized Extracts and Stone Studio Illustrated News reveal a variety of situations involving women martial artists, especially incidents in which they beat numbers of male ruffians. One of the most compelling stories is about a Widow Qi Number Two who, between 1795 and 1820, rescued a wrongfully imprisoned old nun and then joined a group of White Lotus Sect rebels and became their leader. Women martial artists also served in the ranks of the Taiping rebels (1850–1863) and the Boxers in 1900. All this reflects a society in turmoil, where both men and women might be forced to defend themselves. Under these circumstances, the wealthy and well-placed depended on escort or protection agencies. Women served in some of these enterprises as well.

After the Revolution of 1911, women continued to make their mark in the martial arts, and they were prominent in the team that performed at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. They continue to play an important part in
China’s current physical education program, which includes standardized routines for nationwide competition. Most recently, they have participated in international martial arts tournaments, which have included contact competition.

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See also Boxing, Chinese; Folklore in the Martial Arts; Written Texts: China; Yongchun (Wing Chun)

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Women in the Martial Arts: Japan

Early History

The battle tales of Japan, chronicles of wars in the Heian, Kamakura, and Muromachi periods, focus almost completely on the deeds of the nobility and warrior classes. These tales, passed down by blind bards much as Homer’s *Iliad* was, present warriors as archetypes: the tragic Loser-Hero, the Warrior-Courtier, the Traitor, the Coward, and so on.

Women’s roles in such tales are slight:

• The Tragic Heroine who kills herself at the death of her husband.
• The Loyal Wife who is taken captive.
• The Stalwart Mother who grooms her son to take vengeance for his dead father.
• The Merciful Woman whose “weak, feminine” qualities encourage a warrior chieftain to indulge in unmanly empathy, dissuading him from killing the family of his enemy, who later grow up to kill him.
Only in passing does one hear about women in the mass: slaughtered, or “given” to the warriors as “spoils of war.” That they were surely raped and often murdered was apparently considered too trivial a fact to even mention in later warrior tales, once the conventions of the genre had been codified.

Still, unless one is willing to imagine a conspiracy of silence in which women’s roles on the battlefield were suppressed in both historical records and battle tales, it is a fair assumption that onna-musha (women warriors) were unusual. This is borne out by the prominence given to the few women about whom accounts are written. Interestingly, in the cases of both of the most famous of these women, the naginata (a halberd associated with women’s martial arts today) was not their weapon of choice.

Japan’s most famous women warriors are Tomoe Gozen and Hangaku, also called Itagaki. In the Heike Monogatari, Tomoe Gozen was a general in the troops of Kiso Yoshinaka, Yoritomo’s first attack force. She was described as exceptionally strong and hauntingly beautiful, with pale white skin like that of a court lady. Her last act, on the verge of Yoshinaka’s defeat, is the subject of many plays and poems. She was ordered to retreat. Rather than simply leave, however, she instead rode directly into a group of the enemy, singling out the strongest. She matched his horse’s stride, reached over, sliced off his head with her sword, and cast it aside. Tomoe, has not, however, ever been proven as a historical figure, although not for lack of trying. Although Tomoe is claimed by more than a few naginata traditions as being either their founder or one of their primordial teachers, there is no factual justification for such a claim. It is, instead, merely an attempt to associate their tradition with a powerful, romantic figure who lived long before their system was even dreamed of.

Hangaku, daughter of the Jo, a warrior (bushi) family of Echigo province, was known for her strength and accuracy with the bow and arrow. During an uprising of Echigo against the central government, she held off the enemy from the roof of a storehouse. After being wounded in both legs by spears and arrows, she was captured, then released in the custody of a famous warrior. There is an account of her later defending the Torizakayama Castle with 3,000 soldiers. The enemy numbered 10,000, and she was defeated and killed.

Thus, at least in the earlier periods of the Heian and Kamakura periods, women who became prominent or even present on the field of battle were exceptional. This does not mean, however, that Japanese women were powerless. There is a common image of Japanese femininity based on the accounts we have of those women of the Imperial court, swaddled in lay-
ers of kimono and rigid custom, preoccupied with poetry and moon viewing. Such a picture obscures just who the bushi women were during the ascendency of their class. They were originally pioneers, helping to settle new lands, and if need be, becoming fighters, like women of the Old West in American mythology. Women at one time or another even may have led some bushi clans. This can be inferred in that women had the legal right to function as jité (stewards), who supervised land held in absentia by nobles or temples.

These women trained with the naginata because, generally speaking, they defended their homes rather than marching off to battle. Therefore, they only needed to become skilled with a few weapons that offered the best range of tactics to defend against marauders attacking on horseback or in small groups with swords.

The Warring States Period
From the tenth until the seventeenth centuries, Japan can never be said to have been at peace. However, from 1467 until 1568, the whole country was swept into chaos, in what became known as the Sengoku jidai, or Warring States period. This was a time in which all social classes were swept up into war, and feudal domains were sometimes stripped of almost all healthy males.

One result of this rampant warfare was that women were often the last defense of towns and castles. Thus there are accounts of wives of warlords, dressed in flamboyant armor, leading bands of women armed with naginata. In an account in the Bichi Hyôranki, for example, the wife of Mimura Kotoku, appalled by the mass suicide of the surviving women and children in her husband’s besieged castle, armed herself and led eighty-three soldiers against the enemy.

It was at this time that the image of women fighters with naginata probably arose. However, as Yazawa Isako, a sixteenth-generation headmistress of the Toda-ha Buko-ryû, wrote in 1916, the main weapon of most women in these horrible times of war was not the naginata, but the dagger (kaiken). Bushi women carried a kaiken with them at all times. Yazawa states that women were not usually expected to fight with their dagger, but rather to kill themselves.

Japanese female suicide (jigai) was as wrapped in custom as the male warrior’s seppuku (cutting the abdomen). In seppuku, a man was required to show his stoicism in the face of unimaginable pain. In jigai, women had a method in which death would occur relatively quickly, and the nature of the wound would not be likely to cause an ugly distortion of the features or disarrangement of the limbs, thus offending the woman’s dignity after death. The dagger was used to cut the jugular vein.
Women did not train in using the kaiken with sophisticated combat techniques. If a woman was forced to fight, she was to grab the hilt with both hands, plant the butt firmly against her stomach, and run forward to stab the enemy with all her weight behind the blade. She was to become, for a moment, a living spear. Thus, she was not supposed to boldly draw her blade and challenge her enemy. Instead she had to find some way to catch him unawares. If she were successful in this, she would most likely be unstoppable. But men knew this, and so a woman could not realistically expect to face a single foe or have the advantage of surprise. Furthermore, if she were captured alive, even after killing several enemies, she would be raped, displayed as a captive, or otherwise dishonored. In the rigid beliefs of this period, this caused shame to attach to the family name. In these grim times, the only escape from what was believed to be disgrace was death at one's own hands.

The Edo Period: An Enforced Peace
In the mid-seventeenth century, when Japan finally arrived at an enforced peace under the authoritarian rule of the Tokugawa shogunate, the need for skill at arms decreased. The turbulent energies of the warrior class were bound up in an intricate code of conduct, based on laws governing behavior appropriate to each level of society. The rough codes of warriors were organized into the doctrines (for there was not simply one) of bushidō (the way of the warrior). Self-sacrifice, honor, and loyalty became fixed ideals, focusing the warrior class on a new role as governing bureaucrats and police agents of a society at enforced, totalitarian peace. The role of the warrior was mythologized, and certain images were held up as ideals for all to emulate.

During the Edo period (1603–1867), all women, not only those of the samurai class, became increasingly restricted. In this world, everyone had to fill an immutable role in society, fixed at birth and held until death. The rules and social conventions governing conduct between men and women, formerly more egalitarian, became more rigid than at any other period of Japanese history, and a woman’s relationship toward her husband was said to mirror that of a samurai toward his lord. The bushi woman was expected to center her life on her home, serving her family in the person of her husband first, his male sons second, and her mother-in-law third. Studies and strong physical activity were considered unseemly.

Work was almost completely gender divided, and men and women became increasingly separate from one another. There was usually a room in each house reserved for men that women were forbidden to enter, even to clean or serve food. Husbands and wives did not customarily even sleep together. The husband would visit his wife to initiate any sexual activity and afterwards would retire to his own room.
In such a society, stories of women warriors defending their homes and their families were a means toward an end. Women trained with the naginata less for the purpose of combat than to instill in them the idealized virtues necessary to be a samurai wife. Women’s work was unremitting in serving the males of the household and in trying to teach proper behavior to their children, who were legally considered to be the husband's alone. However, unlike the women of Victorian England, who were expected to be subservient and frail, the bushi women were expected to be subservient and strong. Their duty was to endure.

When a bushi woman married, one of the possessions she took to her husband's home was a naginata. Like the *daisho* (long and short swords) that her husband bore, the naginata was considered an emblem of her role in society. Practice with the naginata was a means of merging with a spirit of self-sacrifice, of connecting with the hallowed ideals of the warrior class. As men were expected to sacrifice themselves for the state and the maintenance of society, women were expected to sacrifice themselves to a rigid, limited life in the home.

Meanwhile, in rural villages, women sometimes used naginata to maintain order. An elderly woman, for example, recalled that when she was a small girl in a village in Kyūshū, the southernmost major island of Japan, men were often gone from the village to work on labor crews. When there was a disturbance at night or a suspicious character entered the village, the women would grab their naginata hanging ready on one of the walls of the house and go running outside to search the town for any danger. The woman's grandmother was the leader of this “emergency response squad,” and this squad was a naturally autonomous group within the village. Protecting the neighborhood was simply assumed to be a woman’s job.

**Tendo-Ryū: One Foot on the Battlefield, One in the Modern World**

Perhaps the best way to understand the role of martial training within Edo-period society and in subsequent periods of Japanese history is to examine the historical records and practices associated with some of the traditional ryū. (The author employs the term ryū in order to avoid the connotation of faction within a style that may be carried by the term ryūha.) *Tendo-ryū naginata-jutsu*, in particular, embodies many of the most significant changes in martial training from the late sixteenth century to the present, including

- A transition from a warrior’s art (Ten-ryū), incorporating many weapons, to a martial tradition with a decided emphasis on a single one
- An increasing emphasis on the naginata as a weapon associated with women
- A transition from combative training to a training of will and spirit
• The use of martial arts in mass education
• The development of sportive forms of martial training

Therefore it is a worthy exemplar.

First developed for warriors during the 1560s, Tendo-ryū had a rather violent history, and many of its early members were involved in duels. Significant changes occurred during the late 1800s, however, under the tenure of Mitamura Kengyō, headmaster of one line of Tendo-ryū. Chief among them was that Mitamura singled out the naginata for the purpose of training women and girls.

The motivation was the desire to combat the steady influx of Western influence, and in 1895 Mitamura joined the newly formed Dainippon Butokukai, a Kyoto-based martial arts regulating body. After he displayed his methods for group instruction in 1899, a women’s school in Kyoto contracted with him to teach naginata on a regular basis, and subsequently the Tendo-ryū came to be known as specializing in the study of the naginata. Women took prominence as teachers (most notably, Mitamura’s brilliant wife, Mitamura Chiyo), and over time the practice weapon was made lighter.

Tendo-ryū kata instill a sense of fighting awareness; Mitamura Takeko, the granddaughter of Mitamura Kengyō, calls this the “cut and thrust spirit.” She believes that practicing in this way can help one to reach deep inside oneself: “I don’t just practice the naginata, it is a part of me.” She states that even though a student practices killing, “the gentleness and softness inherent in a woman is not lost. In fact, the training is aimed at focusing those traits into a strength which can be used for fostering and protecting as well as taking life” (personal communication 1982).
Unlike some schools that claim to have remained largely unchanged since their inception, it is likely that Tendo-ryū is far different from the original Ten-ryū practiced by the wild founder Saitō Denkiō Katsuhide. Nonetheless, perhaps the best of his spirit still resides in the hands and hearts of the women of Tendo-ryū, a courage and integrity in movement anyone would do well to emulate.

**Jikishin Kage-ryū Naginata-dō and the Development of Meiji Budō**

During the 1860s, Satake Yoshinori, a student of the Jikishin and Yanagi Kage-ryū, developed a new naginata school with his wife, Satake Shigeo, who had studied martial arts since she was 6 years old and was famous for her strength with the naginata. Between them, these two developed the forms of the present-day Jikishin Kage-ryū Naginata-dō. An innovative work, Jikishin Kage-ryū Naginata-dō bears no discernible relation to Ippu-sai’s kenjutsu system, which tradition says preceded it. Furthermore, the addition of the suffix -dō (way) indicates that the founders saw their school as a budō, a means of martial practice meant for the purpose of self-perfection rather than self-preservation.

During the 1920s, the succeeding chief instructor, Sonobe Hideo, introduced Jikishin Kage-ryū into girls’ schools. (Until the American reforms of the late 1940s, Japanese schools were rarely coeducational.) Sonobe taught at major schools in the Kyoto area, and was one of the first teachers to popularize mass training. “There is no fear on the part of the woman who is well trained [in wielding naginata],” Sonobe told the *Japan Times* in July 1925. “She is strong and confident. Her body is in perfect condition, muscles hard, body constantly alert, eyes and mind keenly following the movements of the blade.”

Since World War II, the Jikishin Kage-ryū has continued to grow and has the most students of any of the traditional schools of naginata. The present head teacher is Toya Akiko.

The forms of Jikishin Kage-ryū are done in straight lines in a highly defined rhythm. The *kiai* (vocal expressions of spirit) are traded back and forth, in almost a call-and-response, adding to a sense of dancelike structure. The forms project a sense of crisp elegance, but the emphasis appears to be on correct performance rather than development of martial skills: Perfection of the form as it is given rather than an ability to improvise freely is the aim of the school.

Despite this seemingly noncombative orientation, Jikishin Kage-ryū first made its name in matches against kendō practitioners. Both Satake Shigeo and Sonobe Hideo became famous through their many victories in such contests. Although Jikishin Kage-ryū no longer emphasizes competition against kendō practitioners, matches still do occur, and many members happily par-
to participate in competitions in the modern sports-oriented *atarashii naginata* (see below). Thus, perpetuating the tradition is clearly a valued part of its practitioners’ lives. Overall, the Jikishin Kage-ryû has been more successful than any other system in appealing to a large population of Japanese women. In its forms and practice, they find a kind of semimartial training that encourages and strengthens their will and sense of a strong, graceful femininity.

**Modern Competitive Martial Sports**

During the 1870s, the Japanese began thinking of themselves in terms of a national identity. Before this time, one’s feudal domain was, in many senses, one’s country. Toward this end, the central government began to manipulate the doctrines of bushidô to make them apply to the entire populace rather than just the warrior class. Through this, the government encouraged the development of a militant and obedient society.

Language, religion, and especially education were brought under the control of the government, and the newly created public school system became a great propaganda machine. As in all societies, the school system’s purposes were manifold, but in imperial Japan, the primary emphasis was on submission to the emperor and the needs of the state. Education was seen as a means of gaining skills and knowledge for the good of the country. Students were taught that cooperation, standardization, and the denial of personal desires were the most productive ways of serving the nation.

After the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, martial arts were made a regular part of the school curriculum. The classical disciplines, however, were not considered completely suitable for the training of the mass population. The older martial traditions encouraged a feudalistic loyalty to themselves and their teachings, and in addition, often focused on somewhat mystical values not directly concerned with the assumed needs of imperial Japan.

So in 1911, jûdô and kendô, both Meiji creations, were introduced into boys’ schools. As early as 1913, there was a jûdô class at Seijyo Girls’ High School in Tokyo, but the idea of women’s wrestling did not prove very popular, for as late as 1936 there were only a few dozen *dan*-graded female jûdôka in Japan.

However, working-class women were not necessarily bound by convention, and during the early Meiji period, a time when many people lost their means of livelihood, there arose a phenomenon known as *gekken kô-gyô* (*sword shows*). In these, former samurai, down on their luck, joined forces to create what amounted to circuses in which they gave demonstrations and took challenges from the audiences. Mounting the stage, fighters would challenge all comers from the audience, using wooden or bamboo swords, naginata, spear, chain-and-sickle, or any other weapon selected by the challenger. These fights were very popular and well written up in the
newspapers. And, even though the fighters probably tried to exert some control, there were many injuries.

In addition to challenge matches, members of the troupe would engage each other in contests, pitting women armed with wooden naginata against men armed with wooden or bamboo swords. One of the most remarkable of these female fighters was Murakami Hideo, who became a seventeenth-generation headmistress of the Toda-ba Buko-ryû. Murakami’s life story cries for a novel. Born in Shikoku in 1863, she studied Shizuka-ryû Naginata-jutsu as a girl. When her teacher died, she left home while still teenaged to study other systems. Then this staunch, tiny woman continued her wanderings in Honshu, traveling alone, testing her skill against other fighters, studying as she went. Imagine, if you will, a young woman, little more than a girl, marching through the Japanese countryside alone, without employment, walking from one dôjô to another.

Murakami reached Tokyo while in her early twenties and became a student of Komatsuzaki Kotoko, and possibly Yazawa Isako, the fifteenth- and sixteenth-generation teachers of the Toda Ha Buko-ryû. By now she was very strong, and so she was awarded the highest license (menkyo kaiden) in the school while still in her twenties.

Unable to read or write, Murakami was unable to make much of a living, so she joined the gekken kôgyô. Fighting with a chain-and-sickle or naginata, she took all challenges from the audiences. There are no reports of her ever losing. In her later years, she was able to make ends meet as a teacher—her dôjô in the Kanda area of Tokyo was called the Shûsuikan (Hall of the Autumn Water)—but she was always poor. According to those who knew her in her old age, she was a tiny, kind, but wary woman, always ready to invite one to supper. She could drink anyone under the table. As far as is known, she lived alone and she died alone.

As these matches were for the paid entertainment of the audience, they soon degenerated to what must be considered the pro wrestling of the Meiji period (1867–1910), with waitresses serving drinks in abbreviated kimono and drunken patrons cheering in the stands. Matches became dramatic exhibitions, vulgar parodies of the austere warrior culture from which they had emerged. Discouraged at times by the police, who regarded them as a threat to public order, the gekken kôgyô were disbanded by the 1920s. Nonetheless, they can be regarded as the first precursors of modern martial sport in Japan—competition for the sake of comparing skills and entertaining an audience.

**Women’s Martial Art Training, 1920–1945**

As martial arts continued to be integrated into public education, the practice of naginata came to a crossroads. Jûdô, kendô, and later karate were
designed to be practiced in standardized formats. While this had not happened to naginata practice yet, it did as it began to be featured in public schools, since when taught en masse to groups of young people, even the most conservative traditions must change. Pre–World War II photographs show lines of children diligently swinging weapons in unison, while other pictures show young children phlegmatically plodding their way through kata. Form practice means something very different to warriors trying to get an edge in upcoming battles and to teenagers attending gym class at the local high school. So, to make the training relevant to young people, competitive practice became more and more popular.

Competition led to modifications in equipment. The light wooden naginata covered with leather was used first; later, for safety’s sake, bam-
boo strips were attached to the end of a wooden shaft, in imitation of kendô shinai. This weapon replica is light and whippy, allowing movements impossible with a real naginata. As rules developed and point targets were agreed upon, the techniques useful for victory in competition began to differ from those used by the old ryû, each of which had been developed for different terrain, varied combative situations, and a welter of sociopolitical objectives. Naginata practice began to develop into something new—a competitive sport.

Not all teachers were opposed to this universalistic trend, given its congruence to the strong centralization of state power at this time. During World War II, some naginata teachers, notably Sakakida Yaeko, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, created the Mombushô Seitei kata (standard forms of the Ministry of Education). Sakakida had been (and remains) a student of Tendo-ryû and was an avid participant in matches pitting naginata against kendô. She states that she found that the different styles of the old ryû were not suitable to teach to large groups of schoolgirls on an intermittent basis. Given the conditions in which she had to teach, she felt that it was too difficult for the girls to learn the sword side of the kata, so she began to emphasize solo practice with the naginata. In addition, she was concerned that they might study one style in primary school and another in secondary school, thus being required to relearn everything each time they switched schools.

As a result of these difficulties, she and several associates created totally new kata that focused on naginata versus naginata. The Mombushô forms, made for the express purpose of training schoolgirls and adopted for use in 1943, were the result. Something, however, seemed to be lost in the process. Geared for children rather than warriors, these forms are, as a result, simplistic and somewhat lacking in character. The singularity that made the old ryû strong was sacrificed in favor of a generic mean.

Teachers and students of the classical ryû received basic but scanty instruction in the new kata and were assigned “territories” made up of several grammar schools. As part of their preparation, the teachers were instructed in how to give pep talks to the girls. These talks included warnings about the barbarism of invading armies and the need for girls to protect themselves and their families. Yet the protection was not intended for the sake of the integrity of the girls themselves, but for the sake of being “mirrors of the Emperor’s virtue.”

Nitta Suzuyo, nineteenth-generation lineal successor to the Toda ha Buko-ryû, subsequently recalled teaching these forms to girls aged 12 to 17 years. She stated that, although still a young woman herself, she was dispatched to teach because her teacher, Kobayashi Seiko, had no desire to teach the Mombushô kata, preferring to continue to teach her traditional
ryû in private. As part of the training for teachers, Nitta was told that the most important thing was to boost the girls’ morale and strengthen their spirit in case of an enemy landing. Nitta said that the girls professed to enjoy the training, which was done in place of “enemy sports” such as baseball or volleyball.

**Training after World War II**

In 1945 the war ended for Japan. The occupation forces were fearful of anything that seemed to be connected to Japan’s warlike spirit, and the Americans severely restricted martial studies. Thousands of swords were piled on runways, run over with steamrollers, and then buried under concrete construction projects. Donn Draeger, noted martial arts practitioner and scholar, recalled the sight of those swords, flashing in the sun in shards of gold and silver, crackling and ringing under the roar and stink of the steamrollers.

After a few years, however, these bans were lifted, and the first All Japan Kendô Renmei (federation) Tournament was held in 1953. At a meeting held afterwards, Sakakida and several of the leading naginata instructors of Tendo-ryû and Jikishin Kage-ryû made plans for the institution of a similar All Japan Naginata Dô Renmei. It was decided to adopt the Educational Ministry kata as the standard form of the federation, with only a few minor changes. They also decided to eliminate the writing of naginata in the traditional characters, which had meant “long blade” or “mowing blade,” and, to indicate their break with the past, they used the syllabary, whose characters only have sound values. This martial sport has come to be called atarashii naginata (new naginata).

This change in the way of writing naginata may seem to be a trivial one, but it is not. The change in how naginata is written states decisively to practitioners that atarashii naginata is no longer a martial art, using a weapon either to train combat skills or to demand, through its paradoxical claim as a “tool for enlightenment,” a focused and integrated spirit. Instead, they have created a sports form, martial in both appearance and “sound,” but not in “character.”

Atarashii naginata is composed of two elements: kata and shiai. According to some of their leading instructors, particularly those of this generation, the kata were created by taking “the best techniques from many naginata ryûha.” This is propaganda at best, absurd at worst: The forms of the various ryû are not mere catalogues of separate techniques, to be selected like bonbons in a corner candy store, but interrelated wholes, permeated with a sophisticated cultivation of movement and designed for combative effectiveness and spiritual training. Sakakida herself only states that she observed the old ryû and tried to absorb their essence. Then, forgetting their movements entirely, she devised the new kata.
Atarashii naginata contests are an imitation of kendō competition. The matches between heavily armored opponents scoring points only at specified targets often resemble a game of tag, and the practitioners rarely utilize kata movements. Thus kata are no longer relevant to combat. So, by removing the considerations of one’s own death (and one’s responsibility for another’s fate), atarashii naginata may have removed the major impetus for the development of an ethical stance toward the world. All that may remain for many trainees is a sport, with the emphasis on winning or losing a match.

Be that as it may, many naginata teachers have entered the modern association and have attempted to teach both their old tradition and atarashii naginata. However, only a few of their students are willing to practice the old kata. This has resulted in the abandonment and demise of most of the old martial traditions; often the only reason young people practice the old school at all is “just so it won’t be forgotten.”

It must be noted, however, that the demise of the old traditions is the responsibility of practitioners themselves, as they either could not find a way to make their art relevant to the younger generation or have no idea themselves of the value of the tradition passed on to them. But there is hope. In the words of one outspoken teacher, Abe Toyoko:

I see lots of people today, jumping from one new thing to another, not getting settled. I really think people need something in the foundation, some deeply rooted place in their lives. I see this even in the judging of naginata matches. It used to be so different, this judging. There were only two per match, and they were deliberate and subtle, not jumpy and conforming like the ones today. Even their movements had more meaning. The judges used to have individual styles, their own way of signaling points. Now everyone has to do it the same way. You won’t believe this. They stopped a match once, one I was judging, and asked over the loudspeaker if I would raise my arm a few more degrees when signaling. Do you believe it? And just a couple of years ago, I was judging with another teacher. One of the competitors moved, just moved a little, and the other judge signaled a point. I asked the two women in the match if a point had been made and they both said no. But because the judge had ruled for it, it was declared valid! I haven’t判决 since. I don’t want to be a part of teaching people how to win cheaply or lose unfairly. (personal communication 1982)

Ellis Amdur

See also Form/Xing/Kata/Pattern Practice; Koryû Bugei, Japanese; Religion and Spiritual Development: Japan; Swordsmanship, Japanese; Women in the Martial Arts, 479 B.C.—A.D. 1896

References
Wrestling and Grappling: China

Wrestling or grappling is the nucleus for Chinese bare-handed martial arts, going back to the dawn of Chinese civilization. It has consisted of various forms and been called by different names over the centuries based on changing times, China’s vast geographical setting, and multiethnic society. From earliest times it was a basic military combat skill that complemented weapons techniques.

Chinese wrestling’s mythological origins are found in the fight between the Yellow Emperor and Chi You, the inventor of weapons. Chi You’s followers are said to have donned animal-horn headdresses to butt their opponents in hand-to-hand combat. Thus, one of the earliest names for wrestling was *juedi* (horn butting). Another early term, used as a verb, *bo* (to seize or strike), to describe bare-handed fighting, including wrestling, was apparently also used as a noun to describe boxing. Thus, we can see the
complementary relationship between Chinese wrestling and boxing, which, in earliest times, were likely barely distinguishable.

During the Spring and Autumn period (770–476 B.C.), exceptional wrestlers were selected to serve as bodyguards to accompany field commanders in their chariots. This tradition is vividly portrayed centuries later in the powerful guardian figures associated with Buddhist art.

In the Record of Rituals (second century B.C.), wrestling, termed jueli (compare strength), is described, along with archery, as a major element of military training carried out during the winter months after the harvest. During the Qin period (221–207 B.C.), wrestling (juedi, the accepted formal name) was officially designated as the ceremonial military sport.

During the Former Han period (206–208 B.C.), wrestling and boxing (shoubo [hand striking]) became more clearly distinguishable, the former more of a sport emphasizing holds and throws, and the latter retaining the deadlier, no-holds-barred, hand-to-hand combat skills. However, wrestling’s full evolution as a sport with rules and limits was uneven. The official Tang History (A.D. 618–960) mentions wrestling matches held in the imperial palace in which heads were smashed, arms broken, and blood flowed freely.

Another trend discernible during the Former Han was the exchange of martial arts skills between China and the nomadic peoples to the north. One of Han emperor Wu’s (140–87 B.C.) bodyguards, Jin Ridi, a Xiongnu (ancestors of the Mongols), used a skill called shuaihu (a neck-lock throw) to defeat a would-be assassin. A similar term, shuaijiao (leg throw), ultimately became the modern common name for Chinese wrestling. This was also likely the period when both Chinese boxing (shoubo) and wrestling (juedi) were introduced to the Korean peninsula through military colonies established and maintained as far south as Pyongyang between 108 B.C. and A.D. 313. These were the terms used for bare-handed Korean military martial arts throughout the Koryo period (918–1392) and into the following early Yi period.

Wrestling tournaments were grand occasions for both commoners and the elite. Folk matches drew crowds from many miles around, while imperial tournaments were accompanied by much pomp, with rows of military drummers on either side of the wrestling ring. Tang emperor Zhuang Zong (924–926) personally challenged his guests and offered prizes if they could beat him. One individual defeated him and was made governor of a prefecture.

Some of what we know about wrestling can be found in the Record of Wrestling (Jueli Ji, ca. 960), the very existence of which is testimony to the role of wrestling in Chinese popular culture. In addition to the older terms, juedi and jueli, it lists several later terms, including xiangpu, a colloquial form for popular folk wrestling (the term first appears between A.D.
the term adopted in Japan for sumô; and xiangfei, a local
term used in Sichuan and Hebei.

Contemporary descriptions of society in the Song dynasty (960–1279)
capitals of Kaifeng and Hangzhou reveal that wrestling enjoyed widespread
popularity. Wrestling associations were among the specialty groups
abounding in the capital of Hangzhou. Open-air matches were held at spe-
cially designated areas in and around the city, sometimes in spacious tem-
ple grounds. People came from all around to watch and participate. The
wrestlers included both men and women, and there were even mixed male-
female matches, such as the one described in the novel Water Margin (also
known as All Men Are Brothers or Outlaws of the Marsh). In this episode,
a woman, Woman Duan Number Three, confronts Wang Qing. Wang fools
her and flips her to the ground, but immediately snatches her up with a
move called “Tiger Embraces His Head.”

The scholar-official Sima Guang, in a memorial to court (1062), op-
posed the spectacle of scantily clad women wrestlers. Moreover, the elite
palace guards or Inner Group were all top-flight wrestlers.

The Mongols, who ruled China from 1271 to 1368, emphasized the
“men’s three competitive skills” of riding, archery, and wrestling. They
were key elements tested in competition for leadership positions. To say
that these were only men’s skills, however, is somewhat misleading, for women also practiced them. The *Travels of Marco Polo* describes one instance where the daughter of King Kaidu (grandson of Ogodai) agreed to marry any man who could best her in wrestling. But, much to the dismay of her family and other well-wishers, she took her skill seriously, defeated all hopefuls, and remained single. The Mongols prohibited Han Chinese martial arts practices, which by this time consisted mainly of boxing and weapons routines.

Like the Mongols, the Manchus, who ruled China between 1644 and 1911, stressed riding, archery, and wrestling. They too attempted to place restrictions on Han Chinese martial arts practices, which they associated with subversive activities. Emperor Kangxi (1662–1722) is said to have established an elite Expert Wrestlers Banner (Shanpu Ying) to reward the strongmen/bodyguards he used to keep palace intrigues in check. Manchu emperors actively encouraged wrestling, called *buku*, among their own people and used it as a political and diplomatic tool in their relations with the Mongols. The Tibetans were also fond of wrestling, and this activity is depicted in a wall mural in the Potala Palace.

The main objective of Chinese wrestling, regardless of local variations of style (such as Beijing, Baoding, Tianjin, or Mongolian), is to throw the opponent to the ground by a combination of seizing, and arm maneuvers (twists and turns) and leg maneuvers (sweeps and hooks). A rough-and-tumble folk sport, it was practiced under Spartan conditions, without mats, and wrestlers practiced rolling in a fetal position to lessen the impact from hitting the ground.

In the turmoil following in the wake of the Communist rise to power in China and finally the split between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan in 1949, a number of Chinese wrestling masters immigrated to Taiwan. Among them was shuaijiao (or, as it is more commonly spelled in the West, *shuai-chiao*) champion Chang Tung-sheng. Chang and his students were instrumental in popularizing the system outside of Asia.

Chinese wrestling was popularized in the twentieth century as sport shuaijiao. The modern form is a type of jacketed wrestling, although practitioners assert that throwing in shuaijiao does not depend on grabbing the opponent’s jacket or clothing. The priority is to grab the muscle and bone through the clothing in order to control and throw down the opponent. However, the use of the competitor’s heavy quilted, short-sleeved jacket, which wraps tightly around the torso and is tied with a canvas belt, adds variety to the techniques used in controlling and throwing the opponent. Fast footwork using sweeps, inner hooks, and kicks to the opponent’s legs are combined with the use of the arms to control and strike in order to create a two-directional action, making a powerful throw.
There is no mat or groundwork in shuaijiao. After the opponent is thrown to the ground, one strives to maintain the superior standing position. This is particularly the case against a larger opponent, who because of greater body weight will generally have the advantage in grappling on the ground. In a self-defense situation, after the opponent is thrown a shuaijiao, the practitioner immediately applies a joint lock and executes hand strikes or kicks with the knee or foot to vital areas of the falling or downed opponent.

Modern shuaijiao training utilizes individual drills, work with partners, and exercises employing apparatus. Balance, flexibility, strength, and body awareness are developed through movement such as hand and foot drills. After attaining proficiency in solo drills, the trainee advances to work with a partner. Practicing with a partner allows one to add power and coordination to techniques. Drills against full-speed punches, kicks, and grappling attacks are practiced to aid in training for san-shou (Chinese freestyle kickboxing) and self-defense. For the inexperienced novice student to learn, remember, and deploy martial art techniques quickly, while difficult in training, becomes more so under stress. In order to teach effective physical applications of shuaijiao techniques, free sparring drills and related mock-physical-encounter situations are of paramount importance in the training. Work with various types of equipment (striking and kicking the heavy bag, weight training, and work with canvas bags filled with steel shot) supplements the solo and partner practice of techniques.

Contemporary shuaijiao utilizes a ranking system divided into ten levels. The first version of the ranking system was created by Grand Master Chang Tung-sheng for the Central Police College of Taiwan. The ranking system follows the Japanese model of beginner (chieh) levels in descending order of fifth through first to expert (teng) levels of first through tenth. A colored belt signifying rank is worn with the uniform. The current ranking system was developed by Chang and Chi-hsiu D. Weng and is recognized by the International Shuai-chiao Association and the United States Shuai-chiao Association.

Shuaijiao has developed an international following. In the United States, the United States Shuai-chiao Association oversees the activities of the system, and in the spring of 2000 the Pan-American Shuai-chiao Federation was established in São Paulo, Brazil. The first Pan-American Shuai-chiao tournament was held in the following year.

Chi-hsiu D. Weng

See also China

References
Wrestling and Grappling: Europe

Wrestling, at its core, is an attempt to force an opponent to submit by using holds, throws, takedowns, trips, joint locks, or chokes. Holds are attempts to immobilize an opponent by either entangling the limbs or forcing the shoulders to touch the mat, placing an opponent in a danger position. A throw is an attempt to toss a person across either the hips or shoulders, using the body as a fulcrum. A trip is an attempt by a wrestler to use legs to sweep one or both of the opponent’s legs out, forcing a fall to the ground. A takedown is an attempt to unbalance an opponent, such as by grabbing both of the legs with the arms, once again forcing a fall to the ground. A joint lock is an immobilizing lock against a limb of the opponent, such as the elbow or knee, which attempts to hyperextend the joint beyond its normal range of motion, forcing the opponent to either surrender or risk losing the limb. A choke is an attempt to cut off either the air supply or blood supply, or both, to the head, once again forcing the opponent to either surrender or suffer unconsciousness.

There are thousands of techniques in wrestling that depend on the implementation of these movements. Experienced wrestlers of any style, therefore, have a great number of techniques and combinations that they may use in combat. Strikes or percussive blows are not allowed in sport wrestling, or if they are, such techniques are purely of a secondary nature, with a throw or hold intended to be the immobilizing technique. Once blows with fists or feet become the primary weapon or balanced equally with throws and holds, then the match either becomes boxing or “all-in” fighting.
Wrestling exists in many forms. There are sportive forms, in which the practitioners attempt to compete for points before judges and must play within a set of prescribed rules. Many of these sportive forms are unique to a particular culture or civilization, while other forms have gained worldwide acceptance and have been introduced into Olympic competition. Contemporary martial arts practitioners use combative forms of wrestling, and the police and military forces of many nations employ wrestling to supplement armed combat. Combative wrestling is used for self-defense purposes in environments where there are no rules. Sacred forms of wrestling are used as religious ceremonies or only practiced during religious festivals or holidays. There are even forms of wrestling that are only used for secular holidays and festivals.

There is no universal agreement as to the origin of wrestling. However, mammals of all types engage in some kind of close-in grappling when they fight. Bears hug each other in fierce grips, attempting to bite and crush their opponents. Felines, ranging from housecats to the great lions and tigers, close with each other and attempt to encircle their opponents with their fore and back legs. Primates are known to wrestle with one another both in play and in combat. The closest human relatives in the animal kingdom—gorillas, chimpanzees, and orangutans—have been observed to throw their fellows when playing in moves that are remarkably similar to
basic wrestling throws. In addition, these creatures attempt to entangle the limbs of their opponents. It is worth speculating that many of the basic wrestling moves have been genetically imprinted in humans as instinctual methods of self-defense. Certainly the human hand, with its opposable thumb and four fingers, is ideally suited to grasping and holding.

Exactly when wrestling became a formal activity that was refined and taught, rather than an improvised activity, is unknown. It is certain, however, that wrestling has been with human society since the earliest civilizations. Wrestling in any form is a struggle between opponents that demands the ability not only to outmaneuver, but to outthink an opponent. Physical strength, although important, has always been secondary to the ability to move quickly and efficiently and to set up an opponent for a throw or hold. It has been said that wrestling matches are more like games of chess than combats, and successful wrestlers have always relied on their ability to think several moves ahead.

In this entry, wrestling will be examined in three broad contexts: historical, societal, and martial. The discussion of the historical aspect of wrestling will examine, however briefly, the development of wrestling from earliest times to the present. The treatment of the societal aspects will focus on specific types of wrestling by culture, a comparison of wrestling styles of the world, and the particular rules and limits of these styles in relation to European wrestling traditions. The discussion of the martial aspects of wrestling will examine wrestling as a martial art, as distinct from a sport. The fact that wrestling is an effective method of self-defense is often overlooked in contemporary society. Considering the myriad of techniques available to experienced wrestlers, including disarms and powerful throws, wrestling should not be characterized simply as a sport.

Western combat traditions generally are conceived of as having their origins in classical civilization. The Greeks and Romans dedicated wrestling competitions to Zeus (Roman Jupiter), the king of the gods, attesting to the importance of the activity. Our knowledge of wrestling as a formal activity, however, begins with the rise of civilization, and diverse cultural influences emerge in contemporary wrestling.

The first written records of the activity come from the Near Eastern civilizations of Babylon and Egypt, East Asia (China), and South Asia (India). Extensive descriptions of wrestling techniques in the surviving reliquaries of the Egyptian civilization date back at least to 1500 B.C. From Egypt, in fact, there comes a clear “textbook” of wrestling and fighting methods recovered from the tomb of Beni-Hassan. Various throws, holds, and takedowns are clearly illustrated through pictographs and descriptions. If, as thought by some scholars, this material was indeed conceived as a textbook of wrestling and fighting, designed to pass on instructions to fu-
tured generations of students, it is one of the oldest textbooks in the world. Many of the images clearly refer to techniques that are easily recognizable in modern wrestling systems: shoulder throws, hip throws, and leg sweeps.

Even earlier records dating back to the ancient Near Eastern civilizations of Sumer (ca. 3500 B.C.) and Babylon (ca. 1850 B.C.) attest to wrestling as being one of the oldest human activities. For example, the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh clearly describes wrestling techniques used by the hero and his antagonists. The early chronicles of Japan list wrestling as one of the activities practiced by the gods. In fact, every culture on the planet appears to have developed some form of wrestling, making it one of the few human activities that can be said to be universally practiced.

In East Asia, Mongolia and China both developed indigenous wrestling systems. Murals of grappling techniques paid tribute to the art in fifth-century B.C. China. Chinese shuaijiao (shuai-chiao) continues to be practiced and has been disseminated internationally. The name literally means “throwing” and “horns,” possibly a reference to the early helmets with horns that were worn by shuaijiao practitioners. Because of an apparently unbroken line of succession from this early period, shuaijiao may be the oldest continuously practiced wrestling system in the world. Shuaijiao wrestling involves powerful throws; the competitor who is the first to land on any part of his body above the knee loses. It is surmised that shuaijiao was originally a battlefield art. Today, shuaijiao exists as a wrestling style that is extremely popular in China, Taiwan, and Mongolia. Historically, it is likely to have influenced Western wrestling via traditional Russian systems and modern sambo.

In addition, there may be a South Asian link to Western wrestling through India. Beginning with the early civilizations of the Indus River valley (ca. 2500–1500 B.C.), there are pictographs and illustrations of figures who are clearly wrestling. In the Hindu religious text the Mahabharata, wrestling is described in detail. Even today, wrestling is practiced at village festivals in India and Pakistan. Like other forms of wrestling, competitors attempt to throw one another for points. Submission holds are neither frequent nor particularly appreciated. There are forms of all-out wrestling competition as well, known as dungbal, where practitioners fight until one submits or the contest is stopped because of injury. An argument can be made for a connection to the West via Alexander the Great’s expeditionary forces into South Asia in the third century B.C., whose members included adepts at both wrestling and pankration (all-in fighting). In the absence of written records, however, cross influences between Indian and Western wrestling traditions must remain speculative.

Not until the Greeks, however (ca. 1000 B.C.), were wrestling techniques and descriptions of champions systematically recorded in written
forms in Western cultures. When the Olympic Games were initiated, wrestling was one of the original events, as was boxing. When pankration was added in 776 B.C., all three Greek unarmed combat systems were in place as Olympic events.

The goal of Greek wrestling was simple: Combatants were to force their opponents to submit without the use of striking. As a result, all holds and throws were permissible, with the exception of arm and leg locks and choke holds. Although the participants began from a standing position, it is likely that many of the events were concluded on the ground after a throw or a trip was used to force one of the competitors to the ground. When thrown, a competitor was lifted from a standing position and thrown to the ground. Examples include throwing an opponent over the shoulders or hips, with the shoulder or hip acting as a fulcrum, or facing an opponent and using the leg strength to lift and deposit the victim on the ground. Since the stadiums in which the wrestling matches were held had dirt floors, a powerful throw could momentarily stun.

Following the throw, trip, or takedown, a Greek wrestler attempted to maneuver the opponent into a submission hold. The purpose of the hold was to immobilize the opponent and place him in a danger position, such as when his shoulders touched the ground. This placed Greek wrestling at odds with pankration, in which any holds were allowed, including those that might dismember joints or choke an opponent into unconsciousness. Besides being included in the Olympics, wrestling was practiced at all athletic festivals, including those that were local, strictly intracity competitions. It was also mandatory for Greeks preparing for armed combat to study the rudiments of wrestling, boxing, or the pankration. Olympic Games, which honored the Greek deities, were ostensibly a religious form of expression. The sportive and military applications, however, were obvious. Wrestling, therefore, addressed three different spheres of life in the Greek world: religion, sport, and military training.

Despite the overall love of wrestling by Greek civilization, this martial art was not universally appreciated. Plato, in The Republic, stated that wrestlers were of dubious health and could fall seriously ill whenever they departed from their diet. In addition, several commentators expressed frustration at the many wrestling contests, including Olympic events, that were, as they believed, fixed. Still, the modern sport of wrestling in the Western world owes its roots to the practices of the ancient Greeks, beginning three thousand years ago.

When the Romans conquered the Greeks, in approximately 146 B.C., they found in the Greek world much that they admired and copied. Although they were impressed by Greek athletic preparation and by events such as wrestling, the art of wrestling as a sport never became popular in
the Roman world. The Romans added no innovations to Greek wrestling; they used the techniques that had been developed over the previous centuries and adapted them to their own temporal and religious festivals. The Romans themselves much preferred the blood sports of the empire, such as fights between gladiators or animals. As a result, wrestling suffered a loss of prestige. When Christianity became the official religion of the empire in the fourth century A.D., and later when the empire fell and chaos ensued, organized sports and high-level athletic techniques such as wrestling declined as well. Although wrestling continued to be practiced, most notably for combat training, in the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) until the empire’s demise in A.D. 1453, the authority of the Eastern Orthodox Church prevented wrestling from obtaining status as a sport. The Greek love of wrestling, with its innovations and techniques, had come to an end.

Contemporaries of the Romans, however, maintained wrestling systems. The Celts were notable in this regard. Roman writings (e.g., Caesar’s Commentaries on the Gallic War) describe Celtic life, including armed and unarmed combat, and note that Celtic festivals included wrestling. At least two variants of these forms of wrestling still exist: Cornish wrestling, practiced in the British area of Cornwall, and Breton wrestling, practiced in the French area of Brittany. Not surprisingly, these are also two of the last remaining outposts of Celtic life on the European continent, with Cornish, a Celtic language, still being spoken into the twentieth century, and Breton, also a Celtic language, still spoken in Brittany in the twenty-first century.

Various wrestling systems, both combative and sporting, appeared in the city-states and nations that arose in Europe following the fall of the Roman Empire. For example, in the area of what is today Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic, as early as the thirteenth century there are indications that knights and men-at-arms used wrestling techniques in hand-to-hand combat. Later, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, German fighting guilds systematically taught wrestling techniques, known as Ringen, and disarming techniques, collectively known in German as Ringen am Schwert (wrestling at the sword), as part of their curricula. The Fechtbuch (fighting book) of Hans Talhoffer offers several pages of illustrations on what today would be classified as “getting inside the opponent,” when an unarmed grappler moves within the effective fighting range of a sword or other weapon and removes it from the armed combatant. Several other Fechtbuchs from this and later time periods clearly show methods of throwing, takedowns, and armlocks that indicate that wrestling as a combat art was in use in Europe in the Middle Ages. One exponent of wrestling, Ott the Jew, was apparently so respected in his native Austria that he was even able to transcend the boundaries of anti-Semitism that existed in European societies during this period.
The Italians, as well, developed wrestling styles and grappling systems for combat. In one of the most famous treatises of the late Middle Ages, the Italian master Pierre Monte describes wrestling as the foundation of all fighting, and goes on to state that any form of weapons training must include knowledge of how to disarm. Monte criticizes wrestling techniques of other nations, most notably the Germans, in which he believed the practice of fighting on the ground was dangerous. This evidence suggests that various schools and theories of wrestling existed in Europe during this time.

In Scandinavia as early as A.D. 700–1100, wrestling called for competitors to grasp their opponents by the waist of their pants and attempt to throw them. The person who fell to the ground first would lose. This reflected the idea that a person once thrown on a battlefield would be at the mercy of an individual with a weapon. This wrestling tradition eventually became extinct in the Scandinavian countries, but persisted in one of the last outposts to be settled by the Vikings: Iceland. Today, this wrestling variant still exists in the Icelandic sport of Glima, an Icelandic word meaning “flash.” Instead of trousers, participants wear a special belt known as a climubeltae, which simulates the wearing of trousers. A climubeltae consists of a wide belt worn around the waist with two smaller belts worn around the thighs. Competitors attempt to throw their opponents by grasping the climubeltae, and as in the ancient art from which it descends, the person who falls first or is thrown so as to touch the earth with any part of his body above the knee loses. This art form has been revived in Scandinavia and is practiced at festivals reenacting and celebrating Viking culture around the region.

Farther east, in Russia, wrestling systems developed among indigenous tribes that were later officially adopted as a part of its national culture. The ancient chronicles of the country, most notably the Lay of Igor’s Campaign, describe warriors using wrestling techniques as part of their training. This would seem to indicate that Russian warriors developed wrestling as an unarmed combat skill for use in battle. The Mongols invaded Russia in the thirteenth century, and later the Russians reversed this by moving into former Mongol-dominated regions as the Mongolian Empire began to fall apart. This move brought the Russians into contact with many different peoples, many with their own styles of wrestling. As a result, regional styles evolved. For example, traditional Siberian wrestling resembles Japanese sumō and Korean ssirün in many respects. Other regions of Russia developed systems very similar to modern Greco-Roman and freestyle.

In the 1930s, after the overthrow of the Russian Empire and the building of the Soviet Union, the Russians developed their own form of wrestling for the entire nation: sambo. Sambo was intentionally created from the native fighting and wrestling techniques of the Russians, those of
the more than 300 nationalities of the Soviet Union, and elements of Japanese jūdō. Sport sambo allows throws, holds, leg and arm locks, and take-downs. Combat variants also exist. Today, even after the demise of the Soviet Union, sambo enjoys international popularity.

The United States developed its own systems of wrestling as well. Many of the early English settlers brought with them their native systems when they settled in the “New World,” including Cornish and Cumberland/Westmorland-style wrestling from England. In the nineteenth century, catch-as-catch-can wrestling, originally from England, became popular in America. Catch-as-catch-can was a combat/sport form of wrestling in which most holds and throws/takedowns were allowed. In this respect, catch-as-catch-can was similar to Greek wrestling at the height of its popularity. Some have even compared it to pankration, although strikes were not allowed. From this catch-as-catch-can tradition, in the later nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, professional wrestling became an established sport in the country. Wrestlers such as Karl Gotch and “Farmer” Burns often challenged all comers in matches in which participants would wrestle until one surrendered. Unfortunately, however, the sport did not survive, and today the only representative from this “golden
age” of American wrestling is the gaudy showmanship and theater of make-believe “professional” wrestling, currently touted as “sports entertainment.” There are attempts to revive the art, however. Today, there is a form of wrestling known as *pancrase* in Japan that resembles catch-as-catch-can.

Two official amateur wrestling systems exist today that may be defined as international styles because they have attempted to impose a rule structure that is uniform in application and that is intended to allow wrestlers from all nations to participate: Greco-Roman and freestyle wrestling. Both types are Olympic events. Freestyle wrestling allows competitors to grasp any part of the body and use the legs for sweeps and take-downs. Greco-Roman allows only the upper body to be used; the legs cannot be employed to sweep the opponent, nor can they be touched for grabs or take-downs. Both forms of wrestling are similar in that competitors attempt to pin their opponents by forcing the shoulders to touch the mat. Freestyle wrestling is practiced worldwide and is the most popular form of the sport. In North America, high school and college students compete in freestyle wrestling tournaments with modified rules, such as changes in the time allowed to pin an opponent. Greco-Roman is most popular in Europe. Due to the lack of worldwide acceptance of this style, however, there is talk at the present time of removing this category from Olympic competition.

Wrestling has traditionally been a male pursuit, but with the close of the twentieth century, female wrestling began to receive greater acceptance. Jûdô has allowed female competition for a number of decades, and in 1987, the Soviet Union allowed female sambo competitions. There is still no worldwide sanctioning body for female Greco-Roman or freestyle wrestlers. However, with the growing demand for gender equality and the passage of laws enforcing it in the United States and many European nations, it is likely that female participation in wrestling will be allowed internationally.

Wrestling is a martial art and sport that transcends national boundaries and cultural identities. Beyond the general criteria presented at the beginning of this entry, hundreds of recognized regional variants of wrestling exist in the world. A small listing includes the following: *trente*, from Romania and Moldavia; *kokh*, the national wrestling system of Armenia; Georgian jacket-wrestling, which resembles jûdô in many respects; *dumog*, one of the better-known wrestling systems from the Philippines; *Schwingen*, the national wrestling system of Switzerland; *tegumi*, a wrestling system from the island of Okinawa; *lutte Parisienne*, the French combat wrestling system that is often associated with the art of *savate*; and Corsican wrestling, from the Mediterranean island of Corsica.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is safe to assume that wrestling will continue to grow in popularity throughout the world. The fate of specific cultural forms of wrestling is unknown; perhaps as the
world narrows into a global village these forms of wrestling will cease to be practiced. Yet, even with this possibility, the growth of wrestling as a world sport and method of combat will continue.

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See also Boxing, European; Europe; Gladiators; Masters of Defence; Pankration; Sambo; Savate; Swordsmanship, European Medieval; Swordsmanship, European Renaissance

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Wrestling and Grappling: India

There can be no consideration of Indian wrestling as a sociocultural phenomenon without a complete examination of the history out of which the modern sport emerges. And this history is not shaped only by the form of the sport as such, nor is it linear in any developmental, progressive sense. Wrestling as a martial art is as closely linked to colonialism and nationalism as it is to the ancient traditions of South Asian civilization; its form emerges out of a more pervasive and complex concern with the place of the body in society and the meaning of embodied practice in terms of religious, moral, and political principles.

However, on a purely superficial level Indian wrestling is directly comparable to other martial arts, most notably and explicitly freestyle wrestling. Since the basic rules, moves, and techniques are almost identical, one
may almost speak of “wrestling in India” rather than Indian wrestling as such. Thus the term kushti, which means “wrestling,” denotes both a very local form of the art as well as a more global phenomenon. Kushti is composed of three primary dimensions: daw, pech, and pantra (moves, countermoves, and stance), and there is almost direct congruence between the “daws” known as multani, dhobi pat, and kalajangh, for example, and the corresponding freestyle moves known as arm drag, front hip throw, and fireman carry. Even so, what is significantly different about wrestling in India is that wrestlers sometimes wrestle in earth pits, sometimes engage in bouts that last for half an hour or more, sometimes wear distinctive briefs, and under some circumstances can employ moves that amount to hitting or kicking an opponent and/or throwing him by holding and pulling on his briefs. Sometimes a bout is decided when one contestant’s shoulders touch the earth, and sometimes the rules of a tournament are set by those who organize it—but at other times and under other circumstances wrestlers in India wrestle according to strict and clearly defined international guidelines, rules, and regulations. The radical contingency of this is all fundamentally important, since wrestlers in India often consider themselves to be simply wrestlers—capable of competing equally on the earth of a freshly plowed village field or on expensive “rubber” mats at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala. In other words, there is an important sense in which the transnational form of freestyle wrestling makes Indian wrestling into wrestling in India. The history of this process can be directly linked to the formalization of rules and the structured organization of tournaments throughout India during the twentieth century.

It is important to realize, however, that this history is not one in which freestyle wrestling in India has emerged out of—and then has diverged away from, and become something different than—traditional Indian wrestling. The point is that wrestling in India, at any given time, but particularly in the twentieth century, undermines the pretense of Indian wrestling understood as a distinctive, culture-specific, martial art. Consider, for instance, what might appear to be uniquely Indian about Indian wrestling—the intense and comprehensive regimen of jor (Hindi; training), khurak (diet), and vyayam (exercise); the principle of brahmacharya (celibacy) as a prerequisite to training; the rich symbolic meaning of the akhara (gymnasium); the competitive dynamics of dangals (tournaments); the significance of royal patronage; the idealized structure of the guru-chela (master-disciple) relationship; and, in more general terms, the kind of embodied person known as a pahalwan, who is completely devoted to his guru, spends all his time wrestling, and who, among other things, idealizes the practice of celibacy; the consumption of huge amounts of milk, butter, and almonds; and the daily performance of thousands upon thousands of
dands and bethaks. Each of these “traditional” features is thoroughly modern and contextualized by changing, rather than stable, priorities.

Although wrestling is said to date back to antiquity in South Asia, references to the art in the Vedas, Upanishads, as well as in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* epics, are cryptic and ambiguous. Two medieval texts, the *Manasollasa*, a treatise on royal art and culture in the Vijayanagar kingdom, and the *Mallapurana*, a caste purana of the Jyesthimalla Brahmans of western India, provide more detailed accounts. What is interesting about these two texts, however, is that they do not provide a very useful framework—no better or worse than accounts of the history of freestyle wrestling, that is—for understanding wrestling in contemporary India. Whereas most contemporary Hindu wrestlers emphasize the fundamental importance of a vegetarian diet, both medieval texts prescribe a diet that includes meat, even for high-caste Brahmans. Contemporary wrestlers de-emphasize the caste identity of wrestlers, saying that the sport breaks down hierarchy by producing a physiology “of one color” based on a principle of embodied power. However, both medieval texts use caste as an important, if problematic, criterion for ranked classification. The medieval texts carefully delineate and differentiate the kind of dietary regimen for different kinds of wrestlers, and recognize the value of moderation and balanced consumption, whereas contemporary wrestlers tend to single-mindedly advocate the hyperconsumption of milk, ghi (clarified butter), and almonds. Correspondingly, whereas the medieval texts seek to make a careful distinction between wrestlers on the basis of age, skill, caste background, physical development, size, and competitive preparedness, contemporary wrestlers tend to fetishize mass and musculature as developed through exercise and diet. Concerning exercise, it is noteworthy that whereas contemporary wrestlers tend to exclusively do hundreds if not thousands of fairly straightforward exercises—dands, a kind of jackknifing push-up, and bethaks, rapid deep-knee bends—to build up strength, the medieval texts catalog complex training regimens based on an array of many more different kinds of exercise.
It is difficult, if not impossible, to know whether there have been various alternatives to, or distinct stages between, the medieval and the modern traditions of wrestling. There is no doubt, however, that the emphasis on celibacy is a fairly modern phenomenon, a phenomenon that articulates the high anxiety of masculinity in late colonial and postcolonial India. Wrestlers claim that celibacy is an imperative part of the training regimen because sex in general and the loss of semen in particular are thought to be debilitating. Brahmacharya, as abstinence and asensuality, has a long genealogy in South Asia, which can be most clearly traced in the practices of asceticism and yogic self-discipline on the one hand and the disciplinary practices of brahmanical ritual pedagogy on the other. Wrestlers explain their advocacy for absolute asexuality using these idioms, pointing out that abstinence promotes focused concentration and the development of skill, as well as the embodiment of shakti (superhuman, subtle strength) manifest in the aura of pervasive ojas (divine energy).

However, it is clear that celibacy became a very problematic concept in twentieth-century India, invoking, on the one hand—in the context of Victorian colonialism—a kind of effete masculinity and, on the other, a kind of power that was displaced, disarticulated, and ambiguously marked on the male physique by virtue of its structural androgyny. In this light it is possible to understand how wrestlers in colonial India sought to articulate, with nervous bravado, an ideology of hypercelibacy—absolute detachment from sensual arousal—that was located, bombastically through hyper-self-discipline, in a massively masculine physique. The point of reference was not so much an idealized, intrinsically athletic physique as the threat of colonial masculinity defined by aggressive sexuality and the attendant feminization of the colonial subject.

The akhara (wrestling gymnasium)—replete with the symbolic significance of the earthen pit, its microcosmic relationship to the elemental structure of the cosmos, and the ritualized structure of religious meanings associated with Lord Hanuman (a patron deity of wrestling), as well as its spatial and architectural form as an integrated whole—might be considered the most quintessentially Indian feature of Indian wrestling. Clearly the earth of the pit has come to symbolize elemental purity, fertility, and the power of nature. Hanuman’s embodiment of shakti through absolute celibacy substantiates this symbolism, and links the gymnasium to the sacred realm, defining it as a locus of physically expressed spiritual devotion. The integrated balance of earth, water, trees, and air is regarded as a kind of elemental matrix, both marking the gymnasium off as a world apart and yet redefining the world as whole by way of microcosmic instantiation. In most respects the gymnasium is conceptualized as a natural environment minimally transformed to evoke the ideal of a rural, agrarian landscape. In
the rhetoric associated with wrestling, the gymnasium is said to reproduce the natural and authentic qualities of village life. Curiously, however, gymnasiums are the product of a history that is rooted not so much in the world of peasants as in the palaces of princes and in the urban imagination of middle-class nationalists.

In the medieval period wrestlers were, in some instances, peasants. But to the extent they came to embody the identity of a pahalwan they were wards of the royal state. They were kept in stables by rajas and maharajas who paid their expenses and built gymnasiums for practice and arenas for tournament competition. These gymnasiums and arenas were designed to represent the aesthetics of aristocratic taste, and thus manifest pomp and pageantry rather than peasant parochialism. Among other things, rose water, buttermilk, ghee, and in some instances crushed pearls, gold, and silver were mixed into the earth of the royal pit. Moreover, the ritual features of the gymnasium as a sacred space were not as significant as its secular configuration in relation to the authority of the king and the degree of his prestige, political power, and attendant status in the domain of changing imperial hierarchies. By most accounts, the place of the gymnasium in the broader political culture of the princely states took on heightened significance in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries when, as scholars have recently pointed out, the status of rajas and maharajas was being defined in terms of British imperial authority and the pageantry of colonial rule.

During this same period of time, gymnasiums were redefined and developed in the context of various kinds of Indian nationalism. Both militant Hindu nationalists as well as the more secular nationalists of the Indian National Congress were concerned with the problem of Indian masculinity and sought to reform Indian men—in particular middle-class men, who were regarded as corrupt, weak, and effeminate—by instituting various forms of physical culture. Thus, after the revolt of 1857, and increasingly around the turn of the century, wrestling gymnasiums were built in the newly urbanized areas of north and central India to try to reproduce the “natural” masculinity of peasants by transplanting the “natural” environment of rural India into the modern space of rapidly expanding cities. The Birla Mill Vyayamshala in the heart of Old Delhi, where, until recently, Guru Hanuman trained almost all of India’s international freestyle wrestlers, is the best example of this manufactured tradition of modern Indian wrestling that is also, significantly, wrestling in India.

Up until his death in 1999, Guru Hanuman epitomized the ideal of an enlightened master teacher and the role of a master teacher in defining the structure of training in the gymnasium. A guru, or ustad, is, in essence, a senior wrestler who imparts to his disciples the knowledge of wrestling. He
gives his chelas (disciples) instructions on training, self-discipline, technique, and overall development. However, a guru is more than a teacher; he is the object of his disciples' absolute devotion and service, and this devotion and service are understood as an integral feature of training. In many respects, the guru is revered as “greater than God” by his disciples, and thus the regimen of training in the gymnasium takes on the aura of ritual practice. Young wrestlers must prostrate themselves at their guru’s feet, and on Gurupuja (devotion to the guru [master teacher]) must formalize their obeisance by transforming the guru into God. In this sense the guru’s persona is much closer to that of an ascetic adept intent on the embodiment of truth than to that of a coach. However, Guru Hanuman cast himself, and was cast by the central government of India, in the role of an Olympic coach, and many if not most other ustads in contemporary gymnasiums struggle with the conflicting demands of athletics and asceticism, of self-discipline as an end in itself and training for competition.

Although there were senior wrestlers in the stables of many rajas and maharajas who functioned, undoubtedly, as teachers, and there were men who built and defined urban gymnasiums around themselves and their sense of national purpose, the status of a guru, as such, has an ambiguous history. Little or no mention is made in the medieval literature and in the history of competitive wrestling of who won against whom. Much more is made of individual prowess than of a tradition of training defined by a specific master of the art. In short, the ideal of the guru-chela relationship seems to be much more important than the practice as such. More significantly, the ideal is a function of the way in which the priorities of modern wrestling and modern coaching require that for Indian wrestling to be anything other than just wrestling in India, it requires the form of difference. Wrestlers in contemporary India are quite clear on this point. While categorically defining themselves as disciples of a master, they say it would be foolish not to avail themselves of a broad range of expertise. As the range of expertise expands to include training camps run by coaches from Russia and Canada, the need for there to be gurus may increase or decrease, depending on the degree to which wrestlers define themselves as pahalwans or Olympic hopefuls.

The designation pahalwan refers to a man who embodies the ideals and practices of wrestling. A pahalwan is a wrestler, but a wrestler who is oriented in two directions at once. As a wrestler in India competing with other wrestlers for the chance to participate in the Asian Games or the Olympics, he is drawn, through the structure of sports hostels and recruiting camps, toward the mats of the National Institute of Sports. As an Indian wrestler he is grounded in the akhara, as the akhara defines a cultural space that is modern by way of its location in the colonial and postcolonial history of India.
In some sense, the characteristic features of a dangal (tournament) define a wrestler in India as a pahalwan, but only to the extent that it highlights the tension between two alternative modernities. Dangals are wrestling tournaments that are organized by various local, regional, state, and national groups, any of which may be either political, economic, or cultural in orientation. Thus, a village leader, a trade union, or an organization such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (a militant, pro-Hindu nationalist organization) may sponsor a dangal. In colonial and precolonial times, rajas and maharajas organized tournaments, and the success or failure of a wrestler reflected directly on his patron. Dangals are defined by the wrestlers who compete, and sponsors often seek to attract well-known
champions in order to enhance the prestige of the event. The rationale for organizing a dangal is nam kamana (making a name for oneself), thus making the events inherently competitive rather than just formal contexts within which athletes compete.

What is most significant about dangals is the pomp and circumstance of the event as a whole, as it revolves around a series of progressively important bouts. Significantly, dangals are characterized by a degree of structured improvisation and ad hoc negotiation, in the sense that the questions of who will compete with whom and what the length of a contest will be are often worked out in public with a high degree of panache and affected style. Similarly, the dangal is very much a stage where wrestlers perform, and not simply an arena where moves are executed with athletic precision. There is certainly no standardization with regard to how to structure dangal competition—no stipulated panel of judges, no weight-class criteria, no time limit as such, no sharply delineated boundary. All of this means that dangals can be very volatile and contentious, for although there are clearly delineated rules, and skill, strength, and stamina define, in some sense, the aesthetics of competitive performance, a dangal always seems to verge on the edge of chaos, and there is usually some degree of unstructured confrontation between competing groups. Thus in an important way dangal competition strains against the rule-bound protocol of competitive freestyle wrestling in India. Moreover, the pahalwan who is on stage at a dangal is called on to embody an ideal of physical development (tremendous mass, density, and radiance) that is somewhat at odds with the paired-down, lean, flexible musculature of the international wrestler.

This, however, is a very recent development, as is most clearly illustrated by the case of Gama who, embodying the ideals of a pahalwan, beat Stanley Zybyzko in what was, in effect, a World Championship “dangal” staged in London by the John Bull Society in 1908. Subsequently, in 1928, Gama defended his title as world champion in a dangal staged in India by the maharaja of Patiala. When Gama was world champion from 1908 until 1950 it was still possible to be a world champion, and to be that as an Indian wrestler. Now, at best, one can be a heavyweight freestyle gold medal winner, and only then as a wrestler from India competing in the Olympics or the Asian Games.

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See also India; Religion and Spiritual Development: India; Written Texts: India

References
Wrestling and Grappling: Japan

The grappling arts are probably the oldest of all the martial arts. Grappling as the term is used here includes hitting, kicking, throwing, joint locks, and holding up or holding down one’s opponent in such a manner that observers declare a victory or, if grappling is used in combat, incapacitation or death of the loser results. Pottery shards shaped like and with pictures resembling wrestlers have been found in many ancient cultures. A 5,000-year-old bronze sculpture from Mesopotamia immortalizes two men in loincloths locking arms in a stance not too different from what we might see in a modern catch-as-catch-can wrestling bout. Gilgamesh, the Middle Eastern hero of mythology from 4,000 or more years ago, engages in symbolic wrestling bouts to prove his superiority over animal nature. Egyptian wall paintings dating back 2,500 years reveal that grappling was a skill considered worthy of artistic depiction along the Nile of the ancient Pharaohs.

The willingness of men, and occasionally women, to put down their arms and participate in contests of strength with simple rules evolved in similar fashions around the world. Asia, particularly Japan and China, has many traditions of martial arts that involve grappling. Some have become well known by evolving into sports, while others have not developed a following, as they have remained too combative and dangerous to appeal to the general public.

Often people try to trace the diffusion of particular techniques historically and cross-culturally, as well as within the country of origin. However, it is likely that the similarities in the martial arts have more to do with physiology and physics than with historical roots. People become very clever when they attack other people. Given that similarities exist across cultures and wide geographical distances, it is still useful to examine martial arts in terms of their points of origin in an effort to develop arguments concerning both the origins of the Japanese grappling arts and their influences on other wrestling traditions.
Although it is connected in oral tradition to the Shaolin arts, the Chinese grappling system of qinna (ch’ìn na) probably existed as a discipline long before the Shaolin Temple. After all, China had a long period of civil wars, invasions, and excursions, as well as battles between city-states. War means conflict, and conflict results in the development of fighting skills. The traditional narratives of Bodhidharma (Damo), a Hindu monk who is credited with bringing Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism to China early in the sixth century A.D., claim he taught bone-and-marrow-washing qigong (ch’i kung) exercises at Shaolin Temple. Tradition notes that he claimed to be a reincarnation of the legendary Yellow Emperor in order to increase his credibility with the monks. He is claimed to have introduced, in addition to Indian qigong methods, new forms of meditation and fighting methods (including qinna) to the monks, but the historical record seems to favor the idea that the monks already possessed effective fighting skills. However, tradition avers that since qinna techniques are extremely effective but non-lethal, they were more compatible with the Buddhist ethos than were other martial disciplines. Therefore, monks at the temple researched, developed, and trained in them. These techniques were passed on with the various martial styles taught at the temple. Qinna influence has been suggested as a factor in the development of specialized weapons for seizing the weapons of opponents that were said to have originated with the Shaolin Temple.

Qin (ch’ìn) means “to seize” and na means “to hold and control”; thus, qinna can be translated as the art of seizing and controlling. Its techniques are generally categorized into muscle tearing, bone or skeletal displacement, sealing the breath (or chokes), pressing the veins and arteries to cause damage or unconsciousness, and cavity presses and meridian attacks, which apply pressure to points associated with the accumulation or circulation of qi (ch’i; vital energy). The last two are considered dim mak (Cantonese, death touch; pinyin dianxue, spot hitting). Because of their usefulness, these techniques have been merged into other fighting skills since the beginning of Chinese martial arts. In fact, practically all the countries of Asia have some techniques of qinna mixed into their indigenous arts.

In the famous Chinese boxing style taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan) and the not so well-known liuhe bafa, neutralization is usually done with a circular motion, and the grappling techniques are usually round and smooth. Often the opponent will be controlled before realizing a technique is being applied. In coordination with circular stepping, circular qinna will be used to pull an opponent’s “root” (solid contact with the ground) and to execute a throw. The influence of this type of movement can easily be seen in the Japanese wrestling arts, especially in the grappling employed in ninjutsu and in aikidô.

Kojiki, the Japanese record of ancient history dating from the eighth
century A.D., mentions sumō in its descriptions of the legendary origins of Japan. Sumō attained a ritual association with the power of good quelling evil. The *Nihon Shoki* (a history of Japan compiled in the eighth century A.D.) describes a legendary bout between Nomi-no-Sukune and Taima-no-Kehaya at the “Imperial Palace” in 23 B.C. This sanctioned brawl was to determine the gods' choice between the Izumo and the Yamato clans to rule over Japan. Nomi-no-Sukune won this bout by smashing Taima-no-Kehaya to the ground with such force that he died of broken bones and internal injuries. The winner, in contrast to the loser, was described as a man of renowned strength, but gentle. After this event, sumō matches were held to determine the will of the gods concerning bountiful crops, political decisions, and so on. This practice was called *sumō sechi* and lasted into the twelfth century.
Until the end of the sixteenth century, wrestling sometimes took the form of no-holds-barred competitions that included both punching and kicking, although restrictions were placed on lethal strikes. When the Tokugawa assumed the shogunate in 1600, sumô stables and tournaments were established, and wrestlers were put on retainer. This lasted until the beginning of the Meiji period (1868).

Although modern sumô societies forbid women from even entering the ring, sumô has not always been an exclusively male sport. The Nihon Shoki records ladies-in-waiting of the emperor Yûryaku as holding bouts in A.D. 469. History also records a powerful Buddhist nun who took on men in Kyoto during the reign of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1592–1598).

Since 1960, modern sumô has been composed of seventy moves derived from the original forty-eight. The ring is considered holy ground and sanctified with salt and water both before and during a tournament as each competitor enters the ring. Sumô is regarded as a heavyweight grappling art, and the contestants are often taller than 220 cm and weigh over 200 kg. The minimum requirements are 173 cm in height and 150 kg in weight for apprentices. The object of the bout is no longer to kill the opponent (nor has it been for centuries), but to hurl the opponent out of the ring or to the ground. Today, there are over forty-five sumô stables ruled by the Japan Sumô Association. Matches frequently draw crowds exceeding ten thousand in Japan, and the sport is gaining popularity around the world.

In contrast to the ritual sport of sumô, jûjutsu (from jū [supple, soft] and jutsu [technique, method]) was from its inception a combative grappling art. Unlike contemporary codified sports, various systems of jûjutsu developed from a variety of sources. As a result, famous schools like the Daitô-ryû Aiki-jûjutsu coexist with the relatively unknown mountain village schools that go back for centuries in the warrior traditions of Japan. The Japanese record over eight hundred schools of jûjutsu.

According to some traditional sources, a Ming refugee imported jûjutsu to Japan in the seventeenth century. This is as suspect as the belief that Damo brought martial arts to the Shaolin Temple. Older schools of jûjutsu than the still existing and popular Shibukawa, Takuechi, Kito, Sekiguchi, and Oguri schools of that period predate the seventeenth century. Moreover, Zen was introduced into Japan from China during the Nara period (710–781). Zen monks were well known for their skills in grappling and striking. Therefore, a Chinese influence on the wrestling and grappling arts of Japan from the eighth century is likely.

Shibukawa Yoshikata (1652–1704), founder of the Shibukawa (knights of harmonious spirit) school and author of Jûjutsu Tsai-eiroku (Synthesis of Jûjutsu), credited Chinese philosophy as the source of his ideas, as he claimed the “change of strength hinges upon being soft and yielding to ad-
just to the movement of things forward and back, moving and stopping. This is jūjutsu and our school is based on the teachings of the I Ching [pinyin Yijing].”

Descriptions of the fighting during the Muromachi period (1338–1573), however, suggest that victory in hand-to-hand fighting was decided more often by power than by technique, by brawn rather than brain. This preponderance shows in the type of armor and weaponry used by the mounted warrior of the period. Izaza Chōsai Ienao (1387–1488) founded the famed Katori Shintō-ryū, the first ryūha (traditional school of warrior arts) to teach, along with weapon skills, hand-to-hand unarmed combat (identified as yawara-ge), to correct what he felt was a loss of moral integrity in the training of the warriors of his time. Though the ryūha is most often discussed as a sword school, its jūjutsu techniques are effective and worthy of study.

Although at present it is popular to categorize martial systems as armed or unarmed and as oriented to grappling or striking, the integration of a range of combat tools within a set of organizing principles represents the traditional norm. For example, in discussing the martial principles of the Kashima-Shintō-ryū, Karl Friday explains that the unarmed application of the ryūha’s principles vis-à-vis the use of swords or pole-arm weapons is not a matter of opposition, but of points along a continuum during which the realities of combat draw to a greater or lesser extent on armed or unarmed conflict.

In fact, a strong argument can be made for the position that most of the schools of jūjutsu emerged from the sword schools during times of peace or when swords were put aside. Thus, a line of development emerges from heibō (combat strategy) to bugei (martial arts) to budō (warrior ways of transcendence). Over time, the Katori Shintō-ryū (like many other Japanese martial disciplines) developed a division of teaching skills between the sōke (the head of school and political leader) and shihan (senior instructors who teach methodology).

At least by 1716, jūjutsu was recognized as a distinctive art. In this year, Hinatsu Shigetaka published Honchō bugei shōden, a short encyclopedia of the martial arts of Japan existing at that time. The volume included hand-to-hand fighting, or jūjutsu.

Jūjutsu as a fighting style emphasizes grappling over striking. However, in most schools grappling is integrated with the strategic application of atemi (striking) or kyūsho-jutsu (vital point, or pressure point, striking).

Jūjutsu commonly works to the outside of the opponent in applying wrist and arm locks and to the inside to execute throws. Effective chokes and hold-downs usually evolve out of arm bars. In the better combat schools, the opponent is usually thrown in such a way as to land on the head or face down, on the stomach.
Some of the schools have been overly influenced by aikidô and have departed from the more brutal and devious combat techniques, and other schools have gravitated toward sport to the point of facing off squarely to an opponent like boxers or wrestlers and throwing people on their backs so that they still have a fighting chance. This can be seen in the modern Gracie Jiu-jitsu (spelling based on the one trademarked by this school) or the Hawaiian Danzan-ryû jûjutsu.

Like jûjutsu, aikijutsu avoids meeting force directly. In the case of aikijutsu, a defender strives to harmonize with aggression rather than either opposing or yielding to it, as the label for the art—derived from ai (coordinated, harmonized), ki (energy) jutsu (technique)—implies. Thus, aikijutsu strives for blending with the force (at both the physical and psychic levels) of the attacker. In practice, aikijutsu techniques have been described as utilizing the mechanical model of the wheel against an opponent, in contrast to jûjutsu or jûdô, which uses the lever as a model. In the context of his discussion of the principles of jûdô and aikidô, John Donohue characterizes the jûdô (and by implication the jûjutsu) strategy as making the attacker fall over the defender’s body, while in aikidô (and aikijutsu) the defender leads the attacker to fall around a focal point (e.g., a point of anatomical weakness). The principle embodied in the method dates from the feudal period as an element of various ryûha, as was the case with jûjutsu, although in its best known modern guise of aikidô, the principle of aiki is most closely associated with Daitô-ryû Aikijutsu through aikidô’s founder, Ueshiba Morihei. Daitô-ryû, the system studied by Ueshiba before he went on to found aikidô, has been claimed by its adherents to date back to the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and is said to have been founded by Minamoto Yoshimitsu (Yoshitsune). The interpretation of ki (in Chinese, qi [ch’i]) as intrinsic energy and its use in a fashion reminiscent of the internal Chinese arts (e.g., taijiquan) is a distinctive feature of aikijutsu and was emphasized (along with a philosophy of harmonious conduct in general) in Ueshiba’s aikidô.

Just as the mainstream ryûha of the feudal period provided a vehicle for the development and preservation of grappling principles that have evolved into the contemporary cognate arts of aikidô and jûdô, ninjutsu permitted the nurturing of similar skills in its pre-Tokugawa heyday and in the modern revival attributed to Hatsumi Masaaki. Hatsumi is the head of nine ryûha or martial traditions: Three are ninjutsu ryûha and six concern other martial art traditions. Each school differs in ways from the others according to the type of armor worn or weapons carried during the time of its popularity. He inherited these schools from Takamatsu Toshitsugu, his teacher. His interpretation of these schools is named the Bujinden or, among the practitioners, Bujinkan budô taijutsu. The hombu (home dôjô) is in Noda City, Japan.
In the 1980s, the American Stephen Hayes, as a shôdan (first-degree black belt), began to publish practical guidebooks of Tôgakure combat techniques leavened with pragmatic information concerning self-protection appropriate for modern times. Hayes inadvertently launched the ninja craze. The ambiguous ninja ways, mysticism, magic, strategy, warriorship, ki development, easily learned combat techniques, exotic weaponry, and artistic expectations were a heady brew for Americans and Europeans. Two of the ninja schools, Gyokko-ryû Koshijutsu and Tôgakure-ryû Happô-hiken, may be used to represent the general grappling techniques of ninjutsu.

According to its own legends, Ninpô has its roots in ancient Daoist (Taoist) China. During the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–907), many Chinese military leaders immigrated to Japan. Gyokko-ryû Koshijutsu, which is primarily a striking art with some rather brutal joint-dislocation techniques, is an example of an art preserved from this period by the Bujinden. One of the interesting characteristics of modern ninja grappling is the use of koshi in the application of grips, locks, and strikes. The other characteristic that separates it from many of the sport grappling arts is that almost all the core techniques of the art are to be done with or without weapons. Bare-handed techniques become sword or pole weapon techniques by the simple introduction of the weapon.

Following Daoist admonitions, weapons are referred to and treated as tools. (The sword is not to be considered an object of beauty or worship.) Until the end of the Nara period, Chinese ideas were dominant in the social life of the nobles of Japan. Chinese concepts of warfare and religion were taught as part of the education of nobles and traders and absorbed into the daily life of the court. Laozi and Sunzi were required reading in the Nara court. Later historians quoted by Stephen Turnbull in his history of the ninja even referred to the families of this region as Chinese bandits who had memorized Sunzi. During the Genpei War (1180–1185), Nara was overrun, and the conquering samurai replaced the indigenous nobles with their own, creating a new underclass of former nobles to be exploited and the legendary “ninja assassin” at the same time.

Tôgakure-ryû Happô-hiken, after Gyokko, is the oldest unbroken line-age ryûha in the nine schools that make up the Bujinden or Bujinkan Budô Taijutsu. It was founded by Tôgakure Daisuke, a vassal of Kiso Yoshinaka, who lost in a revolt against the Heike clan. It includes an array of unconventional weapons and tactics such as camouflage, exploding eggs, and, as swords could not be worn, claws and various rope, chain, and wooden weapons. Sweeps and arm bars dominate its grappling techniques, along with the use of some incapacitating nerve attacks. As it was developed to knock over people wearing armor and carrying at least two swords, the movements are deep and low going in and the escapes are often leaping or rolling.
The ninja philosophy, or Ninpō, can best be illustrated by the words of the former sōke. Takamatsu Toshitsugu stated, “The essence of all martial arts and military strategies is self-protection and the prevention of danger. Ninpō deals with the protection of not only the physical body, but the mind and spirit as well. The way of the ninja is the way of enduring, surviving, and prevailing over all that would destroy one. More than simply defeating or outwitting an enemy, Ninpō is the way of attaining that which we need to live happily, while making the world a better place” (Hatsumi 1981, 4).

The Japanese grappling arts exert a continuing global influence, especially in the cognate forms derived from the earlier combat systems. Jūdō is an Olympic sport with an international following. In the area of popular culture, the films of American actor Steven Seagal have drawn attention to the more combative elements of aikidō. At the close of the twentieth century, submission fighting in various formats provided a popular no-holds-barred arena for grapplers in both “pure” Japanese systems such as jūdō and jūjutsu and those non-Japanese arts heavily influenced by Japanese wrestling, such as Brazilian jiu-jitsu and Russian sambo.

Glenn J. Morris

See also Aikidō; Boxing, Chinese; Boxing, Chinese Shaolin Styles; Japanese Martial Arts, Chinese Influences on; Jūdō; Ninjutsu; Sambo; Samurai; Taijiquan (Tai Chi Ch‘uan); Wrestling and Grappling: China

References
Wrestling, Professional

During the nineteenth century, professional wrestling took place in saloons and circuses for the amusement of gamblers, but during the twentieth century it became a kind of muscular theater performed either live or on television. These latter productions were often hypocritical, greedy, ruthless, reactionary, homophobic, racist, and vulgar. However, the change simply reflected the desires of the audience, for, as former professional wrestler Robert “Kinji” Shibuya put it in 1999, “The meaner I acted in the ring, the richer I walked out of it” (Niiya 2000, 136).

How this transformation came about is a complicated story. Even the roots of the modern all-in style are complicated. For example, in nineteenth-century Britain, professional wrestling was a gambling sport akin to boxing and horse racing. In the north of England and Scotland, the wrestling style most commonly used was Cumberland and Westmorland. In this style, the wrestlers locked hands behind each other’s backs and then each tried to throw the other to the ground or make him break his grip. The judges at these events were known as “stycklers,” a word that, as “stickler,” became a synonym for anyone who insisted on precise and exacting compliance with rules.

In the south of England, other styles were more popular. Cornish wrestlers, for example, wore short jackets, and gripped one another’s sleeve and shoulders as in modern jūdō. A standard trick involved trapping the right arm and then back-heel tripping. Devonshire wrestlers wore straw shinguards and clogs, and were allowed to kick one another in the shins. Otherwise their techniques were similar to Cornish wrestlers. Unlike Cornish and Devonshire wrestlers, Lancashire wrestlers wore only underwear, and the players started well apart with their knees bent and hands outstretched. Although kicking, hair pulling, pinching, and the twisting of arms and fingers were prohibited, almost anything else went, even the full nelson hold to the neck. (The name full nelson dates to the early nineteenth century, and refers to the enveloping tactics used by the famous admiral at the Battles of the Nile and Trafalgar.) Lancashire wrestling also was known as “catch-as-catch-can,” and is an ancestor of international (or Olympic) freestyle.
In Ireland, popular styles included collar-and-elbow. The name referred to the initial stances taken, and in this style, almost anything went, as the initial grips were intended as defenses against kicking, punching, and rushing. Collar-and-elbow wrestling became widely known in the northern states during the American Civil War, and afterwards it became one of the roots of the Amateur Athletic Union’s American freestyle wrestling.

In France, styles included *Ar Gouren*, which was similar to Cornish wrestling, and *La Lutte Française* (French wrestling). In the latter method, holds were permitted from the head to the waist. The goal was to throw or twist the opponent’s shoulders to the ground, without attacking his legs. In this style, head-butts, choke holds, and joint locks were not allowed.

In Germany and the Low Countries, wrestling was associated with three groups. The first was professional entertainers who wrestled bears and each other in traveling circuses. The second was young men who wrestled for the honor of their trade guilds during Carnival and other festivals. And, after the 1790s, the third were patriots who built up their bodies for the Fatherland in gymnastic associations called *Turnverein*. There were a variety of German and Dutch styles, including some all-in methods that bear a passing (and doubtless coincidental) resemblance to jūjutsu.

All these national styles met in North America, where they combined with African wrestling, which was known as “knocking and kicking.” The elements of knocking and kicking were passed along through observation of matches in which slaves were pitted against each other in what the few surviving descriptions characterize as human cockfights.

There was also some influence from Native American styles. Into the early nineteenth century, both slaves and indentured servants in the northeastern United States often ran away to live with Woodland Indians, who used wrestling as a way of settling their personal disputes. To the horror of Protestant missionaries, Woodland Indian wrestling had no rules except prohibitions against pulling hair, and so it began to be suppressed after 1840.

From these diverse roots developed a distinctively North American style that involved considerable eye gouging and ear biting, and a crowd that yelled for more.

Standard venues for mid-nineteenth-century wrestling included music halls and saloons. The entertainment in the better clubs included dance revues, comedy acts, and wrestling matches. The wrestlers were there for the money rather than to hurt one another, and as a result they began “working” the crowd to give them a good show. However, if betting was involved, then sometimes wrestlers and promoters went so far as to prearrange results. A typical scam here involved a wrestler spending several months in a town, beating everyone in sight, and then losing to a partner who drifted into town pretending to be a scrawny, underfed unknown.
At the same time, moralists became concerned with chivalry and fair play. As a result, there were new issues about rules. Some early matches followed Greco-Roman rules, which were essentially those of La Lutte Française. (During the 1870s, La Lutte Française came to be known as Greco-Roman, as that facilitated its spread through Europe.) However, Greco-Roman was not much appreciated in the English-speaking world: It was perhaps “productive of some excitement when witnessed by the uninitiated,” sniffed Walter Armstrong and Percy Longhurst in the Encyclopædia of Sport and Games in 1912 (4, 346–347). “But apart from that it may be asked, ‘What useful purpose does it serve?’ . . . For, instead of being the art of standing up against an adversary, it is simply the art of getting down in a certain position, so as to avoid being thrown in a backfall.” As a result, by the 1890s the style preferred in North America was catch-as-catch-can.

Prominent late nineteenth-century wrestlers and promoters included New York’s William Muldoon, Germany’s Karl Abs, England’s Tom Cannon, and Scotland’s Donald Dinnie. Ethnic wrestlers included the Japanese Sorakichi Matsuda, the African American Viro Small, and a host of “Terrible Turks,” most of whom were ethnically Bulgarian or Armenian. There were also novelty acts. Masked wrestling, for example, appeared in France as early as 1870, and in 1889, Masha Poddubnaya, wife of the
Russian wrestler Ivan Poddubny, claimed the women's world wrestling championship.

During this period, contests often emphasized ethnicity and nationalism. For example, in 1869 a Danish strongman named Frederik Safft defeated a German named Wilhelm Heygster in Copenhagen. As the Prussians had defeated Denmark in a war in 1864, the victory made Safft a Danish hero. Following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, jujutsu acts became popular in the United States, Europe, and Latin America. Noted performers included Katsukuma Higashi, Tokugoro Ito, and Taro Miyake. And during 1909–1910, the Bengali millionaire Sharat Kumar Mishra sent four Indian wrestlers (the Great Gama, Ahmed Bux, Imam Bux, and Gulum Mohiuddin) to Europe as part of a scheme to prove that Europeans could be beaten using Indian methods.

At the turn of the century, popular European champions included George Hackenschmidt, Paul Pons, and Stanislaus Zbyszko. These men worked in the music halls of Paris and London, and did turns with partners, lifted weights, and accepted challenges from the crowd. These challengers were often shills, because champions had nothing to gain and everything to lose by wrestling unknowns. Thus the draw was matches that the crowd believed were real, but in which the results were actually prearranged. As Hackenschmidt put it in an article published in *Health and Strength* on March 20, 1909, “Wrestling is my business . . . [While] I am certainly very fond of the sporting element which enters into it, [I] should be absurdly careless if I allowed my tastes in that direction to interfere too seriously with my career in life.”

In North America, wrestlers worked in saloons, Wild West shows, and vaudeville. Prominent turn-of-the-century wrestlers included Martin “Farmer” Burns, Tom Jenkins, and Frank Gotch. This was also the era of yellow journalism, and so, with the support of jingoistic sportswriters, there arose a clamor to see whether European or American wrestling was best. This in turn led to two well-publicized matches between the North American champion Frank Gotch and the European champion George Hackenschmidt. Gotch won both times, and so the U.S. newspapers gave him the title of “Champion of the World.”

Following Gotch’s retirement in 1913 (he received more lucrative offers from a Chicago movie company), wrestling went into decline. Part of the problem was World War I ruining the business in Europe. But scandals also played a part. For example, in March 1910, John C. Maybray and about eighty others (including Gotch’s former manager, Joe Carroll) pleaded guilty in Iowa to charges of using the U.S. mails to fix wrestling matches.

Toward reducing the appearance of corruption, after World War I the National Boxing Association began recognizing “official” wrestling cham-
pionships, and subsequently organized a National Wrestling Association. In practice, however, promoters and wrestlers continued doing business as they always had.

During the 1920s, there were several ways wrestlers earned their keep. Some wrestled for regional promoters such as Lou Daro in Los Angeles, Paul Bowser in Boston, and Jack Pfeffer in New York. Here they were told who would win and who would lose. Others worked carnivals and Wild West shows. In these venues, shills were often used to work the crowd. An example of a shill was actor Kirk Douglas, who worked his way through college taunting the Masked Marvel. The Marvel in this case was future New York assemblyman Red Plumadore. As Plumadore recalled it for Robert Crichton, occupational hazards of the carnival wrestler included drunken opponents who didn’t know when they were hurt, challengers who introduced rocks or knives into what was supposed to be a wrestling match, and the occasional college wrestler who proved to be a terror. Pay could be good, however, especially when the locals paid the Marvel to be particularly hard on a local bully or especially kind to a popular foreman or labor leader. Finally, a few wrestlers continued hustling. Fred Grubmeier, for example, was legendary for dressing like a hick, losing matches to second-rate local wrestlers, and then “accidentally” defeating the regional champion once the big money was down.

Of course hustling was a hard life, and so most wrestlers and promoters tried something easier. One new product was “Slam Bang Western Style Wrestling,” which combined the showiest moves of boxing, football, and Greco-Roman wrestling with the “old-time lumber camp fighting” seen in the Miller Brothers’ 101 Ranch Wild West Show. Essentially this was film-style stunt work performed before live audiences; pioneers in this development included Joseph “Toots” Mondt, Billy Sandow, and Ed “Strangler” Lewis.

During the Depression, theaters closed and circuses retrenched, and this led to financial difficulties for promoters, contract wrestlers, and hustlers alike. Meanwhile, as wrestling promoters had never adopted boxing promoters’ practice of paying sportswriters to write favorable things about their stars, there was a spate of scandalous exposés in the newspapers. For example, in 1936 heavyweight champion Danno O’Mahoney lost to Dick Shikat. This was apparently a double cross, as Shikat had been scheduled to lose. The defeat cost O’Mahoney money, so his promoters took Shikat to court, and the newspapers had a field day. Taken together, all this led to a sharp decline in business, and by the mid-1930s venues such as Madison Square Garden no longer booked wrestling shows.

Promoters are nothing if not resourceful, however, and gimmicks introduced to draw crowds during the 1920s and 1930s included flying tack-
les and jumping kicks. Bronko Nagurski and “Jumping Joe” Savoldi, respectively, were famous practitioners of those techniques. Mud wrestling also dates to the 1930s; here Paul Boesch was a pioneer. But of course the biggest draws continued to be matches that left the audience (known to the wrestlers, using carnival language, as the marks) believing that the wrestling was real rather than prearranged, or that featured ethnic rivalry. Sometimes the two story lines were combined. A. J. Liebling described how this worked in the New Yorker on November 13, 1954: “A Foreign Menace, in most cases a real wrestler, would be imported. He would meet all the challengers for the title whom [reigning champion Jim] Londos had defeated in any city larger than New Haven, and beat them. After that, he and Londos would wrestle for the world’s championship in Madison Square Garden. The Foreign Menace would oppress Londos unmercifully for about forty minutes, and then Londos . . . would whirl the current Menace around his head and dash him to the mat three times, no more and no less . . . [After] the bout, the Menace would either return to Europe or remain here to become part of the buildup for the next Menace.”

During World War II, wrestlers often ended up in the service. Here some of them found employment as hand-to-hand combat instructors. Examples include Kaimon Kudo and Lou Thesz. To meet the demand for wrestling on the U.S. home front, women’s wrestling became popular. Stars included Mildred Burke, Gladys Gillem, Clara Mortensen, Elvira Snodgrass, and Mae Young. The wartime audiences were about half men and about half women and school-age boys. The performers were working-class women who viewed wrestling as a way of earning good money—up to $100 a week for a champion, as opposed to $20 a week as a secretary—while staying physically fit. Nazi newspapers picked up on this, and used the story to show how corrupt and immoral the Americans were.

In 1948 five North American wrestling promoters organized the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA), the idea of which was to reduce competition between territories and thereby increase the promoters’ share of the financial pie. There were problems, however, most notably that, in the words of the NWA champion Lou Thesz, most of the promoters were “thieves, and the one quality all of them shared was suspicion of each other” (Thesz 1995, 107). Another problem was that every promoter wanted the world champion working for him. So there were soon nearly as many world champions as wrestlers. Nonetheless, by 1956, thirty-eight promoters belonged to the NWA, and between them they controlled professional wrestling in North America, Mexico, and Japan. This arrangement led to another scandal, as the U.S. government eventually ruled that it was an illegal restraint of trade.

To many wrestling fans, the period from the early 1950s to the late 1970s represents the Golden Age of Wrestling. In part, this nostalgia is
owed to the energy, or “heat,” that a charismatic wrestler such as Lou Thesz, Buddy Rogers, or Walter “Killer” Kowalski could generate from live audiences. Mostly, however, it was due to the new medium of television.

From a production standpoint, wrestling was perfect for television. After all, everything could be filmed by one camera, and the action was limited to a small, well-lit area. Furthermore, the act was popular: In Japan, people stood by the thousands in the street to watch their hero Rikidozan beat Americans, while in California and Illinois Americans congregated in bars to watch Americans do the same thing to wrestlers called The Great Tōgō and Mr. Moto. Nevertheless, these stereotyped portrayals of ethnic groups offended the United States’ burgeoning civil rights movement, and as a result U.S. network television refused to syndicate wrestling. As a result promotions remained regional rather than national.

Perhaps the most notorious of the new television wrestlers was Gorgeous George (George Wagner), a dandy whose costumes, pomaded hair, and abrasive style the fans loved to hate. Television, with its close-ups, also increased the audience’s desire for blood. (Literally—wrestlers such as Dangerous Danny McShane would nick themselves with a tiny piece of razor blade, and the fans in Texas, Tennessee, and the South would go wild.) And, finally, it encouraged acrobatic tricks such as Antonio Rocca’s cartwheels. Many wrestlers thought the blading and cartwheels awful, but the crowds grew, so what the wrestlers thought didn’t matter.

The end of the Golden Age was due, as usual, to changing promotional methods. In 1963 there was a split in the National Wrestling Association, and out of the breakup emerged the World Wide Wrestling Federation (WWWF) led by Vince McMahon Sr. Structurally these two groups were similar, and business continued as usual. Then, in 1983, McMahon relinquished control of the organization, now known as the World Wrestling Federation (WWF), to his son, Vince Jr. About the same time, cable television networks started looking to fill niche markets. And, being young and ambitious, Vince McMahon Jr. moved to fill them with WWF wrestling.

One of the strategies McMahon Jr. used was to raid other territories for talent. This made for a strong WWF but quickly depleted other groups. He also told the New York media that wrestling was moribund, and that he and the WWF were going to revitalize it. The reporters bought the line, and so promoted his story of “the amazing revival of wrestling.”

Next, McMahon created Hulkmania. This revolved about soap opera plots surrounding a wrestler called Hulk Hogan, many of which featured celebrities such as pop singer Cyndi Lauper and TV action star Mr. T.

Many old-time fans hated the WWF methods, and vowed never to watch wrestling again. But, like alcoholics or drug addicts, few stuck to their promises of withdrawal. And, due almost solely to the media blitz, in
1987 the WWF champion Hulk Hogan was allowed to beat Andre the Giant in front of a record 93,000 fans in Detroit. This enormous financial success piqued the interest of Atlanta businessman Ted Turner, who in 1988 decided to start his own wrestling show. To start his business he bought Jim Crockett Promotions, which had been the mainstay of now much-shrunken NWA. Next he named his new wrestling promotion World Championship Wrestling (WCW). Finally he began raiding the WWF for talent.

Structurally, WCW attempted to portray an image similar to that of the wrestling seen during the Golden Age of Television. Thus many of the group’s performers wrestled in Spartan attire of boots and trunks, and feuds and angles were reminiscent of the 1950s, where the wrestlers lost due to concern about their sick relatives. The WWF, however, lived on gimmicks. Here anything went—wrestlers were reported involved with other wrestlers’ wives; The Undertaker rose from the dead; women stripped almost naked in the ring; and one wrestler came within seconds of having his penis chopped off by an angry manager. (In a guest appearance, John Wayne Bobbitt, notorious for having his own penis severed during an argument with his wife, came to the wrestler’s rescue.)

Although both WCW and WWF featured a handful of highly paid superstars, they had no farm system. Toward correcting this shortfall, schools taught by former wrestlers such as Karl Gotch and Killer Kowalski emerged. Local independent promotions also developed. Known as “indies,” they made little money for anyone but still provided wrestlers with crowd interaction and dreams of stardom.

Meanwhile, public perception of wrestlers underwent a metamorphosis. For example, in 1956, Rod Serling’s Requiem for a Heavyweight showed a punch-drunk, over-the-hill boxer suffering the worst fate imaginable for a once-proud athlete: He became a professional wrestler. As the character played by Jack Palance in the television production and Anthony Quinn in the movie begged his manager: “Maish, Maish don’t make me . . . Maish, Maish I’ll do anything for you but don’t ask me to play a clown!” By the 2000s, however, successful performers in football, basketball, and boxing gleefully took the money offered by the cable companies. For example, during the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were several ex-NFL players in the WWF and WCW, and boxer Mike Tyson and basketball stars Dennis Rodman and Karl Malone participated in professional wrestling angles and events.

Likewise, during the 1950s many an amateur wrestler would have chosen dismemberment over participation in professional wrestling. But that also changed. For example, Bob Backlund, a former NCAA wrestling champ, began a long-term relationship with the WWF in 1974, and Kurt Angle, a WWF champ of the early 2000s, had been an Olympic gold medalist in 1996.
Martial artists also were involved: Early twenty-first-century wrestlers included former world karate champion Ernest Miller and Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) champions Dan Severn and Ken Shamrock. Unlike some of the jūdōka (jūdō players) who tried wrestling during the 1950s and 1960s, they were well received by the fans and apparently considered the move a career decision rather than a letdown.

Audiences for WWF and WCW promotions were huge, and by the mid-1980s wrestling had become the third most popular spectator sport in North America. (American football and automobile racing were numbers one and two.) According to wrestler Adrian Adonis, this was because the “American people are sickos who love violence and the sight of blood.” Perhaps. But then why wrestling’s even greater popularity in Japan? Approaching the question from another tack, academics such as Theodore Kemper have claimed that watching wrestling releases testosterone in viewers, thereby giving them vicarious thrills that they don’t get in their dead-end jobs (Kemper 1990, 203–204, 214–217). Perhaps. But then how to explain the sales of wrestling action figures to children or market research showing wrestling’s enormous popularity with female viewers? Finally, there are the opinions of academics such as Gerald Morton and George O’Brien, who equate “rassling” with folk theater (Morton and O’Brien 1985, 52–54, 63–64, 74–75). Is wrestling theater in a squared circle, the Shakespeare of sport? That is the most probable explanation. However, there is still no easy way to explain why millions of people enjoy watching professional wrestling and yet dislike watching amateur wrestling.

Jeff Archer
Joseph Svinth

See also Jūdō; Stage Combat; Wrestling and Grappling: India; Wrestling and Grappling: Japan

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The martial arts, like other traditional Chinese skills, are based on certain theory and principles. As living arts, their theory and principles were primarily transmitted orally and through actual practice. Since they were life-and-death skills, extra care was taken to protect their secrets, especially any unique tactics or techniques. For example, the Daoist (Taoist) scholar, Ge Hong (A.D. 290–370), who studied martial arts himself and served a stint as a military commander, notes in his autobiography that the martial arts all have certain closely held techniques, described in an abstruse manner, that allow one to gain the advantage against an unwary opponent.

This aura of secrecy surrounding martial arts techniques has resulted in a dearth of written material on the subject. Also, martial arts did not have a high priority in Confucian society. Literate practitioners generally kept their notes to themselves, while many practitioners were illiterate. Techniques were passed down through demonstration or gained through individual insight. Key principles and techniques were encapsulated in easy-to-memorize “secret formulas” or rhymes, which, in themselves, were not normally transparent to the uninitiated, nor always clear even to other experienced practitioners.

These secretive conditions were prevalent in the Chinese clan-oriented society. However, scholars are still fortunate enough to be able to piece together a reasonably clear understanding of martial arts theory and principles through the scattered literature that exists, especially Ming-period military writings, and Qing-period manuals and other writings.

An interesting characteristic of Chinese military writings is that a common theoretical thread runs from the strategic level down to the level of individual hand-to-hand combat. These written works contain advice on the marshalling of armies that is equally applicable to the martial arts. One author, Jie Xuan (late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries), even uses the earliest term for boxing, or hand-to-hand struggle (bo), to describe military maneuvers.

Yin-yang theory, which is an essential element of the traditional Chinese worldview, is also the foundation for military thought, including the martial arts. This theory of the interplay of opposite attributes and contin-
ual change explains martial arts tactics and techniques to cope with situations described as weak versus strong (empty versus full) and pliant versus rigid (soft versus hard). The earliest extant published exposition of this theory applied directly to the martial arts is a vignette about a young woman of Yue in the Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yue (ca. A.D. 100). This story is found in a chapter titled “Gou Jian’s Plotting.” Gou Jian, king of the state of Yue (?–465 B.C.), is said to have sought the best military minds, armorers, and martial artists to serve him. In fact, one of the finest Chinese bronze swords yet unearthed has actually been identified as Gou Jian’s.

According to the story, the young woman was summoned to appear before the king of Yue because of her famed swordsmanship. Along the way she met an old man in the forest. He said his name was Old Yuan, that he had heard of her skill, and would like to see her in action. When she agreed, Old Yuan broke a piece of bamboo and the young woman got the short end. Old Yuan lunged at her three times, but she eluded his thrusts and jabbed him each time. Suddenly, he jumped up into a tree and was transformed into a white ape (“ape” in Chinese is pronounced the same as his name, Yuan). The young woman bade him farewell and resumed her journey.

When the king of Yue interviewed the young woman, he asked her to reveal the key to her swordsmanship. She replied that deep in the forest with no one around she had no teacher, but she loved to practice constantly, and it came to her in a flash of insight. The key was subtle but easy, and its meaning quite profound. It included frontal and flanking aspects, and yin and yang: Open the frontal, close the flank, yin subsides, and yang arises. In all hand-to-hand combat, the spirit wells up within, but the appearance is calm without; one looks like a proper woman, but fights like an aroused tiger. Pay attention to your physical disposition and move with your spirit; be distant and vague like the sun, and agile like a bounding rabbit. Pursue your opponent like a darting reflection, now bright now gone. Breathe with movement, and don’t transgress the rules. Whether straight or crossing, initiating or responding, nothing is detected by the opponent. By this means, one can confront one hundred, and one hundred can confront ten thousand. The king was so pleased that he gave the young woman the title Maiden of Yue and had her teach his commanders and top warriors so they could, in turn, teach the rest of the troops.

These few principles expounded in the story of the Maiden of Yue comprise the core of Chinese martial arts thought regardless of style. For example, the phrase “the spirit wells up within, but the appearance is calm without” is even found in Chang Naizhou’s eighteenth-century boxing manual and one of Wu Yuxiang’s nineteenth-century t'aijiquan (tai chi ch’uan) commentaries. This phrase describes the psychological aspect of the martial arts, which is inseparable from the physical. An unflappable,
focused mind is a must in hand-to-hand combat. An unsettled mind portends defeat. On the other hand, a good martial artist seeks to confuse the opponent. As described in Tang Shunzhi’s (1507–1560) Martial Compendium, this is done by mastering the principle of emptiness (xu) versus fullness (shi) or deception by feints and diversions, emptiness representing the deception and fullness the real move.

Another key principle, to negate oneself and accommodate others, is found in the Book of History (ca. second century B.C.) and is quoted in Taijiquan Theory (ca. 1795–1854). General Yu Dayou (1503–1580) describes the martial arts interpretation and practical application of this concept in his Sword Classic: “Flow with the opponent’s circumstances, use his force. Wait until his ‘old force’ has dissipated and before his ‘new force’ has been released.” This approach is derived from a popular formula, “Hard prior to his force, pliant following his force, the opponent is busy and I quietly wait, know the timing, let him struggle.” This principle is key not only to conservation of one’s own energy, but also to the timing for use of force and the type of force to use.

Stability is a key principle regardless of school. Basic training invariably emphasizes developing firm, rooted stances. Examples are the widely practiced Horse Riding Stance and the Three-Part Stance of xingyiquan (hsing i ch’uan). Effective issuance of force is primarily dependent on the lower body, up through the waist, and so the saying goes, “The feet hit seventy percent, the hands hit thirty percent.” This does not mean kicks outnumber punches, but that the majority of force in a punch is generated from the feet through the waist, not independently through the arms and hands.

To breathe with movement as described in the story of the Maiden of Yue means to breathe naturally. Generally inhale when amassing force and exhale when releasing it. Emitting a sound when releasing force was considered a normal phenomenon even among past practitioners of taijiquan, but this practice came to be viewed as uncouth in twentieth-century society, as the martial arts came to be practiced more as exercise than as fighting art. Releasing force involves combined psychophysiological focus, and even taijiquan theory compares release of force to shooting an arrow.

Finally, with special reference to boxing, Tang Shunzhi, in his Martial Compendium, explains that there are two main categories of fighting techniques, long fist (changquan) and short hitting (duanda). The former involves changing overall form or stance and is used to close the gap between opponents. The latter involves maintaining one’s overall form or stance for close-in fighting. Tang also explains that individual forms have inherent characteristics. They change in transition when executed, but ultimately retain their essential nature.

Stanley E. Henning
See also Boxing, Chinese; China; Religion and Spiritual Development: China

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Written Texts: India

Within Indian systems of embodied practice like martial arts, yoga, and the performing arts, knowledge is traditionally handed down from teacher to disciple generation after generation, and therefore specialist knowledge is lodged within the practice of the master. When written texts exist in these disciplines, they are often worshipped, since they symbolize the knowledge authoritatively interpreted in the master’s embodied practice. This type of knowledge is witnessed as early as the Vedas, which were transmitted orally for centuries before being committed to writing. Although one can read a Sama Vedic text today, the living tradition of daily, calendrical, and ritual recitation and use of Sama Veda is lodged in the practice of the few surviving masters of the tradition.

Three types of texts are important to understanding the history and techniques of martial arts in India: (1) primary source texts written within a particular Indian martial tradition that provide specific information on techniques and/or the ethos of practice; (2) secondary sources such as poetry or epics that provide a variety of types of information about the practice and culture of traditional martial arts; and (3) ancillary sources that provide information on paradigms of the body, body-mind relationship, and/or practice that are assumed in the practice of traditional Indian martial arts, especially yoga and Ayurveda (Sanskrit; science of life), the indigenous medical system. As reflected primarily in secondary sources, two major strands of martial culture and practice have existed on the South Asian subcontinent since antiquity—the Tamil (Dravidian) and Sanskrit Dhanur Veda (science of archery) traditions. The early martial cultures and practices reflected in Tamil and Dhanur Vedic sources have certainly influenced the history, development, subculture, and practice of extant Indian martial arts.

Texts and Textual Sources in Antiquity

From the early Tamil sangam (heroic) poetry, we learn that from the fourth century B.C. to A.D. 600 a warlike, martial spirit predominated across southern India, and each warrior received “regular military training” (Subramanian 1966, 143–144) in target practice and horseback riding, and each specialized in the use of one or more of the important weapons of the period, including lance or spear (vel), sword (val), shield (kedaham), and bow (vil) and arrow. The heroic warriors of the period were animated by the assumption that power (ananku) was not transcendent, but immanent, capricious, and potentially malevolent. War was considered a sacrifice of honor, and memorial stones were erected to fallen heroic kings and warriors whose manifest power could be permanently worshipped by one’s community and ancestors—a tradition witnessed today in the propitiation...
of local medieval martial heroes in the popular teyyam mode of worship of northern Kerala, heroes who practiced kalarippayattu.

Although Dhanur Veda literally means the science of archery, it encompassed all fighting arts. Among them the use of bow and arrow was considered supreme and empty-hand fighting least desirable. The Visnu Purana describes Dhanur Veda as one of the traditional eighteen branches of knowledge. Both of India’s epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, make clear that Dhanur Veda was the means of education in warfare for all those called upon to fight. Drona, the Brahman guru of the martial arts, was the teacher of all the princely brothers in the Mahabharata. Although the earliest extant Dhanur Veda text is a collection of chapters (249–252) in the encyclopedic Agni Purana, dating no earlier than the eighth century A.D., historian G. N. Pant argues that an original Dhanur Veda text dates from the period prior to or at least contemporary with the epics (ca. 1200–600 B.C.).

Among the heroes described in the epic literature, a number of different paradigms of martial practice and mastery emerge. Among the Pandavas in the Mahabharata, there is Bhima, who depends on his brute strength to crush his foes with grappling techniques or on the use of his mighty mace. Quite in contrast to Bhima’s overt and brutal strength is his brother, the unsurpassable Arjuna, who uses his subtle accomplishments of focus and powers acquired through meditation to conquer his enemies with his bow and arrow. Arjuna is the idealized heroic sage, who develops his subtler powers through disciplined technical training and the application of “higher” powers of meditation to such training.

For example, one of the most important aspects of traditional martial practice is the development of single-point focus (ekagrata) applied in the use of weapons. Drona’s test of skill, administered to his pupils at the end of their course of training in the Mahabharata, illustrates the importance of the development of single-point focus. He asked each prince in turn to take aim with his bow and arrow at an artificial bird attached to a treetop “where it was hardly visible.” Having drawn the bow and taken aim, he asked each whether “you see the bird in the treetop . . . the tree or me, or your brothers?” to which all but Arjuna replied, “Yes” (Van Buitenen 1973, Vol. 1, 272–273). All but Arjuna failed. He was the only practitioner to answer “no” to all but the first question. He did not “see anything else going on around” him—he and the target were one. Contemporary martial practice reflects this antique concern. Kalarippayattu master Achuttan Gurukkal explains, “We should never take our eyes from those of our opponent. By ‘single-point focus’ I mean kannottam, i.e., keeping the eyes on the opponent’s. When doing practice you should not see anything else going on around you.”
Although late, the Dhanur Vedic text in Agni Purana provides us with an important record of the earlier technical system of martial practice that influenced many of today’s martial arts, especially Kerala’s kalarippayattu. The four Dhanur Veda chapters in Agni Purana appear to be an edited version of one or more earlier manuals briefly covering a wide range of techniques and instructions for the king who must prepare for war by training his soldiers in arms. Like the purana as a whole, the Dhanur Veda chapters provide both sacred knowledge (paravidya) and profane knowledge (aparavidya) of the subject. The text catalogues five training divisions for war (chariots, elephants, horseback, infantry, and wrestling) and five types of weapons to be learned (projected by machine [arrows or missiles], thrown by the hands [spears], cast by hands yet retained [noose], permanently held in the hands [sword], and the hands themselves) (249: 1–5). Either a Brahman or a Kshatriya “should be engaged to teach and drill soldiers in the art and tactics of the Dhanurveda” because it is their birthright. A Sudra may be called upon to take up arms when necessary if he has “acquired a general proficiency in the art of warfare by regular training and practice,” and “people of mixed castes” might also be called upon if needed by the king (249: 6–8) (Dutt Shastri 1967, 894–895).
Beginning with the noblest of weapons (bow and arrow), the text describes practical techniques. There are ten lower-body poses to be assumed when using bow and arrow, and a specific posture to assume when the disciple pays obeisance to his preceptor (249: 9–19). Instructions are given on how to string, draw, raise, aim, and release the bow and arrow (249: 20–29).

The second chapter records how a Brahman should ritually purify weapons before they are used, as well as more advanced and difficult bow and arrow techniques (250). Implicit in this chapter is the manual’s leitmotif—how the martial artist achieves a state of interior mental accomplishment. The archer is described as “girding up his loins” and tying in place his quiver after he has “collected himself.” He places the arrow on the string after “his mind [is] divested of all cares and anxieties” (Dutt Shastri 1967, 897). Finally, when the archer has become so well practiced that he “knows the procedure,” he is instructed to “fix his mind on the target” before releasing the arrow (Dutt Shastri 1967, 648). The consummate martial master progresses from training in basic body postures, through technical mastery of techniques, to single-point focus, to even more subtle aspects of mental accomplishment:

Having learned all these ways, one who knows the system of karma-yoga [associated with this practice] should perform this way of doing things with his mind, eyes, and inner vision since one who knows [this] yoga will conquer even the god of death (Yama).

Having acquired control of the hands, mind, and vision, and become accomplished in target practice, then [through this] you will achieve disciplined accomplishment (siddhi). (Dasgupta 1986)

Having achieved such single-point focus and concentration, the martial artist must apply this knowledge in increasingly difficult circumstances. The archer progresses to hitting targets above and below the line of vision, vertically above the head, while riding a horse and shooting at targets farther and farther away, and hitting whirling, moving, or fixed targets one after the other (250: 13–19; 251).

The remainder of the text briefly describes postures and techniques for using a variety of other weapons: noose, sword, armors, iron dart, club, battle-ax, discus, trident, and hands (in wrestling). A short passage near the end of the text returns to the larger concerns of warfare and explains the use of war elephants and men. The text concludes with a description of how to send the well-trained fighter off to war:

The man who goes to war after worshipping his weapons and the Trailokyamohan Sastra [one that pleases the three worlds] with his own mantra [given to him by his preceptor], will conquer his enemy and protect the world. (Dasgupta 1986)
In keeping with the encyclopedic nature of the puranas, other sections of the Agni Purana include information related to the use and application of martial arts in warfare, including a section on rituals performed by Brahman priests to protect and/or cause success in battle (Dutt Shastri 1967, 840, 539), construction of forts (576–578), instructions for military expeditions (594); and battle formations and troop deployments (612–615, 629–635).

The Dhanur Vedic tradition was clearly a highly developed system of training through which the martial practitioner was able to achieve accomplishment in combat skills to be used as duty demanded. Practice and training were circumscribed by rituals, and the martial practitioner was expected to achieve a state of ideal accomplishment allowing him to face death. He did so by combining technical training with practice of yoga, in the form of meditation using a mantra, thereby achieving superior self-control, mental calm, single-point concentration, and access to powers in use of combat weapons. This antique pattern of training toward accomplishment is clearly assumed in the way that traditional kalarippayattu integrates the practices of ritual and devotion, meditation and concentration, and technical training.

It is clear that from antiquity there exists a legacy of recording the techniques and secrets of martial practice in palm-leaf manuscripts, which were preserved, copied, and passed along to a master’s most trusted disciples. Not surprisingly, these texts have traditionally been kept secret and only revealed within a particular lineage of practice to those trusted to safeguard secret knowledge and techniques. Among traditional masters, this is still the case today. Although numerous palm-leaf manuscripts exist in library collections throughout India, only very recently have a few of these texts been published, and many await translation and interpretation by qualified historians and linguists.

Texts within Specific Indian Martial Arts
The following discussion provides an overview of texts—primarily from within the kalarippayattu of Kerala, with some reference to the varma ati of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The points made, however, may represent general relationships between martial arts and texts. The symbolic importance of texts within the kalarippayattu tradition is marked each year in kalari celebrating Navaratri Mahotsavam, the festival of new beginnings inaugurating an annual season of training. It is a time for worshipping the traditional sources of knowledge, that is, texts, masters, and tools of the trade. An architect worships manuals of measurement, building tools, and the master. A dancer worships manuals recording dance technique, hand cymbals for keeping time, items of costuming, and the guru. In kalarippayattu,
sourcebooks or written records of knowledge (traditionally palm-leaf grandam [manuscripts]), weapons, and the gurukkal (masters; teachers) are worshipped. The sources of knowledge and authority are laid at the feet of the deities (usually Sarasvati, Durga, and Mahalaksmi) whose presence is specially invoked for the duration of the festival. They are worshipped at the first special puja given on the eighth day of the festival. A typical set of texts worshipped by one master on Navaratri includes Kalari vidya (kalari art)—a manual of exercises and techniques in the dronambil sampradayam (lineage of practice); Marmmabhyasam (techniques of the vital spots)—a manual that records techniques for attacking and defending the body’s vital spots; Marmmaprayogam (application to the vital spots)—a manual of locks and methods of application to the body’s vital spots; Marmmacikitsa (treatments for the vital spots)—a manual of emergency counterapplications and treatments for injuries to the body’s vital spots; and Vadakkam pattukal (northern ballads)—a contemporary printed collection of the traditional oral ballads of northern Kerala singing of the exploits of local heroes.

Several are original palm-leaf manuscripts passed on within a family; several are handwritten notebooks copied from originals not in this master’s possession; and the Vadakkam pattukal is a printed book purchased from a local bookstore. The information within the texts is of four types: (1) records of specific martial techniques or related information on practice; (2) information on such things as construction of a kalari, deities, and ritual practice; (3) records of martial mythology or legends; and (4) methods of treatment and recipes for medical preparations.

The kalari vidya text is typical of those recording verbal commands (vayttari) that are delivered while students practice preliminary training body exercises, as well as when training in basic weapons forms. For example, the first regular body exercise sequence begins with the commands, “Take position. Left forward, right forward, right back, into position.” The verbal commands per se tell us little about the position to be assumed—in this case the “elephant pose.” When weapons forms are recorded, only the student’s side of weapons use is verbalized and recorded in textual form. Only a master can instruct students in how to correctly assume and perform each of the exercises recorded so that the practitioner reaps the potential benefits of practice or becomes accomplished in a weapon’s technique.

These manuals of practice may be titled or untitled. The oldest manuals are palm-leaf grandam written in archaic Malayalam; however, most masters today possess handwritten notebooks copied from original grandam. Several traditional manuscripts are in library collections (Malayuddhakrama, Verumkaipidutham, and Ayudhabhyasam are in the
Madras University library manuscript collection), and a few have appeared in print, such as Rangabhyasam (published by the Madras Government Oriental Manuscript Series). These titles are similar to those in the possession of practicing masters. At an obvious functional level, these manuals of practice are similar to those of other artists or craftsmen—they are used as reference books for occasional consultation to clarify any doubts that a master might have.

A text is defined by whatever is included within any particular palm-leaf manuscript or copied notebook; for example, a text in the possession of one master may be a loose, lengthy collection of sections of technical information on a variety of subjects, sometimes including not only techniques of practice but also information on the body (both gross and subtle); preparation of medicines and a variety of massage therapies; how, when, and where to reveal secret knowledge to one's most favored disciples; the history and foundation myth of practice in Kerala; information on the construction of a traditional place of training (kalari); and installation and worship of appropriate deities. One master's text records the following details about worshipping the deities of his kalari:

During puja in your mind you must meditate on all the Gurudevada which dwell in the forty-two by twenty-one kalari, and also the twenty-one masters, the eight sages, and the eight murtikkal [aspects or forms] of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, the forty-three crores devas [430 million gods], four sampradayam [lineages] which are meant for kalari practice, the sambradayam which are used in Tulunadu, the famous past kalari gurus of the four Namboodiri households known as ugram velli, dronam velli, ghoram velli, and ullutturuttiyattu, the eight devas connected with thekalari, and the murti positions connected with kalari practice.

Others masters possess many shorter texts devoted to specific topics such as collections of verbal commands for body exercises, empty-hand techniques (verumkaipidutham), mantras, or medical preparations for external application of an oil or for internal consumption in treating a condition.

Some specialized texts are devoted to identifying, locating, attacking, defending, and healing injuries to the vital spots of the body. Kalarippayattu masters possess one or more of three types of texts on the vital spots: (1) those, like the Marmmanidanam (Diagnosis of the Vital Spots), that are ultimately derived from Susruta's early medical text (Samhita) enumerating each vital spot’s Sanskrit name, number, location, size, and classification, the symptoms of direct and full penetration, the length of time a person may live after penetration, and occasionally symptoms of lesser injury; (2) those, like Granthavarinarmma cikitva, that also identify the 107 vital spots of the Sanskrit texts and record recipes and therapeutic procedures to be followed in healing injuries to the vital spots; and (3) much less San-
skritized texts, like *Marmmayogam*, that are the kalarippayattu practitioner’s handbook of empty-hand practical fighting applications and emergency revivals for the sixty-four “most vital” of the spots (*kulabhysamarm-mam*) As detailed in Zarrilli (1998, 1992), kalarippayattu texts focusing on the vital spots are rather straightforward descriptive reference manuals cataloguing practical information. In contrast to the straightforward descriptive nature of these texts are the varma ati master’s highly poetic Tamil texts, which were traditionally sung and taught verse by verse. Some texts, such as *Varma Cuttiram*, located at the University of Madras manuscript library (#2429), are relatively short (146 *sloka* [verses]) and focus on one aspect of practice. Longer texts like *Varma ati Morivu Cara Cuttiram* (Songs [concerning] the Breaking and Wounding of the Vital Spots) include more than 1,000 verses and provide the name and location of each vital spot, whether it is a single or a double spot, symptoms of injury, methods of emergency revival, and techniques and recipes for treatments of injuries not only to the vital spots but also to bones, muscles, and similar tissue. The text admonishes the student to

1. Proceed by giving massage with the hands, legs, and bundles of medicinal herbs,
2. with confidence set fractures. I am explaining all this carefully, so listen and follow what I say.
3. With piety take your guru and god in mind, and treat other lives as your own.
4. With thinking and doing together as one, search out the vital spots, fractures, and wounds. (Selvaraj 1984)

These texts reveal that the varma ati system was traditionally a highly esoteric and mystical one, since only someone who had attained accomplishment as a Siddha yogi (an actualized master of a specialized Tamil form of disciplined practice through which the individual gains enlightenment) could be considered a master of the vital spots. As anthropologist Margaret Trawick Egnor notes, “The language of Siddha poetry is notoriously esoteric; modern students of it say it was deliberately made so, so that the Siddha knowledge would not become public” (1983, 989).

Although numerous palm-leaf and hand-copied manuscripts dealing with the vital spots have been collected in government manuscript libraries and some have even been published (see Nadar 1968; Nadar n.d.; Selvaraj 1984; Nayar 1957), given variability of interpretation, individual masters differ in their interpretations. As Ananda Wood asserts, “the direct instruction of an experienced teacher is necessary to interpret such theoretical texts practically. A theoretical text is fairly meaningless without such a teacher who knows the practical skills and techniques himself. For example, a vital spot may be described in a text as located two named measures
below the nipple, but the lack of a standard measure corresponding to the
name in the text would mean that an experienced practitioner would be re-
quired to interpret the text and point out the spot” (1983, 115). An in-
creasing number of reference texts about the vital spots have also become
available to Ayurvedic medical practitioners and kalarippayattu practition-
ers, such as a recent Alikakerala Government Ayurveda College publication
that includes a section on the vital spots.

To summarize, techniques of practice and related information on
teaching and martial practice are recorded in texts passed on from genera-
tion to generation. These texts record abbreviated, shorthand, partially de-
scriptive sets of verbal commands for oral use in teaching. Techniques can
only be transmitted directly from teacher to student through embodied
practice and oral correction. Ultimately, the authority of any text rests in
the embodied knowledge and practice of the master himself and in his
transmission of that knowledge into the student’s practically embodied
knowledge.

During the 1970s cheap popular paperback editions of these manu-
als began to appear in print (Velayudhan n.d.), making available on a
commercial basis what had hitherto been secret information passed on
from masters to disciples. In addition, complete sets of techniques have
been published, such as can be found in Sreedharan Nayar’s Malayalam
books, *Marmmadarppanam, Kalarippayattu,* and *Uliccil,* and most re-
cently in P. Balakrishnan’s *Kalarippayattu.* It seems likely that future re-
search in other specific martial traditions will reveal a similar range of spe-
cialist texts that have no doubt been influenced by the antique Tamil and
Dhanur Vedic traditions.

Phillip Zarrilli

See also *India; Kalarippayattu; Meditation; Performing Arts; Religion and
Spiritual Development: India; Varma Ati; Wrestling and Grappling: India*

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**Manuscripts**


**Written Texts: Japan**

*Editorial note: Bracketed number codes in this entry refer to the list of ideograms that follows.*

Japanese martial art literature encompasses such a wide variety of genres, both fiction and nonfiction, produced over such a long period of history,
that it defies all attempts at simple characterization. The production of martial literature began with early chronicles and anonymous collections of tales concerning wars and warriors and reached its zenith during the Tokugawa [1] regime (A.D. 1603–1868) when government policies enforced a strict division of social classes, according to which members of the officially designated hereditary class of warriors (bushi [2] or buke [3]) were placed above all other segments of society and charged with administration of government. The Tokugawa combination of more than 250 years of peace, high status afforded to warriors, widespread literacy, and printing technology resulted in the production of vast numbers of texts in which warriors sought to celebrate their heroes, establish universal principles of warfare, record their methods of martial training, adapt arts of war to an age of peace, and resolve the contradiction inherent in government regulations that demanded that they master both civil (bun [4], peaceful) and military (bu [5]) skills. It is this last endeavor more than any other that continues to capture the imagination of modern readers, insofar as Tokugawa warriors applied abstract concepts derived from Chinese cosmology, neo-Confucian metaphysics, Daoist (Taoist) magic, and Buddhist doctrines of consciousness to give new meanings to the physical mediation of concrete martial conflicts.

Some idea of the number of martial art treatises produced by Tokugawa-period warriors can be gleaned from the Kinsei budô bunken mokuroku [6] (References of Tokugawa-Period Martial Art Texts), which lists more than 15,000 separate titles. This list, moreover, is incomplete, since it includes only titles of treatises found at major library facilities and ignores private manuscripts, scrolls, and initiation documents that were handed down within martial art schools. Following the Meiji [7] Restoration (1868), which marked the beginning both of the end of the hereditary status of warriors and of Japan’s drive toward becoming a modern industrialized state, interest in martial arts immediately declined. Despite a brief resurgence of interest during the militaristic decades of the 1930s and 1940s and the reformulation of certain martial arts (e.g., jûdô and kendô) into popular competitive sports, relatively few books about martial arts have appeared since the end of the Tokugawa period. A 1979 References (supplement to Budôgaku kenkyû [8], vol. 11, no. 3) of monographs concerning martial arts published since 1868, for example, includes only about 2,000 titles, the vast bulk of which concern modern competitive forms of kendô, jûdô, and karate. No more than a few Tokugawa-period treatises about martial arts have been reprinted in modern, easily accessible editions. For this reason, knowledge of traditional (i.e., warrior) martial art traditions, practices, and philosophy remains hidden not just from students of modern Japanese martial art sports but also from historians of Japanese education, literature, popular life, and warrior culture.
The following survey of Japanese martial art literature, therefore, is of necessity somewhat tentative. It concentrates on works from the Tokugawa period (or before) that have been reprinted and/or influential during modern (i.e., post-1868) times. However influential a work might have been during premodern periods, if it has been ignored by subsequent generations it is omitted here. Even with this limitation, texts from several disparate genres must be surveyed. Through theater, novels, cinema, and television the image of the traditional Japanese warrior (a.k.a. samurai) has attained mythic status (analogous to that of the cowboy or gunfighter of America’s Old West). Insofar as contemporary practitioners and teachers of Japanese martial arts consciously and unconsciously identify themselves with that mythic image, texts depicting legendary warriors and their traits and ethos constitute an indispensable part of Japanese martial art literature. In addition, the texts in which Tokugawa-period warriors analyzed their battlefield
experiences and systematized their fighting arts remain our best sources for understanding the development and essential characteristics of Japanese martial training. Finally, one cannot fail to mention the early textbooks that laid the foundation for the development of the modern competitive forms of martial art that are practiced throughout the world. Thus, our survey covers the following genres: war tales, warrior exploits, military manuals, initiation documents, martial art treatises, and educational works.

**War Tales**

War tales (gunki mono [9] or senki mono [10]) consist of collections of fictional tales and chronicles about historical wars and warriors. Literary scholars often confine their use of this term to works of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, such as *Heike monogatari* [11] (Tales of the Heike; i.e., the 1180–1185 war between the Minamoto [12] and Taira [13] clans) or *Taiheiki* [14] (Chronicle of Great Peace; i.e., Godaigo’s [15] 1331–1336 failed revolt against warrior rule), which originally were recited to musical accompaniment and which evolved orally and textually over a long period of time. In a broader sense, however, the term sometimes applies even to earlier battlefield accounts such as *Shômonki* [16] (Chronicle of Masakado [17]; i.e., his 930s revolt). None of these tales can be read as history. Their authors were neither themselves warriors nor present at the battles they describe. Episodic in nature, they derive dramatic effect primarily from repetition of stereotyped formulas (e.g., stylized descriptions of arms and armor, speeches in which heroes recite their illustrious genealogies, the pathos of death). Overall, they present the rise of warrior power as a sign of the decline of civilization and sympathize with the losers: individuals and families of fleeting power and status who suffer utter destruction as the tide of events turns against them. Thus, *Heike monogatari* states, in one of the most famous lines of Japanese literature: “The proud do not last forever, but are like dreams of a spring night; the mighty will perish, just like dust before the wind.”

In spite of the fact that war tales are obvious works of fiction, from Tokugawa times down to the present numerous authors have used these works as sources to construct idealistic and romanticized images of traditional Japanese warriors and their ethos. The names of fighting techniques (e.g., tanbo gaeshi [18], dragonfly counter) mentioned therein have been collected in futile attempts to chart the evolution of pre-Tokugawa-period martial arts. Excerpts have been cited out of context to show that medieval warriors exemplified various martial virtues: loyalty, valor, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and so forth. At the same time, however, these texts also contain numerous counterexamples in which protagonists exemplify the opposite qualities (disloyalty, cowardice). Perhaps because of this very mix-
ture of heroes and villains, these tales continue to entertain and to provide story lines for creative retellings in theater, puppet shows, cinema, television, and cartoons.

**Warrior Exploits**

Whereas war tales describe the course of military campaigns or the rise and fall of prominent families, tales of warrior exploits focus on the accomplishments of individuals who gained fame for founding new styles (*ryūha* [19]), for duels, or for feats of daring. The practice of recounting warrior exploits no doubt is as old as the origins of the war tales mentioned above, but credit for the first real attempt to compile historically accurate accounts of the lives and deeds of famous martial artists belongs to Hinatsu Shigetaka’s [20] *Honchô bugei shōden* [21] (1716; reprinted in Hayakawa et al. 1915). Living in an age of peace when the thought of engaging in life-or-death battles already seemed remote, Hinatsu hoped that his accounts of martial valor would inspire his contemporaries, so that they might emulate the warrior ideals of their forebears. Repeatedly reprinted and copied by subsequent authors, Hinatsu’s work formed the basis for the general public’s understanding of Japanese martial arts down to recent times. Playwrights, authors, and movie directors have mined Hinatsu for the plots of countless swordplay adventures. The most notable of these, perhaps, is the 1953 novel *Miyamoto Musashi* [22] by Yoshikawa Eiji [23] (1892–1962). This novel (which was translated into English in 1981) more than anything else helped transform the popular image of Miyamoto Musashi (1584–1645) from that of a brutal killer into one of an enlightened master of self-cultivation. It formed the basis for an Academy Award–winning 1954 movie (released in America as *Samurai*) directed by Inagaki Hiroshi [24] (1905–1980).

**Military Manuals**

Japanese martial art traditions developed within the social context of lord-vassal relationships in which the explicit purpose of martial training was for vassals to prepare themselves to participate in military campaigns as directed by their lords. Therefore, instruction in individual fighting skills (e.g., swordsmanship) not infrequently addressed larger military concerns such as organization, command, supply, fortifications, geomancy, strategy, and so forth. Manuals of military science (*gungaku* [25] or *heigaku* [26]), likewise, often included detailed information on types of armor, weapons, and the best ways to learn how to use them.

The most widely read and influential military manual was *Kōyō gunkan* [27] (Martial Mirror Used by Warriors of Kōshū [28]; reprinted in Isogai and Hattori 1965), published in 1656 by Obata Kagenori [29]
Kôyô gunkan consists of various texts that purport to record details of the military organization, tactics, training, martial arts, and battles fought by warriors under the command of the celebrated warlord Takeda Shingen (1521–1573). Although ascribed to one of Takeda’s senior advisers, Kôsaka Danjô Nobumasa (d. 1578), it was probably compiled long after its principal characters had died, since it contains numerous historical inaccuracies, including fictional battles and imaginary personages (e.g., the infamous Yamamoto Kanzuke). In spite of its inaccuracies, Kôyô gunkan has been treasured down to the present for its rich evocation of the axioms, motivational techniques, and personal relations of late sixteenth-century fighting men.

Yamaga Sokô (1632–1685) was the most celebrated instructor of military science during the Tokugawa period. Yamaga combined military science (which he studied under Obata Kagenori) with Confucianism and Ancient Learning (kogaku) to situate military rule within a larger social and ethical framework. His Bukyô shôgaku (Primary Learning in the Warrior Creed, 1658; reprinted 1917) formulated what was to become the standard Tokugawa-period justification for the existence of the hereditary warrior class and their status as rulers: Warriors serve all classes of people because they achieve not just military proficiency but also self-cultivation, duty, regulation of the state, and pacification of the realm. Through his influence, martial art training came to be interpreted as a means by which warriors could internalize the fundamental principles that should be employed in managing the great affairs of state.

Initiation Documents

Before Meiji (1868), martial art skills usually were acquired by training under an instructor who taught a private tradition or style (ryûha) that was handed down in secret from father to son or from master to disciple. There were hundreds of such styles, and most of them gave birth to new styles in endless permutations. This multiplication of martial traditions occurred because of government regulations designed to prevent warriors from forming centralized teaching networks across administrative borders. Ryûha, the Japanese term commonly used to designate these martial art styles, denotes a stream or current branching out from generation to generation. By definition, though not necessarily so in practice, each style possesses its own unique techniques and teachings (ryûgi), which are conveyed through its own unique curriculum of pattern practice (kata). Typically, each style bestowed a wide variety of secret initiation documents (densho) on students who mastered its teachings. Although some martial art styles still guard their secrets, today hundreds of initiation documents from many different styles have become available to scholars. Many
of them have been published (see reprints in Imamura 1982, etc.; Sasamori 1965). These documents provide the most detailed and the most difficult to understand accounts of traditional Japanese martial arts.

Martial art initiation documents vary greatly from style to style, from generation to generation within the same style, and sometimes even from student to student within the same generation. They were composed in every format: single sheets of paper (kirikami [40]), scrolls (makimono [41]), and bound volumes (sashbi [42]). There were no standards. Nonetheless, certain patterns reappear. Students usually began their training by signing pledges (kishōmon [43]) of obedience, secrecy, and good behavior. Extant martial art pledges, such as the ones signed by Shōgun Tokugawa Ieyasu [44] (1542–1616), provide invaluable historical data about the relationships between martial art styles and political alliances. As students proceeded through their course of training they received a series of written initiations. These writings might have consisted of curriculums (mokuroku [45]), genealogies (keifu [46]), songs and poetry of the way (dōka [47]), teachings adapted from other styles (to no mono [48]), lists of moral axioms and daily cautions (kokoroe [49]), diplomas (menjô [50]), and treatises. In many styles the documents were awarded in a predetermined sequence, such as initial, middle, deep, and full initiation (shoden [51], chûden [52], okuden [53], and kaiden [54]).

A key characteristic of initiation documents, regardless of style, is that they were bestowed only on advanced students who had already mastered the techniques, vocabulary, and concepts mentioned therein. For this reason they typically recorded reminders rather than instructions. Sometimes they contained little more than a list of terms, without any commentary whatsoever. Or, perhaps the only comment was the word kuden [55] (oral initiation), which meant that the student must learn this teaching directly from the teacher. Many initiation documents use vocabulary borrowed from Buddhism but with denotations completely unrelated to any Buddhist doctrines or practices. Moreover, initiation documents from different styles sometimes used identical terminology to convey unrelated meanings or to refer to dissimilar technical applications. For this reason, initiation documents cannot be understood by anyone who has not been trained by a living teacher of that same style. Recently, however, it has been demonstrated that the comparative study of initiation documents from a variety of styles can reveal previously unsuspected relationships among geographically and historically separated traditions.

Martial Art Treatises
Systematic expositions of a particular style’s curriculum or of the general principles of martial performance also were produced in great numbers.
The earliest extant martial art treatises are *Heihō kadensho* [56] (Our Family’s Tradition of Swordsmanship, 1632) by Yagyū Munenori [57] (1571–1646) and *Gorin no sho* [58] (Five Elemental Spheres, 1643) by Miyamoto Musashi (both reprinted in Watanabe et al. 1972). Both texts were written by elderly men who in the final years of their lives sought to present their disciples with a concluding summation of their teachings. Until modern times both texts were secret initiation documents. Like other initiation documents they contain vocabulary that cannot be fathomed by outsiders who lack training in their respective martial styles. For this reason, the modern interpretations and translations that have appeared thus far in publications intended for a general audience have failed to do them justice. In some cases, the specialized martial art terminology in these works has been interpreted and translated into English in the most fanciful ways (e.g., Suzuki 1959).

*Heihō kadensho* begins by listing the elements (i.e., names of kata) in the martial art curriculum that Munenori had learned from his father. This list is followed by a random collection of short essays in which Munenori records his own insights into the meaning of old sayings or concepts that are applicable to martial art training. In this section he cites the teachings of the Zen monk Takuan Sōhō [59] (1573–1643), Chinese military manuals, neo-Confucian tenets, and doctrines of the Konparu [60] school of Nō [61] theater. Munenori asserts that real martial art is not about personal duels, but rather lies in establishing peace and preventing war by serving one’s lord and protecting him from self-serving advisers. He emphasizes that one must practice neo-Confucian investigation of things (*kakubutsu* [62]; in Chinese, *gewu*) and that for success in any aspect of life, and especially in martial arts, one must maintain an everyday state of mind (*byōjôshin* [63]).

*Gorin no sho* eschews the philosophical reflection found in *Heihō kadensho* and concentrates almost exclusively on fighting techniques. It basically expands Musashi’s earlier *Heihō sanjûgoka jô* [64] (Thirty-Five Initiations into Swordsmanship, 1640; reprinted in Watanabe et al. 1972) by organizing his teachings into five sections according to the Buddhist scheme of five elements: Earth concerns key points for studying swordsmanship; Water concerns Musashi’s sword techniques; Fire concerns battlefield techniques; Wind concerns the techniques of other styles; and Space (i.e., emptiness) encourages his disciples to avoid delusion by perfecting their skills, tempering their spirits, and developing insight. Throughout the work, Musashi’s style is terse to the point of incomprehensibility. In spite of his use of the elemental scheme to give his work some semblance of structure, the individual sections lack any internal organization whatsoever. Some assertions reappear in several different contexts without adding any new information. Much of what can be understood appears self-contradictory. This unintelligibility, however, allows the text to function as Rorschach
inkblots within which modern readers (businessmen, perhaps) can discover many possible meanings.

Many other formerly secret martial art treatises have commanded the attention of modern readers. Kotôda Toshisada’s [65] *Ittôsai sensei kenpô sho* [66] (Master Ittôsai’s Swordsmanship, 1664; reprinted in Hayakawa et al. 1915) uses neo-Confucian concepts to explain doctrines of Ittô-ryû [67], a style that greatly influenced modern kendô. *Mansenshûkai* [68] (All Rivers Gather in the Sea; reprinted in Imamura 1982, vol. 5) is an encyclopedia of espionage (ninjutsu [69]) techniques. Shibugawa Tokifusa’s [70] *Jûjutsu taiseiroku* [71] (Perfecting Flexibility Skills, 1770s; reprinted in Imamura 1982, vol. 6) explains the essence of Shibugawa-ryû Jûjutsu [72] so well that it is still studied by students of modern jûdô. *Sekunryû kenjutsu sho* [73] (a.k.a. *Kenpô Seikun sensei sôden* [74]; reprinted in Watanabe 1979) by Kodegiri Ichun [75] (1630–1706) has garnered attention for its sharp criticism of traditional swordsmanship as a beastly practice and its assertion that the highest martial art avoids harm both to self and to one’s opponent.

Not all martial art treatises were kept secret. Many were published during the Tokugawa period. Not surprisingly, these are the ones that modern readers can understand with the least difficulty. *Tengu geijutsuron* [76] (Performance Theory of the Mountain Demons; reprinted in Hayakawa et al. 1915) and *Neko no myôjutsu* [77] (Marvelous Skill of Cats; reprinted in Watanabe 1979) both appeared in print in 1727 as part of *Inaka Sōji* [78] (Countrified Zhuangzi) by Issai Chozan [79] (1659–1741). Likening himself to the legendary Chinese sage Zhuangzi, Issai explains swordsmanship in Confucian terms in *Tengu geijutsuron* and in Daoist (Taoist) terms in *Neko no myôjutsu*. Both works were enormously popular and saw many reprints. Hirase Mitsuo’s [80] *Shagaku yôroku* [81] (Essentials for Studying Archery; published 1788; reprinted in Watanabe 1979) provides an invaluable overview of how archery evolved during the eighteenth century. Hirase asserts that archery is the martial art par excellence and laments that contemporary archers have forgotten its true forms, which he then proceeds to explain. Similar works were published regarding other forms of martial training: gunnery, horsemanship, pole-arms, and so forth.

The most influential treatise was not written by a warrior, but by a Buddhist monk. It consists of the instructions that Takuan Sôhô presented to Yagyû Munenori regarding the way the mental freedom attained through Buddhist training can help one to better master swordsmanship and to better serve one’s lord. First published in 1779 as *Fudôchi shin-myôroku* [82] (Marvelous Power of Immovable Wisdom; reprinted in Hayakawa et al. 1915), Takuan’s treatise has been reprinted countless times ever since and has reached an audience far beyond the usual martial art circles. Takuan emphasized the importance of cultivating a strong sense
of imperturbability, the immovable wisdom that allows the mind to move freely, with spontaneity and flexibility, even in the face of fear, intimidation, or temptation. For Takuan the realization of true freedom must be anchored to firm moral righteousness. He likened this attainment to a well-trained cat that can be released to roam freely only after it no longer needs to be restrained by a leash in order to prevent it from attacking songbirds. Under the influence of the extreme militarism of the 1930s and 1940s, however, the freedom advocated by Takuan was interpreted in amoral, antinomian terms, as condoning killing without thought or remorse. For this reason it has been condemned by recent social critics for contributing to the commission of wartime crimes and atrocities.

Educational Works

In 1872, the new Meiji government established a nationwide system of compulsory public education. That same year, the ministry in charge of schools promulgated a single nationwide curriculum that included courses in hygiene and physical exercise. In developing these courses, Japanese educators translated a great number of textbooks and manuals from European countries, which only a few decades earlier had developed the then-novel practices of citizen armies, military gymnastics, schoolyard drills, and organized athletic games. Tsuboi Gendō [83] (1852–1922) was the first person to attempt to introduce to a general Japanese audience the notion that exercise could be a form of recreation and a pleasant way to attain strength and health, to develop team spirit, and to find joy simply in trying to do one’s best. His Togai yūge hô [84] (Methods of Outdoor Recreation, 1884) helped ordinary Japanese accept the concepts of sport and, more importantly, sportsmanship.

In the eyes of many Japanese educators, a huge gulf separated traditional martial arts from sports and sportsmanship. The Ministry of Education, for example, initially rejected swordsmanship (kenjutsu [85]) and jūjutsu instruction at public schools. Its evaluation of martial art curriculums (“Bugika no keikyô” [86], Monbushô 1890) found martial arts to be deficient physically because they fail to develop all muscle groups equally and because they are dangerous in that a stronger student can easily apply too much force to a weaker student. They are deficient spiritually because they promote violence and emphasize winning at all costs, even to the point of encouraging students to resort to trickery. In addition, they are deficient pedagogically because they require individual instruction, they cannot be taught as a group activity, they require too large a training area, and they require special uniforms and equipment that students cannot keep hygienic. At the same time that the Ministry of Education was rejecting traditional Japanese martial arts, however, it sought other means to actively promote
the development of a strong military (*kyōhei* [87]). In 1891, it ordered compulsory training in European-style military calisthenics (*heishiki taisō* [88]) at all elementary and middle schools. The ministry stated that physically these exercises would promote health and balanced muscular development, spiritually they would promote cheerfulness and fortitude, and socially they would teach obedience to commands.

Faced with this situation, many martial art enthusiasts sought to reform their training methods to meet the new educational standards and policies. In particular, they developed methods of group instruction, exercises for balanced physical development, principles of hygiene, rules barring illegal techniques, referees to enforce rules, tournament procedures that would ensure the safety of weaker contestants, and an ethos of sportsmanship. Kanō Jigorō [89] (1860–1938), the founder of the Kōdōkan [90] style of jūjutsu (*jūdō*), exerted enormous influence on all these efforts in his roles as president (for twenty-seven years) of Tokyo Teacher’s School (*shihan gakkô* [91]), as the first president of the Japanese Physical Education Association, and as Japan’s first representative to the International Olympic Committee. Under Kanō’s leadership, Tokyo Teacher’s School became the first government institution of higher education to train instructors of martial arts. Kanō was a prolific writer. His collected works (three volumes, 1992) provide extraordinarily rich information on the development of Japanese public education, *jūdō*, and international sports.

Kanō also encouraged others to write modern martial art textbooks, several of which are still used today. *Jūdō kyōhan* [92] (*Judo Teaching Manual*, 1908; reprinted in Watanabe 1971) by two of Kanō’s students, Yokoyama Sakujirō [93] (1863–1912) and Ōshima Eisuke [94], was translated into English in 1915. Takano Sasaburō [95] (1863–1950), an instructor at Tokyo Teacher’s School, wrote a series of works, *Kendō* [96] (1915; reprinted 1984), *Nihon kendō kyōhan* [97] (*Japanese Kendō Teaching Manual*, 1920), and *Kendō kyōhan* [98] (*Kendō Teaching Manual*, 1930; reprinted 1993), that helped transform rough-and-tumble *gekken* [99] (battling swords) into a modern sport with systematic teaching methods and clear standards for judging tournaments. These authors (as well as pressure from nationalist politicians) prompted the Ministry of Education to adopt jūjutsu and *gekken* as part of the standard school curriculum in 1912 and to change their names to *jūdō* and *kendō*, respectively, in 1926. Finally, Kanō was instrumental in helping Funakoshi [100] Gichin [101] (1870–1956) introduce Okinawan boxing (*karate*) to Japan (from whence it spread to the rest of the world). Funakoshi’s *Karatedō kyōhan* [102] (*Karate Teaching Manual*, 1935; English translation 1973) remains the standard introduction to this martial art.

William M. Bodiford
See also Archery, Japanese; Budō, Bujutsu, and Bugei; Japan; Kendō; Koryū Bugei, Japanese; Religion and Spiritual Development: Japan; Sword, Japanese; Swordsmanship, Japanese

References


**List of Ideograms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tokugawa</td>
<td>bushi</td>
<td>buke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bu</td>
<td>hata</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinsei budô bunken mokuroku</td>
<td>Meiji</td>
<td>Budôgyaku kankô</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gunkô mon</td>
<td>senki mono</td>
<td>taiseitai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musamoto</td>
<td>Taira</td>
<td>Taitôki</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masakado</td>
<td>tanbo gaeshi</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

770 Written Texts: Japan
<p>| 19 | ryūhō  | 流派  |
| 20 | Himitsu Shigetaka | 木脇秀高  |
| 21 | Higuchī Hōei shōden | 髙木英海小傳  |
| 22 | Miyamoto Musashi | 宮本武蔵  |
| 23 | Yoshikawa Eiji | 吉川英治  |
| 24 | Inagaki Hiroshi | 斎賀浩  |
| 25 | gungaku | 舞楽  |
| 26 | heigaku | 花楽  |
| 27 | Köya junkan | 甲楽院  |
| 28 | Kōshū | 甲州  |
| 29 | Ohata Kagenori | 大谷長盛  |
| 30 | Takeda Shingen | 武田信玄  |
| 31 | Kusaka Danjō Nobumasa | 藤坂但左元信信  |
| 32 | Yamamoto Kanzuke | 山本兼助  |
| 33 | Yamaguchi Seikō | 山鹿泰行  |
| 34 | hōgaku | 古楽  |
| 35 | Bikiyō shōgaku | 武習小樂  |
| 36 | ryūkai | 流派  |
| 37 | ryūgō | 流僕  |
| 38 | kata | 型  |
| 39 | dencho | 道章  |
| 40 | kirikami | 切紙  |
| 41 | makimono | 書物  |
| 42 | sashū | 片子  |
| 43 | shōshūmon | 東講文  |
| 44 | Tokugawa Ieyasu | 徳川家康  |
| 45 | nukeroku | 日録  |
| 46 | kejitu | 竿絵  |
| 47 | dōka | 明鏡  |
| 48 | to no mono | 物の物  |
| 49 | sōkoro | 心得  |
| 50 | meiyo | 名状  |
| 51 | shoden | 初傳  |
| 52 | chūden | 中傳  |
| 53 | okuden | 奥傳  |
| 54 | kōden | 齋傳  |
| 55 | kuden | 告傳  |
| 56 | Heihō kadenho | 異法家傳雲  |
| 57 | Nanya Muneori | 能々宗定  |
| 58 | Gojun no sho | 五輪書  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Takau Sōhō</td>
<td>伏澤宗明</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Kurikuru</td>
<td>柯里武</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Nō</td>
<td>野</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>hakubiusu</td>
<td>九鬼重</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>hyōjōshin</td>
<td>平通信</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Heihō sanjūgokā jā</td>
<td>呼合三十萬極</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Kōtōda Toshisada</td>
<td>高田宗利</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Ittō-ryū</td>
<td>一刀流</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Murasenshūkai</td>
<td>藤原氏昭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Ninjutsu</td>
<td>忍術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Shihōgawa Tokifusa</td>
<td>史波川瑞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Jūjutsu toiseiroku</td>
<td>伍術與ぜろく</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Shihōgawa-ryū Jūjutsu</td>
<td>史波川瑞流</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Sekitōryū kenjutsu'ka</td>
<td>塚本流刀術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Kenpō Setku sensei sōden</td>
<td>菅平四万代Bookmark: Kenpō Setku sensei sōden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Ködōgū Ichimun</td>
<td>小出一雲</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Tengu gejutsuron</td>
<td>天狗狩獵師</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Neko no myōjutsu</td>
<td>野猫妙術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Inaka Sōji</td>
<td>伊那之藤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Issai Chōzan</td>
<td>一派長山</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Ōmase Mitsuo</td>
<td>大葉盛雄</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Shōgaku yoroku</td>
<td>東寄源陸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Funōchō shinnōyosuka</td>
<td>足越新栄依</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Isobei Gendō</td>
<td>土肥谷雲道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Togai Ōgi hō</td>
<td>堂平芳雲道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>kenjutsu</td>
<td>刀術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>“Bugiko no keikyō”</td>
<td>武蔵科の景形</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Kyōhei</td>
<td>剣解</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>heishiki toisō</td>
<td>十式体操</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Kanō Jigorō</td>
<td>菅野五郎</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>Kōdōkan</td>
<td>総道館</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Shihon gaikō</td>
<td>師範学校</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Jūdō kyōhan</td>
<td>朱道館</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Yokoayama Sakujiro</td>
<td>横山作次郎</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Ōshima Fūsuke</td>
<td>大島光光</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Takamotsusaburo</td>
<td>高橋宗次郎</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Kendō</td>
<td>剣道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Nihon kendō kyōhan</td>
<td>日本剣道教範</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>Kendō kyōhan</td>
<td>剣道教範</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wushu
See Boxing, Chinese
**Xingyiquan (Hsing I Ch’uan)**

Of the three primary “internal” arts of China, *xingyiquan* (also spelled *hsing i ch’uan* and *shing yi ch’uan*) is the most visibly martial and the least well known and understood in the West. Xingyiquan (Form Will Fist) is a complex art, utilizing bare-handed and weapon techniques, that applies more linear and angular force than the other two internal arts of *baguazhang* (*pa kua ch’uan*) and *taijiquan* (*tai chi ch’uan*). Xingyi is probably best known for its emphasis on extraordinary power applied explosively. Several styles or lineages of xingyi exist, named for the various provinces in China where they were developed. Xingyi has been practiced widely in China, and the styles are not limited to the province for which they are named. For example, *Shifu* (Master) Kenny Gong reports that he learned the *Hebei* style along with bone medicine as a child in Canton.

The origins of xingyiquan are traditionally assigned to General Yue Fei, who is believed to have developed the boxing system from the movements of the spear during the Song dynasty (920–1127). According to legend, he developed both xingyi and Eagle Claw, the former for his officers, the latter for his troops. Tradition asserts that his teachings were passed down secretly and in a book now lost until a wandering Daoist (Taoist) taught xingyiquan to General Ji Jike (also called Ji Longfeng; 1600–1660) and gave him a copy of Yue Fei’s book. Of Ji Jike’s students, two are important: Ma Xueli of the Henan province and Cao Jiwu of the Shanxi province. Cao Jiwu was not only Feng’s foremost disciple, but also a commanding officer of the army in the Shanxi province, and he trained his officers in xingyiquan. From Cao Jiwu, the Shanxi or Orthodox style of xingyi descends. Tradition holds that Ma Xueli originally became a servant in Feng’s household, where he secretly watched the xingyi class. He learned so well that he was later formally accepted, and from him descends the Henan school. The Henan style has become closely associated with Chinese Moslems and has lost some of the ties to Daoist cosmology seen in the other styles.
Cao Jiwu had a disciple named Dai Longbang who had previously been a taijiquan master. He trained his two sons, who introduced him to a farmer named Li Luoneng (Li Lao Nan). Li Luoneng studied for ten years and took xingyi back to his home province of Hebei. In the Hebei province, xingyi-quan absorbed some of the local techniques of another boxing system, baguazhang, to become the Hebei style. Two stories exist of how this occurred. The more colorful one is that a Dong Haichuan, the founder of baguazhang, fought Li Luoneng’s top student, Guo Yunshen, for three days, with neither being able to win. Impressed with each other’s techniques, they began cross-training their students in the two arts. More probable is the story that many masters of both systems lived in this province, and many became friends—especially bagua’s Cheng Tinghua and xingyi’s Li Cunyi. From these friendships, cross-training occurred and the Hebei style developed.

The Yiquan (I Ch’uan) school derives from Guo Yunshen’s student and kinsman, Wang Xiangzhai. His style places a great emphasis on static meditation while in a standing position. During World War II, Wang defeated several Japanese swordsmen and jūdōka (practitioners of jūdō). When invited, Wang turned down an opportunity to teach his art in Japan. However, one of his opponents, Kenichi Sawai, later became his student and introduced Wang’s style of xingyi into Japan as Taiki-Ken.
Training in xingyi consists of a series of standing meditations (called “standing stake”), stretching and conditioning exercises sometimes called qigong (chi kung), a series of forms, and one- and two-man drills. The Shanxi, Hebei, and Yiquan systems share the five basic fists (beng quan [crushing fist], pi [chopping], pao [pounding], zuan [drilling], and heng [crossing]), which are named for the elements of Daoist cosmology: wood, metal, fire, water, and earth.

There are also twelve animals upon which forms are based in these styles: dragon, tiger, bear, eagle, horse, ostrich, alligator, hawk, chicken, sparrow, snake, and monkey. Because the names represent Chinese characters, the names of some of the animals may change between styles and even from teacher to teacher. For example, alligator may be called snapping turtle or water dragon, and ostrich may be called tai bird, crane, or phoenix. Some styles combine the bear and eagle into one bear-eagle form. In general, the Shanxi styles have the most complicated animal sets and the most weapon forms, while the Yiquan styles are the simplest. Henan style, which has been practiced extensively among Chinese Moslems, is the simplest, in that it does not use the five elemental fists and its animal forms are based on only ten animals. The animal forms are also very short, consisting of one or two moves each.

Weapons used in xingyi include the spear (often considered the archetypal xingyi weapon), the staff, the double-edged sword, the cutlass or
broadsword, needles, and the halberd. In addition, a Hebei stylist will also learn the basics of bagua, including forms called “walking the circle” and the “Eight Palms Form.”

Training normally starts by learning the basic standing exercises, starting with the fundamental stance, called san ti (three essentials). This develops posture and alignment. The basic exercises (dragon turns head, looking at moon in sea, boa waves head, lion plays with ball, and the turning exercise) are taught next to introduce the student to proper body movement. The five fists are then taught, introducing the student to the concepts of generating power in various directions. After that, the student is introduced to other exercises and the forms. Three one-man forms are taught: the Five Element Linking Form, the Twelve Animal Form, and the assorted form. Several two-man forms also exist and may be part of the training: These include Two Hand Cannon, the Conquering Cycle Form, and others.

Many exercises and drills exist to help the student learn these techniques and applications involving striking; throwing and grappling are also learned from the forms. Shifu Kenny Gong of the Hebei style asserts that xingyiquan has three special attributes: the ability to sense and take an opponent’s root, or balance (“cut the root”), to act and strike instantly (“baby catches butterfly”), and to stun an opponent with a shout (“thunder voice”). The first two are said to give the xingyi practitioner the look of not fighting when he fights. The third ability is reputedly lost to the current generation.

Kevin Menard

See also Baguazhang (Pa Kua Ch’uan); Boxing, Chinese; External vs. Internal Chinese Martial Arts; Ki/Qi; Taijiquan (Tai Chi Ch’uan)

References


778 Xingyiquan (Hsing-I Ch’uan)


Yongchun/Wing Chun

_Yongchun_ (perhaps better known outside Asia by its Cantonese name _wing chun_) is a Chinese martial art that is classified as a boxing system because of its reliance on striking techniques utilizing either hands or feet. The name _yongchun_ or _wing chun_ (alternatively _wing tsun_, _ving tsun_, or _youngchuan_), following oral tradition, is commonly translated as “beautiful springtime” in honor of the first student of the art. In general, Chinese fighting arts are classified as “external” (relying on muscular and structural force) or “internal” (relying on an inner force called _qi_ [chi]); _wing chun_ is a member of the former category. _Wing chun_ originated in and remains most popular in southern China (particularly in the Hong Kong area). This martial art employs proportionately more punches than kicks and teaches the stable stances and closer fighting distances consistent with favoring hands over feet. Therefore, _yongchun_ is characterized by economical movements, infighting, and defensive practicality.

As is the case with many traditional martial arts, the origins of _yongchun_ come to us via oral history rather than written documentation. Oral transmission allows for the addition of legendary material, particularly concerning the earliest periods of the system. In addition, the secrecy imposed on students of the art and the existence of autonomous local cadres of _yongchun_ practitioners, as distinct from a central organization, render impossible the contemporary reconstruction of a lineage that would be both definitive and scientifically documented.

Oral traditions of _yongchun_ maintain that the system was invented by a Buddhist nun named Wu Mei (Ng Mui) who escaped the Shaolin Temple in Hunan (or in some versions, Fujian) province when it was razed in the eighteenth century after an attack by the dominant Manzhou (Manchu) forces of the Qing (Ching) dynasty (1644–1911), which officially suppressed the martial arts, particularly among Ming (1368–1644) loyalists. After her escape and as the result of witnessing a fight between a fox (or snake, in some histories) and a crane, Wu Mei created a new fighting sys-
tem. This system was capable of defeating the existing martial arts practiced by the Manzhou and Shaolin defectors and, owing to its simplicity, could be learned in a relatively short period of time.

At this time, Ng lived on Daliang Mountain (Tai Leung Mountain) and regularly traveled to a village at its foot, where she befriended a local shopkeeper, Yan Si (Yim Yee), and his daughter, Yan Yongchun. On one of her trips to the village, the nun learned that the pair was being bullied by a local warlord who had announced his intention of marrying Yongchun, with or without her consent or her father’s permission.

Wu Mei offered Yongchun sanctuary on Daliang and instruction in her new method of fighting. After, by the standards of the day, a remarkably short period of time (given as from one to three years), Yongchun returned home, challenged her unwelcome suitor, and defeated him soundly.

Yongchun later married Liang Botao (Leung Bok Chau), who was himself a martial artist. After seeing her fight, he came to respect her so much that he learned her system, which he named yongchun in her honor. Despite the secrecy surrounding the art, it was taught to select students through subsequent generations. During this period, the exchange of fighting knowledge between teachers of yongchun and students who had previous martial arts experience led to the addition of weapon techniques to the empty-hand skills created by Wu Mei. There was a particularly close connection between yongchun practitioners and the traveling Chinese opera performers known as the “Red Junk (Malay; ship) People” after the red junks that served as both transportation and living quarters for the troupes. These troupes reportedly served as havens for Ming loyalists involved in the resistance against the Qing rulers and offered refuge to all manner of martial artists.

At any rate, Liang Erdi (Leung Yee Tai), a crew member of one of the Red Junks, became an heir to the yongchun system, which he passed along to Liang Zan (Leung Jan), who resided in the coastal city of Fuzhou. With Liang Zan and his students, the transition from legend to documented history begins.
Noting that the earliest solid evidence of yongchun places it in the coastal regions of southeastern China, alternative early histories of the system consider the ecology of that area, the cultural adaptations required for this environment, and the historical record. In general, these rationalist arguments maintain that the system developed from the fighting styles that were practiced in coastal Fujian province. Rather than originating in the Shaolin heritage of a single martial artist, as the Wu Mei legend maintains, martial arts knowledge that passed along through the coastal provinces of southeast China led to the development of the precursor of the contemporary art. Thus the creation, transmission, and refinement of practical fighting techniques by successive generations of anonymous individuals eventually produced yongchun. The argument that the mechanics of yongchun and other martial arts systems found in the south were ecologically determined goes as follows. The balanced stances and sliding footwork patterns and the low, focused kicks of the system are particularly suited to stability on treacherous terrain—the marshlands between the rivers and tributaries of southeastern China, the mud of a riverbank, the swaying deck of a boat. Also, the infighting preferred by the yongchun stylist lends itself to close quarters and tight spaces, just the situation one might encounter on a junk. Therefore, we see in the rationalist histories of yongchun a sense of geographic determinism, an argument that ecology, coupled with the needs of self-defense, have here produced an appropriate response. Although widely accepted, this argument is not universally accepted, by any means.

A less orthodox, but intriguing, rationalist theory espoused by Karl Godwin attributes the origin of yongchun to the introduction of Western bare-knuckled boxing to the southeastern coastal region of China during the nineteenth century. This argument draws evidence from the technical and structural similarities between European and American boxing of the latter half of the nineteenth century and yongchun, as well as from the historical records of European commerce in the area. Godwin further suggests that Western boxing was modified by the introduction of (push-hands) from *taijiquan* (tai chi ch’uan, the most widely practiced internal boxing system) to create yongchun’s distinctive *chi shou* (sticky hands) techniques.

During the late nineteenth century a traceable record emerges surrounding the education and martial arts career of Grand Master Yip Man (Cantonese; Mandarin Ye Wen; 1893–1972). This record begins with Yip’s master, Liang Zan (Leung Jan). Liang Zan, a traditional physician and pharmacist who was heir to a yongchun system, established a medical practice in the coastal city of Fuzhou. He taught his sons, Liang Chun (Leung Chun or Leung Tsun) and Liang Bi (Leung Bik), and a few other students in his pharmacy after closing. Next to the pharmacy was a money changer’s stall run by Chen Huashun (Chan Wah Shun; Wah the Money-
changer). Chen learned elements of the art by peeping through a crack in the pharmacy door and, after repeated appeals, eventually obtained formal instruction.

Chen gained a national reputation and passed along the art to sixteen disciples. The sixteenth was Yip Man, the son of a prominent Fuzhou landowner. Yip Man, at the age of 16, after he had studied for three years with Chen, was sent to Hong Kong to continue his formal academic education. Soon after his arrival, he challenged and was soundly defeated by an elderly man whom he later discovered to be Liang Bi. Thereafter, he was taught by Liang until Yip returned home to Fuzhou at the age of 24. There he remained until the end of World War II.

The Japanese conquest of southeastern China left Yip Man in financial difficulty. With the takeover of the country by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, his fortunes degenerated further, compelling Yip to move his family to Hong Kong. During this unsettled period, he turned for the first time to teaching yongchun for his livelihood, initially as instructor for the Association of Restaurant Workers and later opening a series of his own schools and privately instructing scores of students. As the result of these actions, Yip is credited with removing the veil of secrecy from the art and making yongchun available for public instruction. Since the 1970s, yongchun has grown to become one of the most popular of the Chinese boxing arts.

The style of yongchun introduced by Yip Man and popularized by his students consists of three principal unarmed sets (sequences of martial arts movements): *Sil Lim Tao* (Cantonese, Little Idea; Mandarin *xiaoniantou*), *Chum Kil* (Cantonese, Seeking the Bridge; Mandarin *xunqiao*), and *Bil Jee* (Cantonese, Flying/Thrusting Fingers; Mandarin *biaozhi*). In addition, there are two weapon sets: one that utilizes a long staff and one that utilizes a pair of broad-bladed, single-edged swords, approximately 20 inches long. Chi shou (sticky hands) techniques are the cornerstone of yongchun. These techniques, which teach students to come into contact with and adhere to opponents in combat, are practiced with partners and in a form using a wooden dummy, *mok yan jong* (Cantonese, also *muk yan jong*; Mandarin *mu ren zhuang*). The sticking concept is extended to legs and to movements of the staff set, also.

Following Grand Master Yip’s teachings, contemporary yongchun principles call for closing with an opponent and utilizing the ability to stick to and trap limbs. The centerline theory posits a vertical line drawn down the center of the body, intersected by three horizontal lines dividing the body into six gates. One defends this centerline and gates while attempting to launch an attack by “entering” an opponent’s gates. The ability to “stick” and launch centerline attacks is augmented by the basic yongchun
stance, which calls for feet shoulder-width apart with the toes and knees turned in at 45-degree angles. The system favors flowing with an opponent rather than meeting force with force and deflecting strikes with one’s own strikes at such an angle as to simultaneously block and attack. Therefore, yongchun is well suited for use by a smaller, weaker person against a larger, stronger one.

Finally, yongchun, unlike the overwhelming majority of Asian martial arts and many non-Asian ones, is notable for its absence of ritual. The primary example of this is the fact that the yongchun sets begin without the formal bow that precedes the forms of most other martial arts.

Yongchun systems exist that developed parallel to Yip Man’s. Since the 1970s, however, Yip’s system has enjoyed overwhelming international popularity. Some of this is due to Grand Master Yip himself; he developed an effective system and introduced it to the public before his rivals. More importantly, though, he taught film star Bruce Lee (1940–1973) yongchun in the mid-1950s. Lee vocally acknowledged his debt to Yip throughout his career. As a result of these factors, Yip’s students, such as Hawkins Cheung, Leung Ting, William Cheung, and others, have successfully perpetuated the Yip system of yongchun.

During the 1960s, Bruce Lee developed his own martial systems, which expanded on and departed from the yongchun techniques he learned from Yip Man. For example, Jeet Kune Do translates as “intercepting fist way”; the intercepting fist is also a principle of yongchun.

In Hong Kong, Leung Ting has sought to systematize and popularize Yip Man’s yongchun by introducing a highly structured curriculum, a ranking hierarchy, uniforms, and diplomas under the auspices of the Wing Tsun Leung Ting Martial Arts Association.

Yongchun systems, unlike many other martial arts, show no sign of developing into sports. Their compact movements lack the spectacular acrobatics that have caused other arts to capture public attention. As a practical defensive art, however, the international popularity of yongchun continues undiminished.

Thomas A. Green

See also Boxing, Chinese; Boxing, Chinese Shaolin Styles; Folklore in the Martial Arts; Women in the Martial Arts: China; Written Texts: China

References


Chronological History
of the Martial Arts

About 30,000 years ago
Slings, arrows, and atlatls (Nahuatl; spear throwers) are developed.

About 9500 B.C.
Metal is refined.

About 8000 B.C.
Self-bows appear. (A self-bow is a bow made from a single piece of wood.)

About 7250 B.C.
Walled towns appear.

About 5500 B.C.
Copper tools appear.

About 4000 B.C.
Compound bows appear. (A compound bow is one that is made from more than one piece of wood or of material other than wood. Examples include horn and sinew glued together.)

About 3127 B.C.
According to Indian texts written during the sixth century B.C., the god-man Krishna is born at Mathura, in Uttar Pradesh. Stories describing the life of Lord Krishna report that he sometimes engaged in wrestling matches.

About 2700 B.C.
Britons begin making and using yew bows. Although made from a single piece of wood, and therefore technically self-bows, these weapons were actually compound bows, as the wood from which they were made was carefully selected to include both sapwood and heartwood. (The flexible sapwood was used for the back of the bow, while the denser heartwood was used for its belly.)

2697 B.C.
According to documents written between the sixth century B.C. and the third century A.D., Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor, rules China. Huang Di was subsequently credited with inventing many things, including Daoism (Taoism), archery, wrestling, swordsmanship, and football.

About 2300 B.C.
Friezes on the walls of a tomb in Saqqara, Egypt, show youths wrestling. Other friezes on the same tombs also show boys in light tunics boxing with bare fists and fencing with papyrus stalks, perhaps in the context of playing soldier.

About 1950 B.C.
The world's oldest wrestling manual appears as frescoes on the walls of four separate tombs built near Beni Hasan, Egypt.

About 1829 B.C.
According to the twelfth century A.D. Irish Book of Invasions, the Taillenn Games are established near modern Telltown, Ireland. These games featured singing, wrestling, and racing; took place about August 1; and commemorated Tailltu, the mother of a pre-Christian sun god named Lugh (pronounced “Lew,” but nonetheless sometimes anglicized as Lammas).

About 1520 B.C.
A fresco made on the Aegean island of Thera shows boys boxing.
About 1500 B.C. Near the ford at Jabbok, the Hebrew patriarch Jacob wrestles with a spirit being, thereby earning the title of “Israel,” or “wrestler with God.” There is some controversy about Jacob’s winning technique. The Christian Bible, for example, credits Jacob’s victory to his refusing to give in even after his opponent grabbed him by the genitals (“the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh” [Genesis 32:32, King James Bible]). The Jewish tradition, however, has Jacob continuing despite an injury to his sciatic nerve, which in turn explains why the sciatic nerve is discarded during kosher preparation of meat. The nature of Jacob’s opponent is also debated. For example, Christian theologians typically say it was an apparition of God. Jews, on the other hand, say that it was the guardian angel of Jacob’s brother Esau, and that the victory symbolizes Jacob’s spiritual victory over Esau.

About 1450 B.C. Swords (that is, metal blades that are more than twice as long as their handles and equally usable for cutting, thrusting, and guarding) are made in the mountains of Austria and Hungary.

About 1424 B.C. According to the Bhagavad-Gita (Sanskrit; Lord’s Song), the god-man Krishna and the warrior-king Arjuna discuss the meaning of life. Their decision is that a warrior should have a code of ethics and fight in defense of it. They also decide that it is inappropriate for a warrior to avoid battle by choosing to live as a merchant or a priest, as he would then be untrue to his obligations.

About 1250 B.C. According to the Hellenic story of Jason and the Argonauts, a Lakedaemonian (Spartan) boxer named Polydeuces defeats a foreign bully named Amykos.

About 1193 B.C. According to Homer’s Iliad, funeral games (agon gymnikos) played by the Homeric warriors during their siege of Troy include chariot races, boxing, wrestling, foot races, discus throwing, and archery events.

About 1160 B.C. A frieze at Medinet Habu celebrating the accession of Pharaoh Ramses III shows ten pairs of wrestlers and stickfighters in an arena surrounded by grandstands. The matches were probably fixed, as the art shows that Egyptians always won, and the Libyans, Sudanese, and Syrians always lost.

1123 B.C. According to tradition, King Wan and his son, Dan, the Duke of Zhou, patronize the publication of the Yijing (I Ching; Book of Changes). King Wan is also credited with increasing the number of the linear diagrams shown in the Yijing from their original eight to their modern sixty-four.

About 1015 B.C. According to 1 Samuel 17:21–58, a Hebrew shepherd named David uses five stones and a sling to slay a Philistine named Goliath.

About 890 B.C. The Athenian king Theseus is entertained by the spectacle of men hitting each other in the head with leather-laced fists.

Eighth century B.C. According to the Ramayana epic, the Indian kingdom of Kosala conquers Sri Lanka. The hero of the conquest is Lord Rama, whose best friend is the monkey-god Hanuman. As long as Hanuman remains celibate and loyal to his Lord Rama, he is blessed with great wisdom, windlike speed and strength, and
immunity from all types of weapons. Hanuman has since become the patron saint of Indian and Pakistani wrestlers.

776 B.C. According to tradition, the first Panhellenic Games are played at Olympia, a shrine to the god Zeus standing on a plain west of Corinth.

About 770 B.C. Swords appear in China. These early Chinese weapons were generally made of hammered bronze; although the Chinese worked terrestrial iron from about 1000 B.C., they used it mainly for tipping plows until the fourth century B.C.

708 B.C. According to a victor’s list made up by Sextus Julius Africanus after A.D. 217, wrestling is made part of the Olympic Games. However, the date is questionable, as the oldest statue at Olympia to honor a wrestler is only dated to 628 B.C.

About 700 B.C. A Chinese text written in the sixth century B.C. ranks wrestling as a military skill on a par with archery and chariot racing.

688 B.C. According to a victor’s list drawn up by Sextus Julius Africanus after A.D. 217, boxing with ox-hide hand-wrappings is added to the Olympic Games. As the first Olympic statue to honor a boxer was only erected in 544 B.C., this dating is unreliable.

648 B.C. According to the victor’s list produced by Sextus Julius Africanus after A.D. 217, pankration (literally, “total fighting” in the sense of “no holds barred”) is introduced into the Panhellenic Games, A giant named Lygdamis of Syracuse being its first known champion. Unfortunately the latter attribution is not certain, as the oldest statue honoring an Olympic pankrationist was only dated 536 B.C.

632 B.C. According to a Chinese text written during the fourth century B.C., the Prince of Chin dreams of wrestling.

About 550 B.C. Reflexed compound bows appear in Central Asia. (A reflexed bow is one that, when unstrung, reverses its curve; a Cupid bow is an example.)

544 B.C. According to tradition, the Buddha achieves Nirvana while sitting under a tree in Bodhgaya, India. The Buddha’s power was not entirely spiritual, either, as according to subsequent stories, he was a champion wrestler, archer, runner, swimmer, and mathematician who won his first wife in a duel.

About 540 B.C. An Olympic wrestling champion named Milo of Kroton (a Hellenic city in southern Italy) reportedly develops his famous strength by carrying a heifer the length of a stadium every day for four years, a feat that has in modern times been claimed as the progenitor of progressive weight training.

About 511 B.C. According to tradition, a crippled general from Shandong province called the Honorable Sun, or Sun Zi, writes The Art of War, as a way of passing his knowledge on to others.

479 B.C. The Chinese philosopher known as Kong Zi dies in Shandong province. Although his philosophy, known as Confucianism, was ignored in its time (the fourth-century philosopher Meng Zi was actually the first famous Confucianist), it subsequently became the cornerstone of the imperial Chinese bureaucracy. And, because the government viewpoint was not popular with everyone, rival philosophies such as Daoism (Taoism) and Legalism developed to compete with it.
About 460 B.C. The Hellenic historian Herodotus describes the practices and culture of some female warriors he calls the Amazons. Who the Amazons were is not known, and in fact there were female warriors and priestesses throughout the Mediterranean world.

About 445 B.C. Hellenic philosophers describe the four “roots” of the universe as being Fire, Air, Earth, and Water. These elements in turn had basic characteristics, namely hot, cold, dry, and wet.

About 398 B.C. Engineers working for the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius the Elder invent what the Greeks called katapeltes (hurlers) and the Romans called ballistae (throwers). Smaller versions of these weapons subsequently became crossbows. The Chinese meanwhile were developing trebuchets, which were enormous slings attached to pivoting wooden beams.

388 B.C. During one of the first fixed fights on record, a boxer named Eupolos the Thessalian pays the fighters Agetor of Arkadia, Prytanis of Kyziokos, and Phormion of Halikarnassos to lose to him during the Olympics.

About 350 B.C. According to a story by Zhuang Zi, Chinese kings enjoy watching sword fights, sometimes to the exclusion of affairs of state.

About 330 B.C. Etruscan bronze statuettes show men wrestling with women.

About 322 B.C. According to Greek sources, a north Indian king named Chandragupta kept an armed female bodyguard.

About 290 B.C. While commenting on the Yijing (I Ching; Book of Changes), the Chinese scholar Zhuang Zi introduces the convention of describing “yin” and “yang” as “bright” and “dark” instead of “weak” and “strong.”

About 270 B.C. Chinese scholars describe matter in terms of the Five Configurations (wu xing). These elements included wood, fire, earth, metal, and water, and may show Hellenistic influence via India. The appearance of this cosmology in Sun Zi is part of the reason that many non-Chinese scholars think that Sun Bin actually wrote (or at least extensively revised) the text.

About 246 B.C. As part of a memorial for a deceased patrician named Junius Brutus Pera, three pairs of slaves are made to fence with one another in the Roman cattle market. The spectacle makes this funeral famous, and gladiators are the ultimate result.

216 B.C. King Ptolemy IV of Egypt sends his best pankrationist, a man named Aristonikos, to the Olympic Games; his goal is to show Egypt’s superiority over Greece. However, to the Greeks’ satisfaction, the Theban pankrationist Kleitomachos ultimately prevailed. And how did he do this? Not by outfighting the Egyptian, but by appealing to the patriotism of the ethnically Greek officials and crowd. This is a reminder that neither the use of athletics for political purposes nor biased officiating is anything new.

Second century B.C. The Chinese historian Si Ma Qian describes xia, a word that can be translated as “knights who wore coarse clothes” or “knights from humble alleys.” In general, these heroes were noted for their altruism, courage, and sense of justice (with the emphasis being on correcting individual rather than social injustices). They were notorious for associating with butchers and gamblers, drinking in public, and ignoring normal social cour-
testes; while not all of them were famous swordsmen or archers, some were, and these probably provided models for subsequent Chinese martial art heroes.

165 B.C. A rope-dancer and a pair of boxers upstage a new play by the Roman dramatist Terence; undaunted, Terence unveils an improved play five years later and is again upstaged by the announcement that the boxers are about to begin. This is a reminder that Roman boxing and wrestling were as much theatrical acts as combative sports.

105 B.C. To show recruits exactly what happens on battlefields, the Roman governors of Pavia, Italy, introduce public gladiatorial matches. That these matches were not intended to be recreational (in which case they would have been called ludi [Latin; games]) is indicated by their name, munera, from munus, function, employment, duty.

First century B.C. A Chinese annalist named Zhao Yi writes about a woman who was a great swordsman. She said the key to success was constant practice without the supervision of a master; after a while, she said, she just understood everything there was to know.

23 B.C. According to the Chronicles of Japan, the Emperor Suinin watches a sumô match between a hero named Sukune-no-Nomi and a bully named Taima-no-Kehaya. The story is probably legendary, as the text was not written until the eighth century, at which time its purpose was to trace the genealogies of the reigning leadership back to ancient gods.

A.D. 90 Roman entrepreneurs introduce gladiatorial battles between dwarves. Similar midget acts remained popular in circuses and professional wrestling rings for the next 1,900 years.

About 98 The Roman writer Tacitus reports that German priests forecast the outcome of upcoming engagements by comparing the strength of the two sides’ war-chants. Warriors amplified their chants by shouting into their shields while clashing their weapons against them. Sixteenth-century English playwrights called this sound “swashbuckling,” and said it was especially useful against cavalry attacks, as the noise scared horses.

Second century Indian Buddhists are encouraged to avoid all contact with evil or cruel persons who practice the arts of boxing, wrestling, and nata. Nata is, literally, “dancing,” but in some of the more violent dances, the dancers go through choreographed battles against invisible demons. The Hellenistic world had its equivalents; unarmed exercises were known as skiamachiae (Greek; private contests), while armed versions were known as hoplo-machiae (armed contests).

Second century The medical texts ascribed to the Indian physician Susruta describe 107 vital points on the human body. (Some people added a secret spot, too, to bring the total to 108, a number with important Buddhist cosmological significance.)

141 The Chinese physician Hua Tuo is born. As an adult, Hua created a series of exercises called Wu Qin Xi (Five Animals Play). Although the inspiration is said to have been observation of the
animals themselves, the animal dances of Turkic animists seem a more likely source, especially if those dances were done by sorcerers interested in acquiring the animals’ magical powers.

About 200 A Christian philosopher named Clement of Alexandria writes that women should be athletes for God. That is, they should wrestle with the Devil and devote themselves to celibacy instead of bowing meekly to their destiny of mothers and wives.

About 220 As a way of recruiting the best fighters for his bodyguard, a Chinese warlord named Liubei begins holding fencing tournaments.

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271 A group of Gothic women captured while armed and dressed as men are paraded through Rome wearing signs that read “Amazons.”

302 Stirrups appear in Chinese art, the Turks or Mongols then beginning to invade the country having introduced the devices. The most famous member of the Han resistance to the contemporary invasions is Hua Mulan, a young girl who takes her elderly father’s place in the Northern dynasty army.

About 378 In Mexico, the Tikal king Jaguar-Paw and his brother Smoking-Frog begin using atlatls (Nahuatl; spear-throwers), for the purpose of killing enemies from long range. (Earlier battles had been fought hand-to-hand.)

Fifth century Quarterstaffs become associated with Daoist exorcisms. The idea was that when the priest pointed his staff toward heaven, the gods bowed and the earth smiled, but when he pointed it at demons, the cowardly rascals fled.

About 400 The Indian poet Vatsayana writes the *Kama Sutra*, or “Aphorisms on Love.” Along with acrobatic sex, the *Kama Sutra* also taught Indian courtesans to captivate men through regular practice with sword, singlestick, quarterstaff, and bow and arrow.

495 The Shaolin Temple is built at Bear’s Ear Peak in the Song Mountains of Henan province. The name means “the young forest,” and alludes to the forest in north India where the Buddha chose to depart this life.

501 The king of the Burgundians introduces trial by battle into Western Christianity.

About 530 According to tradition, an Indian monk known as Bodhidharma (Carrier of Wisdom) introduces southern Indian moving meditations to the monks of the Shaolin Monastery in Henan province.

About 550 During an exhibition held at the court of the Liang dynasty Wu Di emperor, a Buddhist monk called Dong Quan (Eastern Fist) uses unarmed techniques to disarm armed attackers.

590 The Christian Synod of Druim Ceat orders British women to quit going into battle alongside their men. The ban must not have been especially effective, since the daughter of Alfred the Great is remembered as the conqueror of Wales and the people who taught sword dancing to the Ulster hero Cu Chulainn were female.

About 600 The imperial court of China’s Tang dynasty hires Punjabi and Bengali astrologers to teach Vedic astrology. This may have significance for the Chinese martial arts, as many subsequent mar-
tial art practice forms have rectilinear patterns whose designs are similar to those used by Vedic astrologers to cast birth charts and horoscopes. (Practice inside tiled courtyards is another possible explanation, but defining social space using geometric methods was vastly more important to thirteenth-century Muslims and sixteenth-century Western Europeans than to seventh-century Chinese.)

About 630
Norasimhavarman I Marmalla, the Vaishnavite king of southern India’s Pallava dynasty, commissions dozens of granite sculptures showing unarmed fighters disarming armed opponents.

About 647
The White Huns settle in northern India. Various Rajput (King’s Sons) clans claim descent from these warriors. This seems unlikely. First, reliable Rajput genealogies rarely go back further than the eleventh century. Second, Muslim chroniclers do not start describing Hindu warriors as Rajput rather than kshatriya until the tenth century. So the Rajputs are probably not White Huns, but Hindus who got tired of the passive resistance that many Brahmins preached.

668
The Chinese capture the Koguryo capital of Pyongyang, leaving a political vacuum in Korea that Silla quickly fills. The question has been raised of why the Chinese did not also conquer Silla. Evidently the government was too well organized and the military too strong. Koreans also believe that the Silla warriors’ hwarang spirit deserves some of the credit. It is also unclear what hwarang refers to. The name translates into something akin to “Young Flower Masters.” It could refer to an earlier women’s group that its members replaced politically, the flower of manhood the members represented, a flower that the Buddha once held aloft to admire, a Korean gambling game that involves fencing with reeds, or something else altogether. In any case, the followers of hwarang were said to refine their morals, learn right from wrong, and select the best from among themselves to be their leaders. Aristocratic youths were inducted into this organization while aged 14–18 years. Usually there were about 200 hwarang scattered throughout the kingdom, each with an entourage of about a thousand, and they frequently served as generals or political advisors.

About 671
The Byzantines develop a liquid incendiary called by the Franks Greek fire.

680
During a battle at Karbala, Iraq, the third Shiite imam, al-Hussein ibn ‘Ali, disappears under a shower of arrows. To commemorate his martyrdom, the Shiites instituted a forty-day period of mourning in 1109. Known as Muharram (abstinence), this observance originally meant little more than hanging black sheets from windows. But over time people took to showing their piety in more sanguinary ways. Lent served a similar purpose for Christians, while for Rajputs, it was Dussehra.

682
In an essay called The Canon on the Philosopher’s Stone, the Chinese alchemist Sun Simiao becomes the first person known to have written that saltpeter, charcoal, and sulfur are explosive when mixed.
Eighth century Vishnaivite monks living in Kerala, India, are described as devoting their mornings to archery, singlestick, and wrestling; their afternoons to chanting and dancing; and their evenings to walking in the woods.

Eighth century The Kievan annals describe a Slavic boxing game involving fist-fights between picked champions. Bouts took place during the winter on the frozen rivers that established boundaries between districts. While kicking, tripping, and putting iron into one's gloves were discouraged, the only real rule was that the two men had to fight face to face and chest to chest without recourse to magic or trickery.

About 700 The Chinese scholar Hong Beisi describes an esoteric Buddhist movement art using the word *quanfa*. This term, which has become a generic term for the Chinese martial arts, is probably best translated as “boxing methods” (*quan* means “fist,” and *fa* means “method” or “law,” usually in a philosophical context).

About 710 Christian Serbs are reported using poisoned arrows against Bosnian Muslims. The English word *toxin* comes from the Greek phrase *toxikon pharmakon* (bow poison), which is what the Byzantines called these arrow-borne poisons.

714 China's Xuan Zong emperor establishes an acting school at his royal capital, and the sword dances and gymnastics taught in such schools subsequently were associated with Chinese martial arts.

About 750 A peripatetic Indian monk called Amoghavajra introduces the esoteric finger movements, or mudras, of Yogacara Buddhism into China. As memorizing these finger movements was supposed to cause subtle changes to the practitioner's internal energy (which is possible, since the hands provide more sensory input to the brain than all other parts of the body except the eyes, tongue, and nose), they were subsequently incorporated into some East Asian martial arts.

About 750 Probably in hopes of obtaining divine intervention, the Koreans erect Buddhist temples all around Kwangju. By the gates of these temples were statues of bare-chested temple guardians standing in what the Koreans now call *kwon bop* (pugilistic) stances. The guardian on the west (the excited fellow with wild hair and open mouth) represented yang energy, and was called Mi-chi. The guardian on the east (the fellow who stands with his mouth closed and his emotions under control) represented yin energy, and was called Chin-kang. Similar temple guardians were constructed in Japan. The surviving pair at the Tedaiji Monastery in Nara were unusual, though, partly because they were next to the altar rather than the gate and mostly because they wore armor. The Tedaiji statues were made of lacquered hemp cloth spread over a wooden frame, and known as *rikishi*, or strongmen. Japanese professional wrestlers also use the latter name.

788 Shankara achieves enlightenment in India. While little known today, Shankara was probably the most influential philosopher of his day, as his theory that one could escape fate by achieving a mind empty of illusions (*sunya*) led to the development of both Zen Buddhism and the Indo-Arabic numeral zero.
The Japanese aristocracy start patronizing *kumitachi* (sword dances). Their models were similar Chinese and Korean entertainments, and their methods reportedly set the precedent for the choreographed fencing depicted in the seventeenth-century No and Kabuki theaters.

About 790 Rhinelanders develop bellows-driven forges, significantly improving German metallurgy and becoming a factor behind the subsequent successes of the Danish Vikings, who bought their swords from the Rhenish Germans.

793 Given a choice between seeing his mother torn to pieces before his eyes or losing his horse, an Aquitanian aristocrat named Datus does the only sensible thing: He keeps his horse.

Ninth century The Franks start using the Latin word *schola*, or “school,” to describe places where monks study philosophy rather than places where soldiers wrestle and fence.

About 800 Buddhist monks develop the idea of centering the mind and the breathing at a spot about three fingers’ width below and a couple of inches behind the navel. While the practice soon became popular among sitting Zennists, it did not become popular among Japanese swordsmen for another thousand years. (Pioneers of the idea that training in proper breathing and energy projection was important to swordsmanship included Shirai Tôru Yoshinori [1781–1843], whose *Heibô michi shirube* [Guide to the Way of Swordsmanship] was widely circulated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.)

About 820 Members of an Indian monastic order called the Dasnami Naga are reported practicing archery and other combative sports.

About 840 *Sumai* (struggle) wrestling, an ancestor of modern sumô, develops in Japan. Associated with harvest festivals, the wrestlers were part of a giant potlatch relationship designed to show their patrons’ ability to squander such mighty energies. The roots of the sport may lie in Korea.

About 860 The Iraqi mathematician Abu Yusuf Ya’qub ibn-Ishaq as-Sabbah al-Kindi (called in Latin Alkindus) writes that the finest swords in the Islamic world come from Yemen and India. To al-Kindi, these weapons were known as *wootz*, after the Indian steel used to make them; to Europeans, they were known as Damascus, after the damask cloth that the wootz steel resembled.

863 The Chinese storyteller Duan Cheng dies. His works include a text called *Yu Yang Za Zu* (Miscellaneous Fare from Yu Yang, a mountain in Hunan where great masters had hidden books containing great knowledge). One story describes a young man who learns that a prospective knight-errant needs to master swordsmanship as well as archery, and another an old sword-dancer who whirls two swords as if pulling silk, then plants them in the ground in the manner of the seven stars of the Big Dipper.

About 890 According to David Howlitt of Oxford University, King Alfred the Great of England has a cleric named Aethelstan write a vernacular description of proper chivalric behavior that even Alfred’s grandson will be able to understand. The result is the untitled poem called by eighteenth-century scholars *Beowulf*. 
Tenth century  
A Punjabi weaver called Goraksha (a title of initiation; the man’s actual name is unknown) renounces the world to become a Tantric mystic of the Natha sect. Goraksha is remembered as the creator of hatha yoga, which means the “yoking (of the spirit) to the sun and the moon,” a system of breathing techniques and calisthenics designed to teach practitioners how to control their personal and psychic energies.

About 907  
Following the collapse of the once-mighty Tang dynasty, Chinese refugees settle in Japan. The Tōgakure-ryū ninjutsu system claims these Chinese refugees as its founders.

About 950  
Japanese martial philosophers describe kyuba no michi (the Way of Bow and Horse). This discussed the Japanese warrior’s overriding concern for personal honor, and was the conceptual grandparent of the Tokugawa-era code known as bushidō. (The contemporary pronunciation of the two Chinese characters meaning “warrior,” though, was “mononofu,” not “bushi.”)

About 960  
Indo-Iranian merchants settle along China’s southeast coast, leading to the creation of an ethnic Chinese Muslim population known as the Hui. Chinese persecution occasionally led to Hui insurrections, and several modern wushu (martial arts) spear forms are attributed to the fighting arts of nineteenth-century Hui rebels.

960  
The Song dynasty is established in southern China. This dynasty is remembered for its many technological innovations, probably because it used scholars rather than warlords as its governors and generals. Song-dynasty storytelling was divided into eight categories, and topics included magical tales (yao shu), sword stories (biao dao, or military tales), and cudgel stories (gan bang; these are essentially detective stories, and the allusion is to police using clubs rather than swords to apprehend and interrogate suspects). These categories were not too distinct, and were freely mixed in later works such as The Water Margin.

About 967  
Japanese officials describe their peers’ bodyguards as samurai, or “ones who serve,” instead of “henchmen” or “minions.”

About 970  
According to a twelfth-century writer named Zhang Bangji, Chinese palace dancers begin binding their feet to make themselves more sexually attractive to men. The crippling practice was widespread throughout southern China by the fourteenth century and throughout all of China by the seventeenth, and is remarked because foot binding prevented well-bred Han females from effectively practicing boxing or swordsmanship until the twentieth century. (Some were noted archers, though, generally with crossbows.) Still, into the 1360s, Hong Fu, Hong Xian, Thirteenth Sister, and other Chinese martial heroines (xia) were sometimes portrayed by women on Chinese stages, and there was a seventeenth-century reference to a fourteenth-century woman named Yang who was said to be peerless in the fighting art of “pear-blossom spear.”

About 1040  
Indian Buddhists fleeing the raids of the Muslim Muhammad of Ghazna reestablish Tantric Buddhism in Tibet. One of their earliest monasteries was the Shalu monastery at Shigatse. Its
claim to fame was that it trained its monks to run for many
days and nights without stopping. The basis for such tales is
the khora, or pedestrian mandalas, run by Tibetan monks
around sacred mountains. Buddhist monks ran clockwise, while
Bon monks traveled counterclockwise. (This difference had to
do with which direction the practitioner held to be the most
important, the female/left or the male/right. The landowning
classes, which included priests and soldiers, generally preferred
the right-hand path, while the mercantile classes, which in-
cluded artisans, merchants, potters, burglars, hunters, and pros-
titutes, generally preferred the left-hand path.) Analogous
dances appeared in Islam and Christianity about the same time.
The Islamic and Christian dances represented the angels in
heaven and the progression of the planets. Only men did such
dancing, as women’s dances were considered lewd. Such dances
also reinforced Hellenistic medical theories, according to which
standing strengthened the spine, walking removed afflictions of
the head and chest, and well-regulated breathing tempered the
heat of the heart.

1042 Warrior-monks establish a Western Saharan Islamic nomocracy
known as the Almoravides (al-murabbitun—those who gather
in the fortress to wage the holy war). By the 1080s, these fun-
damentalists had conquered Morocco and invaded Ghana and
Iberia; Rodrigo Díaz, known as El Cid, was the Christian hero
of the Iberian defense.

About 1063 Following his reported intervention during a battle in Sicily,
Saint George becomes the patron saint of Norman warriors. Pi-
ous English soldiers continued seeking Saint George’s assistance
well into the modern era, and he was reported to be personally
supporting British forces as late as 1914.

1066 According to the Chronicle of Saint Martin of Tours, Geoffroi
de Preuilli, the man “who invented tournaments,” is killed dur-
ding a tournament at Angers. The Germans rejected the French
claim to primacy in inventing tournaments, citing as evidence
similar equestrian games played by the retainers of Louis the
German in 842 and King Henry the Fowler ca. 930.

About 1070 An Englishman known as Hereward the Wake exchanges blows
with a potter, the two men agreeing to stand up to each other’s
blows in turn, with the better man to be judged by the result.
The blows seem to have been open-handed slaps to the side of
the head rather than punches to the jaw, but in the parlance of
the day the game was known as boxing. In the nineteenth cen-
tury, the story caused Sir Walter Scott to claim that Richard the
Lion-Hearted played similar boxing games.

About 1075 Norman clergy start dubbing Norman knights. The reason
seems to have been that the clergy wanted to exert control
over the men-at-arms by blessing preexisting initiation rites.
Rituals varied from place to place. The practice of “striking
me kneeling, with a broadsword, and pouring ale upon my
head” (Burke 1978, 39–41) is associated with eighteenth-cen-
tury journeyman initiations rather than medieval aristocratic
practice.
1077 The Song-dynasty scholar Zhao Yong dies. Ming-dynasty scholars subsequently credited Zhao and his students with creating Earthly Branch horary astrology. Earthly Branch astrology sought to locate auspicious moments by combining birth information, Indo-Iranian arithmetic puzzles, and the 64 trigrams of the Yijing (I Ching; Book of Changes). Earthly Branch divination methods are commemorated by the names of several Southern Shaolin guan fa (fist law) styles, various Okinawan karate kata, and the eight trigrams shown on the modern South Korean flag.

About 1086 Believing it to be useful for teaching beihō (the way of strategy) to soldiers, a Japanese prince named Otoku introduces the game of Go into Japanese military training. Most of his contemporaries continued to view the game as an entertainment rather than a practical martial art.

1090 An Iranian imam called Hasan ibn al-Sabbah establishes the occult branch of Sevener Shiism known as the Nizaris in the mountains of western Iran. Due to hashish-laden drinks that Nizari leaders supposedly gave their followers before sending them out to commit political assassinations, the Nizaris are better known by the Syrian name of hashshashin (hashish-takers), from which the word assassin comes. The Nizaris are also remembered for providing Islamic literature with its stories about Aladdin, the daring young thief who could open magic caves and seduce women simply by crying, “Open, sesame!” Pakistan’s Agha Muhammad Khan (1917–1980) is probably the most famous modern Sevener.

1096 During England’s first important judicial duel, the Norman Count of Eu fights another Norman named Godefroy Baynard; the cause is a dispute over Godefroy’s relationship with the homosexual King William Rufus.

Twelfth century A Tamil martial art develops in southern India. In Travancore, it was known as varma ati (hitting the vital spots) while in Kerala it was known as kalarippayattu (gladiatorial training).

About 1100 Mystery plays become popular throughout Europe. These presented the history of the world from the Creation to the Last Judgment (the word mystery originally meant “to minister”) and taught biblical stories to illiterate audiences during Carnival or other popular festivals. The plays’ scatological dialogue and use of partial nudity were sacrilegious and crude by modern standards. Nevertheless, from a martial art standpoint, their feats of choreographed sword dancing and wrestling were impressive, and it was not for want of a better word that the twelfth-century German theologian known as Hugh of St. Victor described all kinds of games and amusements as “theatrics.”

About 1106 Troubadours popularize pre-Christian legends about an Ulster hero called Cu Chulainn who was so much a man that by the age of 7 he already required the sight of naked women to distract him from wanton killing. Further, as he got older, Cu Chulainn became notorious for conquering matristic societies by rape. Evidently Christian patrilinealism was being imposed
on Ireland, and the victors were describing how it was being
done, since in the earliest forms of the story, Cu Chulainn’s
martial art instructors included a woman known as Scathach
(Shadowy). At any rate, the military training described included
lessons in breath control, charioteering, chess, sword dancing,
tightrope walking, and wrestling. At advanced levels, the train-
ing also included fencing games, in which the goal was to chop
off locks of hair without drawing blood, and dodging well-
thrown rocks and spears.

About 1130  An Indian text describes the nature of wrestling patronage in
the kingdom of Chaulukya.

1132  A Chinese text describes a firearm made using a bamboo tube
reinforced on the inside with clay and on the outside with iron
bands. The invention is attributed to a soldier named Gui Chen,
the commander of a Southern Song garrison in Hebei province.

1135–1147  A Welsh cleric named Geoffrey of Monmouth writes a Latin
manuscript called Historia Regum Britanniae (The History of
the Kings of Britain). In it, Geoffrey makes Arthur a king no-
bluer than Charlemagne, transforms Merlin from a slightly batty
poet into a powerful warlock, and introduces the characters of
Uther Pendragon, Gawain, Mordred, and Kay. In other words,
he codified the entire Arthurian legend.

About 1140  A bas-relief at Ankor Wat shows Thai mercenaries parading be-
fore King Suryavarman II. Cambodian war-magic of the era in-
cluded ingesting human livers.

1155  An Anglo-Norman scholar named Wace dedicates a French
poem named Brut to Eleanor of Aquitaine. Brut tells the story
of Britain’s Trojan founder (a myth borrowed from Virgil) and
introduces Round Tables and other Celtic myths into the
Arthurian legend.

About 1160  Southern Chinese philosophers (including the neo-Confucian
scholar Zhu Xi) begin arguing that the elixir of life is not found
through magic spells or elixirs, but in directed meditation. The
same sources also introduced the Greco-Indian concepts of the
Three Treasures (jing, semen in men, and life energy in the uni-
verse; qi, breath in people and cosmic energies in the universe;
and shen, consciousness in people and the Dao [Tao] in the uni-
verse) into Chinese exercise routines.

1170  Tametomo, a minor retainer associated with the Minamoto
clan, becomes the first Japanese samurai honored for slitting
his belly open with his dagger rather than surrendering. (Before
that, Japanese warriors had often changed sides if it seemed ex-
pedient, but the Minamoto stressed loyalty more than had their
predecessors.)

1184  Minamoto soldiers kill a Taira general named Yoshinaka and
his wife. Subsequent Japanese accounts portray the woman, To-
moe Gozen, as a mighty warrior.

About 1190  “During the holydays in the summer,” writes the English trav-
erel William Fitzstephen, “the young men [of London] exercise
themselves in the sports of leaping, archery, wrestling, stone
throwing, slinging javelins beyond a mark, and also fighting
with bucklers” (Carter 1992, 59).
Chinese mathematicians start experimenting with the Indo-Arabic numeral zero. The transmitters were more likely Indo-Iranian merchants than Zen monks, for if the Zen Buddhists had transmitted the knowledge to China from India, then Chinese mathematicians would have started experimenting with the “gap,” as they called the numeral, 300 years earlier than they did.

Thirteenth century

Tahitian priests introduce the Huna religion into Hawaii. The martial art associated with this religion was known as Lua, a word meaning “to pit [in battle]” or “two” (e.g., duality; the idea was to balance healing and hurting, good and evil).

Thirteenth century

According to tradition, a text called Mallapurana (literally, Old Story of the Caste of Wrestlers from Modhera) appears in India. Although the exact date is uncertain (the oldest surviving copy of the text only dates to 1674–1675), the Malla Purana is clearly one of the oldest surviving Indian wrestling manuals.

1215

According to tradition, Swiss mountaineers develop Schwingen (German; swinging) wrestling at Unspunnen, near Interlaken, in honor of their duke, Betchold von Zaringenn. While thirteenth-century Swiss mountaineers clearly used wrestling matches to resolve or minimize intracommunity conflicts, the earliest verifiable Schwingen matches were only held in 1593, and the sport only became popular following the introduction of Swedish and Prussian gymnastics into Switzerland during the 1830s.

1228

A woman challenges a man to a judicial duel at the lists in Bern, Switzerland, and wins. Such challenges were not uncommon in Germany and Switzerland during the thirteenth century, particularly in rape cases.

1235

Crossbows enter common use with Swiss hunters, and in 1307, an Altdorf farmer called Wilhelm Tell reportedly uses one to shoot an apple from atop his son’s head. While the veracity of the latter tale is questionable (it did not appear in print until 1470), it has become an important part of modern Swiss nationalism.

About 1250

Chivalric codes are codified throughout France.

1258

English clergymen tell their parishioners that they should not engage in violent wrestling (axlartok), ring-dancing, or dishonest games on church holidays.

About 1261

English minstrels create stories about a landless outlaw of the Sherwood Forest called Robin Hood. Robin’s arrow-splitting feats appear to combine folklore—heroes are always supermen—and gambling games with old men’s memories of days gone by.

1280

The Venetian merchant Marco Polo describes a Mongol princess named Ai-yaruk (Bright Moon), who refused to get married until she met a man who could throw her in wrestling.

1285

A Chinese actor introduces Chinese military dances into Vietnam. These dances were a possible source of inspiration for the Vietnamese court dances known as vo vu, which were in turn a source of inspiration for the eighteenth-century Vietnamese stickfighting art known as Vo Tay Son (Tay Son fighting) or Vo Binh Dinh (Binh Dinh fighting).
1289 Kublai Khan issues orders prohibiting Chinese peasants from possessing swords, spears, and crossbows. Although these bans are popularly believed to have inspired the development of the modern Chinese martial arts, that causality is uncertain, as reliable descriptions of the Chinese unarmed martial arts do not become common until the 1560s.

1292 Northern Italian towns start holding pugil-stick fights, bare-knuckled boxing matches, and cudgeling tournaments. Legend attributes the creation of these games to the Sienese monk Saint Bernard, who taught that fists were better than swords or sticks for deciding arguments. Preparations began shortly after New Year, and celebrations were in full swing by Lent. (Essentially a time of institutionalized disorder, the celebration of Carnival before Lent always placed enormous emphasis on food, sex, and violent stage plays and games.) Where Carnival was not held, the Feast of the Innocents and May Day served as substitutes.

1295 A man calling himself “The Snake” (Del Serpente) publishes an illustrated swordsmanship manual in Milan.

Fourteenth century

About 1300

Fourteenth century

1300 Chinese sources describe methods for attacking the 108 vital points of the human body.

1307 A seafaring Turk named Suleyman Pasha leads forty Muslim holy warriors on a raid into Byzantium. Two of Suleyman’s men were mighty wrestlers. (The other thirty-eight were evidently smaller, bowlegged Central Asian archers rather than mighty wrestlers.) According to legend, these two men were so well matched that they died wrestling one another. The match was said to have occurred near Hadrianopolis (modern Edirne). Be that as it may, Suleyman Pasha (by then the Ottoman emperor Orkhan I) organized an annual wrestling tournament in 1342 near Edirne. Known as the Kirkpinar tournament, it soon became a national festival.

1314 To celebrate the Scottish victory over the English at Bannockburn, the people of Fife, Scotland, organize the Ceres Highland Games, with events including wrestling, stone lifting, caber throwing, and horse racing; the venue is the archery ground. The Scots claim the Ceres Games as the oldest annual sporting contests in Europe.

1325 The black African knights of Mansa Musa, king of Mali, are described as receiving pairs of new trousers whenever they distinguished themselves in battle. The greater their exploits, the baggier their pants.

1332 The world’s oldest surviving bronze cannon is cast in China, probably for the Mongols.

About 1345

Korean sources describe a wrestling game called ssirum, similar to Mongolian wrestling, except that rope belts knotted on the right are used to show government-awarded grades. The chief Korean martial art tournament was held annually at Kaesong.
on the fifth hour of the fifth day of the fifth month. Since this was according to a lunar calendar, that meant around the beginning of June. From an astrological standpoint, the timing was propitious. After all, the competitors' yang (male) energy was at its peak with so much Horse energy in the air. (In East Asian astrology, five is a powerful male number, and the horse is a major symbol of male energy. Meanwhile, in Confucianism, relationships between people, nature, etc., are almost always arranged in quintuples.) On the other hand, from a political standpoint, the ability to host a peaceful national tournament reflected well on the central government's credibility and power.

1347  According to tradition, Saint Barbara becomes the patron saint of English gunners.

About 1350  Temple art shows Southeast Asian and Indonesian aristocrats carrying the serpentine daggers called krisses. For Vaishnavas, these blades appealed to a serpent god, whereas for Muslims, they symbolized a believer's willingness to accept pain.

About 1360  Chinese authors begin writing down the oral traditions known as Shuihu Zhuan (The Water Margin). These stories were originally set near the end of the Northern Song period, meaning the early 1100s, and featured a social bandit named Song Jiang. Writers associated with this transcription are Shi Nai’an (a possible eighteenth-century forgery) and Luo Guanzhong, the pseudonym of a fourteenth-century romance novelist. A version running to 120 individual episodes appeared in 1614, but in 1641 literary critic Jin Shengtan edited this to a more manageable 71 and simultaneously reset the plot to the late Ming dynasty. In the process the 108 bandits of the stories were made loyal to the old emperor and ascribed other conventional values. This latter text is the version of the story most commonly translated into English. (For example, All Men Are Brothers in 1933 and The Water Margin in 1937.)

1368  After seizing Peking from the Mongols, a Chinese warlord named Zhu Yuanzhang establishes himself as the Hong Wu (Extensive and Martial) emperor, thereby establishing the Ming dynasty. Because Zhu was an orphan who had been raised at the Shaolin Monastery, Chinese panegyrists subsequently credited all Shaolin monks with nearly supernatural fighting prowess.

About 1374  The Malayan national hero Hang Tuah moves from Menangkabau, Sumatra, to Malaka, Malaya. As Hang Tuah was a shopkeeper's son and Malaka was a major spice-trading port, this move was probably mercantile rather than military. Hang Tuah is famous for introducing both krisses and silat (“quick action,” with an implication of “a method for overcoming any problem posed by an adversary”) into southern Malaya.

1377  After learning how to manufacture gunpowder from a Chinese engineer, a Korean official named Choe Mu-son persuades the Koryo court to establish a “Superintendency for Gunpowder Weapons.”

1378  A Welsh mercenary named Owain Glyndwr is murdered in
France. His military exploits and hatred of the English endeared him to the Welsh people, and when the Welsh rebelled against the English in 1402, Owain Red Hand became the subject of many legends and stories. These stories in turn inspired Shakespeare’s character Owen Glendower.

About 1380

Bornean Muslims settle the Sulu Islands. During the holidays and coronation ceremonies of their sultans, Muslim soldiers often did sword dances known as dabus. These had Indonesian and Sufi roots, and provide one source of the modern Filipino stickfighting art known as arnis de mano (harness of the hand). Christian Moro-Moro plays produced for performance during Carnival provide another major root.

1383

German butchers establish the Bürgerschaft von St Marcus von Lowenberg (The Citizens’ Association of Saint Marcus of Lowenberg) at Frankfurt-am-Rhein. This was a sword-dancing club where members learned a mimed dance using carving knives instead of swords. To reduce injuries, the sword techniques taught used slashing movements rather than thrusting blows. Dances were done publicly during Carnival and Christmas. Although the dances themselves were festive in nature, rival guilds often fought over which should have precedence during parades and speeches. Butchers also danced the sword dance in Zwickau in Bohemia, while in Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland), it was the skinners.

About 1391

According to a seventeenth-century hagiographer named Wong Xiling, Zhang Sanfeng, a Daoist (Taoist) alchemist turned minor deity, creates taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan; Grand Ultimate Boxing). But the alchemist wasn’t associated with boxing until the sixteenth century, when the boxer Zhang Songqi mentioned that he had learned his methods from the alchemist in a dream.

1393

According to Okinawan tradition, emigrants from Fujian province introduce quanfa (fist law) to the Ryûkyûs. Unfortunately for the tradition, these Chinese emigrants were navigators and shipwrights rather than boxers, and, in the words of the U.S. historian George Kerr, “There is no evidence that they were more than very ordinary folk at home on the China coast” (Kerr 1972, 110).

About 1410

A swordsman of the Bolognese school named Fiore dei Liberi publishes Flos Duellatorum in Armis (Flower of Battle).

1411

According to tradition, two Thai princes resolve a dynastic dispute by agreeing to be bound by the results of a boxing match between picked champions. While this wager is often claimed as the first manifestation of Muay Thai (Thai boxing), that claim remains unsubstantiated.

About 1413

Because the Daoists (Taoists) believe that qi (internal energy) develops fastest at places that are 2,000 to 4,000 feet higher than the surrounding territory, during the thirteenth century some of them start building hermitages in Hebei province’s Wudang Mountains.

1416

Buddhist monks establish the Drepung Monastery in Lhasa, Tibet. It housed over 7,000 monks in 1901, and was one of the largest Buddhist universities in the world until the Communist
Chinese destroyed it in 1959. In 1419, a rival sect established the Se-ra monastery at Lhasa. Because Tibetan political power rested in the hands of abbots and prelates, a corps of warrior monks, or dob-dob, was also established at this monastery. The warriors’ training consisted of running in the hills, throwing stones at targets, practicing high and long jumping, and fighting with clubs and swords.

About 1450
A retired samurai named Choisai Ienao establishes the Tenshin Shoden Katori Shintō-ryū. This is Japan’s oldest documented martial art school.

1474
The Swiss establish the Société de l’Harquebuse (French; Society of the Harquebus) at Geneva, making it the country’s first gun club. As in modern shooting sports, the shooters fired at black bull’s-eyes surrounded by concentric rings. As the targets stood 200 yards from the firing line, weapons probably included rifles as well as harquebuses.

1485
Portuguese merchants arrive at Benin City, in southern Nigeria; the Portuguese describe the Bini soldiers as carrying iron swords, wooden shields, and iron-tipped spears, and using poisoned arrows.

1486
Sword dances are outlawed in Vitoria, Spain; the reason given is “the scandalous behaviour and shedding of blood occasioned by them” (Alford 1962, 121–122). Iberian dances of the era often feigned combat between Moors and Christians. Hence the English term Morris (from Moorish) dancing. Besides patriotism, their purposes included impressing women.

About 1499
The Sikh religion, which borrowed tenets of faith from both Hinduism and Islam, appears in the Punjab. One unusual Sikh weapon was a sharpened steel washer measuring about 7 inches in diameter. The weapon was known as a chakra (circle), and aristocratic Sikhs often carried two or three stuffed inside their turbans and amused themselves by twirling them around their forefingers and then flicking them toward targets; the television heroine of Xena, Warrior Princess is of course the most famous chakra user in recent memory. More important personal weapons for Sikh soldiers included swords, bucklers, lances, and daggers.

About 1500
The Iranian Shah Ismail I makes Shiism the paramount Islamic faith in Azerbaijan and Iran. Ismail was also an avid physical culturalist, and the modern Zour Khaneh (Iranian academies of physical training) owe much to his patronage.

About 1500
The straight-bladed rapier known as the Toledo appears in Spain. The design is important because it evolved into the modern épée.

1509
A monument is built at Shuri, Okinawa, to honor the accomplishments of the Ryūkyūan king Shō Shin. In 1926, the Okinawan scholar Iha Fuyu interpreted the part of the monument reading “Swords and bows and arrows exclusively are accumulated as weapons in the protection of the country” to mean that the king had ordered the collection of all the iron weapons in the country. In 1987, Professor Mitsugu Sakihara of the University of Hawaii showed that this was a misinterpretation of the text,
and that King Shô Shin was actually stockpiling arms rather than
suppressing them (Sakihara 1987, 164–166, also 199, fn. 76).

About 1510

Matchlock harquebuses enter service throughout Europe.

1517

A Spanish expedition commanded by Hernán Cortés introduces
crossbows, cannons, iron armor, horses, and war dogs into Yu-
catán and Mexico. Although the Spanish thus had superior
technology, the conquest of Mexico owed less to technology
than to the hatred that the coastal Indians had for the Mexica-
Tenochitlans, who raped coastal Indian women and boys, then
cut out their hearts and ate their arms and legs.

1517

The Bolognese fencing master Achille Marozzo writes a manu-
script he calls Opera Nova chiamata duello, or New Work of
Dueling. First published in 1536 and continuously reedited un-
til 1568, this was probably the most important Italian fencing
manual of the Renaissance.

1521

On Cebu, in the Philippines, a band of Filipinos enraged over
Spanish sailors impregnating local women kills Ferdinand Ma-
gellan. The hour of hard fighting it took the 1,100 Filipinos to
kill the capitan-general and chase his remaining forty or so men
back into their longboats suggests that the historic martial arts
of the Philippines may not have been as deadly as modern Fili-
ño nationalists sometimes claim.

1525

In the wake of the Peasants’ War in Swabia and Franconia,
German nobles suppress Carnival, trade fairs, and the pugilistic
entertainments featured in them.

1528

In India, the Timurid conqueror Babur holds a darbar (public
festival) to celebrate the circumcision of his son, Humayun.
Rajputs and Sikhs held similar initiation ceremonies for their
boys, and scheduled amusements included animal fights,
wrestling, dancing, and acrobatics.

About 1530

English tournament fighters are reported shaking one another’s
unarmored hands after completing their matches. A century
later Quakers adopt the courtesy as “more agreeable with
Christian simplicity” than either bowing or cheek kissing. The
practice of passing knives by the handle also dates to the mid-
sixteenth century. This was a matter of courtly etiquette rather
than common practice, and for the next three centuries, the Eu-
ropean practice of eating from the blades of foot-long knives
horrified most Asians.

About 1532

After learning five different ways of seizing an opponent from a
traveling wizard, a Japanese man named Takenouchi Hisamori
establishes a martial art school that teaches students to defeat
their opponents by tying them up. Although Takenouchi-ryû
teachers sometimes claim that theirs is Japan’s oldest jûjutsu
system, that has never been definitively proven.

1533

Francisco Pizarro and a few hundred Spanish cavalrmen and
harquebusiers, plus an equal number of Indian archers and
spearmen, conquer the Inca Empire. Although nineteenth-cen-
tury scholars said that the most important reasons for Pizarro’s
success were his unshakable faith in God and glory, twentieth-
century historians give greater importance to a smallpox epi-
demic that preceded Pizarro in the Andes.
East Asian patent medicine salesmen start breaking bricks and boards with their bare hands, to convince skeptical customers that the peddlers’ opium-laden alcoholic beverages are as powerful as claimed. Whereas legitimate breakers used normal bricks and boards (a fist moving at 40 feet per second generates about 675 foot-pounds of energy, far more than is necessary to break a brick or board), illegitimate breakers often gave challengers hardened bricks while saving weakened ones for themselves.

The Sikh guru Angad Dev establishes a wrestling pit, or *akhara*, at Khadur Sahib. According to subsequent reports, the guru’s goal was to instill character into street urchins.

According to some Italian historians, Caminello Vitelli of Pistoia manufactures Europe’s first pistols. This seems unlikely, though, as the Venetians built handgun ranges as early as 1506 and the Bohemians used the word *pistala* (pipes) to describe one-handed guns as early as 1427. So it is probably better to say that small handheld firearms became popular in southern Europe during this period. Sixteenth-century Italian pistols were about 2 feet long, and could be used as clubs following discharge.

After surviving a terrible leg wound, a pious Basque soldier named Ignatius Loyola establishes an evangelistic Roman Catholic monastic order known as the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits. Loyola envisioned the Jesuits as members of a kind of chivalric order, and his spiritual exercises, which taught solitary meditation and fencing as forms of mental discipline, bear comparison to the Buddhist meditations used in China and Japan.

The English Parliament bans crossbows, giving the reason that “malicious and evil-minded people carried them ready bent and charged with bolts, to the great annoyance and risk of passengers on the highways”; they also ban “little short handguns,” the reason being that too many yeomen were loading them with “hail shot” and then slaughtering the king’s game birds (Trench 1972, 116–118).

The Portuguese introduce snaphaunce muskets into Japan. Snaphaunce locks are a firing mechanism for handheld black-powder firearms that drop the piece of flint onto a steel plate near the touchhole. Hence their name, which means “pecking hen” in Low Dutch. Snapping-lock muskets were mechanically simpler and more reliable than wheel-locks, and Italian gunsmiths continued making them until the 1810s. Always looking for weapons to give ill-trained conscripts, Japanese warlords quickly ordered these weapons into mass production, and within fifty years, owned more high-quality firearms than all the princes of Europe combined.

A Tudor scholar and writer named Roger Ascham publishes *Toxophilus*, the first English-language archery manual. An educated man, Ascham viewed archery as a way of promoting fitness and building character rather than as a practical military combative.

The archbishop of Mainz conducts tests to discover why rifling...
makes muskets more accurate, and concludes that demons
guide the spinning balls; the result is bans against the manufac-
ture and possession of rifles in most Roman Catholic countries.

1549
Burmese soldiers besieging the Thai capital at Ayuthia stage a
series of sword dances. These appear to have been used mostly
to keep the troops amused while their superiors interpreted
cloud omens and other astrological signs.

About 1550
Japanese pirates (waka) use harquebuses during their raids into
China and Korea. While the pirates’ successes owed more to
disciplined small-unit infantry tactics than firearms, the new
weapons still caused the Koreans to create new military bu-
reauocracies. The Chinese, on the other hand, started hiring ac-
robats and boxers to teach their peasants how to fight. How-
ever, tales of flying swordsmen do not become a staple of
Chinese fiction until the late nineteenth century.

About 1550
The training of Ottoman Janissaries is described as including
archery, musketry, javelin throwing, and fencing. There was no
pike training, though, since the Janissaries believed that pikes
were useful only for men trained to fight like machines.

About 1560
Japanese schools of swordsmanship introduce kata designed to
teach batto-jutsu (quick-draw techniques). Pioneers included
Tamiya Heibei Narimasa, a sword instructor for the first three
Tokugawa shôgun who was a student of Hayashizaki Jinsuke,
the mid-sixteenth-century samurai who reportedly developed
these techniques after meditating for 100 days at a Shintô
shrine in Yamagata. In 1932, the Japanese systematized some
of these quick-draw techniques and then turned them into a
new martial art called iaidô (the way of sword-drawing). A pio-
near in the latter process was Nakayama Hakudo of the Musô
Jikiden Eishin-ryû.

1560
Construction begins on the massive Da Er Monastery in the Nan
Shan mountains of western China. Since it was an important
and popular Yellow Hat Buddhist temple, an additional “De-
fender of Buddhism” hall was added in 1631. Bronze mirrors
lined the walls of this latter hall. Beside its doors stood rows of
spears and swords. The monks used these weapons to exorcise
demons and entertain crowds during quarterly temple fairs.

1562
A Ming-dynasty general named Qi Jiguang starts work on a
book of military theory called Jixiao Xinshu (New Text of
Practical Tactics). Although most of Qi’s book was devoted to
battlefield maneuver and armed techniques, this was also the
first Ming-dynasty text to provide realistic descriptions of
Shaolin quanfa (fist law).

1563
Because so many duelists are dying from blood poisoning or in-
fecion, the Council of Trent threatens duelists, seconds, and
the civil authorities who are failing to suppress them with excom-
unication; rarely enforced in practice, these bans are used
mainly for preventing duels between aristocrats and commoners.

About 1565
The Flemings start putting handle bindings on longbows, thus giv-
ing them both a top and a bottom. (Although bow makers rou-
tinely stamped bows at their centers to help archers line up their
shots, bows without handles could be spanned either end up.)
1570 By doing single backward aerial somersaults, an Italian mountebank named Arcangelo Tuccaro becomes modern Europe’s first famous trapeze artist. Due to problems with ropes and springboards, double back flips were usually fatal until the 1890s, while triple back flips were equally hazardous until the 1920s. These statistics about world-class gymnasts are worth recalling whenever one encounters tales about the exploits of legendary heroes.

1571 To increase his power, prestige, and wealth, the Japanese lord Oda Nobunaga orders the destruction of the Buddhist temples on Mount Hiei. (When King Henry VIII of England dissolved all Catholic monasteries in Britain between 1535 and 1540, he almost tripled his private income. Although these two men didn’t know each other, doubtless they had similar hopes and expectations.) As Nobunaga’s persecution caused the surviving monks to begin living in towns instead of monasteries, the destruction was partially responsible for spreading Buddhist martial arts into the Japanese cities.

About 1578 To secure the support of the Tibetan theocracy for his son Yonten Gyatso, the Golden Horde’s Altan Khan orders that people start referring to the young man as the Dalai Lama Vajradhara. The phrase means “the teacher whose wisdom is as great as the ocean.”

1578 Lord Oda Nobunaga hosts Japan’s first major sumô tournament. Although referees and heroic ring names, or shikona, also date to the 1570s, the straw-and-earthen ring, or dohyo, only dates to the 1670s.

1579 Lai Qidai becomes the first Chinese philosopher known to have illustrated his explanations of the Dao (Tao) using a circle of interlocking black and white fish. Lai’s goal was to emphasize the Dao’s central nature, yin and yang, rather than its outward nature, seen in the sixty-four trigrams of the Yijing (I Ching; The Book of Changes).

About 1588 In a stage play called The Wounds of Civil War, the Elizabethan playwright Thomas Lodge becomes the first English playwright known to have included lusty rapier work in a secular entertainment.

1588 To ensure the safety of his tax collectors, the self-made generalissimo Toyotomi Hideyoshi prohibits Japanese farmers from owning weapons of any kind, which in turn forces peasants to choose between being samurai or farmers. Nevertheless, firearms, swords, and other weapons remained easily obtainable throughout the Tokugawa era, and as late as 1840, perhaps 80 percent of the participants in Saitama Prefecture fencing contests were commoners.

1592 A massive Japanese invasion causes a desperate Korean government to create a Hullyon Togam (General Directorate for Military Training). Its purpose was to teach peasants to be musketeers, archers, or pikemen. Its pedagogy came from the 1562 Chinese military treatise called New Text of Practical Tactics (described under that year). An unintentional result was the publication of some of the first detailed de-
scriptions of the Korean martial arts. Unsurprisingly, the book emphasized fighting with weapons rather than fists and feet.

1594 China's Wan Li emperor canonizes a third-century A.D. soldier-saint named Guan Yu. This converts the latter into Guan Di, the Chinese God of War, whose likeness graces the entries of many modern martial art schools.

About 1595 Dutch Republican soldiers develop the marching and musketry drills that eventually become military close-order drill.

About 1600 The members of a Hindu religious cult known as the thugi (pronounced “tug-ee,” and meaning “sly deceivers”) become notorious throughout India for strangling unsuspecting merchants, then dancing around their bodies. Although loot was behind the cult's popularity, cult leaders claimed that the Indian death goddess Kali provided occult powers when offered human sacrifices.

About 1605 The Tokugawa court of Japan patronizes the Go In (Go Academy) of a master called Honinbo Sansha, leading to the introduction of Honinbo's method of classifying players (shôdan for the first degree, nidan for the second degree, and so on) to the samurai class.

1610 The Spanish create the name armis de mano (harness of the hands) to describe the ritual hand movements used during Filipino folk theatricals.

1612 Tokugawa soldiers hunt down gangs of armed peasants unwilling to resume their status as serfs. This process is pronounced complete in 1686, when 300 members of the All-God Gang are arrested and their leaders executed. As usual, this was more a case of the government declaring victory than an accurate representation of the facts, as the modern Japanese crime syndicates known as the yakuza date their origin to the officially sanctioned guilds of peddlers, gamblers, and strong-arm men formed in the wake of this repression.

1613 Some Beothuk Indians kill a couple of Basque cod fishers during a fishing dispute off Newfoundland, encouraging the angry Basques to sell large quantities of weapons, including a few old muskets, to the Micmacs, the Beothuks' traditional enemies, and to offer bounties for Beothuk scalps. Although this offer led to the first known scalping in North America, the practice did not become widespread until the Massachusetts Bay Colony began offering scalp bounties in 1675.

1617 English merchants carry Japanese matchlocks into Thailand “three or four at a Tyme” so that the government “would not take notice thereof” (Perrin 1979, 11, 18, 64). Japanese firearms were preferred partly because they were better made than European weapons, and mainly because the Christian samurai in the Siamese king's bodyguard preferred them.

1621 The last chapter of a Chinese military manual called Wu Bei Zhi (Account of Military Arts and Science) includes illustrations of some unarmed martial arts exercises. According to tradition, these descriptions subsequently influence the development of Shuri-di karate.
1624 Needing sugar to make their gin, the Dutch seize the sugar plantations of Salvador da Bahia. A year later, the Spanish eject the Dutch. Two years later, the Dutch return the favor, and so on until 1654, when the Luso-Brazilians finally reclaim Bahia as their own. While the importance of all this was that it gave the Dutch the desire to establish slave-and-sugar plantations in the Caribbean, some Brazilian historians have seen in these battles the roots of capoeira, which was supposedly developed to help slaves who escaped during the confusion to better resist recapture. Yet this causality seems improbable, mainly because the Maroons of Haiti, Jamaica, and Reunion all greeted the bounty hunters with firearms, spears, and pungi sticks, not musical bows and twirling shin kicks. Therefore capoeira probably dates to the development of sizable mixed-race populations during the eighteenth century rather than the unrest and warfare of the seventeenth century.

1624 The English coin the word gunman. The idea was to distinguish the matchlock-armed Woodland Indians of the Carolinas from the European settlers (who were described as “firemen,” after their snaphaunce and wheel-lock weapons).

1625 The Thirty Years’ War causes the development of new codes of warfare in Europe. The Dutch jurist Huigh de Groot describes these changes, the main purpose of which was to put legitimate use of force into the hands of a central state rather than regional chieftains, in a legal text called On the Law of War and Peace. On the other side of the world, Japanese warlords were formulating an equally flexible code of bureaucratic militarism known as bushidô (the Way of the Warrior).

About 1630 French and German duelists begin scoring points using the points instead of the edges of their rapiers. To reduce injuries during training, fencing masters first develop the fleuret, or flower-like leather sword-tip, and then a special lightweight sword known as the épée.

About 1640 Catholic Irish butchers are reported hamstringing or knee-capping their Protestant rivals, who retaliate by hanging the Catholics from meat hooks.

1643 The phrase second-string starts referring to the substitute during a football scrimmage rather than the spare bowstrings that British archers carried in case their first string broke or got wet.

1646 The English word fire-arm is coined to describe wheel-lock carbines and other weapons that discharge projectiles using the hot gases released by burning gunpowder.

About 1648 A Dutch geographer named Olifert Dapper (who bases his comments on an account written by a Dutch mercenary named Fuller) reports that the armies of the Angolan queen Nzinga Mbande trained for war using leaping dances. This Angolan dancing has been claimed as a root of the modern Brazilian game called capoeira.

About 1653 Rather than shaking hands before a match, school-trained French fencers are reported as raising their swords to their hats.

1659 Outside Pratapgarh Fort, 80 miles southeast of Bombay, the
Maratha hero Shivaji agrees to discuss terms with a Bijapur general named Afzal Khan. The two men met with their bodyguards inside Shivaji’s tent to discuss terms. Although there is sectarian debate about who struck first, there is no doubt that the talks broke down into a brawl in which Shivaji killed the Khan, and his bodyguards killed the Khan’s bodyguards and beheaded the Khan.

1661 Johan Paschen publishes Fecht, Ring und Voltigier Buch (Fencing, Wrestling, and Vaulting Book) at Halle, Germany, which is one of the first books to describe those activities as being separate rather than related.

1663 Samuel Pepys describes a match between two prizefighters named Matthews and Westwicke. The rules required the fighters to use eight different weapons, and as the fighters’ only payment was coins that the audience threw into a hat, probably neither man had much interest in injuring the other so badly that he could not continue.

About 1664 A central Chinese soldier named Chen Wangting dies. According to tradition, Chen combined General Qi Jiguang’s military conditioning exercises with Daoist (Taoist) breathing exercises, thereby creating the oldest known taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan) practice forms. But Chen’s martial art was called pao chui, not taijiquan. Further, pao chui means “strike like a cannon,” which sounds like something one would name an external art rather than an internal art. Also, the Chen family records do not describe the man as the founder of a system. So some skepticism is perhaps in order.

1664 Morikawa Kozan establishes a Japanese archery style called the Yamato-ryû. While acknowledging that firearms rendered archery obsolete for military purposes, Morikawa believed that bows did a better job of improving the spirit, and so taught archery as a Buddhist exercise.

1666 Iroquois warriors are described as going into battle wearing only loincloths, moccasins, and war paint, firearms having rendered their body armor, shields, and war clubs obsolete.

1666 Hendrik Hamel, a Dutch merchant shipwrecked in Korea for thirteen years, notes that Buddhist monks hired down-on-their-luck laborers to protect monasteries and roads. This suggests a source for subsequent stories about Buddhist monasteries teaching fighting arts.

1669 The Japanese close the only swordsmithy on Okinawa. During the 1930s this fact is used to support the theory that karate was created due to Japanese weapons bans.

About 1670 French fencing masters begin wearing padded waistcoats (plastrons) with their leather fencing jackets. The plastron was decorated with a red heart and provided students with a target against which to practice their lunges and thrusts. The affectation of elegantly elevated sword hands was adopted soon thereafter, apparently as a way of keeping thrusts from accidentally slipping into the face. (Masks were as yet uninvented.)

1671 A Chinese potter named Chen Yuanbin dies in Nagoya, Japan. Chen always enjoyed wrestling and boxing, and according to
tradition his discussions with three rônin (masterless samurai) named Fukuno Hichiroemon, Isogai Jirozaemon, and Miura Yojiemon had significant impact on the development of jûjutsu and related Japanese martial arts.

A Japanese swordsman called Nakagawa Shoshunjin advertises himself as a master of ninjutsu, and even offers to teach people to avoid detection by changing themselves into birds or rats. Since Nakagawa studiously avoided matching swords with duelists and only taught children, the truth of his claims is unknown.

According to an eighteenth-century tradition, five Shaolin monks skilled “in the art of war and self-defense” establish the first Chinese Triad, the Hong League, in Fujian province. What these military skills involved is unknown, as the account of them has changed over time. In 1925, for instance, they included praying for rain and making a few magical passes with a sword, while by 1960, they included superhuman prowess in Chinese boxing.

About 1676 A Japanese man named Fujibayashi Yasuyoshi publishes ten hand-bound volumes, known collectively as Bansenshukai (Ten Thousand Rivers Collect in the Sea), that discussed ninja techniques and mysteries in some detail.

The London Protestant Mercury provides the first known description of an English bare-knuckled prizefight.

Following a coup in Siam, women drilled in the use of muskets replace the 600 European mercenaries and Christian samurai who had served the previous government.

Female wrestling acts become common in Japanese red-light districts. Although Confucianist officials charged that such acts were harmful to public morals, female wrestling remained popular in Tokyo until the 1890s and in remote areas such as southern Kyûshû and the Ryûkyûs until the 1920s.

About 1692 A man named Gong Xiangzhun introduces a form of Chinese boxing to Okinawa; the Shôrin-ryû kata kusanku commemorates his instruction.

The French opera star Julie La Maupin dies at the age of 37; in 1834 novelist Théophile Gautier made her famous as Made-moiselle de Maupin. In her time she was a noted fencer and cross-dresser; her fencing masters included her father, Gaston d’Aubigny, and a lover, a man named Séranne.

A Máistir pionnsa (Gaelic; fencing master) named Alexander Doyle starts teaching Irish fencing in Germany, claiming it develops obedience to orders, quickness of eye, agility, and physical fitness in young men thinking of military careers. (Because British law prohibited Catholic Irish from owning swords, Irish fencing masters normally trained using singlesticks instead of swords.)

The words of Yamamoto Tsunetomo, a provincial samurai turned Buddhist monk, are collected, bound, and titled Hagakure (Hidden Among the Leaves). Although obscure during its own time, during the 1930s Hagakure became popular with
Japanese ultranationalists, and the quotation “The Way of the Samurai is found in death” was especially popular.

1719 Prince Phra Chao Seua institutionalizes high-stakes prizefighting at Ayudhya, a Thai royal city 53 miles north of modern Bangkok. This may represent the beginnings of Muay Thai (Thai boxing).

About 1720 Despite the Chinese laws prohibiting nonmilitary personnel from owning bows, swords, or firearms, an official named Lan Ding Yuan argues that the crews of merchant ships should be allowed to carry arms to protect themselves from pirates. After considerable deliberation, his government agreed, and in 1728, new laws were passed allowing junks sailing to Japan, the Ryûkyûs, Siam, or Indonesia to carry eight muskets, ten sets of bows and arrows, and twenty-five pounds of powder.

1727 After his army takes heavy casualties during a slave-raiding expedition against Ouidah, King Agaja of Dahomey creates a female palace guard and arms it with Danish trade muskets. By the nineteenth century this female bodyguard had 5,000 members.

1733 In Charleston, the South Carolina Gazette posts a reward for the return of a runaway slave named Thomas Butler. Butler was said to be a “famous Pushing and Dancing Master,” which suggests a practitioner of an African combative akin to capoeira (Rath 2000).

1734 Jack Broughton introduces new rules to English pugilism, prohibiting hitting below the waist or after the opponent is down, introducing rounds and rest periods, and designating the starting mark as “a square of a yard chalked in the middle of a stage.” However, they say nothing about hip throws or slashing the opponent’s legs with spiked shoes, and they allow seconds to bring their man up to the mark, whether conscious or not.

1740 A Confucian memorialist writes that if the people of Henan province “are not studying boxing and cudgels, prizing bravery and fierce fighting, then they believe in heterodox sects, worshipping Buddhas and calling on gods.” In other words, to this eighteenth-century scholar, quanfa and religion were not related, but were instead separate paths through a world filled with poverty and injustice (Esherick 1987, fn. 25, 357).

1743 Jack Broughton introduces “mufflers,” or leather gloves padded with ten ounces of horsehair or lamb’s wool, to boxing.

About 1755 Japanese school fencers begin using face and body armor. According to the Shiget enkakuo of 1831, masks designed to protect the eyes came first. Next came padded helmets and arm protectors. Finally bamboo breast protectors were developed. These in turn developed into what are now helmets (men), breast protectors (dô), and gauntlets (kote). About the same time, bamboo swords (fukuro-shinai) also came into use. The latter development probably came as the result of peasant participation in fairground battles, but it could also have been motivated by merchants’ sons wanting to make their swordplay as visually exciting as the swordplay seen in Bunraku (Japanese puppet theater).
About 1755 Toward reducing the risk of accidental blinding, metal masks pierced by eyeholes appear in Parisian fencing salles. But according to Richard Burton, “To put on a mask was to show the adversary that you feared the result of his awkwardness; it was a precaution that bordered on the offensive” (Burton 1911, 92–93). As a result, they did not become popular until a more comfortable (and stylish) wire mesh design appeared during the 1780s.

1755 In his famous dictionary, Samuel Johnson defines the English word box. As a noun it meant a blow on the head given with the hand, while as a verb it meant to fight or strike with the fist. A boxer is defined as “a man who fights with the fist.” The word also appeared in Irish Gaelic, where it became bois-cín, and referred to both fighting with the hands and sparring with sticks.

1757 Gamblers and grifters living in Fujian and Gwangdong province create the crime syndicates known to outsiders as Triads, after the three dots that members used as gang signs, and to insiders as the Dian Di Hui, or Heaven-and-Earth Societies. Members were rarely orthodox (zheng) boxers. Instead, in the words of the nineteenth-century Malay triad leader Ho Ah-kay, they were simply gangs in the employ of brothel owners and gamblers.

1758 The Swiss jurist Emmerich de Vattel revises Huigh de Groot’s laws of war, calling the result The Law of Nations. Vattel specifically excludes battles against American Indians, black Africans, and Barbary corsairs from consideration because, in Vattel’s words, right “goes hand in hand with necessity” (Fabell 1980, 202).

1764 To reduce expenses, the members of England’s Royal Company of Archers begin shooting feather-filled glass balls instead of the eyes of live geese buried up to their necks in dirt.

1766 Near Ningbo, in Zhejiang province, a few dozen mountain villagers recite incantations, dance wildly, and invoke the protection of a Tang-dynasty general they learned about by watching stage plays. This makes them China’s first known Spirit Boxers (shenquan).

About 1767 A Thai aristocrat named Nai Khanom Tom defeats a dozen Burmese boxers to secure his release from a Burmese prisoner of war camp. On the one hand, this speaks highly of Tom’s skills, as Burmese boxers were generally both larger than Thai boxers and more skilled in wrestling. On the other hand, it may not be as surprising as it sounds, as the Burmese army relied more on spears and firearms than boxing prowess for its military successes, and its soldiers included more townsmen than skilled pugilists.

1768 During a national sorcery scare, Chinese officials search some sectarian temples and torture some beggars, and then declare the problem solved. Removed from context and combined with stories about concurrent Fujianese lineage feuds, these events may provide a root for the many subsequent stories describing how the Chinese government forced Daoist (Taoist) fighting monks to sack Shaolin Monasteries in Henan and Fujian province.
In the Clerkenwell district of London (perhaps at the London Spa), two female prizefighters mill for a prize of a dress valued at half a crown, while another two women fight against two men for a prize of a guinea apiece. And at Wetherby’s on Little Russell Street, the 19-year-old rake William Hickey saw “two she-devils . . . engaged in a scratching and boxing match, their faces entirely covered with blood, bosoms bare, and the clothes nearly torn from them.” These “she-devils” were singers and prostitutes, and their prefight preparation consisted mostly of drinking more gin than usual (Quennell 1962, 63–66).

A French fencing master named Olivier, whose Fleet Street school is a favorite of British lawyers, publishes a bilingual text called Fencing Familiarised. In it, Olivier encourages civilized behavior from his students. Shouts and exclamations, for instance, are not to be tolerated, as “they serve only to fatigue the stomach, and deafen the spectators” (Conroy n.d.). During the same period in East Asia, shouts and ritual breathing methods were viewed as almost magical keys to success. For example, some nineteenth- and twentieth-century Japanese fencing masters discounted blows that were not accompanied by a shout; the exact phrase they used was *kiai wo kakeru* (to utter the spirit-shout). Chinese boxers also liked loud war cries and esoteric breathing methods. The White Lotus rebel Wang Lun, for instance, taught his civil students to practice breathing, fasting, and meditation, and his military students to practice boxing and cudgels.

The Tay Son brothers start a Vietnamese civil war that lasts until 1801. Tay Son military training, known as *Vo Tay Son*, taught eighteen bladed weapons, but was best known for its aggressive swordsmanship. Chinese influence is possible, as the system has been called Vietnamese *quanfa* (fist law). Another Vietnamese system of the era was *Kim Ke* (Golden Cock). As the name implies, Kim Ke was based on cockfighting, and as a result featured aggressive high kicks to the head. Here *Muay Thai* influence is possible, as the Nguyen family that eventually occupied the Vietnamese capital of Hue received considerable military aid from Siam.

Philip Vickers Fithian writes that Easter Monday in Virginia was a general holiday, and that “Negroes now are all disbanded till Wednesday morning & are at Cock Fights through the County” (Gorn and Goldstein 1993, 18–19). Slave owners also gave slaves off the six days between Christmas and the New Year. During this time, the slaves visited friends, played ball games, wrestled, and danced.

About 1776 According to tradition, a Buddhist nun named Wu Mei (Ng Mui) creates a Southern Shaolin Boxing style known in Cantonese as *yongchun* (*wing chun*; Beautiful Springtime). The tradition has never been proven, and twentieth-century stylistic leaders such as Yip Chun believe that a Cantonese actor named Ng Cheung created the style during the 1730s.

A Tyrolean clock maker named Bartolomeo Girandoni manufactures some twenty-shot air rifles for the Austrians. Even
though they worked well, these technologically advanced .56 caliber weapons were withdrawn from service in 1801 and banned outright in 1802. In theory, this was because the weapons were fragile, but in practice it was more probably because the roar of a flintlock musket was too thrilling to give up for mere range and accuracy.

Turkic-speaking Chinese Muslims living in Gansu province brawl in the streets over matters of Islamic ritual; the men fight using long poles, short sticks, and whips, while the women throw garbage. Martial art training took place in mosques, and combined Sufistic spirit possession and trance dancing with *xingyi quan* (*hsing i ch’uan*; mind and will boxing) and other martial arts commonly practiced by caravan guards.

The publication of the *Treatise of Ancient Armour and Weapons* by Francis Grose stirs English interest in antique arms and armor. This said, scholarly investigations only date to 1824 and the publication of the appropriately titled *Critical Inquiry into Ancient Armour* by Samuel Rush Meyrick.

The Chinese establish a National Theater in Beijing, with the purpose, of course, of showcasing the Chinese theatricals commonly (but imprecisely) known in English as the Chinese opera. To make these performances work, schools were established for children as young as 4 years of age, and because a star could make a good living, standards for admission were very high. Physical training for the students included daily practice in bodybuilding, gymnastics, and sword handling, while concurrent academic training involved memorizing long passages from Chinese classical literature. Thus National Theater–level martial art students operated at an entirely different level of proficiency than those of the Shandong *wushu* (martial art) teacher of 1900 who promised his students that they would be bulletproof following just one day of study.

The Saxon educator Johann Guts Muths publishes *Gymnastics for the Young*. Three years later, he follows up with another book called *Games*. The idea of both books was that every minute of a schoolboy’s day should be filled with purposeful, directed activity.

A Korean official named Yi Dok-mu compiles a manual of the martial art techniques used by the Korean army. Known as the *Mu Yei Do Bo Tong Ji* (Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts), it was written in classical Chinese, perhaps to keep it from being easily understood by merchants and wives.

With the support of the Crown Prince of Denmark, Franz Nachtigal establishes a Prussian-style gymnasium in Copenhagen. Nachtigal, like Guts Muths in Germany, believed that fun was overrated. Therefore schoolchildren and soldiers needed to do exercises that made them respond quickly to their superiors rather than play the games that they enjoyed. Furthermore, they needed to be graded in everything they did, and their performances needed to show measurable improvement over time. In other words, physical training was something that children and soldiers did for the nation, not for fun.
1803 The word *amateur* enters the English language. Originally it referred solely to literary dilettantes, but during the 1860s people changed the meaning of the word to refer to athletes who followed the rules designed to keep working-class athletes from competing with middle-class athletes.

About 1809 Incursions by British and Russian naval forces into Japanese waters cause the Japanese government to regain an interest in manufacturing cannons and other militarily useful weapons. This said, it was the entirely unrelated threat of gang warfare along the Tokaido Highway between Edo and Yokohama that lay behind the era’s revived interest in sword fighting, wrestling, and other traditional martial arts.

1811 A Prussian schoolmaster named Friedrich Ludwig Jahn establishes a *Turnverein* (gymnastics club) at Hasenheide, a park just outside Berlin. A strict moralist, Jahn saw *Turnen* (the term means more than just gymnastics, as it originally included weight lifting and wrestling, too) as a means of building character in boys. He was an ardent patriot, and his club soon became a hotbed of muscular pan-Germanism. As this pan-Germanism frightened the conservative Prussian government, it persecuted both *Turners* and Jahn from 1819 until 1842.

About 1815 *Hung gar* (Red Boxing) *wushu* appears in Fujian province. The nineteenth-century Chinese used such arts to improve fitness or health, make money for gamblers or reputation for prizefighters, and attract new members to esoteric religious cults.

1819 The publication of *Ivanhoe* by the Scottish novelist Sir Walter Scott helps create the Romantic perception of gallant knights in shining armor; Scott’s chivalric ideal proves especially popular in the American South. As a result, equestrian tournaments were held in Charlottesville, Virginia, as late as 1863. (The latter was a Confederate hospital town, and that particular tournament featured one-armed knights who held the reins in their teeth.)

1825 Jem Ward of London becomes the first British prizefighter to receive a championship belt. (Although English wrestlers had received championship belts for years, boxers usually preferred cash prizes.) Similar belts were introduced into the United States around 1885, mostly as a way of generating interest in prizefights.

1827 On a sandbar outside Vidalia, Mississippi, a Louisiana slave-smuggler and sugar merchant named James Bowie uses a large knife to kill a local banker named Norris Wright; colorful newspaper accounts of their fight start a journalistic tradition in which all large single-edged knives are called Bowie knives. Newspaper accounts aside, the big knives’ more usual uses included shaving kindling, butchering game, and holding the meat over the fire.

About 1830 An Italian woman named Rosa Baglioni is described as perhaps the finest stage fencer in Weimar, Germany. German students start fighting with the blunt-tipped swords known as *Schläger* (blow) around the same time, perhaps because they are heavy weapons less likely to be carried by women.
About 1830 Irish immigrants introduce collar-and-elbow wrestling into New England. The style was often used by the Irish to settle arguments, and was known as “collar-and-elbow” after the initial stances taken as defenses against kicking, punching, and rushing. The style became widely known during the American Civil War and formed the basis for the American professional wrestling techniques of the 1870s and 1880s.

1832 Jean Antoine Charles Lecour combines English prizefighting with French savate to create Boxe Française (French boxing). Lecour’s brother Hubert starts introducing the methods into the French music halls, often to the accompaniment of comic songs and similar acts.

1834 Johann Werner introduces Turnen to his School for Female Children in Germany; girls in Magdeburg begin to be taught gymnastics in 1843, as are adult women in Mannheim in 1847. Competition was discouraged as “unwomanly,” and exercises such as the horizontal bar and the balance beam were prohibited as indecent.

1835 James Gordon Bennett stimulates sales for the New York Herald by adding coverage of footraces and prizefights.

1837 The Highland Games are introduced at Braemar, Scotland. These games were the progenitors of modern track-and-field, and of professional sports in general. They also helped popularize Cumberland wrestling, which previously had been popular mainly in northern England.

1837 Japanese soldiers use gunfire to prevent a United States ship from landing missionaries at Naha, Okinawa. This said, it took the naval bombardment of some Satsuma and Choshu forts in 1863 to start the Japanese thinking about reorganizing their forces after European models. Armed with rifles and drilled as disciplined tactical units, the Choshu armies defeated much larger shogunate forces in pitched battle in 1866, which in turn led the shogunate to seek French military assistance in 1867. In other words, it was internal politics, not Commodore Perry's Black Ships, that caused the Meiji Restoration and the subsequent militarization of Japan.

1838 Wealthy New Yorkers begin frequenting “concert saloons,” the first modern nightclubs, where the entertainment includes dance revues, comedy acts, and prizefights.

1838 London Prize Ring Rules replace Broughton's Rules in English prizefighting.

1842 According to tradition, a Chinese man named Gou Zi creates Da Xing Quan (Monkey Boxing) after spending several months watching monkeys cavorting outside his prison cell. Romance aside, the name probably refers to the dramatic sword dances done by Shandong peasants possessed by the spirit of the Monkey King, a Chinese literary hero renowned for always being one step ahead of his adversaries. The word the Chinese used for this spirit possession, ma bi, means “horse,” and the phenomenon probably bears comparison to the similar spirit-possessions reported in the Haitian vodou religion.
1842 A prizefight between Charles Freeman and William Perry on December 6 becomes the first to use the railway as a means of transporting spectators. (The prefight agreements stipulated that the fight had to take place halfway between Tipton and London, thus necessitating a special for the Eastern Counties Railway.) But as the police could also ride the rails, the illegal mill was rescheduled several times, and in the end the fans ended up going to the fight by riverboat.

1844 In London, an English shop assistant named George Williams establishes the first Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Williams’s dream was to provide middle-class Protestant men such as himself with social clubs that encouraged Bible study rather than tobacco and gin. And the early YMCAs did this. But when the YMCA moved into the United States and Canada during the 1850s, its leaders found that Bible study did not attract as many young men as the gymnasiums of the Swiss and German Turners. To overcome this problem, most YMCA buildings built after 1880 included weight rooms, gymnasiums, and swimming pools.

1846 In Singapore, members of triad-affiliated gangs are reported fighting each other using wooden sticks and iron pipes. But by 1867, the gangsters were using muskets and small cannon, and by 1921 they were carrying pistols. Unarmed martial arts, meanwhile, were taught and used mostly as a form of militant nationalism.

1852 Harvard and Yale hold their first informal sporting competition, a rowing regatta in Boston; the ties between American sport and business are already clear, as a local railroad pays all expenses in exchange for free advertising.

1853 The YMCA opens a “Colored” branch in Washington, DC. By 1869 Colored YMCAs existed throughout the United States. By training hundreds of African American coaches, administrators, and officials, these YMCAs made sport part of African American cultural pride.

1854 Chinese miners wave American-made spears and swords at one another during a mining dispute in Trinity County, California. This is the first known display of Asian martial arts in the Americas.

1855 The United States Navy replaces its flintlock single-shot pistols with .36 caliber Model 1851 Colt revolvers; the navy also orders some full-flap sheaths to accompany these revolvers, which in turn makes it the first military to issue belt holsters with its pistols. (Military holster design reached fruition four years later with the development of the British Sam Browne rigs.)

1857 An anonymous notice in the Saturday Review coins the phrase Muscular Christianity. The phrase described the philosophy that a perfect Christian gentleman should be able to fear God, play sports, and doctor a horse with equal skill. (“The object of education,” said an editorial in Spirit of the Times, “is to make men out of boys. Real live men, not bookworms, not smart fellows, but manly fellows.”) (Gorn and Goldstein 1993, 94).
On October 13, an Austin, Texas, newspaper called the *Southern Intelligencer* reports that “it is a common thing here to see boys from 10 to 14 years of age carrying about their persons Bowie knives and pistols” (Hollon 1974, 54). The model for the statement was probably Ben Thompson, a 16-year-old typesetter for the newspaper who fancied himself quite the thug. In Thompson’s case, the weapons were somewhat ornamental: Although Thompson once fired a shotgun from ambush at a black youth, he did not actually kill anyone until 1865. Texas gunslingers were much more likely to shoot unarmed blacks and Mexicans than armed anything. John Wesley Hardin, for instance, was 15 when he shot and killed a black man for shaking a stick at him. William Preston Longley was similarly 15 when he shot and killed two black men for dancing in the street. These youthful Texas gunmen somehow always managed to avoid meeting equally notorious black or Mexican gunslingers. The most notorious black gunslinger was probably Jim Kelly, a rider with the Print Olive outfit in Kansas and Nebraska during the 1870s. The Olive outfit was truly mean, and known for shooting, hanging, and then burning rustlers it found on its range.

As part of their post–Crimean War reforms, the British introduce Swiss calisthenics into their recruit training programs.

New York State bans prizefights, and places severe restrictions on sparring matches. The goal was to stop working-class men from traveling around the state watching prizefights.

A Greek grain merchant named Evangelios Zappas convinces King Otto of Greece to host an Olympic festival at Athens in order to inspire Greek patriotism and promote international trade. Besides running and jumping, the events held at this festival include both standing and ground wrestling.

Under the influence of the physical culture movement, Amherst becomes the first United States college to have a physical education department.

Feng Guifen introduces *zi qiang* (self-strengthening) into the Chinese political lexicon. Although the phrase originally meant using European arms and manufacturing methods to defend traditional Chinese values, by 1935 it also meant using foreign calisthenics to strengthen Chinese bodies and spirits for military service.

With the help of Henry Fugner, Dr. Miroslav Tyrs creates the Sokol (Falcon) system of national gymnastics in Bohemia. This system offered women a greater part than did German gymnastics, and also supported Czech nationalism better than Prussian *Turnverein*. Sokol methods influenced czarist Russian sport during the 1890s and Soviet sport after 1918.

In volume 1 of a text called *Principles of Biology*, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer coins the phrase “survival of the fittest.” Spencer sees nature as a state of pitiless warfare, with the elimination of the weak and unfit as its goal. People who did not read him closely soon applied this theory to social dynamics, and called the result Social Darwinism.
With the publication of a book called *Researches into the History of Early Mankind*, the English anthropologist Edward B. Tylor becomes the first important prophet of cultural diffusion. Tylor’s premise is that ideas are only invented once, and that cultures grow by borrowing these ideas from one another. These ideas have subsequently been applied to the martial arts. Europeans, for instance, have often insisted that Greeks or Romans were the source of some particular invention, while the Chinese and Indians argued about whether Bodhidharma was the inventor.

Under the patronage of John Sholto Douglas, the eccentric eighth Marquis of Queensberry, new rules are developed for amateur boxing. The new rules helped pugilism recover its lost popularity, as they reduced the visible injuries and subjected fighters to the constraints of the clock, something important to workingmen who needed to catch the last train home.

Japan’s first modern police force is formed, the organizer and first chief a former Satsuma samurai named Kawaji Toshiyoshi. (About two-thirds of early Tokyo police were former Satsuma samurai.) A trained swordsman of the Chiba school, Kawaji believed that martial arts training developed superior policemen. Many Japanese agreed with him, and to this day training in kendô, jûdô, and jodô (singlestick) continues to play an important role in Japanese police training.

The Russian mystic Helene Blavatsky and the American lawyer Henry Olcott establish the Theosophical Society in New York and London. Although Blavatsky was something of a charlatan and Olcott important mainly for supporting Sri Lankan Buddhism during a time of profound Christian oppression, together they were among the first Europeans or Americans to systematically mine Vedic and Buddhist philosophies for religious truths.

Inspired by the success of the YMCA at providing urban youth with an attractive alternative to saloons, the Wilson Mission establishes the Boys Club of the City of New York; to attract Catholic and Jewish youths, the club keeps active Protestant proselytizing. Sponsors, including railroad baron E. H. Harriman, supported such organizations because they were believed to reduce street crime.

An Anglo-Irish philologist named John Mahaffy invents the myth of ancient Greek amateur sports. The invention was designed to keep white-collar workers and their children from having to compete against working-class workers and their children. Mahaffy also invented the idea of the intrinsic pleasure of sport for its own sake, again as a way of preventing working-class athletes from competing with middle- and upper-class athletes. In fairness to Mahaffy, he was a man of his times, and his ideas were an outgrowth of late Victorian philosophy rather than eccentric bigotry.

To encourage newspaper sales (the more controversial or anticipated the bouts, the more papers sold), Richard Kyle Fox’s *National Police Gazette* begins ranking boxers.
The Japanese army replaces neo-Confucian bushidō with tokubo, a Prussian-inspired “Soldiers’ Code.” (Although trained by the French, the Japanese liked imperial German and Austrian political philosophy.) After making some additional changes that emphasized the primacy of the emperor, the Soldiers’ Code was renamed bushidō (the way of the warrior) in 1909. The brutal excesses of the Greater East Asian War, as the Japanese call World War II, are therefore owed to early-twentieth-century military codes rather than the neo-Confucian bushidō of the Tokugawa-era samurai.

About 1883 Kanô Jigorô decides to divide his jûdô students into two separate groups, ungraded (mudansha) and graded (yudansha). This ranking system was innovative, as Japanese martial art schools previously awarded rank using scrolls (menkyo) rather than colored belts.

Britain’s Edgerton Castle publishes a history of European swordsmanship called Schools and Masters of Fence. Probably the most influential swordsmanship history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it presents theories that came under savage attack during the 1990s. Particularly contentious aspects include the following: first, that Renaissance Italy was the birthplace of systematic European fencing; second, that older German swordsmanship was mere rough and untutored fighting; and finally, that nineteenth-century sport fencing represented linear evolution toward final perfection.

Hooks become common in Australian and North American boxing, as do corkscrew punches and combinations of three to five punches thrown in rapid succession. Queensberry-rules boxing with padded gloves was the reason—padded gloves protected knuckles and thumbs from breaking on the opponent’s head, while ten-second knockouts and rounds that did not end when a player fell to the ground encouraged boxers to throw flurries rather than carefully aimed single shots.

Female boxing becomes popular throughout the United States. Champions included Nellie Stewart of Norfolk, Virginia; Ann Lewis of Cleveland, Ohio; and Hattie Leslie of New York. The audiences were male, and the fighters sometimes stripped to their drawers like men. Savate fights in which kicking was allowed were also popular. Girls as young as 12 years headed the bills.

The First International Games are held in Athens, Greece; these are subsequently renamed the first modern Olympics.

The Spanish close a Manila fencing academy known as the Tanghalan ng Sanda (Gallery of Weapons) because its active students include the rebel leader José Rizal y Mercado. The master of the Gallery of Weapons was Don José de Azes, and his academy was located at a Jesuit private school known as Ateneo de Manila. Since de Azes taught both rapier fencing and Filipino nationalism, either he or his students are probably the creators of the theory that Spanish fencing influenced the development of arnis.

An English engineer named Edward W. Barton-Wright pub-
lishes an article called “The New Art of Self Defence” in *Pearson’s Magazine*. Barton-Wright had studied jūjutsu while living in Japan, and his “New Art,” which he immodestly called “Bartitsu,” combined jūjutsu with boxing and savate.

1901 An elderly Ryūkyūan aristocrat named Itosu Ankō campaigns for the introduction of a simplified form of *Shōrin-ryū Karate* into the Okinawan public schools.

1902 A London dentist named Jack Marles invents the first mouth guards for boxers. The devices were originally designed for use during training, and the English welterweight Ted “Kid” Lewis, who reigned from 1915 to 1919, was the first professional to regularly wear one in the prize ring.

1902 Alan Calvert establishes the Milo Bar-Bell Company, the first company to manufacture plate-loading iron barbells for amateur use, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

1902 An editorial in Baltimore’s *Afro-American Ledger* complains that professional boxer Joe Gans “gets more space in the white papers than all the respectable colored people in the state.” This was not to take anything away from Gans, but to wonder why illiterate prizefighters should be more influential role models than “respectable colored people” such as Booker T. Washington or W. E. B. Du Bois (Ashe 1988, 16).

1904 The word *kokugi* (national sport) is coined in Japan to describe sumō; at the same time, Japanese school gymnastics (*heishiki taisō*) are renamed “military drills” (*heishiki kyoren*), as this puts the emphasis on discipline and obedience.

1904 Xu Fulin and his coworkers Xu Yiping and Xu Chenglie open the Chinese Physical Training School (*Zhingguo Ticao Xuexiao*) in Shanghai. Between 1926 and 1931 novelist Xiang Kairan wrote some fictionalized popular accounts of this organization’s leaders beating Russians, British, and Japanese in weight lifting, boxing, and jūdô contests.

1905 “It is a good thing for a girl to learn to box,” says an article in the beauty column of the February 27 issue of the New York *Evening World*, because “poise, grace and buoyancy of movement result from this exercise.”

1905 A pro-Japanese karate teacher named Hanagusuku Nagashige creates the modern ideograms for karate, the ones that mean “empty hands” instead of “Tang dynasty [i.e., Chinese] boxing.”

1906 Erich Rahn of Berlin opens Germany’s first jūjutsu school; the style taught is (probably) *Tsutsumi Hozan-ryū*.

1908 Robert Baden-Powell establishes the Boy Scouts of England. Stated goals of the organization include preparing working-class youth for future military service.

About 1911 Yabiku Moden establishes the Ryūkyū Ancient Research Association, the first school to publicly teach *kobudō* (ancient weapons arts) on Okinawa.

1911 Under pressure from the Diet, Japan’s Ministry of Education decides to require schoolboys to learn jūjutsu and *shinai kyōgi* (flexible stick competition), as jūdō and kendō were known until 1926; the idea, says the ministry in its reports, is to ensure that “students above middle school should be trained to be a
1911 cont. soldier with patriotic conformity, martial spirit, obedience, and toughness of mind and body."

1912 Xu Yusheng, the vice-director of the Beijing Physical Education Research Association, introduces studio-style martial art instruction to north China. Although Hsu taught taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan) and had studied with Yang Jianhou, Song Shuming, and other famous boxers of his day, he was an intellectual. Therefore he taught taijiquan as national gymnastics, rather than as training in pugilism or self-defense.

1912 The Shanghai Chinese YMCA organizes a course in quanfa, since the youths who come for self-defense lessons usually discover that they like the foreign games of volleyball, basketball, and baseball even better, and thus are more amenable to Protestant proselytizing.

1913 A Japanese police official named Nishikubo Hiromichi publishes a series of articles arguing that the Japanese martial arts should be called budô (martial ways) rather than bujutsu (martial techniques), as their purpose is to teach loyalty to the emperor rather than practical combatives. In 1919, Nishibukko became head of a major martial art college (Bujutsu Senmon Gakkô) and immediately ordered its name changed to Budô Senmon Gakkô, and subsequently Dainippon Butokukai publications began talking about budô, kendô, jûdô, and kyûdô rather than bujutsu, gekken, jûjutsu, and kyûjutsu.

1917 Funakoshi Gichen, a 53-year-old Okinawan schoolteacher, demonstrates Naihanchi kata during the First National Athletic Exhibition in Kyoto. Although this introduced karate into Japan, no one there expressed much interest until 1921, when Kanô Jigorô added atemi-waza (vital point techniques) to the curriculum of Kôdôkan Jûdô.

1918 Believing that physical exercises will create healthier workers and fitter soldiers, Bolshevik leaders encourage their workers and soldiers to exercise; because few Russians have access to gyms or swimming pools, wrestling is encouraged.

1919 Huo Yuanjia of Tianjin establishes the Jin Wu Athletic Association in Shanghai. Although organized along the same lines as a YMCA, the nationalism of its founders was Chinese rather than North American or European. Therefore its instruction included training in the Chinese martial arts rather than Swedish gymnastics or Canadian basketball.

1919 In order to give a cut over his eye time to heal, Jack Dempsey starts wearing padded headgear while training for a world championship fight in Toledo, Ohio. Because Dempsey won that fight in three rounds, the practice quickly became standard during professional training and amateur boxing.

About 1920 Romantic fantasies in which Chinese heroes overcome foreign invaders through military prowess become popular in China. Their plotting was subsequently a staple of Chinese martial arts films.

About 1920 Three competent professional wrestlers (Joseph “Toots” Mondt, Billy Sandow, and Ed “Strangler” Lewis) associated with the 101 Ranch Show invent “Slam Bang Western Style
Wrestling.” This was a carefully choreographed act designed to return more of the gate profits to the wrestlers than the promoters.

1921

Ueshiba Morihei, the founder of aikidô, opens his first dôjô in Tokyo.

1929

The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore arranges for a Japanese named Takagaki Shinzo to teach jûdô at Calcutta’s Bengal University (modern Visvabharati University). Tagore’s hope was that the jûdô instruction would spread Japanese-style nationalism through British India. But few Indian college students were particularly interested in physical culture, and when they were, they preferred American barbells to Japanese jûdô.

1929

Vasilij Sergevich Oshchepkov introduces jûdô to Moscow. In 1932 Oshchepkov organized Russia’s first jûdô tournament, and the following year he published jûdô’s first Russian-language rules. Then, in 1936, the Leningrad Sport Committee prohibited a competition between the Moscow and Leningrad teams, causing an angry Oshchepkov to write protests to various government offices. This in turn led to his being arrested on the charge of being a Japanese spy, and in October 1937 he died from what the NKVD termed a “fit of angina.” His students took the hint, and in November 1938 Anatolij Arcadievich Kharlampiev announced the invention of “Soviet freestyle wrestling,” which coincidentally looked a lot like Russian-rules jûdô. Following World War II, Stalin decided that the USSR would compete in the Olympics, which already had international freestyle wrestling, so in 1946 Soviet freestyle wrestling was officially renamed sambo, which was an acronym for “self-defense without weapons” (Samozashchita Bez Oruzhiya). Present-day sambo has diverged significantly from jûdô. Technical differences include sambo players wearing tight jackets, shorts, and shoes; using mats instead of tatami (which in turn causes sambo coaches to stress groundwork and submission holds rather than high throws); and a philosophy that emphasizes sport and self-defense rather than character development.

1930

Thai boxing adopts Queensberry rules; although the introduction of gloves and timed rounds reduce the visible bloodshed, they also increase the death rate from subdural hemorrhage. (Recent estimates have put the death rate at one per 1,500 bouts.)

1930

Following a year in which nine professional boxing matches ended in fouls, the New York State Athletic Commission starts requiring professional boxers to wear protective groin cups.

1931

After the Japanese seize Mukden, the Chinese government orders its schoolchildren to undertake two to three hours of physical training a week. In 1934, the Chinese Ministry of Education published a formal fitness program designed by a YMCA director named Charles McCloy, and with slight modifications, this program remained the Chinese standard into the 1970s. The designer of the taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan) forms used in the Guomindang program was a physician named Zheng Manqing.

1934 Ōtsuka Hironori of the All-Japan Collegiate Karate Association publishes rules for *yakusoku kumite* (noncontact free sparring).

1934 Twenty-seven-year-old Charles Kenn of Honolulu organizes a theatrical event featuring ancient Hawaiian games and sports, with the goal of replicating a *mahahiki* festival, including replicating *lua* and other combative sports virtually extinct since the arrival of missionaries and smallpox during the 1840s.

1935 Kawaishi Mikonosuke introduces Butokukai *jûdô* to Paris. (Although a separate licensing body, the Butokukai’s *jûdô* differed from Kôdôkan *jûdô* mostly because the former put more emphasis on groundwork than the latter.) At the front of Kawaishi’s school was a blackboard. On this board, Kawaishi wrote the names of his techniques. In front of each name was a number:

- *Ashi-waza* (Leg technique)
  1. *Osoto-gari* (“Major Outer Reaping Throw”)
  2. *De-ashi-barai* (“Advanced Foot Sweep”)
  3. *Hiza-guruma* (“Knee Wheel”)

Kawaishi would then say, “I will teach you the first movement,” and the students would follow along. As the numbers were in French, the students thus “learned by the numbers” (personal communication with Henry Plee, October 8, 1995). Kawaishi’s inspiration was probably American self-defense instruction, as by 1935, New York wrestling instructor Will Birmingham had been teaching women “to dispose of a masher with neatness and dispatch [using] grip No. 7 followed by hold No. 9” for at least twenty years (*New York World*, January 30, 1916, *Sunday Magazine*, 3).

1940 The Hon Hsing Athletic Club is established in Vancouver, British Columbia, and its *quanfa* (fist law) classes are (probably) the first organized Chinese martial art classes in Canada. There were, however, no non-Chinese students allowed until the 1960s. “It used to be that the Chinese instructors wouldn’t teach Westerners,” Raymond Leung told Ramona Mar in 1986. “But it’s wrong to think that if we teach them, they’ll use it to beat us. With every new student, I think we make one new friend” (Yee 1988, 148).

1940 In Montreal, 19-year-old Joe Weider publishes the first issue of *Your Physique*, the first magazine to seriously tout bodybuilding. In 1947 Weider started the International Federation of Body Builders. The chief difference between bodybuilding and weight lifting is that the former is semierotic muscular theater while the latter is nationalistic athletic competition.

1941 Bob Hoffman of York Barbell introduces the idea of women’s weight lifting and bodybuilding to the United States.

1942 The Japanese replace the Dutch colonial government of Indone-
sia with an Islamic nationalist government, whose leaders of the new government include Achmed Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta; with Japanese approval, these Indonesian nationalists then use the dancelike Indonesian martial art of *silat* as a method for uniting ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse peoples.

**About 1944**  
In Pernambuco, Brazil, Paulino Aloisio Andrade teaches a stick-fighting game called *maculêlê* to a group of local children, and then has the children participate in various regional festivals and folklore shows. Machetes were later added to the act for the sparks that flew when the players' blades hit.

**1947**  
Soviet leader Joseph Stalin decides that the Soviets should participate in the Olympics, thus making the games a battleground in the Cold War. Stalin wanted his athletes to enter the 1948 Olympics, but could not be guaranteed a large number of gold medals. Since the Soviets had virtually no athletic facilities, coaches started having players swim during the summer, run in the spring and fall, and do cross-country skiing in the winter. In other words, they invented cross-training.

**1947**  
A Japanese named Doshin So incorporates his martial art school as a Kongô Zen Buddhist religious order. So said that he taught martial arts mostly as a way of attracting young people to Buddhism, and that it was the Buddhism, not the martial arts, that would make them better people.

**1947**  
A Shôtôkan karate club known as the Oh Do Kwan is established at a Korean army signals school at Yong Dae Ri. The original instructor was a signal officer named Nam Tae Hi. In 1955, during a demonstration for the South Korean President Rhee Seung Man, Nam broke thirteen roofing tiles with a single blow. This so impressed Rhee that he told Colonel Choi Hong Hi, who was Nam's commander and an honorary fourth *dan* (fourth degree black belt), to start a training program for the entire Korean military. As Nam always insisted that trainees shout “Tae Kwon!” (Fists and Feet), his karate style soon became known as taekwondo (the way of fists and feet).

**1947**  
The Ikatan Penchak Silat Indonesia (Indonesian Pentjak Silat Association) is established in Jakarta. Although its leaders said that the association was meant to encourage the development of the Indonesian martial arts, it was actually used to further the spread of militant Islamic (and anti-Dutch) nationalism.

**1949**  
Feng Wenpin, president of the All-China Athletic Federation, describes the purpose of Communist Chinese physical education as developing sports for health, nationalism, and national defense; to accomplish this with a minimum of time, space, or equipment, workers are encouraged to practice martial art practice forms.

**1950**  
The U.S. Air Force introduces Japanese martial arts into its physical training programs; this in turn introduces them to middle America.

**1952**  
Although Mao Zedong's motto was “Keep fit, study well, work well,” the chairman also believed that secret societies, like capitalism and ancient religions, undermined the race and retarded
1952
cont.
progress. Therefore the China Wushu Association was created, under the aegis of the All-China Athletic Federation, and tasked with removing all “feudal comprador fascist thought” from the Chinese martial arts.

1953
Arvo Ojala introduces metal-lined, forward-raked pistol holsters to Hollywood; Ojala’s rigs appear in most subsequent cinematic gunfights and contribute to the establishment of quick-draw pistol competitions in 1956.

1953
Tôhei Kôichi introduces aikidô to Hawaii; on Maui, a policeman named Shunichi Suzuki helps him arrange demonstrations, and due to Tôhei’s good work (and returning to Hawaii during 1955–1956 and 1957–1958), aikidô soon becomes popular with U.S. policemen.

1959
With the publication of Goldfinger, British novelist Ian Fleming introduces European and North American readers to karate.

1959
Bruce Lee starts teaching yongchun (wing chun) in the covered parking lot of a Blue Cross clinic in Seattle, Washington.

1961
After a woman named Rusty Glickman defeats a male opponent during an Amateur Athletic Union (AAU)–sanctioned jûdô meet in New York City, the AAU bans women from participating in jûdô tournaments. (The reason was not that the male-dominated AAU leadership believed that women couldn’t wrestle, but that women shouldn’t wrestle.) Under pressure from women’s groups (including one led by the by-then Rusty Glickman Kanokogi) the AAU finally relented in 1971 and allowed women to compete against women using special “women’s rules.” The women kept pushing for equality, and women were allowed to compete using standard rules in 1973.

1963
The massive muscle bulk of the Soviet national jûdô team causes the French national jûdô team to start demanding weight divisions.

1964
Angel Cabales of Stockton, California, opens the first commercial school to teach Filipino martial arts to non-Filipinos.

1966
History students at the University of California–Berkeley establish the Society for Creative Anachronism, or SCA. The original purpose of the SCA was to re-create life in medieval times. Many members liked sword-and-buckler play. Early weapons and armor were crude and tended to build a high tolerance for pain.

1966
Bruce Lee appears on a short-lived American television series called The Green Hornet. Because some influential producers refused to believe that North American audiences would ever like an Asian hero, Lee could not get starring roles. Outraged, he returned to Hong Kong, where he met Raymond Chow of Golden Harvest, who was starting to use hand-to-hand fights in his action films instead of swordplay. The result was a series of low-budget chop-socky flicks, including The Big Boss and Way of the Dragon. Even though the fighting shown in these movies was more spectacular than practical, the scripts’ anti-authoritarian themes appealed to working-class audiences everywhere, and the result was incredible box-office success.

1970
While watching full-contact karate star Joe Lewis defeat a San...
Jose kenpô stylist called Black Militant Ohm, a ringside announcer invents the term kickboxing.

1974 Mike Anderson, a taekwondo instructor from Texas, introduces brightly colored uniforms to North American tournament karate, so as to add visual excitement to the sport; previously karate uniforms were black, white, or a combination of black and white.

1980 Stephen Hayes introduces the Tōgakure-ryū Ninjutsu of Hatsumi Masaaki into the United States. While Tōgakure-ryū is a relatively mainstream Japanese martial art, its popularity in the United States is owed mainly to the unrelated (but nearly simultaneous) publication of The Ninja, a novel by fantasy writer Eric van Lustbader that portrays the ninja as bulletproof, black-clad sadists.

1981 Due to the commercial success of chop-socky movies, the People’s Republic of China repairs the damage to the exterior of the Shaolin Temple at Changzhou and replaces its four aged monks with dozens of politically reliable martial art teachers. From a commercial standpoint, the move was wildly successful, and by 1996, there were nearly 10,000 Chinese and foreign students attending wushu academies in the Shaolin valley (Smith 1996, A1, A16).

1981 Park Jung Tae, a senior instructor of the International Taekwondo Federation living in Canada, introduces taekwondo into North Korea. The South Korean government is outraged.

1986 In Tokyo, the Ministry of Education proposes allowing kendo and jūdō to be termed budô (native Japanese techniques that constitute martial ways) rather than kakugi (combative technique).

1991 In California and New York, “karate aerobics” and “executive boxing” become the rage among working women looking for a new form of aerobic exercise.

1993 New York music promoter Robert Meyrowitz organizes a pay-per-view Ultimate Fighting Championship™ (UFC) in which competitors are free to punch, kick, or wrestle their opponents. At first, most participants were trained in styles that emphasized either striking (e.g., punching or kicking) or grappling but not both, and during such contests, Gracie Jiu-jitsu, which emphasized groundwork, proved most successful. Then both strikers and grapplers began cross-training, and within a few years champions had to be competent at both striking and grappling.

Joseph R. Svinth


Select Bibliography


Payne-Gallwey, Ralph. 1968. *The Crossbow, Medieval and Modern, Military and


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAU. See Amateur Athletic Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABA. See American Bandô Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbey of Cîteaux, 369–370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abe family, 185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abhananda, 632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ablin, Faustino, 429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aborigines, 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abs, Karl, 737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abu Fazl, 671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acalanâtha, 490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and women, 671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action (you wei)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and medicine, traditional Chinese, 329–330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acupuncture, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhemar of le Puy, Bishop, 452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adi murai, 177, 227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Adventure of the Empty House,” 684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerobics, karate, 829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aethelstan, 795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa and African America, 1–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Brazil, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and capoeira, 7–10, 61–62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and combat training, 3–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Europe, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and iron smithing, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Islam, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and paganism, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and percussion instruments, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Portuguese, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and religion, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and slave trade, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and stickfighting, 4–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and trade, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and warriors, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and weapons, 1–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and wrestling, 5–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See also Capoeira; Middle East; Performing arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African America. See Africa and African America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-American Ledger, 823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afzal Khan, 811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agaja, King, 673, 813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agasthya, 647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the Country at War, 568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agetor of Arkadia, 790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agni Purana, 174, 750, 751–753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agonistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and social uses of the martial arts, 532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agramonte, Omelio, 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrippa, Camillo, 322, 582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiki, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiki taisô, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aikibudô, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aikidô, 12–16, 160–161, 732, 734, 825, 828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and police training, 828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and ranking system, 14–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and technique, 12–13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and training, 12–13, 14, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and weapons, 12–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See also Jûdô; Ki/Qi; Religion and spiritual development: Japan; Wrestling and grappling: Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aikidô dôjô, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiki-jujitsu, 161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aikijutsu, 732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aikijutsu, 322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air rifles, 815–816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ai-yaruk, 669, 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akamine Eisuke, 291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akbar, Emperor, 671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akhara, 722–723, 806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akkadevi, 667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aladdin, 798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albrecht III, Duke, 394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alemanni, 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, 341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander I, 675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander the Great, 110–111, 411, 448, 713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexius Comnenus, 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfieri, Francesco, 322, 582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfonso, King, 934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfonso X, 374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfonso XI, 376, 392, 399</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
American Kenpō Karate System, 259
*American Pistol Shooting* (Frazier), 826
American Revolution
and dueling, 106
American Shaolin Kenpō System, 259
*Anabasis* (Xenophon), 448
Anapale, 417–418
Anawrahtar, King, 629
Anderson, Mike, 829
Anderson, Steve “Nasty,” 259
Andrade, Paulino Aloisio, 827
Andre the Giant, 742
Angad Dev, 806
*Angel*, 555
Angelo, Domenico, 555
Angelo, Henry, 83–84, 675
Angle, Kurt, 742
Anglo-Manipuri War, 638
Angola, 8
Animal and imitative systems in Chinese martial arts, 16–18.

*See also* Baguazhang (pa kua ch’uan); Boxing, Chinese; Boxing, Chinese Shaolin; Xingyiquan (hsing i ch’uan)
Animal systems
and thaing, 635–636
Animal-modeling motif, 128
Animism
and bandō, 544
and silat, 529, 543
Anji Kata no Me (Dance Form of the Lords), 365–366
Anson, 242
Anteater skin armor
and Africa, 1–2
Apache, 678
Arakaki, 242
Arakaki Ankichi, 246
Arakaki Ryūkō, 247
Arakaki Seishō, 237
Arappukai, 227
*Arbre des Battailes* (Bouvet), 281
Archery, 26, 483
and Filipino martial arts, 431
Archery, Chinese, 68
Archery, English, 814
Archery, Japan, 18–21, 182, 811
history of, 18–20
and training, 20

*See also* Kendō; Kyūdō; Religion
Archery, Mongolian, 344, 347–348
and the bow, 347–348
See also Mongolia
Archery, women's, 670
Ariosto, Ludovico, 284
Aristotle, 411, 416
Arjumand Banu, 671
Arjuna, King, 173, 788
Armistice, 86
Armor
and Filipino martial arts, 428
and knights, 164–165, 267, 276–277, 281, 282
and masters of defence, 322–323
and swordsmanship, European medieval, 572–575
Armorial achievement, 165
Arms
and masters of defence, 322
Armstrong, Walter, 737
Arnis, 423, 560, 822. See also Philippines
Arnis de mano, 556, 803, 809
Around the World in Eighty Days (Verne), 116
Arrow cutting, 409
Arrows
development of, 787
and Filipino martial arts, 431
Japanese, 20
poison, 794
Art of War (Sunzi), 188, 332, 789
Arte of Defence, 579
Arthurian legend, 81, 274, 276, 799
Asaf Khan, 671
Asanas, 468, 469–470
Asari Yoshiaki, 496
Asato, 234, 245–246
Ascham, Roger, 806
Ashikaga, 20
Ashikaga family, 187, 188
Ashikaga Takauji, 187, 517
Ashikaga Yoshimasa, 187
Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, 187
Asia
and performing arts, 419–422
Asian/Experimental Theatre Program, 421
Association of Restaurant Workers, 784
Astaad Deboo, 639
Astrology
Earthly Branch horary, 798
and martial arts, 792–793
Atemi, 12, 201, 211
Atemi-waza, 509, 824
Ateneo de Manila, 822
Athletics, women's, 678, 792
and ranking system, 687–688
rules for, 686–687
and sexual stereotyping, 687–688
Ati murai. See Varma ati
Ati tata. See Varma ati
Atlatls, 792
development of, 787
Attire
and aikidô, 15
and fencing, 811
and fencing, French, 814
and fencing, Japanese, 813
and kajukenbo, 220–221
and karate, 829
and Muay Thai, 350–351
and sambo, 511–512
and taekwondo, 612, 615–616
and wrestling and grappling:
China, 708
Auerswald, Fabian von, 112
Augagnier, Mademoiselle, 680
Augustinian Rule, 370, 371, 377
Augustine of Hippo, Saint, 370
Austria
and military training, 85–86
and wrestling and grappling:
Europe, 715
The Avengers, 522
Awa Kenzô, 483–484
Ax
and Filipino martial arts, 428
Ayurveda, 749
Azets, Don José de, 822
Azuchi Castle, 189, 197
Ba To, 458
Babur, 805
Bach My Phai, 548
Backlund, Bob, 742
Baden-Powell, Robert, 823
Baglioni, Rosa, 676, 817
Bagnigge Wells, 674
Bagua, 23
Baguazhang (pa kua ch’uan), 13, 23–26, 38, 70, 461
and folk hero legends, 130–131
history of, 23–24
and kung fu, 313
and meditation, 336
and qi, 261
and technique, 25
and training, 24–25
and weapons, 25
See also Xingyiquan (hsing i ch’uan)
Bahadur, G., 632
Balakrishnan, P., 757
“The Ballad of John Wesley Harding,” 153
Ballistae (throwers), 790
Bandô, 544, 633–634. See also Thaing
Bands
and dueling, 100
BansenShukai (Ten Thousand Rivers Collect in the Sea) (Fujibayashi Yasuyoshi), 812
Banzai, 544. See also Thaing
Bennett, James Gordon, 818
Benton, Jesse, 99
Benton, Thomas H., 99
Beowulf, 667, 795
Bergman-Osterberg, Martina, 679
Bersilat, 524, 530, 542, 543–544. See also Silat
Bethold von Zaringenn, 800
Bhakti Negara, 529–530
Bhima, 173
Bibb, Henry, 10
Bichi Hyôranki, 694
Biddle, Anthony J. Drexel, 87
Biddle, Francis, 87
The Big Boss, 828
Bilby the Kid, 149, 150, 152, 153
Bimba, Mestre, 63
Bing jiqiao, 65
Bingham, Will, 826
Black Belt Society, 220
Black Militant Ohm, 829
Black Prince, 81
Blades, Japanese, 191
Blair, Eric, 632
Blau, Herbert, 421
Blavatsky, Helena, 821
Blessed Gerard, 371
Blitzkreig, 86
Bo (striking), 26
Boadicea, 666
Boche castle, 371
Bodhidharma, 126, 129, 131, 220, 460, 728, 792
Bodybuilding, women’s, 678, 826
Bodyguards, 792, 796
women as, 665, 670, 672, 673, 790, 813
Boesch, Paul, 740
Bohemond, 452
Bois, 563
Boji Mein His, 632
Bôjutsu, 556
Bokken, 13
Bologna University, 320
Bolshevik revolution of 1917, 507, 509
Bolt, Jeffrey, 39
Bond, James, 89
Bonebreaking (hakihaki), 406–407
Bonney, William (Billy the Kid), 149, 150, 152, 153
Book of Changes. See Yijing
Book of History, 747
Book of Invasions, 787
Book of Rites, 66
Book of the Courtier (Castiglione), 82
Bothner, George, 684
Bougbainville, Louis-Antoine de, 673
Bouvet, Honoré, 281
Bowie, James, 817
Bowie knives, 817
Bows, 813
and Filipino martial arts, 431
and Great Britain, 787
and Japan, 191–192
Bowser, Paul, 739
Boxe Française, 116, 519, 521–522, 818
Boxer Rebellion, 41, 689
Boxers of 1900, 128
Boxers United in Righteousness, 29–30
Boxing, 27, 89, 201, 787, 797, 814, 817, 823
and China, 67, 68, 70
and gladiators, 146
and Greece, ancient, 110
and groin cups, 825
Han Chinese, 16–18
and headgear, 824
and illegal tactics, 48–49
and Jeet Kune Do, 205
and jûdô, 213
and krav maga, 311
and military training, 85, 86–87
and mouth guards, 823
and Olympics, 789
and punches, 47–48, 822
and racism, 823
and ranking system, 821
and sambo, 509
and training, 49–51
and vulnerable organs and bones, 48
Boxing, amateur, 821
Boxing, Burmese, 545, 634–635, 814
Boxing, Chinese, 26–32, 219, 439–460, 461, 705–706, 796, 812, 815, 824
and folk belief, 132–133
and legendary origins, 129–130
northern vs. southern traditions, 32–33, 132
and Vietnam, 548
See also Animal and imitative systems in Chinese martial arts;
Baguazhang (pa kua ch’uan);
Boxing, Chinese Shaolin;
Taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan);
Xingyiquan (hsing i ch’uan)
Boxing, Chinese Shaolin, 17, 32–44, 121
and Kajukenbo, 222
and military training, 83
See also Animal and imitative systems in Chinese martial arts;
Baguazhang (pa kua ch’uan);
Boxing, Chinese; External vs. internal Chinese martial arts;
Karate, Okinawan; Kung fu/gungfu/gongfu; Political conflict and the martial arts;
Taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan);
Yongchun (wing chun);
Xingyiquan (hsing i ch’uan)
Boxing, English, 813
Boxing, European, 44–52, 219
and Kajukenbo, 222
See also Europe; Masters of Defence; Pankration
Boxing, executive, 829
Boxing, Filipino, 89
Boxing, French, 818
Boxing gloves, 813
Boxing, Greek, 415
Boxing, Hawaiian, 408
Boxing, Japanese, 20
Boxing, Korean, 299, 300
Boxing, Roman, 791
Boxing, Slavic, 794
Boxing, Thai. See Muay Thai
Boxing, women’s, 664, 667, 669, 673–674, 675, 677, 679–680, 691, 796, 815, 822, 823
Boy Scouts, 557
Boy Scouts of England, 823
Boys Club of the City of New York, 821
Brahmacharya, 465–468
Brass knuckles, 147
Brata, 557
Brazil
and Africa, 7
and capoeira, 61–65
and fugitive slaves, 435, 439–440
Brazilian jiu-jitsu, 52–56, 117–118
and ranking system, 52, 55
See also Gracie Jiu-Jitsu; Jûdô;
Wrestling and grappling: Japan
“Bread and circuses,” 141
Breathing technique
and Daoism, 492–493
and swordsmanship, 795
Brekers, 806
Brethren of the Sword, 375
Breton Order of the Ermine, 386
Brief Instructions (Silver), 324
British Army Medical Department, 678
British East India Company, 631
Broma
and Venezuela, 10
Brook, Peter, 422
Brooks, Preston, 98–99
Broughton, Jack, 45–46, 47, 813
Broughton’s Rules, 45–46, 818
Brown, Tom, 559
Bruce Lee Educational Foundation, 209

Brut, 799
Bubishi: Hô gôjû donto, 248
Buckler fighting, 319
Buddha, 489–490, 491, 789
and warrior monks, Japanese/sôhei, 659–663
Buddhism, 35, 120, 183, 492, 821
and Hapkidô, 158
and Japan, 475–476, 482–491
and Kung fu, 66
and meditation, 336
and Muay Thai, 352
and religion and spiritual development: China, 455–460
and silat, 529, 543
See also Zen Buddhism
Buddhist art
and wrestling and grappling: China, 706
Buddhist temples, 35–39
Buddhists, 791

Budô, 12, 169, 484, 485, 824, 829.
See also Budô, bujutsu, and bugei
Budô, bujutsu, and bugei, 56–59. See also Japan; Koryû bugei; Samurai; Swordsmanship, Japanese
Budô Charter, 485
Budô Senmon Gakkô, 824
Budô shôshinshû (The Code of the Samurai), 194
Budôgaku kenkyû (References of Tokugawa-Period Martial Arts Texts), 759

Budôkai, 87
Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 555
Bugei, 56. See also Budô, bujutsu, and bugei
Buitron, Paul-Raymond, III, 520, 522–523
Bujutsu, 56, 824. See also Budô, bujutsu, and bugei
Bujutsu Senmon Gakkô, 824
Bukyô shôgaku (Primary Learning in the Warrior Creed) (Yamaga Sôkô), 763
Bukyô zesho, 496
Burbage, Richard, 552
Burckhardt, Jakob, 79
Bürgerschaft von St Marcus von Lowenberg (The Citizens’ Association of Saint Marcus of Lowenberg), 803
Burgundians, 73
Burke, Mildred, 740
Burma, 631–633
and Thaing, 629
See also Myanmar, 541
Burmese Days (Orwell), 632
Burns, Martin “Farmer,” 717, 738
Burns, Walter Noble, 153
Burr, Aaron, 107
Burton, Richard, 673
Burton, Richard Francis, 84, 88
Bushi Matsumura, 286–287
Bushidô, 479–481, 483, 796, 810, 822
Bushidô, 194
Bushidô: The Soul of Japan (Nitobe Inazô), 480
Butler, Andrew Pickens, 99
Butler, Thomas, 813
Butokuden (Martial Virtues Hall), 232, 252
Butokukai Jûdô, 826
Butokusai (Martial Arts Festival)
Buttrick, Barbara, 679
Bux, Ahmed, 89, 738
Bux, Imam, 89, 738
Byzantine Empire, 415

Cahales, Angel, 427, 828
Caballarri, 264–266
Caballarri, Frankish, 263
Cabeçada (head-butt), 8
Cadwell, Linda Lee, 209
Caeser, 715
Caestus
and gladiators, 146
Cailifoquan (Choy Lay Fut boxing), 34, 38
Calisthenics
and military training, 84
Calisthenics, Swiss, 820
Calvert, Alan, 823
Cambodia, 541–542
   history of, 541–542
   and warfare, 541
See also Southeast Asia
Campbell, Fanny, 674
Candombé, 7, 129
Canete, Ciriaco C., 423
Canete, Felimon “Momoy,” 430
Cannon, bronze, 801
Cannon, Tom, 737
The Canon on the Philosopher’s Stone, 793
Canons, 801, 817
The Canons of Boxing (Qi Jiguang), 619
Canterbury Tales (Chaucer), 378
Cao Jiwu, 775–776
Capellanus, Andreas, 80–81
   and Africa, 7–10
   and folk hero legends, 132
   history of, 61–63
   and invulnerability, magical, 133
   and legendary origins, 129
   and ranking system, 63
   and savate, 520
   and technique, 64
   and training, 64
   and training area, 644, 646
Capoeira Angola, 8, 9, 63, 440
Capoeira Regional, 9, 63
Capoeiristas, 8
Carey, Peg, 676
Caribbean
   and stickfighting, 562–563
Carlo III, 394
Carnival, 801, 805
   and stickfighting, 562–563
Carolingian Empire, 73
Carolingian government, 450–451
Carradine, David, 314
Carranza, Jeronimo de, 322, 582
Carroll, Joe, 738
Carus, Paul, 482
Cass, Eleanor Baldwin, 679
Casseux, Michel, 519, 520, 561
Castellanies, 267
Castiglione, Baldassare, 82
Castilian Order of Santiago, 392
Castilian Order of the Band, 280, 386
Castle, Edgerton, 822
Castle of Marienburg, 375
Castro, Ralph, 259
Cat Ballou, 151
Cataphracti, 263
Catch-as-catch-can wrestling, 717–718
Cavalry, 84, 85
   and chivalry, 74
Cavittu natakam, 226–227
Celibacy, 792
   and India: Religion and spiritual
development, 465–468
   and wrestling and grappling: India,
   720, 722
Celtic warrior tribes, 111
Celts
   and masters of defence, 318
Central Asia
   and compound bows, 789
Central Hawaiian Authority #3
   Kenpō. See CHA-3 Kenpō
Central Martial Arts Institute, 30, 33, 69–70
Centralized politics systems
   and dueling, 100–101
Centro de Cultura Física e Capoeira Regional, 63
Ceres Highland Games, 801
Cervantes, Miguel de, 284
CHA-3 (Central Hawaiian Authority #3) Kenpō, 259
Chae Myung Shin, 90
Chaemulpo (Book of Treasures) (Yi Sŏng-ji), 603
Chainarol, 638
Chakravala, 804
Champlain, Samuel de, 103
Chan Buddhism. See Zen Buddhism
Chao, Jackie, 43
Chandragupta, 665, 790
Chandralekha, 422
Chang, George C., 219, 220, 221
Chang Naizhou, 746
Chang River, 32
Chang Songkao, 294
Chang Tung-sheng, 708, 709
Changquian (long boxing), 28, 30, 33–34, 620
Chapa, Isdro, 520
Character development
   and social uses of the martial arts, 532
Chariot-racing, 665
Charlemagne, 73, 266, 274, 398, 450–451
Charlemont, Charles, 522
Charlemont, Joseph, 521–522
Charles VI, 167
Charles of Anjou, Count, 453
Charny, Geoffrey de, 281
Chat’ou, 10
Chattambi Swamigal, 650–651
Chautuer, 378
Chausson
and savate, 519, 520
Chekevar, 176
Chen, 621
Chen Fake, 621
Chen Family, 619, 620
Chen Huashun (Chan Wah Shun), 783–784
Chen Qingping, 620, 621
Chen Wangting, 619, 620, 811
Chen Yuanbin, 811–812
Chen Yuanpin, 41–42
Chen Yuanyun, 200–201
Cheng, 69
Cheng Dali, 16
Cheng family, 23
Cheng Tinghua, 23–24, 130, 776
Cheng Wan Tat, 39
Cheng Zongyou, 130, 459–460
Chennault, Claire, 632
Chen-style taiji, 121
Che, 685
Chess
and boxing, 47
Cheung, William, 785
Chevalier de Sainte Georges, 675
Cheyenne Indians
and dueling, 102
Chi. See  K’i/Qi
Chi You, 124, 705
Chiang Kai Shek, 42
Chibana Chôshin, 242, 245–246, 290
Child, Lydia Mary, 676
Chin, Prince of, 789
China, 65–72, 483, 490, 491
and Baguazhang, 23–26
and Hapkido, 158
and Japan. See Japanese martial arts, Chinese influences on
and karate, Japanese, 232
and kobudô, Okinawan, 289–290
and Korea, influence on, 291, 293–294
and martial arts, animal and imitative systems in, 16–18
and meditation, 336
and military training, 86
and performing arts, 420
and the Philippines, 425
and police training, 89
and political conflict and the martial arts, 435, 437
and ranking system, 445
and religion and spiritual development, 453–462
and swords, 789
and taekwondo, influence on, 610
and training area, martial arts, 644
and weapons, 70
and women in the martial arts, 689–692
and wrestling and grappling, 705–710
and written texts, 745–748
See also Animal and imitative systems in Chinese martial arts;
Baguazhang (pa kua ch’uan);
Boxing, Chinese; Boxing, Chinese Shaolin; Kung fu/gungfu/gongfu;
Medicine, traditional Chinese;
Religion and spiritual development: China; Taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan);
Women in the martial arts: China; Wrestling and grappling: China;
Written texts: China; Yongchun (wing chun);
Xingyiquan
China Wushu Association, 828
Chinen Masame, 291
Chinese Boxer Rebellion, 435, 437
Chinese Kara-hô Kenpô Association
Chinese Martial Arts: History and Culture (Cheng Dali), 16
Chinese Ministry of Education, 825
Chinese opera, 816
Chinese Physical Training School, 823
Chinese Revolution of 1949, 296
Chinese theater, 420
Chinna adi, 177
Chinna ati. See Varma ati
Chivalric codes, 800
Chivalric love, 80
Chivalry, 72–82, 163, 369, 795, 817
and dueling, 105
and gunfighters, 153
and knights, 268, 284–285
and marriage, 80
and warfare, 81–82
See also Europe; Herald; Knights; Orders of knighthood, secular;
Religion and spiritual development: Ancient Mediterranean and medieval West; Swordsmanship, European medieval
Cho Hyung-Ju, 296
Choe Mu-son, 802
Choi Hong-Hi, 159, 296, 297–298, 611, 827
Choi Seo-Oh, 297
Choi Yong-I, 296
Choi Yong-nyôn, 604
Choi Yong-Shul, 157, 159, 160, 296
Choi-gar, 548
Choisai Ienao, 804
Choo, Peter Y. Y., 219, 220, 221
Chow, Raymond, 828
Chow, William K. S., 220, 257–259
Choy Lay Fut, 34, 38
Chrétien de Troyes, 81, 274
Christian I von Oldenburg, 395
Christian Synod of Druim Ceat, 666
Christianity
  and battle, 792
  and chivalry, 72–73, 77
  and gladiatorial combat, 148
  and Japan, 474, 479–480, 485
  and Kajukenbo, 224
  and knights, 267, 269
  and orders of knighthood, religious, 368
  and paganism, 415
  and religion and spiritual development: Ancient Mediterranean and medieval West, 448–450
Chronicle of Saint Martin of Tours, 797
Chronicles of Japan, 791
Chronique de France, d’Angleterre, d’Ecosse et d’Espagne (Froissart), 81
Chu, C. C., 632
Ch’uan’fa, 221–222
Chun Sang-Sup, 296
Chung Do Kwan, 440
Chungio, Emperor, 598
Chuparsp, 350
Church, the
  and chivalry, 72–73
  and the Crusades, 77–79
Bushido, 194
Ci Xi, Empress, 437, 689
Cicero, 142
Cirie, Jack, 91
Cistercian Order, 373
Cistercian Order of Alcántara, 373
Cistercian rule, 370
Cistercians, 369–370
Civilians
  and dueling, 101, 104
Clanton, Billy, 152
Clanton brothers, 98
Classical civilization
  and wrestling and grappling: Europe, 711–715
Classical fencing movement
  and swordsmanship, European Renaissance, 587–588
Classism
  and prizefighting, 820
  and sports, amateur, 821
Clement of Alexandria, 666, 792
Clement V, 79
Clerics
  and orders of knighthood, religious, 369
Clia, Phokian, 676
Clovis, 73
Club
  and Filipino martial arts, 428
  Cockfighting, 815
  Codes of warfare, 810
Cold Steel (Styer), 87
Cold War, 484, 827
  and the Olympics, 827
Collectanea (Monte), 112
College Kendô League, 481
Colonialism
  and cultural revitalization movements, 436
  Colosseum, 141, 142
Combat
  and women, 672
  Combat Krav Maga, 310
  Combat movements and dance, 3–4
  Combat training and Africa, 3–4
  See also Combatives: Military and police martial arts training
Combat without Weapons (Leather), 89–90
Combatives, 83
Combatives: Military and police
  martial art training, 83–95. See also Combat training; Military training; Police training; Training; Training area
Comitatus, 73
Comité National de Canne de Combat et Baton, 561
Commentaries on the Gallic War (Caesar), 715
Communism
  and military training, 91
  Communist Party, 42–43
Company of King Arthur, 398
Company of Our Lady of the Swan, 392
Company of St. George of the Grail-Templars, 392
Company of St. George's Shield, 391
Company of the Black Swan, 388
Company of the Buckle, 391
Company of the Dragon, 394
Company of the Frank Palace, 398, 400
Company of the Holy Spirit of Right Desire, 393
Company of the Knot, 394, 399
Company of the Old Love, 389
Company of the Pale Horse of the Star of Brunswick, 389
Company of the Round Table, 398–399, 400
Company of the Sickle, 389
Company of the Star, 393, 399
Company with the Lion, 389
Complete Biography of Yue Fei, 130
Complete Book of Miscellany, 200
The Complete Fencing-Master (Hope), 323
Complete System of Bayonet Exercise (Burton), 84
Compound bows, 787
and Central Asia, 789
Comprehensive Study of Documents, 69
Concert saloons, 818
Conde Koma, 52
Confraternal societies, 387–392
Confraternity of St. George, 391
Confraternity of the Virgin Mary, 395
Confucianism, 198, 789, 802
and Hapkido, 158
and Japan, 492–496
and Korea, 293–294, 598
and pattern practice, 137
and Vietnam, 548
Confucius, 67, 331, 532
and medicine, traditional Chinese, 330
Constantine, 148, 448, 449
Conversations of Qi, 66
Conversations of the States, 66
Cooper, Gary, 149–150
Copper tools, 787
Corpo fechado, 133
Corporation of Masters of the Noble Science of Defence, 323
Corps and Order of the Young Male Falcon, 388–389
Cortés, Hernán, 805
Cosimo de’ Medici, 377
The Cosmopolitan, 684
Coubertin, Pierre de, 477
Council of Trent, 807
Council of Troyes, 370
A Course of Calisthenics for Young Ladies (Beecher), 676
Crean, Patrick, 553
Critical Inquiry into Ancient Armour (Meyrick), 815–816
Crossbows, 192, 800, 806
Cross-dressing, 673, 676–677, 679
Crusade of Nicopolis, 397
Crusaders, women, 667–668
Crusades, the, 77–79
and orders of knighthood, religious, 268–276
and religion and spiritual development: Ancient Mediterranean and medieval West, 451–453
Cu Chulainn, 666, 667, 792, 798–799
Cuba, 10
Cudgel, 557, 559
Cudgeling, 801
Cudgeling, women’s, 669
Culin, Stuart, 604
Cultural diffusion, 821
Cultural revitalization movements and political conflict and the martial arts, 435–437
Currying divine favor and social uses of the martial arts, 532
Cut-and-thrust swords, 582–583
Czech Republic and wrestling and grappling: Europe, 715
Da Er Monastery, 807
Da Hong Quan (big red fist), 38
Da Xing Quan. See Monkey Boxing
Dabus, 803
Dacascos, Albert J., 222
Dae Woo company, 297
Daggers, 802
and Filipino martial arts, 428, 429
and gladiators, 142
Dai Longbang, 776
Dainippon Butokukai (Greater Japan Martial Virtue Association), 232, 252, 253, 480–481, 485, 697, 824
Daigoro Goh, 684
Daishakyōdō, 483
Daitō-ryū, 160–161
Daitō-ryū Aiki-jūjutsu, 157, 160–161, 730
Daitō-ryū jūjutsu, 12
Dalai Lama Vajradhara, 808
Dalton, Emmett, 152
Damié, 9
Damo, 120
Dan, the Duke of Zhou, 788
Dance, 417
and combat movements, 3–4
Dueling, 97–108, 807, 810
and stage combat, 551, 552
and swordsmanship, European Renaissance, 585, 587
and swordsmanship, Japanese, 595
and warfare, 101
and weapons, 97–98
See also Gunfighters; Masters of Defence; Swordsmanship, European medieval; Swordsmanship, European Renaissance; Swordsmanship, Japanese
Dueling, women’s, 669, 671, 672–673, 800
Dumas, Alexandre, 116, 520
Durand, Guillaume, 76
Durova, Nadezha, 675
Dustin, Hannah, 672
Dutch colonization, 435, 437–438
Dutch Guyana, 10
Duwa Maung, 632
Dylan, Bob, 153
Eagle Claw–style boxing, 16
Earp brothers
and dueling, 98
Earp, Morgan, 152
Earp, Wyatt, 150–151, 152
Earthly Branch horary astrology, 798
East India Company, 631
Easter Island, 403, 404
Eastern Counties Railway, 819
Eastwood, Clint, 152
Economy of Energy Principle, 160, 161
Educational works
and written texts: Japan, 767–768
Edward I, 280, 454
Edward II, 280, 319
Edward III, 280, 392–393, 398–399, 400
Edward of England, 81
Edwards, Charles, 679
Egami Shigeru, 246
Egenolph, Christian, 320
Egypt
and boxing, 45
Egyptian Middle Kingdom, 110
Egyptians, 410
Eichmann, Adolph, 307
Eight Trigrams sect, 29, 128
Eighteen martial arts, 68
Eighteen weapons, 67–68
Eight-trigram pattern, Chinese, 23
El Cid, 797
El libro del orden de cavaleria (Book of the order of knighthood), 276
Eleanor of Aquitaine, 80, 667–668, 799
Elizabeth I, 284
Elucidation of Shaolin Staff Methods (Cheng Zongyou), 130
Elwes, Carey, 555
Emblems
and knights, 281
Embryonic breathing, 492
Emei, 23
Emmanuel Philibert, Duke, 377
Emperado, Adriano, 219, 220, 221, 259
Emperado, DeChi, 220, 221
Emperado, Joe, 220, 221, 223
Emperado, Johnny “Bulldog,” 220
Emperor Qianlong Visits the South, 128, 460
Empty hands
and Filipino martial arts, 430
Encyclopaedia of Sport and Games, 737
Encyclopedia of Illustrated Martial Arts Manuals (Yi Dok-Mu), 299–300
England
and fighting guilds, 323–324
and masters of defence, 319
and military training, 83–85
and police training, 88
and wrestling, 89
English Civil War, 285
English literature
and chivalry, 81
Enguerrand VII, 394
Enter the Dragon, 616
Enterprise of St. George, 393
Enterprise of the Dragon, 389
Enterprise of the Prisoner’s Iron, 389
Enterprise of the White Lady with Green Shield, 389
Entertainment
and stage combat, 551, 555–556
and swordsmanship, 578
Épée, 109, 804, 810
Epic of Gilgamesh, 713
Epitaph for Wang Zhengnan (Huang Zongxi), 70, 127, 461
Epitoma Rei Militaris (Epitome of Military Matters) (Vegetius), 449
Equestrian tournaments, 817
Erhart, Gregor, 321
Esau, 788
Escrima
and Kajukenbo, 220, 222
See also Fencing; Philippines
Esgrimidores, 320
Fighting guilds and masters of defence, 319, 322, 323–324
FILA. See International Amateur Wrestling Federation
Filipino Constabulary, 89
Filipino martial arts (FMA) and competitions, 433
  history of, 422–426
  and instructors, 433
  and military training, 434
  and police training, 434
  and ranking system, 433
  and technique, 431–433
  and training, 432–433
  and weapons, 426–431
The Fine Art of Jujutsu (Watts), 685
Finger movements, 794
Fiore die Liberi, 810
"Fire-arm," 810
Firearms, 1, 83, 806, 810, 813
  and Europe, 116
  and Filipino martial arts, 431
  and Japan, 192, 809
  and military training, 83
First International Games, 822
First National Athletic Exhibition in Tokyo, 234, 824
Fish, Marion, 679
Fisher, King, 150, 151–152
Fitzgerald, J. Henry, 826
Fitzsimmons, Bob, 51, 680
Fitzsimmons, Rose, 680
Fitzstephen, William, 799
Five Ancestors, 39–40
Five Animal exercises, 16
Five Configurations, 790
Five Star, 621
Five weapons, 67
Flaherty, Martha, 676
Fleming, Ian, 828
Fleuret, 810
Flos Duellatorum (Flower of Battle), 321, 803
Flying Tigers, 632
Flynn, Errol, 553
FMA. See Filipino martial arts
Foil, 109
Folk belief, 123–124, 132–134
Folk hero legends, 129–132
Folklore in the martial arts, 123–135.
  See also Boxing, Chinese Shaolin;
  Capoeira; Ninjutsu; Political
  conflict and the martial arts; Silat
  Fonda, Henry, 152
Foot binding, 667, 796
Football, 27, 810
Footraces, 818
Ford, John, 151
Foreign Menace, 740
Forges, bellows-driven, 795
Form/xing/kata/pattern practice, 135–140
Former Han History, 299
The Former Nine Years War, 185
Former Nine Years War Picture Scroll, 191
Fort Benning, 55
Fox, Richard Kyle, 680, 821
Fox, Sir Malcolm, 85
France
  and military training, 83–84
  and savate, 519
  and stickfighting, 560–561
  and Vietnam, 634
  and wrestling, professional, 736
Francesco, Master, 320
Frankish caballarii, 263
Fraternitas, 387
Fratres de Caceres, 373
Frazier, William D., 826
Frederick I, 78
Frederick II, 78, 374, 453
Frederick III, 377, 391
Freedom fighters, 90
Freeman, Charles, 819
Freestyle wrestling, 718
French literature
  and chivalry, 81
French Order of the Star, 82
Frog boxing, 16
Froisart, Jean, 81
Frontinus, 670
Fu Xi, 618
Fudôchi shinmyôroku (Marvelous Power of Immovable Wisdom)
  (Takuan Sôhô), 494, 766–767
Fugitive slaves and political conflict and the martial arts, 435, 439–440
Fugner, Henry, 820
Fujian Monastery, 39
Fujibayashi Yasuyoshi, 812
Fujiwara family, 183, 186, 566
Fujiwara no Hirotugu, 184
Fukuchi Seiko, 291
Fukuno Hichiroemon, 201, 812
Fulcher of Chartres, 452
Funa Benkei, 420
Funakoshi Gichin, 91, 201, 234,
  235–236, 239, 241–242,
  245–246, 290, 768, 824
Funakoshi Yoshitaka, 236
Fundai, 188
Funeral games, 788
Funerary rituals
and social uses of the martial arts, 532–533
Further Biographies of Eminent
Monks (Dao Xuan), 457
Gaje, Leo T., Jr., 423
Gallery of Weapons, 822
Galton, Sir Francis, 679
Gama, 726
Games (Guts Muths), 816
Gang warfare, Japanese, 817
Gans, Joe, 823
Gardiner, Robert, 101
Garrett, Pat, 152
Garter Principal King of Arms, 167
Gaspar de Carvajal, 670
Gautier, Théophile, 672, 812
Ge Hong, 460, 745
Gefolgschaft, 73
Geisha, 671
Gekken, 478–479, 481, 824
General Service Medal, 676
Genkoki, 367
Genpei War, 18, 186, 566, 733
Geoffrey of Lotharingia, Duke, 452
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 799
Geoghegan, Owney, 680
George, Saint, 797
German tribes, 72
Germany, 112
Germanic states
and masters of defence, 320
Germanic tribes
and masters of defence, 318
Germanic warrior tribes, 111
Germanicus, 448
and dueling, 98, 105–106
and masters of defence, 319, 576–577
and military training, 83–84, 85–86
and stickfighting, 559
and swordsmanship, European
medieval, 576–577
and wrestling, professional, 736
Germans
and wrestling and grappling:
Europe, 715
Geronimo, 678
Gressalennne Librata (Tasso), 284
Gestapo
and training, 87
Ghazi Brotherhoods, 340
Ghost Dance Movement, 436–437
Ghost Dance, Native American, 133
Ghost Dance Shirts, 436–437
Ghurka Rifles, 632
Giganti, Nicoletto, 323
Gilgamesh, 338, 340
Gillem, Gladys, 740
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, 678
Ginga, 10
Gingering
and Filipino martial arts, 431–432
Ginowan Donchi, 287
Giocondo Stretto, 112
Girandoni, Bartolomeo, 815–816
Gladiatorial training. See
Kalarippayatu
Gladiators, 141–148, 790, 791
and training, 141–142, 147–148.
See also Kalarippayatu
See also Europe; Pankration;
Swordsmanship, European
medieval; Wrestling and
grappling: Europe
Glass Palace Chronicle, 633–634
Glickman, Rusty, 828
Glima, 113, 508, 716
Glove, Japanese, 20
Glyndwr, Owain, 802–803
Go, 798
Go In (Go Academy), 809
Gō Kenki, 237
Godai, Emperor, 187, 194, 517, 568
Godefroi de Bouillon, 398
God’s Army, 133
Godwin, Karl, 783
Gogarty, Deirdre, 688
Gōjū, 239, 248
Gōjū-kaï, 239
Gōjū-ryū, 235, 367
Gōjū-ryū Karate, 248
Gōjū-ryū Karate Bujutsu, 248
Golden Harvest, 828
Golden Pavilion, 196
Goldfinger (Fleming), 828
Goliath, 103–104
Golitsin family, 462
Gong, Kenny, 775, 778
Gong Xiangzhun, 812
Gong ci zhi shu, 65
Gongfu, 31, 66. See also Kung
fu/gungfu/gongfu
Goraksha, 796
Gorgeous George, 741
Gorin no sho (Five Elemental
Spheres) (Miyamoto Musashi), 765–766
Goshidô Kempô, 256
Gosudarstvenije Razvedivatelnije Upravlenije (GRU), 510–511
Gotch, Frank, 738
Gotch, Karl, 717, 742
Gottfried von Strassburg, 81
Gou (hook sword), 25
Gou Jian, 126, 689
Gou Zi, 818
Gracie, Carlos, 53–54, 55–56
Gracie, Gastão, 54
Gracie, Hélio, 54–55, 118
Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, 52–55, 829
and jûdô, 216
Gracie, Ronion, 55
Gracie, Royce, 54, 55
Grading system
and iaidô, 171
See also Ranking system
Grailly, Jehan de, 389
Grail-Templars, 392
Gran Simulacro (Great Representation/Description) (Ferro), 323
Granthavarimarmma cikitsa, 755
Grappling, 545, 634, 727–728, 829
and jûdô, 210
and Korea, 293
and Middle East, 338–339, 340
See also Wrestling and grappling: China; Wrestling and grappling: Europe; Wrestling and grappling: India; Wrestling and grappling: Japan
Grassi, Giacomo di, 555, 582
Great Bow, 192
Great Britain
and bows, 787
and Burma, 631–633
and Manipur, 638–639
and women in the martial arts, 684–688
and wrestling, professional, 735
Great Gama, 89, 738
Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 30
Great Theater of Hanoi, 652
Great Tôgô, the, 741
Greater East Asian War, 822
Greater Japan Martial Virtue Association, 480–481
Greco-Roman rules
and wrestling, professional, 737
Greco-Roman wrestling, 718
Greece, ancient, 110–111
and boxing, 45
and masters of defence, 318
and olympics, 417
and pankration, 410–416
and performing arts, 417–419
and religion and spiritual development: Ancient Mediterranean and medieval West, 447–448
and war dances, 3
Greek fire, 793
Greek mythology
and boxing, 45
The Green Hornet, 314, 828
Grendel’s mother, 667
Groin cups, 825
Groot, Huigh de, 810, 814
Grose, Francis, 815–816
Group solidarity
and social uses of the martial arts, 533
GRU. See Gosudarstvenije Razvedivatelnije Upravlenije
Grubmeier, Fred, 739
Grundies, Mrs., 687
Guadeloupe, 10
Guam, 403. See also Pacific Islands
Guang Di, 809
Guang Yu, 809
Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, 16
Guardians, temple, 794
Guards
women as, 671
Guì Chen, 799
Guilds, 387, 391
Guillaume de Lorris, 81
Gun club, 804
Gun (staff), 25
The Gunfighter, 151
The Gunfighter (King), 152
Gunfighters, 149–155, 820
and knights, 153
and weapons, 820
See also Dueling
Gung fu, 202–203, 785
Gunki, 591
Gunner, 810
Gunners, 802
Gunpowder, 82, 802, 810
Guo Yunshen, 23, 130, 776
Guomindang, 66
Guoshu, 66
Guoshuguan, 66
Guo Yunshen, 23
Gushi, 242
Gusukuma, 242
Guts Muths, Johann, 816  
Gymnasia, 819  
Prussian-style, 816  
and wrestling and grappling: India, 720, 722–723  
Gymnastics, 817, 820  
and military training, 84, 86  
Gymnastics for the Young (Guts Muths), 816  
Gymnastics, Japanese, 823  
Gymnastics, women’s, 679, 818  
Gymnasts, 808  
Gyokko-ryû Koshijutsu, 733  
Hakmu, 730  
Hakmu-ryû Koshijutsu, 733  
Hackenschmidt, George, 216, 738  
Haedong Chukchi (East Sea Annals)  
(Choi Yong-nyón), 604  
Hagakure (Hidden Among the Leaves)  
(Yamamoto Tsunetomo), 812–813  
Hagana, 306–307  
Hakama, 15, 20  
Hakoko. See Wrestling, Hawaiian  
Hakunin Ekaku, 492  
Hatsumi Masaaki, 732, 829  
Hatashi, Teruo, 290  
Hattan, Etta, 679  
Have Gun, Will Travel, 153  
Hawaii, 403, 404, 406–409  
and arrow cutting, 409  
and boxing, 408  
and Kajukenbo, 219  
and Lua, 406–407  
and weapons, 407–408  
and Wrestling, 408–409  
See also Pacific Islands  
Hawaiian Kenpô Karate, 259  
Hawks, Joe  
Hay, Lord, 672  
Hayashizaki Jinsuke, 807  
Hayes, Stephen, 733, 829  
Headgear, boxing, 824  
Headington, J. R., 678  
Healing arts  
and Filipino martial arts, 431–432  
Health  
and taijiquan, 621, 627  
Health and Strength, 738  
Heaven and Earth Society, 29, 128, 460, 814. See also Hong League; Triad Society  
Hebei style, 130  
Heckler, Richard Strozzi, 91  
Heian Shrine, 252  
Heihô, 798  
Heibô kadenso (Our Family’s Tradition of Swordsmanship)  
(Yagyû Munenori), 765

Index 855
Heihô michi shirube (Guide to the Way of Swordsmanship) (Shirai Toru Yoshinori), 492, 795
Heihô sanjûgoka jô (Thirty-Five Initiations into Swordsmanship) (Miyamoto Musashi), 765
Heiji Conflict, 186
Heike Monogatari (Tale of the Heike), 591, 660, 693, 761
Heishiki kyoren, 823
Heishiki taisô (school gymnastics), 823
Heki Danjô, 19
Heki-ryû, 19
Heller with a Gun (L’Amour), 153
Henan temple, 37
Henmi Kiyomitsu, 18
Henmi-ryû, 18
Henning, Stanley, 121
Henry II, 80, 667
Henry V, 167
Henry VIII, 324, 445, 808
Henry of Grosmont, 392
Henry the Fowler, King, 797
Hequan (crane boxing), 38
Heralds, 162–168
and knights, 162–166, 279
See also Chivalry; Europe; Knights; Orders of knighthood, religious; Orders of knighthood, secular
Hereward the Wake, 797
Hermitages, 803
Herodotus, 664–665, 790
Herrick, Eugen, 483–484
Heygster, Wilhelm, 738
Hi, kan, chû (fly, pierce, center), 19
Hickey, William, 673–674, 815
Hickman, Morgan, 152, 154
Hickock, James Butler (Wild Bill), 149–150, 152
Hidari gomon, 365
Higa, 248
Higa Seiko, 290
Higa Yochoku, 290
Higaonna Kanryô, 243–244, 246–247. See also Higashionna Kanryô
Higashi, Katsukuma, 738
Higashionna Kamesuke, 234–235
Higashionna Kanryô, 237, 242, 243–244, 244–245, 246–247, 366. See also Higaonna Kanryô
Higashionna Morio, 248
Highland Games, 818
Hikiwake, 20
Hill, Harry, 677
Hill, Sam, 685
Himantes, 45
Himiko, Queen, 181
Hinatsu Shigetaka, 731, 762
Hindu warriors, 793
Hinduism, 463, 470
and silat, 529, 543
See also Brahmanic Hinduism
Hindus, 425
Hipkiss, James, 89
Hirase Mitsuo, 766
Hirobumi Ito, Prince, 294
Hirohito, 234, 247, 290
“His Practice in Two Books” (Saviolo), 322–323
“His Treatise on the Science of Arms with a Philosophical Dialogue” (Agrippa), 322
His True Arte of Defence (Grassi), 323, 555
Historia Regum Britanniae (The History of the Kings of Britain) (Geoffrey of Monmouth), 799
Hitler Youth, 89
HMS Sandwich, 673
Ho Ah-Kay, 814
Ho Chi Minh, 441, 653–654
Hobbs, William, 554
Hoffman, Bob, 826
Hôgen Conflict, 186
Hôgen Monogatari (Tale of Hôgen), 591
Hohenzollern, Albrecht von, 375
Holck, Joseph, 219–220, 221
Holkar, Richard Shivaji Rao, 88–89
Holliday, Doc, 150
Holmes, Sherlock, 559, 684
Holocaust, 307
Holsters, 819
quick-draw, 826, 828
Holy Grail, 81
Home Guard, 89
Homer, 45, 532, 534, 788
Homeric epics, 419
Hon Hsing Athletic Club, 826
Honchô bugei shôden (Hinatsu Shigetaka), 731, 762
Hong Beisi, 794
Hong Fu, 667, 796
Hong (Hung)-gar, 548
Hong League, 29, 39, 812. See also Heaven and Earth Society; Triad Society
Hong Xian, 667
Hongquan (Hong Boxing), 29
Hongjiaquan. See Hung Gar
Honinbo Sansha, 809
Honor
and dueling, 99–100
and social uses of the martial arts,
533–534
Honorable Sun, 789
Honourable East India Company, 677
Hoover, J. Edgar, 87
Hope, Sir William, 323
Hoplomachiae (armed contests), 791
Horse racing
and Mongolia, 344, 348–349
Hosokawa family, 187
Hospitallers, 79, 377–378
Hou Hanshu (The History of the
Latter Han), 181
How to Fight Tough (Dempsey and
Menke), 90
Howlitt, David, 795
Hsing i ch’uan. See Xingyiquan
Htoo Brothers, 133
Hua Mulan, 691, 792
Hua Tuo, 16, 791
Huang Di. See Yellow Emperor
Huang Zongxi, 29, 70, 121, 127, 461
Hugh of St. Victor, 798
Hui rebels, 796
Hula, 407
Hulk Hogan, 741, 742
Hulkman, 741
Hullyon Togam (General Directorate
for Military Training), 808
Human Life magazine, 150
Humayun, 805
Huna religion, 800
Hundred Years’ War, 81
Hung Gar (hongjiaquan), 34
Hung gar wushu, 817
Hungarian Society of St. George, 392
Hunters, women, 670
Huo Yuanjia, 824
Huron Indians
and dueling, 103
Huyen Lallong, 637
Hwang Ki, 296, 297, 298
Hwarang, 293, 793
Hwarang-dó, 157, 609–610
Hydne, 664
Hyfield, Hannah, 673
Hyôhô, 58

I Ching. See Yijing
Iaidô, 169–173, 594, 807
and grading system, 171
and technique, 171
and weapons, 171
See also Japan; Kendô; Sword,
Japanese; Swordsmanship,
Japanese
Iberian Reconquista, 373
IBF. See International Boxing
Federation
Ibn Battuta, 670
Ideograms, karate, 823
IDF. See Israeli Defense Forces
Idi Amin, 91
Iha Fuyu, 804
Ijûin Yashichirô, 234, 289
Ikatan Pencak Silat Indonesia (IPSI),
529, 827
Ikebana, 595
IKF. See International Kendô
Federation
Ikhuwaan-al-Muslimeen (Muslim
Brotherhood), 338, 562
Il Duello (Marozzo), 322
The Iliad (Homer), 532, 534, 788
Ilmu, 529, 543
Imagawa army, 189
Imjin War, 598
“In Praise of the New Knighthood”
(Bernard of Clairvaux), 370
Inaka Sôji (Countrified Zhuangzi)
(Issi Chozan), 766
India, 88, 173–178, 490
and performing arts, 420–421, 422
and religion and spiritual
development, 462–471
and thang-ta, 637
and training area, martial arts, 644,
645–646
and varma ati, 647
and wrestling and grappling,
727–719
and written texts, 749–758
See also Kalarippayattu; Religion
and spiritual development: India;
Thang-ta; Varma ati; Wrestling
and grappling: India; Written
texts: India
Indian National Congress, 723
The Individual Swimmer, 513
Indonesia, 542–543
history of, 542
and political conflict and the
martial arts, 435, 437–438
and silat, 542–543
See also Southeast Asia
Initiation documents
and written texts: Japan, 763–764
Injo, King, 598
Inner alchemy, 24
Inner Mongolia
and wrestling, 346
See also Mongolia
Innocent III, 453
Inoki, Antonio, 51
Inosanto, Dan, 423, 430
Intangible Cultural Asset, 603
Internal Chinese martial arts. See
External vs. internal Chinese
martial arts
Internal School, 29, 121. See also
External vs. internal Chinese
martial arts
International Amateur Sambo
Federation (FIAS), 513
International Amateur Wrestling
Federation (FILA), 511
International Boxing Federation (IBF),
354
International Capoeira Angola
Foundation, 64
International Federation of Body
Builders, 826
International Guild of Danse de Rue
Savate, 561
International Guild of Savate Danse
de Rue, 522
International Hapkido Federation, 157
International Judo Federation, 215
International Kendô Federation (IKF),
253
International Krav Maga Federation,
310
International Martial Arts Federation,
236
International Olympic Committee,
478, 768
International Shuai-chiao Association,
709
International Taekwondo Federation
(ITF), 298, 829
Invented tradition
and social uses of the martial arts,
534
Invulnerability, magical
and boxing, Chinese, 133
IPSI. See Ikatan Pencak Silat
Indonesia
Iran
and wrestling, 341–343
Ireland
and military training, 799
and stickfighting, 559–560
and wrestling, professional, 736
Iron
and Africa, 1–2
spread of, 1
Iron smithing
and Africa, 1
Iroquois Indians, 811
and dueling, 103
Ishin-denshin, 137
Islam, 368, 425
and Africa, 7
Islamic Revolution of 1979, 343
Islamic Sufism, 529, 543
Ismail, Shah, 342–343
Ismail I, 804
Isogai, 201
Isogai Jirozaemon, 812
Israel, 46, 118, 306, 307
and kray maga, 343–344
Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), 306,
307, 343
Israel Mossad, 307
Issai Chozan, 495, 766
Itagaki, 693
Italian Masters of Defence, 111
Italy
and masters of defence, 320, 321
and wrestling and grappling:
Europe, 711–715
ITF. See International Taekwondo
Federation
Ito, Tokugoro, 738
Ito, Tokukô, 823
Ito, Yasutsune, 237, 244, 245–246
Ittôsai sensei kenpô sho (Kotôda
Toshisada), 766
Ituso, 234
Ivanhoe (Scott), 817
Iwah, 233, 242, 289
Izaza Chôsai Ienao, 731
Jab, 48
Jacket wrestling, 508
Jackson, Andrew, 99, 107
Jacob
and wrestling, 788
Jacobs, Mary Phelps, 687
Jaegerstocken, 560
Jaguarina, 679
Jaguar-Paw, King, 792
Jahangir, Emperor, 671
Jahn, Friedrich Ludwig, 476, 817
James I, 285
James, Frank, 153
James, Henry, 678
James, Jesse, 153, 535
James, William, 482
Jana Ueekata, 364–365
Jang Baek San, 600
Jang In Mok, 159
Janissaries
and training, 807
Japan, 179–199
and Aikidô, 12–16
and archery, 18–21
and battle, engaging in, 193
Brazilian jiu-jitsu, 52
cultural revolution in, 475
geography of, 179–180
Hapkidô, 158–159
high culture, 196–198
Iaidô, 169–173
Kobudô, Okinawan, 288–289
Korea, influence on, 291–292,
294–296
military, 818
military training, 83, 85, 90, 91
Okinawa, 435, 439
Olympics, 478
performing arts, 420
Philippines, 426
police training, 87–89, 821
politics, 181–190
ranking system, 445–447
religion and spiritual
development, 472–501
samurai, 514–519
society, 181–190
sports, 481–482
and training area, martial arts,
644–645, 646
warfare, 179–180, 181–190
warriors, traits of, 193–196
weapons, 60, 190–193
women in the martial arts,
692–705
wrestling and grappling,
727–735
written texts, 758–774
See also Aikidô; Archery, Japanese;
Budô, bujutsu, and bugei;
Japanese martial arts, Chinese
influences on; Jûdô; Karate, Japanese;
Kendô; Kenpô; Kû/qî;
Koryû bugei; Ninjutsu; Religion
and spiritual development: Japan;
Samurai; Sword, Japanese;
Swordsmanship, Japanese;
Warrior monks, Japanese/Sôhei;
Wrestling and grappling: Japan;
Written texts: Japan
Japan Foundation, 253
Japan Karate Association (JKA), 91,
236, 246
Japan Sumô Association, 730
Japan Times, 698
Japanese Amateur Athletic
Association, 478
Japanese Budô Association, 485
Japanese Education Association, 478
Japanese martial arts, Chinese
influence on, 199–202. See also
Japan; Jûdô; Karate, Japanese;
Karate, Okinawan; Kenpô;
Okinawa; Wrestling and
grappling: China; Wrestling and
grappling: Japan
Japanese Physical Education
Association, 768
Jason and the Argonauts, 788
Java, 133
Jeanne d’Arc (Joan the Archer), 670
Jeet Kune Do (JKD), 46, 202–210,
222, 434, 785
history of, 203–204
philosophy of, 206–208
and training, 205–206
See also Yongchun (wing chin)
Jehan, Duke, 393
Jehan II, 393
Jehan of Bourbon, Duke, 389
Jehan “the Good,” 280
Jenkins, Tom, 738
Jerusalem History (Fulcher of
Chartres), 452
Jesuits, 806
Jesus, 81
Jet Li, 43
Jhoon Rhee, 611
Ji Han-Jae, 157, 159, 160, 296–297
Ji Jike, 775
Ji Longfeng, 775
Ji Xiao Xin Shu
(New Text of
Practical Tactics) (Qi Jiguang), 83
Jian (Two-edged sword), 25
Jiang Fa, 620
Jiangwu, 65
Jie quandao. See Jeet Kune Do
Jie Xuan, 745
Jiefa (escaping), 28
Jigen-ryû, 234
Jigen-ryû Bô Odori (Staff Dances),
233
Jihad
and Africa, 7
Jiji, 65
Jikishin Kage-ryû Naginata-dô
and women, 698–699
Jim Crockett Promotions, 742
Jimmu, Emperor, 18
Jin Ridi, 706
Jin Shengtan, 802
Jin Wu Athletic Association, 824
Jing qi, 262
Jinnaluo, King, 127
Jinshin War, 183
Jixiao Xinshu (New Book of Effective
Discipline), 294, 598
Jixiao Xinshu (New Text of Practical Tactics) (Qi Jiguang), 807
JKA. See Japan Karate Association
JKD. See Jeet Kune Do
Joan, Saint, 670
Jōgo (match or game), 8
Jōgo do pau, 560
John Bull Society, 726
John the Almoner, Saint, 371
John the Baptist, 371
John XXIII, 79
Johnson, Jack, 53
Johnson, Samuel, 814
Jōmyō Meishū, 660
Jongjo, King, 299
Journey to the West (Yu), 16
Joust, the, 282, 284
Jousting, women’s, 667, 670
Jū jitsu, 161
Jūbiabā (Amado), 62–63
“Judith,” 667
Jūdō, 15, 199, 200–201, 210–217, 484, 485, 605, 732, 734, 823, 824, 825, 829
and Kajukenbo, 220, 222
and the Olympics, 213, 215
and police training, 87
and ranking system, 445–446, 822
and Russia, 510
and sambo, 511–512
and Soviet Union, 88
and sports, 213
and technique, 213–214, 215
tournaments, 825
and weight divisions, 828
See also Japanese martial arts, Chinese influences on; Wrestling and grappling: Japan
Jūdō kyōhan (Judo Teaching Manual)
(Yokoyama Sakujirō and Ōshima Eisuke), 768
Jūdō, women’s, 684–685, 828
Jueli, 199
Jūjutsu, 12, 28, 42, 200–201,
and capoeira, 63
and Kajukenbo, 222
and kenpō, 256
Jūjutsu ryūha, 211
Jūjutsu taiseiroku (Perfecting Flexibility Skills) (Shibugawa Tokifusa), 730, 766
Jun Fan, 785
Jun Fan Gung Fu, 209
Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do, 209
Jung Ki Kwan, 157
Junius Brutus Pera, 790
Kabayama Junichi, 246
Kabuki, 595
Kabuki theater, 420
Kachin style, 635–636
Kadja, 10
Kai, 20
Kaidu, King, 708
Kajidor, 177
Kajukenbo, 219–224
and attire, 220–221
and ranking system, 221
and technique, 222–223, 224
and training, 223
See also Kenpō
Kajukenbo Self-Defense Institute (KSDI), 220, 221
Kajukenbo System, 259
Kakugi, 829
Kal, 321
Kalari vidya, 754
Kalarippayattu, 175–176, 225–231, 421, 798
and technique, 226–227, 228–230
and training, 228, 229
and training area, 644
and varma ati, 647–648, 650
and warfare, 225–226
and written texts: India, 753–756, 757
See also India; Religion and spiritual development: India; Varma ati; Written texts: India
Kalarippayattu (Balakrishnan), 757
Kalarippayattu (Malayalam), 757
Kali, 423, 560, 809. See also Philippines
Kalinda, 9
Kalistenie (Clia), 676
Kama Sutra (Aphorisms on Love)
(Vatsayana), 792
Kamakura bakufū, 186–187
Kamehameha I, 406, 409
Kanagusuku, 242
Kanami, 196
Kang, 642
Kanga Teruya, 233, 241, 366
Kangxi, Emperor, 39, 708
Kannu, Emperor, 184
Kanō Jigorō, 52, 201, 210–215, 220,
Index 861
Ki, 12, 13, 335–336
Ki/qi, 260–262. See also Aikidô;
External vs. internal Chinese
martial arts; Medical systems,
traditional Chinese; Meditation;
Religion and spiritual
development: China; Religion and
spiritual development: Japan
Kickboxing, 43, 829
and Boxe Française, 521
See also Muay Thai
Kicking, 406
and Middle East, 338
Ki-Kongo, 8
Kim Jung Ho, 600, 602
Kim Ke, 548–549, 815
Kim Moo-woong, 159
Kim Mu Hyun, 296
Kim, Richard, 675
Kim Yun Chae, 600, 602
Kimono, 20
Kimura, Masahiko, 54
Kina, 248
King, Henry, 152
King Henry VI (Shakespeare), 557
King of the Great Wa, 181
King's African Rifles, 91
Kinjo Hiroshi, 291
Kinei budô bunken mokuroku,
759
Kirisutokyô to bushidô (Uemura
Masahisa), 479–480
Kirmpinar tournament, 801
Kise Fusei, 246
Kiso Yoshinaka, 693, 733
Kita Noh, 420
Kitano Shrine, 197
Kito-ryû, 42, 211
Kito-ryû Kenpô Stele, 201
Kiyowara family, 185
Kleitomachos, 790
Klibanarioi, 263
KMT. See National People’s Party
Knighthood
and initiation ceremony, 75–76
See also Orders of knighthood,
religious; Orders of knighthood,
secular
Knighthood, European, 73–82
Knighthood of Christ of Livonia, 374
Knighthly Order of St. George, 377, 391
Knights, 111–112, 263–285,
790–791, 817
and armor, 164–165, 267,
276–277, 281, 282
and chivalry, 268, 284–285
and Christianity, 267, 269
and dubbing, 797
and emblems, 281
and gunfighters, 153
and heralds, 162–166, 279
and high classic knighthood,
278–283
and late classic knighthood,
283–284
and masters of defence, 318
and military codes, 268
and orders of knighthood, religious,
368–369
and postclassic knighthood,
284–285
and preclassic knighthood, 266–278
and protoknighthood, 264–266
and samurai, 516
and seals, 269
and soldiers, 263–264
and swords, 267
and titles, 271–272
and tournaments, 76–77, 268,
275–276, 282, 285
and vassals, 267–268
and warfare, 263–264, 281–282,
281–282, 368
and weapons, 278–279
See also Chivalry; Europe; Herald;
Orders of knighthood, religious;
Orders of knighthood, secular;
Religion and spiritual
development: ancient
Mediterranean and medieval
West; Swordsmanship, European
medieval
Knights of Christ, 370
Knights of Columbus, 89
Knights of Malta, 79, 376
Knights of Mansa Musa, 801
Knights of Rhodes, 79, 375–376
Knights of St. Catherine of Mount
Sinai, 387
Knights of St. Mark of Venice, 387
Knights of St. Thomas, 375
Knights of the Bath of England, 387
Knights of the Golden Fleece, 82, 165
Knights of the Golden Spur of the
Lateran Palace, 387
Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, 387
Knights of the Temple, 368, 374, 376
and warfare, 368
See also Templars
Knights Templars, 36, 79
Knives, 805
and Filipino martial arts, 429
Knocking and kicking, 10
Kunishi Yasuhiro, 234, 290
KO (knock-out), 48
and Filipinos, 429
Knights Templars, 36, 79
Knives, 805
and Filipino martial arts, 429
Knocking and kicking, 10
Kunishi Yasuhiro, 234, 290
KO (knock-out), 48
862 Index
Kung Fu, 66, 153, 314
Kuniba Shiyogo, 290
Kuntao, 425, 531, 543
Kuntaw, 720
Kusanku, 242, 289, 366
Kushti, 215
Kwoon. See Training area/Training site
Kyan Chôtoku, 242, 245–246
Kyniska, 665
Kyôda Jûhatsu, 247
Kyôgen, 197
Kyôgen theater, 196
Kyokushinkai Karate, 296
Kyû, 15
Kyuba no michi, 796
Kyûdô, 18–21, 824. See also Archery, Japan
Kyûdô-gi, 20
Kyujanggak research institute, 598
Kyujutsu, 824
Kyûsho, 42
Kyushu, 41
La Bounty, Steve
La canne d’armes, 556, 560–561
La canne de combat, 519, 560–561
La Canne et Baton, 521–522, 560
La Destreza, 115
La Lutte Française, 737
Laamb, 11
Lacu castle, 371
Lacy, Mary, 673
Ladja, 9–10
Lai Ka, 545
Lai Qidai, 808
Lake, Stuart, 150–151
Lamand, Emile, 519–520
Lammas, 787
L’Amour, Louis, 153
Lamprécht, Master, 320
Lan Ding Yuan, 813
Lancelot (Chrétien), 81
Lanna Boxing Camp, 352
Lao Leitrît, 51
Laos, 542
Laozi, 618, 627
Lapu-Lapu, 429
Laquearius, 144
Lassos

and gladiators, 144
Last Supper, 81
Lathi, 557
The Latter Three Years War, 185
Latter Three Years War Picture Scroll, 191
Lauper, Cyndi, 741
The Law of Nations (Vattel), 814
Lay military associations, 385
Lay military societies, 387–391
Lay of Igor’s Campaign, 716
Le Roman de la Rose (Guillaume de Lorris), 81
Le Sang, 654, 656
League of Nations, 306
Leaping dances, 810
Leather, E. Hartley, 90
Lebkommer, Hans, 320
LeBroucher, Hubert, 521
Leckuechner, Johannes, 321
Lecour, Charles, 520–521
Lecour, Hubert, 520, 818
Lecour, Jean Antoine Charles, 818
Lee, Bruce, 43, 46, 202–209, 222, 314, 434, 785, 828
Lee Joo Bang, 160
Lee Jun Fan, 209
Lee Won-Kuk, 296
Legalism, 789
Legends, 123
folk hero, 129–132
and gunfighters, 152–153
migratory, 127–129
of Shaolin Monastery, 126–127
and silat, 525
Lehmann, Helmut, 87
Lei Tai, 43
Leland, George A., 478
LeMay, Curtis, 91
Leningrad Sport Committee, 88, 825
Lent, 801
Leone, John, 259
Leone, Sergio, 152
Lerdrit, 350
Leslie, Hattie, 679, 822
Lethwei, 634–635
Leung, Raymond, 826
Leung Ting, 785
Lewis, Ann, 679, 822
Lewis, Ed “Strangler,” 739, 824
Lewis, J. Lowell, 8
Lewis, Joe, 259, 828–829
Lewis, Ted “Kid,” 823
Li Cunyi, 23–24, 130, 776
Li Lao Nan, 776
Li Luoneng, 130, 776
Li Shimin, 39. See also Taizong,
Magellan, Ferdinand, 426, 427, 805

Magic
and boxing, Chinese, 133
and cultural revitalization movements, 437
Magical powers
and weapons, 2
The Magnificent Seven, 151, 153
Mahabharata, 45, 173, 421, 463, 713, 721, 750
Mahaffy, John, 821
Mahahiki festival, 826
Maiden of Yue, 16, 126, 689, 691, 746, 747
Mainz, archbishop of, 806–807
Mair, Paulus, 323
Makilhi, 408
Makila, 556
Malayalam, Sreedharan Nayar, 757
Malaysia, 133, 438–439, 543–544
and bersilat, 524, 530, 543–544
See also Southeast Asia
Malayuddhakrama, 754
Malkambh, 176
Mallapurana (Old Story of the Caste of Wrestlers from Modhera), 721, 800
Malloy, Dallas, 688
Malone, Karl, 742
The Malone Kenpô Karate Association
Malone, Ron
Mamar, Romeo C., Sr., 427
Mamar, Romeo “Nono,” 433
Manasollasa, 721
Mandan Indians
and dueling, 102
Mangra, Lord, 350
Mani, 10
Manipuri, 637–639, 642
Mann, Anthony, 152
Mansa, Cobra, 64
Mansenshûkai (All Rivers Gather in the Sea), 766
Mantra, 175
Manuals
archery, 806
fencing, 320
military, 762–763
swordsmanship, 801
technical, 317–318
wrestling, 800
See also individual manuals
Manuscript I.33, 670, 801
Mao Zedong, 42, 66, 201, 827–828
Maori, 405
Mar, Ramona, 826
Marche, Olivier de la, 556
Marîci, 490
Marles, Jack, 823
Marmmabhyasam, 754
Marmmacikitsa, 754
Marmmadarpanam (Malayalam), 757
Marmmanidanam, 755
Marmmaprayogam, 754
Marmmayogam, 756
Marozzo, Antonio Achille, 322, 581, 805
Marriage
and chivalry, 80
Mars, 111
Martial Compendium (Tang Shunzhi), 747
Martin, Thomas Byam, 676
Martinez High School, 686
Martinique
and ladjia, 9–10
Marvin, Lee, 151
Marx, Groucho, 90
Masakado, 185
Masashige, Kusonoki, 194
Masatoshi, Nakayama, 91
Masked Marvel, 739
Massachusetts Bay Colony, 809
Massage, 407
Masters of Defence, 317–327, 445
and knights, 318
and stage combat, 551
and stickfighting, 557
and swordsmanship, European medieval, 576–577
and swordsmanship, European Renaissance, 581–582, 586
See also Chivalry; Europe; Knights; Swordsmanship, European medieval; Swordsmanship, European Renaissance; Wrestling and grappling: Europe
Masterson, Bat, 150, 154
Matayoshi Shinkô, 290, 291
Matchlock
and China, 68
Mather, Cotton, 672
Mato, 20
Matsumura, 242
Matsumura Nabe, 246
Matsumura Sôkon, 233–234, 242, 243, 244, 245, 288–289, 366, 675
Maupin, Julie La, 672, 812
Maurice, Emperor, 449
Maximilian, Emperor, 377
Maximilian I, 391
May Day, 801
Maybray, John C., 738
McCloy, Charles, 825
McLaglan, Leo, 687
McLaury brothers, 98
McMahon, Vince, Jr., 741
McShane, Dangerous Danny, 741
McSweeney, John
McVey, Sam, 51
Mechanics’ Pavilion, 680
Medical profession, 35
Medical theory
and k‘i/qi, 261
Medicine, traditional Chinese,
327–325
and training and martial arts,
332–333
See also Boxing, Chinese; K‘i/qi;
Religion and spiritual
development: China
Medieval tournaments
and dueling, 105
Meditation, 175, 335–338, 799
and q‘i, 262
See also Baguazhang (pa kua
ch‘uan); K‘i/qi; Medicine,
traditional Chinese; Religion and
spiritual development: China;
Religion and spiritual
development: India; Religion and
spiritual development: Japan;
Taijiquan (tai chi ch‘uan); Written
texts: China; Written texts: India;
Written texts: Japan; Xingyi
q‘uan (hsing i ch‘uan)
Meditations, moving, 792
Mehrunissa, 671
Meihuaquan, 548
Meiji Restoration, 252, 253, 439,
518, 818
Meine Selbsthilfe Jiu Jitsu für Damen
(My Self-Help Jiu Jitsu for
Ladies) (Cherpillod), 685
Meitei, 638
Mendoza, Daniel, 46
Meng Zi, 789
Menke, Frank G., 90
Menkyo-kaiden, 303
Menon, K. Sankara Mudavannattil,
227
Mercado, José Rizal y, 822
Mercer, Marvin, 51
Merchant guilds, 387
Mestemaker, Robert, 90
Mestre Nô, 440
Metal refining, 787
Metal spear points
and Africa, 1
Metallurgy, 795
and weapons, 2
Metaphysics
and Filipino martial arts, 431–432
Meyer, Joachim, 322, 323, 581
Meyrick, Samuel Rush, 815–816
Meyrowitz, Robert, 829
Mézières, Philippe de, 397
Mi Zhong Lo Han (Lost Track
Lohan), 38
Middle East, 338–344. See also
Africa; Krav maga; Pankration;
Stickfighting, non-Asian;
Wrestling and grappling: China;
Wrestling and grappling: Europe
Middle Passage, 11
Migratory legends, 127–129, 128
Miki Nisaburō, 234
Mikkyo Buddhism
and meditation, 336
Miles Christi, 269
Military
Chinese, women in, 689–690
and Chinese martial arts, 67, 68–69
and dueling, 104
Japanese, 818
and knighthood, 279–280
and sambo, 510–511
and savate, 522
and wrestling and grappling: China,
706
and written texts: China, 745–746
Military Academy of Tran Quoc
Tuan, 654
Military Athletic Club, 632
Military Classics (Wujing Zongyao),
68
Military close-order drill, 809
Military codes, 822
and knights, 268
Military drills (heishiki kyoren), 823
Military religious orders, 368–377.
See also Orders of knighthood,
religious
Military societies, 388
perpetual and temporary subclasses
of, 388–390
See also Lay military associations;
Secular military associations
Military training, 83–92
and Austria, 83–86
and bayonets, 83–84, 85–86
and boxing, 85, 86–87
and boxing, Chinese Shaolin, 83
and calisthenics, 84

Index 867
Military training, continued
and China, 86
and England, 83–85
and Europe, 83
and exercises, 83–85
and Filipino martial arts, 434
and firearms, 83
and France, 83–84
and Germany, 83–84
and gymnastics, 84
and Ireland, 799
and Nazis, 85
and Qi Jiguang, 83
and sexual desire, 85
and social uses of the martial arts, 534–535
and stickfighting, 557
and Sweden, 84
and swords, 83, 85
and Uganda, 91
and United States, 90
and World War I, 85–86
and World War II, 89
and wrestling, 85
See also Combatives: Military and police martial art training
Military treatise, 808–809
Miller Brothers, 739
Miller, “Deacon” Jim, 150
Miller, Ernest, 743
Miller, James, 557
Milo Bar-Bell Company, 823
Milo of Kroton, 789
Mimura Kotoku, 694
Min, Queen, 294
Minamoto, 185
Minamoto clan, 566, 799
Minamoto family, 184–185, 186
Minamoto no Yoshitomo, 186
Minamoto Yoritomo, 19, 194, 516, 517
Minamoto Yoshimitsu, 732
Minamoto Yoshitsune, 194, 660
Miners, Chinese, 819
Ming dynasty, 39–41
Ming History (Zhang Tingyu), 28
Ministry of Education, 478–479, 481, 482, 484, 485, 823–824, 829
Mishra, Sharat Kumar, 89, 738
Mitamura Kenyō, 697
Mitamura Tākeko, 697
Mitose, James M., 220, 257–259
Mitsuhide, Akechi, 194
Miura, 201
Miura Yojiemon, 812
Miyagi Anichi, 248
Miyagi Chōjun, 234, 238, 242, 246, 247–248, 367
Miyahira Katsuya, 290
Miyake, Taro, 738
Miyamoto Musashi, 762, 765
Miyamoto Musashi (Yoshikawa Eiji), 762
Miyazato Eiichi, 248, 290
Mochihito, Prince, 186
Mochizuke Moritoki, 671
Mochizuki Chiyo, 671
Mo-gar, 548
Mohiuddin, Gulam, 89, 738
Mokomoko, 669. See also Boxing, Hawaiian
Momoyama Castle, 189, 197
Monarchical orders, 392–400
Monastic rules, 369–371
Monasticism
and orders of knighthood, religious, 368–370
Mondt, Joseph “Toots,” 739, 824
Monetary gain
and social uses of the martial arts, 535
Moneymaker, Rick, 42
Mongolia, 344–350. See also China; Wrestling and grappling: China
Mongols, 186–187
Monkey Boxing, 16, 459–460, 818
Monkey King, 818
Monks, 795
and khora, 797
Monks, fighting, 457–460. See also Warrior monks, Japanese/sōhei
Monks, Vishaivite, 794
Monks, warrior. See Warrior monks, Japanese/sōhei
Mononobe family, 183
Monte, Pierre, 716
Monte, Pietro, 112–113
Montjoie King of Arms, 167
Morgan, Sadie, 680
Morikawa Kozan, 811
Moro-Moro, 423
Moro-Moro plays, 803
Mortal Kombat II, 65
Mortensen, Clara, 740
Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears, 513
Moshigiwa Ire, 290
Mother Ross, 672
Motives
and dueling, 99–100
Moto, Mr., 741
Motobu Chōki, 234, 242, 246, 247, 257, 258
868 Index
Motobu Chôyû, 258, 365
Motte, Mademoiselle de la, 672
Mounted archery, 19
Mouth guards, 823
Movies, 684, 824, 829
and boxing, 43
and capoeira, 65
and gunfighters, 151
and kung fu, 314
and Lee, Bruce, 203, 828
and sambo, 513
and savate, 522
and stage combat, 554–555
and taekwondo, 616
See also individual movies
Mr. T., 741
Mu Sul Kwan, 157
Mu Yei 24 Ban, 157
Mu Yei Do Bo Tong Ji (Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts) (Yi Dok-mu), 294, 598, 816
Muay Thai, 51, 350–354, 545, 546, 634, 803, 813, 814, 825
and attire, 350–351
history of, 350
and the Olympics, 352
and ranking system, 351–352
and technique, 352–354
and training, 352
See also Southeast Asia
Mucupe, 8
Mudras, 794
Mufflers, 813
Muhammad, 340
Muhammad Ali, 51
Muhammad of Ghazna, 796
Muharram, 793
Mukna, 642
Muldoon, William, 677, 737
Muncy, Tom, 42
Mundavannadu family, 227
Murakami Hideo, 700
“Muscular Christianity,” 819
Muscular development
and social uses of the martial arts, 535
Mushtì, 176
Muskets, 806–807
Muskets, snaphaunce, 806
Muslims, 11
Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryû, 169
Musō Shinden-ryû, 169
Mutsu Mizuhō, 234
My Darling Clementine, 151
Myanmar, 544–545
and weapons, 544
See also Burma; Southeast Asia
Myres, Sam, 826
Myth plays, 798
Myths, 123
Myung Jae-nam, 160, 297
Myung Kwang-Shik, 160, 297
Naadam festival, 345
Naban, 545, 634
Naboud, 338, 562
Nachtigal, Franz, 84, 816
Nackord, Dennis, 259
Nafâ (seizing), 28
Nagahama, 242
Nagamine Shôshin, 246, 290, 675
Nagashino, battle of, 189
Naginata, 698–699, 703–704
Nagurski, Bronko, 740
Naha-di, 244–245, 246–248
Nai Khanom Tom, 350, 546, 631, 814
Naihanchi kata, 824
Nakagawa Shoshunjin, 812
Nakaima Norisato, 366
Nakamoto Eishô, 247
Nakamura Jirô, 258
Nakamura Shigeru, 290
Nakano Michiomi Sô Dôshin, 257
Naka-no-ie, Prince, 183
Nakatomi family, 183
Nakatomi-no-Kamatari, 183
Nakayama Hakudo, 807
Nakayama Masatoshi, 236, 246
Nakayama Shinzaburô, 236
Nakazato, 242
Nakazato Sûgûrô, 246, 290
Nam Tae Hi, 827
Nan Shaolin hu hao quan (southern Shaolin tiger crane fist), 38
Nanquán (southern boxing), 30, 33–34
Nanquán shù, 33
Napoleonic Wars, 83, 476, 675, 676
NARAPHIL. See National Arnis Association of the Philippines
Narathihapate, King, 630
Naresuan, King, 546–547
Naresuen, Prince, 350
Narvaez, D. L. P. de, 322
Narvaez, Luis de, 582
NASA, 112
Nasrul Haq (NH), 439
Nata, 791
National Arnis Association of the Philippines (NARAPHIL), 433
National Bandô Association (NBA), 632, 635
National Boxing Association, 738–739
National Chinese Kenpô Association
National Collegiate Taekwondo Federation, 298
National High School and Middle School Taekwondo Federation, 298
National Institute of Sports, 724
National Police Gazette, 677, 680, 821
National Theater, 816
National Wrestling Alliance (NWA), 740, 741
National Wrestling Association, 739, 741
Nationalism
and social uses of the martial arts, 535
Nationalist Party, 66
Native Americans
and dueling, 102–103
and folk belief, 133
and wrestling, professional, 736
Natyaasastra, 420
Navarro, Mariano, 429
Nayar, Govindankutty, 227
Nayars, 176
Nazis, 306, 307
and military training, 85
NBA. See National Bandô Association
Neko no myôjutsu (Marvelous Skill of Cats) (Issi Chozan), 766
Neopolitan Order of the Ship, 280
Nerio, Master, 320
Nero, 666
Netherlands
and stickfighting, 560
Nets
and gladiators, 142, 144
Netuvatippayattu, 177
Neues Kunstliches Fechtbuch (New Artistic Fencing Book) (Sutor), 323
“The New Art of Self Defence” (Barton-Wright), 823
New Book of Effective Discipline (Qi Jiguang), 16, 27–28, 69, 300
New Text of Practical Tactics, 808–809
New York Herald, 818
New York State Athletic Commission, 825
New Yorker, 740
New Zealand, 403, 405
Ng Cheung, 674, 815
Ngbarato, Julius Donald, 6
Ngolo (zebra dance), 8
Nguyen Loc, 441, 549, 651–652, 654
Ngwîndulu mu-tu (striking of the head), 8
NH. See Naseerud-Din Shah
Nha Han II, 600
Nhan Vo Dao, 656
NHB fighters. See No-holds-barred fighters
Nietszche, 532
Nightclubs, 818
Nihon Budô Taikei (Martial History of Japan), 288
Nihon kendô kyôhan (Japanese Kendô Teaching Manual)
(Takano Sasaburô), 768
Nihon Shoki, 199, 564, 591, 729, 730
Nine-Word Spell, 491
Ninja, 671, 733–734, 829
The Ninja (van Lustbader), 829
Ninjutsu, 355–361, 732, 733, 812, 829
early history of, 356–358
and technique, 358–359
and training, 360
and weapons, 359–360
and written texts, 358
See also Japan; Meditation
Ninpô, 733, 734
Nippon Karate Kyôkai (Japan Karate Association), 236
Nippon Kempô, 256
Nippon Kempô Karate, 257
Nippon Shôrinji Kenpô (NSK), 257
Nirvana, 789
Nishikubo Hiromichi, 481, 824
Nitobe Inazô, 480
Nitta family, 187
Nitta Suzuyo, 702–703
Nitta Yoshisada, 187, 517
Nizami, 667
Nizari, 798
Nô, 197
Nô drama, 196, 420
Nobility
and chivalry, 73–82
Noble Science, 326
Noble societies
perpetual and temporary subclasses of, 388–390
See also Orders of knighthood, secular
No-holds-barred (NHB) fighters, 354
No-holds-barred wrestling, 730
Index  871
Order of St. Maurice, 377
Order of St. Michael, 395, 397, 400
Order of St. Michael the Archangel, 284
Order of St. Stephen, 284, 377
Order of St. Thomas, 377, 378
Order of the Band, 393, 399, 560
Order of the Brethren of the Sword, 374
Order of the Broom-Pon of Charles VI of France, 387
Order of the Collar, 394, 395, 398, 400
Order of the Crescent, 392
Order of the Crown, 394
Order of the Dragon, 397
Order of the Eagle, 394
Order of the Elephant, 395
Order of the Ermine, 395, 397
Order of the Garter, 394, 395, 396, 398, 399, 400, 401
Order of the Golden Apple, 389
Order of the Golden Fleece, 284, 394, 395, 397, 400
Order of the Golden Shield, 394
Order of the Holy Spirit, 284
Order of the Hospital, 377, 383
Order of the Hospital of St. John, 374, 375, 376, 378–379, 380–381, 387
Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, 272, 284, 371–372
Order of the Hospital of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem, 372
Order of the Hospital of St. Thomas of Acre, 373
Order of the Hound, 392
Order of the Jar, 394
Order of the Jar of the Salutation, 394
Order of the Knights of Christ, 376, 379
Order of the Knights of St. Lazarus, 379
Order of the Knights of St. Stephen, 379
Order of the Knights of the Garter, 82, 165, 167
Order of the Knights of the Hospital of St. John, 397
Order of the Knot, 393, 397
Order of the Passion of Our Lord, 397
Order of the Poor Knights of Christ of the Temple of Solomon, 370
Order of the Porcupine of Duke Louis of Orléans, 387
Order of the Salamander, 394
Order of the Ship, 394, 397, 399
Order of the Star of France, 397
Order of the Stole, 394
Order of the Sword, 393, 397
Order of the Swordbrethren, 375
Order of the Temple, 392, 397
Order of the Teutonic Knights, 374–375, 375, 377, 378, 379, 383, 397
Order of the Teutonic Knights of the Hospital of St. Mary, 372–373
Order of the Towel, 394
Order of the Tress, 394
Order of the True Cross, 394
Orders of knighthood, 272, 276, 284, 285
Orders of knighthood, religious, 368–384
and Christianity, 368
and the Crusade, 368–376
housing of, 381–382
and the master, 379–380
military missions of, 382
and military religious orders, 368–377
and monasticism, 368–370
principal fighting force of, 382–383
and regional and local administration, 380–381
See also Chivalry; Europe; Knights; Orders of knighthood, secular; Religion and spiritual development: Europe
Orders of knighthood, secular, 384–401
and confraternal societies, 387–392
and curial orders, 390, 392–393
and lay military associations, 385, 387–391
and monarchical orders, 392–400
and perpetual societies, 389–390
and secular military associations, 385–387
and secular noble associations, 387
and semireligious orders, 391–392
See also Chivalry; Europe; Knights; Orders of knighthood, religious
Ordonez, Frank F., 219, 220, 221
Origin narratives, 124–126
Orkhan I, 801
Orlando Furioso (Ariosto), 284
Orleans, duke of, 520
Orwell, George, 632
Ôsaka Castle, 190
Ôsaka Exposition, 253
Oshchepkov, Vasilij Sergevich, 88, 507, 508, 509, 825
Ôshima Eisuke, 768
Ôshima Hikki, 242, 289
Otoku, 798
Ôtsuka Hironori, 235, 236–237, 246, 826
Ôtsuka Jirô, 237
Ôtsuka Shinjun, 235
Ôtsuka Hironori, 235, 236–237, 246, 826
Ôtsuka Jirô, 237
Ôtsuka Shinjun, 235
Ott the Jew, 715
Ottacuvat, 177
Otto I, 275
Otto, King, 820
Otto the Great, 451
Oudalric of Augsburg, Bishop, 451
Our Lady of the Noble House, 393
Outlaws of the Marsh, 68, 691, 707
Ouyang Xiu, 69
Owain Red Hand, 803
Owens, Bill, 222
Oyadomari, 242
Oyama, Masutatsu, 296
Oyama Karate, 296

Pa kua ch’uan. See Baguazhang
Pacific Islands, 403–410
history of, 403–404, 406
and lima-lima, 409
and Lua, 406–407
and warfare, 403–404
and weapons, 404–406
See also Form/xing/kata/pattern practice; Jûdô; Boxing, European;
Wrestling and grappling: Europe;
Wrestling and grappling: Japan

Paganism
and Africa, 7
and Christianity, 415
and gladiatorial combat, 148
Pahalwan, 724
Paiute indians, 436
Paladin, 153
Palance, Jack, 742
Palanzo, Joe, 259
Pâlado-chakgum, 600–602
Palestine, 306
Pallas Armata (Pallas Athena Armed), 324
Pan Qingfu, 43
Panache, 521, 523
Pan-American Shuai-chiao Federation, 709
Panathenaea Festival, 417
Panhellenic Games, 789
and pankration, 789

Panikkar, Kavalam Narayana, 422
Panikkar, Thoma, 227
Panikkar, Vira Sree Mudavannattil Sankunni, 227
Pankration, 110, 342, 410–416
history of, 410–411
and the Olympics, 410–411, 414, 790
and Panhellenic Games, 789
and sports, 414–415
and technique, 412–413
and training, 413–414
and warfare, 414
See also Europe; Gladiators;
Performing arts; Wrestling and grappling: Europe
Pao chui, 811
Paona Brijabi, 638–639
Paradoxes of Defence (Silver), 324, 555, 557
Paramilitary training
and social uses of the martial arts, 535
Parasurama, 225
Park Chung Hee, 297, 298
Park Jung Tae, 829
Parker, Ed, 259, 314
Paschen, Johan, 811
Paschen, Johanne Georg, 113
Patinkin, Mandy, 555
Pattern practice, 135–140. See also
Form/xing/kata/pattern practice
Paturel, Robert, 522
Pauerfeindts, Andre, 320
Pax Dei (Peace of God), 77
Payens, Hugues de, 368
Pear-blossom spear, 667, 796
Pearson’s Magazine, 823
Peasant revolts
and chivalry, 81–82
Peasants’ War, 805
Pecanha, Cinezio Feliciano, 64–65
Pedoy, Braulio, 429
Pedro II, 669
Pekiti Tirsia, 429
Pencak Silat. See Silat
Pentjak silat. See Silat
People’s Republic of China, 38, 314–315
and boxing, 43
Pepin I, 265
Pepys, Samuel, 811
Peralta, Alfred, 220
Percussion instruments
and Africa, 4
Pere II, King, 374
Pere “the Ceremonious,” 280
Index 873
Performing arts, 417–422
and Asia, 419–422
and China, 420
and India, 420–421, 422
and Japan, 420
and technique, 417
and the West, 419, 421–422
See also Africa and African America; Capoeira;
Form/xing/kata/pattern practice; Japan; Kalarippayattu; Mongolia;
Thang-ta
Perkins, Anthony, 152
Perpetual societies, 388, 389–390
Perry, Commodore, 192, 819
Persatuan Pentjak Silat Selurah Indonesia (PPSI), 529, 543
Pertubohan Selendang Merah, 438–439
Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich, 478
Peter the Great, 114
Petters, Nicolaes, 113
Pham Xuan Tong, 549–550
Philip II, 78, 426
Philip IV, 79, 454
Philippe II, 273
Philippe IV, 376
Philippe VI, 393
Philippe “the Good,” 284, 394
Philippines, 422–434
geography of, 423
and Japan, 426
and silat, 524, 530–531
and United States, 426
See also Silat; Southeast Asia
Phormion of Halikarnassos, 790
Phra Chao Seua, Prince, 546, 813
Physical Culture and Sports Commission, 30, 33, 70
Physical education, 825
and China, 827
and Germany, 481
and Japan, 481
Physical education departments, 820
Physical Training for Women by Japanese Methods (Hancock), 685
Physical Training for Women, 683
Piano duels, 97–98
Pierre I, 393, 397
Pillatanni, 227
Pimiko, Queen, 181
Pinkney, Miss, 680
Pisan, Christine de, 670
Pistols, 806, 819
Pizarro, Francisco, 805
Plains Indians
and dueling, 102
The Plainsman, 149–150
Planos, Richard “Huk,” 259
Plato, 411, 416, 417
Plumadore, Red, 739
Plutarch, 534–535, 665
Poddubnaya, Masha, 680, 737–738
Poddubny, Ivan, 680, 738
Pofa (breaking), 28
Point and Circle Principle, 160–161
Police (breaking), 28
Police Athletic League
and boxing, 46
Police departments
and women, 680
Police Gazette, 684
Police training, 83, 87–89, 821
and aikidô, 828
and China, 89
and England, 88
and Filipino martial arts, 434
Japan, 87–89, 821
and jûdô, 87
and krav maga, 312
and savate, 521
and United States, 87
and wrestling, 87
See also Combatives: Military and police martial arts training
Political conflict
and folk belief, 133
Political conflict and the martial arts, 435–442. See also Africa and African America; Capoeira;
China; Folklore in the martial arts; Korea; Okinawa; Silat;
Southeast Asia; Taekwondo;
Vovinam-Viet Vo Dao; Yongchun (wing chun)
Political theater
and social uses of the martial arts, 535
Politics
Japanese, 181–190
and women, 670
Polo, Marco, 669, 800
Polo, women’s, 667
Polydeukes, 788
Polynesia
and warfare, 403–404
Pons, Paul, 738
Pontifical (Durand), 76
Poor Knights of Christ of the Temple of Solomon, 272
Popes and dueling, 105
Popular press and gunfighters, 151
Portuguese and Africa, 7 and capoeira, 62
Potlatch and social uses of the martial arts, 535–536
Power and martial arts folklore, 124
PPSI. See Persatuan Pentjak Silat Selurah Indonesia
Pranayama, 468–469
Prapaisilp, Supat, 353–354
Prapaisilp-Kitipitayangkul Camp, 353–354
Praying mantis style, 16
Pré-Abbé, Madame de la, 672
Preposterous violence and social uses of the martial arts, 536
Presas, Remy A., 423
Preuilli, Geoffroi de, 797
Primitive Revolutionaries of China (Davis), 39
The Princess Bride, 554, 555
Principles of Biology (Spencer), 677–678, 820
Principles of Psychology (Spencer), 497
Print Olive outfit, 820
Priscus, General, 449
Prizefighting, 811, 812, 813, 817, 818, 819, 820
and classism, 820
Prizefighting, women’s, 673, 676, 677, 684, 815
Protestant Mercury, 812
Protoknights, 263, 264–266
Prytanis of Kyziokos, 790
Ptolemy IV, 790
Public school education in Japan, 479
Pucelle, Jeanne la (Joan the Maid), 670
Pugilists Protective Association, 46
Pugil-stick fights, 801
Punches and boxing, 47–48, 822
Punching and women, 679
Pung, Paul, 239
Purdy, A. H., 677
Puy, Raymond du, 371
Pyrrhic, 417–418
Pyrrhic war dances, 3
Qi, 24, 328, 335–336, 803. See also Ki/qi
Qi Jiguang, 16, 27–28, 68, 69, 132, 300, 619, 807, 811
and military training, 83
Qiang (spear), 25
Qianlong, Emperor, 130
Qigong, 24, 728
Qin, Prince, 458
Qin Zong, Emperor, 459
Qing Unofficial History Categorized Extracts, 691
Qinna, 38, 42, 728
Quai (crutch), 25
Quan, 27
Quan Ki Do, 549–550
Quanbang, 65
Quanfa, 86, 794, 803, 807, 813, 815, 826. See also Boxing; Kenpô
Quarterstaffs, 556, 557, 792
Quasi-monastic rules, 369–371
Quay qi, 262
Queensberry, Duchess of, 675
Queensbury Rules, 46
Queirolo Brothers’ American Circus, 54
The Quest, 65
Quick-draw holsters, 826, 828
Quilombo, 129, 132
Quinn, Anthony, 742
Quintilian, 142
Quiros, 671
Racism and boxing, 823
and gunfighters, 153, 820
and wrestling, 88
Rahn, Erich, 87, 823
Ram, Lord, 467
Rama, Lord, 788
Rama Tibodi II, King, 546
Ramayana, 173, 421, 463, 466–467, 721, 750, 788
Ramses III, 788
Randori, 14, 215
Rangabhyasam, 755
Rani Durgawati, 671
Rani of Jhansi, 677
Rank, 445–447. See also Jûdô; Koryû bugei; Ranking system
Ranking system and aikidô, 14–15
and athletics, women’s, 687–688
and boxing, 821
and Brazil, 446
and capoeira, 63

Index 875
Ranking system, continued
and China, 445
and Filipino martial arts, 433
and Japan, 445–447
and jiu-jitsu, 52, 55
and jūdō, 214–215, 445–446, 822
and Kajukenbo, 221
and kendō, 253–254
and koryū bugei, 303–304, 445
and Muay Thai, 351–352
and sambo, 512–513
and savate, 522, 523–524
and Vovinam/Viet Vo Dao, 656
and wrestling and grappling: China, 708
and wrestling, Mongolian, 345
See also Grading system; Rank
Rao, Tukoji, III, 89
Rapa Nui. See Easter Island
Rape of Nanking, 483
Rapiers, 113–114, 582, 583–585, 804
and masters of defence, 322–323
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, 725
Ratchadamnoen Stadium, 350
Raymond of Toulouse, Count, 452
Record of Rituals, 706
Record of Wrestling, 706
Red Eyebrow Rebellion, 665
Red Guard, 42
Red Junk, 131
“Red Junk People,” 782
Red Sash Society, 438–439
Red Sun, 153
Red Turban uprising, 459
Regiment of Dragoons, 672
Religion
and Africa, 7
and orders of knighthood. See Orders of knighthood, religious and quanfa, 813
secular academic approaches to, 474
and silat, 529
and social uses of the martial arts, 532
and swordsmanship, Japanese, 589, 595
Religion and spiritual development: Ancient Mediterranean and medieval West, 447–455
and Christianity, 448–450
and the Crusades, 451–453
and early Middle Ages, 450–451
and Greco-Roman period, 447–448
and Greece, ancient, 447–448
and high Middle Ages, 453–454
and late antiquity, 448–450
See also Chivalry; Knights; Orders of knighthood, religious; Orders of knighthood, secular
Religion and spiritual development: China, 455–462
and Buddhism, 456–460
See also Boxing, Chinese; Boxing, Chinese Shaolin; China; Medicine, traditional Chinese; Meditation; Written texts: China
Religion and spiritual development: India, 462–471. See also India; Kalarippayattu; Meditation; Thang-ta; Varma ati; Wrestling and grappling: India; Written texts: India
Religion and spiritual development: Japan, 472–501. See also Aikidô; Budô, bujutsu, and bugei; Form/xing/kata/pattern practice; Kendô; Kû/qi; Koryû bugei; Swordsmanship, Japanese; Warrior monks, Japanese/sôhei; Written texts: Japan
Religious orders, 369–370. See also Orders of knighthood, religious Renaissance Fairs, 419
Renat, Laishev, 513
Renga, 197
Republic of Korea (ROK), 297
Republic of Korea Haedong Kumdô Federation, 600
Republican Revolution, 41
Reputation
and social uses of the martial arts, 533–534
Requiem for a Heavyweight, 742
Researches into the History of Early Mankind (Tylor), 821
Restored behavior, 419
Retan Gôshin Karate-jutsu (Strengthening of Willpower and Self-Defense through Karate Techniques), 234
Retiarius, 142–144, 145, 146
Revolution of 1911, 460
and boxing, Chinese, 30
Revolutionary War, 674
Rifles, 819
Rhee Seung Man, 827
Ribat, 368
Ricarte, General, 429
Richard I (Richard the Lionhearted), 78, 81, 797
Rig Veda, 230
Righteous and Harmonious Fists, 41
Rikidozan, 741
Ring names, 808
Ringeck, Sigmund, 320
Ringen am Schwert, 112
Ringo, Jimmy, 152
Riparian Franks, 73
Rites of passage
and social uses of the martial arts, 536
Rites of Zhou, 66
Ro Pyong-Chik, 296
Robin Hood, 535, 800
Rod, 8
Rodman, Dennis, 742
Rodrigo of Sarria, Count, 373
Roeber, Ernst, 51
Roger, Master, 319
Rogers, Buddy, 741
ROK. See Republic of Korea
Roman Catholic Church, 35
Roman des Eles (Romance of the Wings), 276
Roman Empire, 72, 111, 148
and boxing, 45
Rome, ancient
and religion and spiritual development: Ancient Mediterranean and medieval West, 447–448
Romeo and Juliet (Shakespeare), 552
Rommel, Erwin, 85
Ronpoin, 9
Roosevelt, Franklin, 87
Roosevelt, Theodore, 87, 680
and jūdō, 213
“Roots” of the universe, 790
Rosenthal, Rachel, 421
Rosolino, Master, 320
ROSS. See Russian Martial Arts Federation
Round Table Company, 392
Round Table Society, 399
Rowing, 819
Royal Canadian Mounted Police and training, 87
Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics, 84
Royal Company of Archers, 814
Ruas, Marco, 354
Rudman, David, 513
Rukana ibn ‘Abdu Yazid, 340
Rule of the Temple, 371
Rules, monastic and quasi-monastic, 369–371
Running Eagle, 676–677
Russia, 114–115
and Sambo, 507–513
and stickfighting, 561–562
and wrestling and grappling: Europe, 716–717
See also Soviet Union
Russian Martial Arts Federation (ROSS), 562
Russian Revolution, 462
Russo-Japanese War, 85, 294, 684, 699, 738
Rustichello of Pisa, 669
Ryōgen, Head Abbot, 659–660
Ryūkyū Ancient Research Association, 823
Ryūkyū Islands, 232–233
Ryūkyū Kenpō: Karate, 234
Ryūkyū Kobudō Hozon Shinkō Kai, 290
Ryūkyūan genesis myths, 366
Ryūkyūans, 83
Ryusaki, Bill, 259
Saber, 109
Sacher-Masoch, Leopold von, 678
Safft, Frederik, 738
The Saga of Billy the Kid (Burns), 153
Sagol Kangjei, 642
Sainen Budō Taikai
Saint Patrick’s Day, 557
Saitō Denkihō Katuhide, 698
Sakae Sanyū, 234
Sakagami Ryūshō, 290
Sakakida Yaeko, 702, 703
Sakanoue-no-Tamuramaro, 184
Sakikibara Kenkichi, 252
Sakiyama, 242
Saladin, 78, 372, 375
Salian Franks, 72
Salvation Army, 532
Salza, Hermann von, 374
Sam Browne rigs, 819
Sama Vedic, 749
and attire, 511–512
history of, 507–508, 510
and military, 510–511
and Olympics, 511
and ranking system, 512–513
and sports, 510, 511–512
and technique, 508–509
Samhita, 755
Samnite, 144–145, 146
Samoa, 403. See also Pacific Islands
Samoans, 405
Samoborona bez oruzhija (self-defense without weapons). See Sambo
Sampson, Deborah, 674
Samurai, 58, 195, 301, 514–519, 796
and knights, 516
and swordsmanship, 250, 594
and warfare, 517–518
See also Budô, bujutsu, and bugei;
Japan; Sword, Japanese;
Swordsmanship, Japanese;
Written texts: Japan
Samurai, 762
San da (loose hit), 43
San shou (loose hand), 43
Sandow, Billy, 739, 824
Sanyas, 467–470
Sanskrit Dhanur Veda tradition, 173
Santikan, 423
Saramakan Maroon, 10
Sarit-sarat, 639, 640
Sarugaku, 197
Satake Shigeo, 698
Satake Yoshinori, 698
Sato, 240
Satô Shinji, 234
Satsuma, 41
Satsuma clan, 83
Satto, King, 289
Saturday Review, 819
Saunders, Nel, 677
Savate, 109, 115, 116, 519–524, 818, 822, 823
history of, 519–523
and military, 522
and police training, 521
and ranking system, 522, 523–524
and technique, 519–520, 523
and training, 522–523, 524
and weapons, 520, 521–522, 523
and women, 679–680
See also Boxing, European;
Capoeira; Dueling: Europe;
Masters of Defence; Pankration;
Stickfighting, non-Asian;
Swordsmanship, European
Renaissance
Savate Danse de Rue, 519, 522–523
Savate-Boxe Française Federation, 522
Saviolo, Vincentio, 322–323, 582
Savoldi, “Jumping Joe,” 740
Sawada Masaru, 234
Sayaw, 423
SCA. See Society for Creative
Anachronism
Scalp bounties, 809
Scalping, 809
Scandinavia
and stickfighting, 560
and wrestling and grappling:
Europe, 716
Scathach (Shadowy), 667, 799
Schläger, 559, 817
Schleiermacher, Friedrich, 482
School for Female Children, 818
School of Fencing (Angelo), 555
School of Nine Arts, 634
School of Seven Arts, 634
School (schola), 795
Schools and Masters of Fence (Castle), 822
Schools of Defence, 322
Schwingen, 113
Schwingen wrestling, 800
Science of religion, 482
Scientific American, 687
Scientific streetfighting, 205
Scimitars
and gladiators, 142
Scola overo Teatro (School of Theater) (Giganti), 323
The Scots Fencing-Master (Hope), 323
Scott, A. C., 421
Scott, Sir Walter, 797, 817
Seagal, Steven, 15, 734
Seals
and knights, 269
Seamen, women, 673, 675–676
Seattle Police Department, 87
Seattle Times, 688
“Second-string,” 810
Secret societies, 128, 460. See also individual societies
Secrets of Chinese Karate (Parker), 314
Secrets of Shaolin Boxing Methods, 129, 460
Secular military associations, 385–387, 388
characteristics of, 385–386
distinctions between, 386–387
orders of, 386–387
Secular-noble associations, 387
Secutor, 144–145, 146
Seijô, Crown Prince, 234
Seinan War, 252
Sekeino Jûjutsu, 220
Sekigahara, battle of, 41, 189–190
Sekiumryû kenjutsu sho (Kodegiri Ichimun), 766
Self-bows, 787
Self-Defense Krav Maga, 310
Self-Defense without Weapons. See Sambo
Seljuk Turks, 77
Semireligious orders, 391–392
Semitic tribes
and dueling, 103–104
Senaha, 242
Senegal, 11
Seng Zhou, 126–127
Sengoku age, 517
Sengoku daimyô, 188
Sengoku jidai. See Warring States period
Sengoku warfare, 189
Se-ra monastery, 804
Seraikella chhau, 421
Séranne, 672, 812
Serfin, Federico, Jr., 429
Serling, Rod, 742
Seth, Daksha, 422
Seven Samurai, 153
Sevener Shiism, 798
Severn, Dan, 743
Sextus Julius Africanus, 789
Sexual desire
and military training, 85
Sexual stereotyping
and athletics, women’s, 687–688
Sexuality
and India: Religion and spiritual development, 465–466
Sexually transmitted diseases
and military, 85
Seymour, Lord, 520
Shadowboxing, 50
Shagaku yôroku (Essentials for Studying Archery) (Hirase Mitsuo), 766
Shahnama (Book of Kings), 343
Shaka, 103
Shakespeare, William, 684, 803
and stage combat, 551–552
and stickfighting, 557
Shakti, 463–465
Shalu monastery, 797
Shamans, women, 666
Shamrock, Ken, 743
Shane, 151, 154
Shanghai Chinese YMCA, 824
Shankara, 794
Shanxi-Hebei school, 130
Shaolin, five animals of, 38
Shaolin boxing. See Boxing, Chinese Shaolin
Shaolin Monastery, 16, 28, 29, 458–460, 792, 814
and Kung fu, 66
legends of, 126–127
Shaolin Monk Soldiers, 29, 126, 128, 457–460
Shaolin monks, 802, 812
Shaolin Temple, 43, 120, 728, 730, 792, 829
and boxing, 33, 35–39
and kung fu, 313
Sharkey, Jack, 680
Shen, 262, 336
Sherif, C. Mohammed, 229
Shi Na’ian, 802
Shiai, 215
Shiba family, 187
Shibugawa Tokifusa, 766
Shibukawa, Frank, 90
Shibukawa Yoshikata, 730–731
Shibuya, Robert “Kinji,” 735
Shidachi, T., 684
Shields
and Europe, 111
and Filipino martial arts, 428–429
and gladiators, 142, 143–144, 145
and swordsmanship, European medieval, 572–575
Shigenobu, Hayashizaki Jinsuke, 169
Shiism, 804
Shikat, Dick, 739
Shikona, 808
Shillelagh, 556, 557
Shimabukuro Eizô, 242, 246, 290
Shimabukuro Tatsuo, 246, 290
Shimakado, 51
Shimazu clan, 41
Shimazu, Lord, 233
Shimazu Yoshihisa, 288
Shimakado, 51
Shinai kyôgi, 823
Shinai uchikomi keiko, 251
Shinerikyo, 364
Shingen, Takeda, 194
Shinjitsu, 661
Shintosh, 239, 475–476, 481, 491
and meditation, 336
Shinzato Jinan, 234, 247–248
Shioda Gôzô, 15
Shiôta, 27
Shirai Tôru Yoshinori, 492, 795
Shiroma Koki, 235
Shiroma Shimpan, 242
Shitenôji, 565
Shôtô-Ryû, 235
Shivaji, 811
Shô Koshin, Prince, 365
Shô Nei, King, 240–241, 364
Shô Sei, King, 240

Index 879
Shô Shin, King, 41, 240, 804–805
Shô Shitsu, King, 365
Shô Ten, Marquis, 365
Shôdan, 15
Shoden Katori Shintô-ryû, 804
Shogunate, 516–517
Shooting (Fitzgerald), 826
The Shootist, 151, 154
Shôrinji Kenpô, 220
Shôrin-ryû Saitô Ninjitsu, 124–126
Shôrin-ryû Karate, 823
Shôsôin Repository, 565
Shôtôkan, 235
Shôtôkan Karate, 235–236, 246
Shôtoku, Prince, 183
Shôtoku Taishi, Prince, 363, 364, 366
Shoubô, 26, 27
Shôyô, 561–562
Shuaijiao, 509, 706, 708–709, 713.
See also Wrestling and grappling: China
Shuibu Zhuan (The Water Margin), 802
Shûkyô, 474
Shunichi Suzuki, 828
Shurî-di, 234, 244–245, 245–246
Shuri-di karate, 809
Shurtleff, Robert, 674
Si Ma Qian, 790
Siam, 540. See also Thailand
Siddha, 470
Siegel, Don, 154
Siejyo Girls’ High School, 699
Sigismund von Luxemburg, 394
Sikander Begum, 677
Silambam, 175
Silit, 128, 437–438, 524–531, 542–543, 802, 827
history of, 524–527
and invulnerability, magical, 133
styles of, 525–527, 529
and technique, 524–525, 527–528
and training, 527–528
and weapons, 524, 527, 530
See also Philippines; Southeast Asia
Silk Road, 40
Silver, George, 317, 324–325, 555, 557, 581
Silver Pavilion, 197
Silver, Toby, 324–325
Sima Guang, 690, 707
Sin Han-sûng, 605–606, 608
Singletick, 556, 557, 559
Sino-Japanese War, 240, 252, 294
Sirhak (Practical Learning), 598
Sivananda, Swami, 465
Skiamachiae (private contests), 791
Skyllis, 664
“Slam Bang Western Style Wrestling,” 824–825
Slave trade
and Africa, 7
Slavery
and capoeira, 61–62
and gladiators, 141, 147
Slings, development of, 787
Small, Viro, 737
Smith, Robert, 121
Smith, Ron, 353–354
Smok-Frog, 792
The Snake, 801
Snaphaunce muskets, 806
Snodgrass, Elvira, 740
Social class
and dueling, 98, 100, 101
Social Darwinism, 678, 820
Social uses of the martial arts, 532–538
and military training, 534–535
See also Duelling; Folklore in the martial arts; Political conflict and the martial arts
Société de l’Harquebuse (Society of the Harquebus), 804
Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), 587, 828
Society of American Fight Directors, 555–556
Society of Jesus, 806
Society of St. George, 392
Socrates, 411, 416
“Soft” Chinese martial arts, 119–121.
See also External vs. internal Chinese martial arts
Soâ family, 183
Sôhei, 659. See also Warrior monks, Japanese/sôhei
Sok Pyungjang Tosul (Revised Illustrated Manual of Military Training and Tactics), 598
Sôken Hohan, 246, 290
Sokô, Yamaga, 195
Sokol gymnastics system, 820
Sokolov, Aleksandr, 675
Soldiers
and knights, 263–264
Soldiers’ Code, 822
Soldiers, women, 672, 674, 675, 677, 678, 792, 812
Song duels, 98
Song Jiang, 802
The Song of Roland, 452
“Song Period Essentials,” 68
Index 881
Stickfighting, non-Asian, 556–564.
See also Capoeira; Dueling;
Masters of Defence; Philippines;
Savate; Stickfighting
Stickfighting, women’s, 669
Sticks
and Filipino martial arts, 426–427,
428, 430, 431
Stirrups, 792
Stochfechten, 560
Stone Studio Illustrated News, 691
Strand Magazine, 684
Strange Tales from the Studio of
Small Talk, 691
Strategic Situation in Jiangnan (Zheng
Ruozenz), 200
Strategikos (Onasander), 447
Straw-and-earthen ring, 808
Streetfighting, scientific, 205
Striking, 829
and Korea, 293
Sturges, John, 153
Styer, John, 87
Suárez, Inés, 671
Subak, 610
Subakdô Association, 297
Subakhi, 603
Sufism, 338, 437–438
Suh Bok-sup, 159, 296
Suh In Hyuk, 160
Suicide
and warriors, women as, 694,
696
Suinin, Emperor, 791
Sukarno, Achmed, 827
Sukunai Hayashi Tomari Te (Shaolin
Small Pine Tomari Hand), 41
Suleyman Pasha, 801
Sullivan, John L., 677
Sumitomo, 185
Sumner, Charles, 98–99
Sumô (grappling), 199, 201,
729–730, 795, 823
tournaments, 808
See also Wrestling and grappling:
China; Wrestling and grappling:
Europe; Wrestling and grappling:
India; Wrestling and grappling:
Japan
Sun, 621
Sun Bin, 790
Sun Lutang, 621
Sun Monasteries, 157
Sun Simiao, 330, 793
Sun Zi, 789
Sunjong, Emperor, 597
Sunzi, General, 188, 332
Superintendency for Gunpowder
Weapons, 802
Supernatural resistance, 133
Supernaturalism
and silat, 529
Surinam, 10
Suriname, 10
“Survival of the fittest,” 820
Suryavarman II, 541, 799
Susa, 10
Susruta, 230, 791
Sutawijaya Sahidin Panatagam, 671
Sutor, Jacob, 322, 323, 581
Sutton, Ned, 673
Suzuki, D. T., 482–483
Swan, Gary
Swashbuckling, 791
Sweden
and military training, 84
Swedish gymnastics, 84
Swetnam, Sir Joseph, 317, 324, 581
Swift, Owen, 521
Swiss calisthenics, 820
Sword and buckler, 113
and women, 670
Sword Classic (Yu Dayou), 747
Sword dancing, 792, 795, 803, 804,
807
and mystery plays, 798
and women, 666, 670, 690
Sword, European medieval
characteristics of, 570–571, 575
handling and action of, 576
Sword, European Renaissance, 579
characteristics of, 579–581
Sword, Filipino, 428, 431
Sword, Japanese, 190–191, 564–570
characteristics of, 564–570,
589–591
and schools of sword making,
566–568
and Zen Buddhism, 568–569
See also Japan; Religion and
spiritual development: Japan;
Samurai; Swordsmanship,
Japanese
Swords, 249–250, 788, 795, 813
bamboo, 813
and China, 69, 789
and iaidō, 170–171
and knights, 267
and military training, 83, 85
and Pacific Islands, 406
and stickfighting, 556
Swordsmanship, 249–254, 492, 822
and entertainment, 578
and Europe, 113
and gladiators, 142

in Japan, 478–479, 481

and masters of defence, 318, 325

and proper breathing, 795

and Russia, 114–115

and stage combat, 551–552, 578

terms for, 249

and training, 252

See also Kendô

Swordsmanship, European medieval, 570–579

and armor, 572–575

schools of, 572

and shields, 572

and technique, 570–571, 576–578

See also Dueling; Europe; Knights;

Masters of Defence; Wrestling

Swordsmanship, European Renaissance, 579–588

and classical movement, 587–588

and cut-and-thrust swords, 582–583

and dueling, 585, 587

and fencing, 585–586

and Masters of Defence, 581–582, 586

and rapiers, 582, 583–585

and technique, 581–582

See also Dueling; Europe; Masters

of Defence; Savate

Swordsmanship, Japanese, 588–597, 807

schools of, 592–594

and warriors, 591–593

See also Form/xing/kata/pattern

practice; Japan; Koryû bugei;

Samurai; Sword, Japanese

Swordsmanship, Korean/Hankuk Haedong Kumû, 597–602

future of, 602

and paldo/chakgum, 600–602

and Shimugum, 600–601

and technique, 600, 602

See also Korea

Swordsmanship, Vietnamese, 815

Swordsmen, women, 663, 666, 667, 689, 791, 796

Swordsmiths, 811

and sword, Japanese, 564–570

Syngmann Rhee, 440, 610–611

Tabaski, 11

Tabi, 20

Tachi, 565

Tachikaki, 591

Tacitus, 73, 448, 666, 791

T'aeck'yon, 159, 300, 603–608

history of, 603

and technique, 603, 604–605, 607–608

and training, 604–605, 605–606

and written texts, 603–604

See also Korea; Korean martial arts,

Chinese influence on; Taekwondo

Taekwondo, 297–298, 300, 605,

608–617, 827, 829

and attire, 612, 615–616

Chinese influence on, 610

history of, 608–612

and Olympics, 297–298, 611,

614–616, 616–617

and political conflict and the

martial arts, 435, 440–441

and technique, 612–616

and warfare, 609–610

See also Korea

Taft-Katsura Memorandum, 294

Tagore, Rabindranath, 825

Tahiti, 403. See also Pacific Islands

Tahteeb, 338, 562

Tai chi, Emperado, 221

Tai chi ch’uan. See Taijiquan

Taiheiki, 591, 592, 761

Taidô Codes, 184

Taiji, 43

Taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan), 13, 30, 33,

38, 42, 43, 70–71, 127, 221, 461,

470, 617–629, 728, 803, 811,

824, 825

and external vs. internal, 620,

623–624

and health, 621, 627

history of, 618–621

and kung fu, 313

and meditation, 336

and Olympics, 622

and performing arts, 421

and qi, 261

and technique, 624–627

and training, 622

and training area, 644

and weapons, 622–623

See also Boxing, Chinese; External

vs. internal Chinese martial arts;

Ki/qi; Medicine, traditional

Chinese; Meditation; Religion

and spiritual development: China

Taijiquan Theory, 130–131, 747

Taillten Games, 787

Tailltu, 787

Taima-no-Kehaya, 729, 791

Taira clan, 566
Taira family, 184–185, 186, 565
Taira no Kiyomori, 186
Taira Shinken, 235, 290–291
Tairo no Masakado, 185
Taishi-ryû, 18
Taiwu, Emperor, 457
Taizong, Emperor, 39, 126, 127
Taiwu, Emperor, 457
Takagaki Shinzo, 825
Takamatsu Toshitsugu, 732, 734
Takano Sasaburo, 768
Takeda Katsuyori, 189
Takeda Shingen, 189, 763
Takeda Sokaku, 159
Takuan Sôhô, 494–495, 497, 765, 766
Takuan Sôhô, 494–495, 497, 765, 766
Takuan Sohô, 494–495, 497, 765, 766
Talbot, Mary Anne, 674
Talhoffer, Hans, 320–321, 715
Talhoffer, Hans, 320–321, 715
Tamura Maro, 184
Tamura Maro, 184
Tanegashima Tokitaka, 192
Tang Hao, 619
Tang History, 706
Tang Shou dao. See Tang Soo Do
Tang Soo Do, 747
Tang Soo Do, 219, 222
Tanghalan ng Sandata (Gallery of
Weapons), 822
Tanglangquan (praying mantis
boxing), 38
Tani, Yukio, 684
Tanmi Kanpu, 243
Tano Matsuda, 51
Tantô, 13
Tantric Buddhism, 796–797
Tantric Buddhism, 796–797
Tao. See Dao
Tao. See Dao
Tarloon, Richard, 552
Tasso, Torquato, 284
Tay Son boxing, 548
Tay Son boxing, 548
Tay Son brothers, 815
Taylor, Ron, 679
Te, 364–366
Technique
Technique
and aikidô, 12–13, 14
and archery, Mongolian, 348
and baguazhang, 25
and capoeira, 64
and Filipino martial arts, 431–433
and iaidô, 171
and jûdô, 213–214, 215
and kajukenbo, 222–223, 224
and kalarippayattu, 226–227, 228–230
and krav maga, 310–312
and Muay Thai, 352–354
and ninjutsu, 358–359
and pankration, 412–413
and performing arts, 417
and sambo, 508–509
and savate, 519–520, 523
and silat, 524–525, 527–528
and stage combat, 554
and stage fighting, 554
and swordsmanship, European
medieval, 570–571, 576–578
and swordsmanship, European
Renaissance, 581–582
and swordsmanship,
Korean/Hankuk Haedong
Kumdo, 602
and t’aek’kyön, 603, 604–605,
607–608
and taekwondo, 612–616
and taijiquan, 624–627
and thang-ta, 639–641, 642
and training, 604–605, 607–608
and varma ati, 648–649, 650
and Vovinam/Viet Vo Dao,
652–653, 655–656
and wrestling and grappling:
Europe, 710, 712–718
and wrestling and grappling: India,
719–720
and wrestling and grappling: Japan,
727
and wrestling, Mongolian, 346
and yongchun/wing chun, 784–785
Technique, breathing. See Breathing
Technique
Technology
Japanese, 190–193
Tegner, Bruce, 215
“Tekken III,” 65
Television
Television
and kung fu, 314
and savate, 522
and stage combat, 555–556
and taekwondo, 616
and Ultimate Fighting
Championship, 829
and wrestling, professional,
741–742
Tell, Wilhelm, 800
Templars, 79, 370, 371, 373,
377–378, 379. See also Knights
of the Temple
Index 885
Tournaments, continued
medieval, 105
sumô, 808
and women, 670
and wrestling and grappling: China,
706
and wrestling and grappling: India,
720, 725–726
Toxophilus (Ascham), 806
Toyotomi Hideyoshi, 189, 192, 193,
197–198, 294, 517, 569, 598,
730, 808
Tôzama, 188
Tracy, Al, 259
Tracy, Jim, 259
Tracy System of Kenpô, 259
Trade
and Africa, 7
Training
and aikidô, 12–13, 14, 15
and archery, Japan, 20
and baguazhang, 24–25
and boxing, 49–51
and capoeira, 64
and FBI, 87
and Filipino martial arts, 432–433
and Gestapo, 87
and gladiators, 141–142, 147–148
and Janissaries, 807
and Jeet Kune Do, 205–206
and Kajukenbo, 223
and Kalarippayattu, 228–229
and kata, 206
and kendô, 254
and medicine, traditional Chinese,
332–333
and Muay Thai, 352
and ninjutsu, 360
and pankration, 413–414
and performing arts, 417, 421–422
and savate, 522–523
and silat, 527–528
and stage combat, 553–554,
555–556
and swordsmanship, 252
and t'ae kwon, 604–605, 605–606
and taijiquan, 622
and technique, 604–605, 607–608
and thang-ta, 641–642
and U.S. Air Force, 827
and varma ati, 648–649
and Vovinam/Viet Vo Dao,
652–653, 656
and women, 700–704
and wrestling and grappling: China,
708
and wrestling and grappling: India,
720, 723–724
and xingyiquan, 777, 778
See also Combat training; Military
training; Police training
Training area, 643–646. See also
Koryû bugei, Japanese; Religion
and spiritual development: ancient Mediterranean and
medieval West; Religion and
spiritual development: China;
Religion and spiritual
development: India; Religion and
spiritual development: Japan
Traité de’Escrime (Fencing Treatise)
(Lovino), 323
Trapeze artists, 808
Travels of Lao-tz’an (Liu E), 129, 460
Travels of Marco Polo, 708
Treatise of Ancient Armour and
Weapons (Grose), 815–816
A Treatise on Taijiquan (Wang
Zongyue), 620
“Treatise on Victorious Warfare,”
546
Trebuchets, 790
Triad gangs
and weapons, 819
Triad Society, 29, 39, 41, 127. See
also Heaven and Earth Society;
Hong League, 39
Triads, 814, 819
Triads of Hong League, 128
Tribes
and dueling, 100, 101–102
Trident
and gladiators, 142, 143, 144
Tristan and Isolde (Gottfried von
Strassburg), 81
Troubadours, 798
and chivalric love, 80
Truga Dei (Truce of God), 77
Trump, Donald, 536
Trung Nhi, 666
Trung Trac, 666
Turkey
and wrestling, 340–342
Troubull, Stephen, 733
Turn, 817, 818
Turner, Ted, 742
Turners, 819
Turnverein, 736, 817
Tylor, Edward B., 821
Tyrs, Miroslav, 820
Tyson, Mike, 742
U Ba Chan, 632
U Ba Saw, 632
U Maung Gyi, 635
U Zaw Min, 632
Uchiokoshi, 20
Uechi Kanbun, 41, 235, 244, 366
Uechi Kanei, 291
Uechi-ryû, 41
Ueekata, Jana, 240–241
Uemura Masahisa, 479–480
Ueshiba Morihei, 12, 13, 15, 238, 732, 825
Uesugi Kenshin, 189
UFC. See Ultimate Fighting Championship
Uganda
and military training, 91
Uke, 14
Uliccil (Malayalam), 757
Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), 110, 118, 513, 743, 829
UMNO. See United Malay Nationalists’ Organization
Unarmed Combat (Hipkiss), 89
The Undefeated, 513
Unforgiven, 152
United Kenpô Systems, 259
United Kingdom
and stickfighting, 557, 559
United Malay Nationalists’ Organization (UMNO), 438–439
United Nations, 307
United States
and boxing, 89
and dueling, 106–107
and knocking and kicking, 10
and military training, 90, 91–92
and Philippines, 426
and police training, 87
and wrestling and grappling: Europe, 717–718
and wrestling, professional, 736–738
United States Shuai-chiao Association, 709
University of California–Berkeley, 828
Unterhalten, 112
Upanishads, 721
Upper Egypt
and stickfighting, 562
Urban II, 77, 269, 451–452
Urban IV, 453
Urban, Peter, 131–132
Urinza, Ana Lezama de, 672
U.S. Air Force
and training, 827
U.S. Marines, 86
U.S. Navy, 819
USA Savate and Canne de Combat Association, 561
USSR Sports Federation, 513
Vadakkam pattukal, 754
Vadi, Fillipo, 321
Valdivia, Pedro de, 671
Vale Tudo, 118
Van Lustbader, Eric, 829
Van Wyck, Frederick, 680
Varma ati, 173, 177, 227, 647–651, 798
history of, 647
and kalarippayattu, 647–648, 650
and technique, 648–649, 650
and training, 648–649
and written texts: India, 753, 756, 757
See also Kalarippayattu; India; Religion and spiritual development: India; Written texts: India
Varma ati Morivu Cara Cuttiram, 650, 756
Varma Cuttiram, 756
Varna, 463
Varzesh-e-Pahlavani, 342
Vassals
and chivalry, 73–74
and knights, 267–268
Vatsayana, 792
Vettel, Emmerich de, 814
Vatten Tirippu, 227
Vayu, 467
Vedas, 721, 821
Vegetius, 449, 670
Venezuela
and broma, 10
Venus in Chains (Sacher-Masoch), 678
Veritable Records of the Yi Dynasty, 299
Verne, Jules, 116
Verumkaipidutham, 754
Vice
and social uses of the martial arts, 536
Victoria, Queen, 676
Video games
and capoeira, 65
Vie de Guillaume li Marechal (Life of William the Marshal), 276
Viera, Jelon, 64
Viet Lon Guom, 550
Vietnam, 441, 547–550
history of, 547
and Vovinam-Viet Vo Dao, 651–655
See also Southeast Asia
Vietnam War, 91, 611
Vigianni, 323
Vigneron, Louis, 521
Vikings
and masters of defence, 318
Vingras, Joseph, 521
Virgil, 45, 799
Virgil, Master, 320
The Virginian (Wister), 151–154
Vishnavite monks, 794
Visgoths, 73
Visnu Purana, 750
Visvabharati University, 825
Vitelli, Caminello, 806
Viterbo, Max, 680
Viviane, Jean-Paul, 522
Vo Bach Ninh, 550
Vo Binh Dinh, 548, 550, 800
Vo Quang Binh, 550
Vo Tay Son, 548, 800, 815
Vo vu, 800
Vovinam, 548
Vovinam/Viet Vo Dao, 549, 651–657
and political conflict and the martial arts, 435, 441
and ranking system, 656
and technique, 652–653, 655–656
and training, 652–653, 656
See also Political conflict and the martial arts; Southeast Asia
Vratam, 230
Wace, 799
Wace, Robert, 274
Wadô, 236
Wadô-ryû, 235
Wae Kumbup, 600
Wagner, George, 741
Wai Kru, 547
Wai Xinxian, 242
Walker: Texas Ranger, 616
Walled towns, 787
Wan An, 459
Wan, King, 788
Wan Li, 809
Wang Lun, 815
Wang Lun's rebellion, 674
Wang Shichong, 458
Wang Shixing, 16
Wang Xiangzhai, 776
Wang Yangming, 137
Wang Zongyue, 130–131, 620
Wanghompu, Khaokor, 354
Wanghompu, Khaosai, 354
Wannian Quig (Evergreen), 128
War of Resistance, 30
War tales
and written texts: Japan, 761–762
Ward, Jem, 817
Warfare
and Cambodia, 541
and chivalry, 81–82
codes of, 810
and dueling, 101
and Japan, 179–180, 181–190
and kalarippayattu, 225–226
and knights, 263–264, 281–282
and Knights of the Temple, 368
and krav maga, 307
and Pacific Islands, 403–404
and pankration, 414
and Polynesia, 403–404
and samurai, 517–518
taekwondo, 609–610
and Thailand, 546–547
Warfare, ethnic
cultural revitalization movements, 435–436
Warlock, 151
Warrior exploits
and written texts: Japan, 762
Warrior monks, Japanese/sôhei, 659–664. See also Folklore in the martial arts; Japan; Religion and spiritual development: Japan
Warrior skills
and masters of defence, 325
Warriors
and Africa and African America, 2
Hindu, 793
Iroquois, 811
and Japan, 193–196, 591–593, 796
and Krishna, 788
Zulu, 2
Warriors, women, 664–665, 668, 691, 692–696, 790, 799
Washington, Booker T., 823
Wat Tyler Rebellion, 81–82
The Water Margin, 68, 535, 691, 707, 796, 802
Water Principle, 160
Watts, Mrs. Roger (Emily), 685
Way of the Dragon, 828
Wayne, John, 154
WBA. See World Boxing Association
WCW. See World Championship Wrestling
Weapons
and Africa, 1–3
and aikidô, 12–13
and baguazhang, 25
and China, 70
and dueling, 97–98
and Filipino martial arts, 426–431
and gladiators, 142–145
and gunfighters, 820
and hapkidô, 160
and Hawaii, 407–408
and iaidô, 171
and Japan, 69, 190–193
and knights, 278–279
and kobudô, Okinawan, 286
and magical powers, 2
and masters of defence, 318
and metallurgy, 2
and Myanmar (Burma), 544
and ninjutsu, 359–360
and Pacific Islands, 404–406
and savate, 523
and silat, 524, 527, 530
and taijiquan, 622–623
and thiang, 633–634
and triad gangs, 819
and wrestling and grappling: Japan, 731
and xingyi quan, 777–778
and yongchun/wing chun, 784
Weichi Jingde, 67
Weider, Joe, 826
Weight training, 789
Weightlifting, 826
Weightlifting, women’s, 826
Weizhi, 181
WEKAF. See World Eskrima, Kali
Arnis Federation
Wellesley, Arthur, 477
Wells, Natalie, 679
Weng, Chi-hsiu D., 709
Werner, Johann, 818
West, the
and performing arts, 419, 421–422
Western Europe
and chivalry, 72
Wetherby’s, 673–674, 815
White Conduit House, 674
White Lotus sect, 29, 128
Widow Qi Number Two, 691
Wilhelm, Joerg, 320, 581
Wilhelm I, Duke, 394
Wilkinson, Elizabeth, 673
Will, Jay T., 239
William of Malmesbury, 451
William Rufus, King, 798
William the Conqueror, 451
Williams, Alice, 680
Williams, George, 819
Willibrand of Utrecht, Bishop, 453
Wilson Mission, 821
Wing chun, 203
and Jeet Kune Do, 205
See also Yongchun
Wing chun (eternal spring), 38
Wing Tsun Leung Ting Martial Arts
Association, 785
Wister, Owen, 150, 154
Woman Ding Number Seven, 691
Woman Number Four, 691
Wo-Mei, 549
Wo-Mei Shan Pai, 548
Women
and acting, 671
and aerobics, 829
and archery, 670
as athletes, 678, 792
and athletics, 678, 686–688, 792
and basketball, 686–687
and bodybuilding, 678, 826
as bodyguards, 670, 672, 673, 790, 813
and boxing, 664, 667, 669,
673–674, 675, 677, 679–680,
691, 796, 815, 822, 823
in the Chinese military, 689–690
and combat, 672
and the Crusades, 667–668
and cudgeling, 669
and dueling, 669, 671, 672–673, 800
and exercise, 676
and fencing, 673, 675, 676,
678–679, 684, 817
and foot binding, 667, 796
as guards, 671
and gymnastics, 679, 818
as hunters, 670
and jikishin Kage-ryû Naginata-dô,
698–699
and jousting, 667, 670
and jûdô, 213, 684–685, 828
and karate, 675
and the military, 670
and the Olympics, 691–692
in police departments, 680
and politics, 670
and polo, 667
and prizefighting, 673, 676, 677,
684, 815
and punching, 679
and savate, 679–680
as seamen, 673, 675–676
as shamans, 666
Women, continued

as soldiers, 672, 674, 675, 677, 678, 792, 812
and sports, 699–700
and stickfighting, 669
and sword and buckler, 670
and sword dancing, 666, 670, 690
as swordsmen, 665, 666, 667, 689, 791, 796
and tendo-ryû, 696–698
and tournaments, 670
and training, 700–704
as warriors, 664–665, 668, 691, 692–696, 790, 799
and weightlifting, 826
and wrestling, 665, 669, 671, 672, 673, 675, 677, 680, 690, 740, 790, 812
and wrestling and grappling: China, 707–708
and wrestling and grappling: Europe, 718
and wrestling and grappling: Japan, 727

Women in the martial arts: 479
B.C.–A.D. 1896, 664–684. See also
Women in the martial arts:
Britain and North America;
Women in the martial arts: China;
Women in the martial arts: Japan

Women in the martial arts: Britain
and North America, 684–689.
See also Boxing, European; Jûdô;
Wrestling and grappling: Japan

Women in the martial arts: China, 689–692. See also Boxing,
Chinese; Folklore in the martial arts;
Written texts: China;
Yongchun (wing chun)

Women in the martial arts: Japan, 692–705
early history of, 692–694
and the Edo period, 695–696
and Jikishin Kage-ryû Naginata-dô, 698–699
and sports, 699–700
and Tendo-ryû, 696–698
and training, 700–704
and the Warring States period, 694–695
See also Form/xing/kata/pattern
practice; Koryû bugei; Religion
and spiritual development: Japan;
Swordsmanship, Japanese;
Women in the martial arts: 479
B.C.–A.D. 1896

Women’s liberation, 684

 Won Kwan-wha, 160
Won Xiling, 803
World Boxing Association (WBA), 354
World Championship Wrestling (WCW), 741, 742, 743
World Eskrima, Kali Arnis Federation (WEKAF), 433
World Hapkido Foundation, 297
World Kido Federation, 157
World Taekwondo Championships, 298
World Taekwondo Federation (WTF), 298

World War I, 84
and military training, 85–86
and wrestling, professional, 738–739

World War II, 307, 822
and Burma, 632
and military training, 89
and Okinawa, 367
and Philippines, 426, 430
and savate, 522
and silat, 529
and Soviet Union, 508
World Wide Wrestling Federation (WWWF), 741
World Wrestling Federation (WWF), 741, 742, 743
Worldwide Kenpô Karate Association, 259

The Wounds of Civil War (Lodge), 808

Wovoka, 133, 436

Wrestling, 89, 799
and gladiators, 146
and Greece, ancient, 110
and Jacob, 788
and jûdô, 213, 216
and Krishna, 787
and military, 88–89
and military training, 85
and mystery plays, 798
and Olympics, 789
and police training, 87
and savate, 519
Wrestling, African, 5–6, 736
Wrestling, American, 818
Wrestling and grappling: China, 705–710
and attire, 708
main objectives of, 708–709
and the military, 706
modern form of, 708–709
mythical origins of, 705–706
and ranking system, 708
and tournaments, 706
and training, 708
and women, 707–708
See also China
Wrestling and grappling: Europe, 710–719
and Austria, 715
and classical civilization, 711–715
and Czech Republic, 715
and Germany, 715
history of, 711–712
and Italy, 716
and Olympics, 711
regional variations of, 718
and Russia, 716–717
and Scandinavia, 716
and technique, 710, 712–718
and United States, 717–718
and women, 718
See also Boxing, European;
  Gladiators; Masters of defence;
  Pankration; Sambo; Savate;
  Swordsmanship, European
  medieval; Swordsmanship,
  European Renaissance
Wrestling and grappling: India, 719–727
and celibacy, 720, 722
and gymnasiums, 720, 722–723
history of, 719–726
and technique, 719–720
and tournaments, 720, 725–726
and training, 720, 723–724
See also India; Religion and
  spiritual development: India;
  Written texts: India
Wrestling and grappling: Japan, 727–735
history of, 727–731
and technique, 727
and weapons, 731
and women, 727
See also Aikidô; Boxing, Chinese;
  Boxing, Chinese Shaolin;
  Japanese martial arts, Chinese
  influences on; Jûdô; Ninjutsu;
  Sambo; Samurai; Taijiquan (tai
  chi ch’uan); Wrestling and
  grappling: China
Wrestling, Breton, 560
Wrestling, Burmese, 345, 814
Wrestling, Chinese, 26, 789, 796
Wrestling, collar-and-elbow, 818
Wrestling, Cumberland, 818
Wrestling, Egyptian, 787
Wrestling, European, 112
Wrestling, German, 112
Wrestling, Greco-Roman, 109
Wrestling, Hawaiian, 406, 408–409
Wrestling, Japanese, 812
Wrestling, Korean, 299, 300
Wrestling, Middle Eastern, 338–339,
  340–342
Wrestling, Mongolian, 344–346,
  801
Wrestling, Parisian, 521, 561
Wrestling pit, 722–723, 806
Wrestling, professional, 735–745
  and the Depression, 740
  and Europe, 738
  and France, 736
  and Germany, 736
  and Great Britain, 735
  and Greco-Roman rules, 737
  and Ireland, 736
  and Low Countries, 736
  and Native Americans, 736
  1920s and 1930s, 739–740
  1980s to the present, 740–743
  and North America, 736–738
  styles of, 735–736
  and United States, 736–738
  and World War I, 738–739
during World War II, 740
See also Jûdô; Stage combat;
  Wrestling and grappling: India;
  Wrestling and grappling: Japan
Wrestling, Roman, 791
Wrestling, Russian, 88, 115, 824
  and sambo, 508–509, 511
Wrestling, Schwingen, 800
Wrestling, Soviet freestyle, 825
Wrestling, Sumai, 795
Wrestling, Western, 605
Wrestling, Western style, 824–825
Wrestling, women’s, 665, 669, 671,
  672, 673, 675, 677, 680, 690,
  740, 790, 812
Wright, Norris, 817
Written texts
  and ninjutsu, 358
  and T’aek’kyôn, 604
Written texts: China, 745–748
  and military writings, 745–746
See also Boxing, Chinese; China;
  individual texts; Religion and
  spiritual development: China
Written texts: India, 749–758, 787.
  See also India; individual texts;
  Kalarippayattu; Meditation;
  Performing arts; Religion and
  spiritual development: India;
  Varma ati; Wrestling and
  grappling: India
Written texts: Japan, 758–774
and educational works, 767–768
and initiation documents, 763–764
and martial art treatises, 764–767
and war tales, 761–762
and warrior exploits, 762
See also Archery, Japanese; Budô, bujutsu, and bugei; individual texts: Japan; Kendô; Koryû bugei;
Religion and spiritual development: Japan; Sword, Japanese; Swordsmanship, Japanese
WTF. See World Taekwondo Federation
Wu, 621
Wu Bei Zhi (Account of Military Arts and Science), 809
Wu Chengqing, 620
Wu, Emperor, 706
Wu Hong, Emperor, 289
Wu Jianquan, 621
Wu Mei, 131, 674, 783
Wu Mei (Ng Mui), 127–128, 781–782, 815
Wu Qin Xi (Five Animals Play), 791–792
Wu Quanyou, 621
Wu Ruqing, 620
Wu San Niang, 674
Wu Xingui, 247
Wu Yuxiang, 130–131, 620, 621, 746
Xin Tangshu (The New History of the Tang Dynasty), 181
Xing, 135. See also Form/xing/kata/pattern practice
Xingyi, 24, 121
and folk hero legends, 130
Xingyi boxing, 16–17
Xingyiquan (hsing i ch’uan), 13, 38, 70, 130, 461, 775–779, 816
history of, 775
and kung fu, 313
and meditation, 336
and qi, 261
and training, 777, 778
and weapons, 777–778
See also Baguazhang (pa kua ch’uan); Boxing, Chinese;
External vs. internal chinese martial arts; Kî/qî; Taijiquan (tai chi ch’uan)
Xu Chenglie, 823
Xu Fulin, 823
Xu Xuanping, 618
Xu Yusheng, 824
Xuan Zong, 794
Yandong, 541, 771
Yang, 328, 667, 796
892 Index
Yang Aner, 691
Yang Banhou, 620–621
Yang Chengfu, 621, 624
Yang Family, 618, 621
Yang Jianhou, 621, 824
Yang Jwing-Ming, 39
Yang Luchan, 620–621
Yang Shaohou, 621
Yangtze River, 32
Yara Chatan, 242
Yasen kanna (Hakuin Eakaku), 492
Yasumaru Yoshiho, 494
Yasushi, Aizawa, 58
Yatra Brahman, 176
Yazawa Isako, 694, 700
Yedo Kumbup, 600
Yellow Emperor (Huang Di), 124, 492, 705, 728, 787
“The Yellow Wallpaper” (Gilman), 678
Yi Dok-Mu, 294, 299, 816
Yi He Tuan (Righteous Harmonious Fist), 437
Yi Sông-ji, 603
Yi Sung-Man, 605
Yijing (I Ching; Book of Changes), 188, 328, 493, 618, 731, 788, 790, 798, 808
Yin, 328
Yin family, 23
Yin Fu, 23
Yin Yang, 23
Yin-yang symbol, 206
Yin-yang theory, 745–746, 790
Yip Chun, 674, 815
Yip Man, 203, 783, 784–785
Yiquan, 130
YMCA. See Young Men’s Christian Association
Yoga, 24, 228, 229, 239, 425, 467, 468–470, 753
and performing arts, 421
Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, 469–470
Yogi Jirsuei, 238, 248
Yogis, 470
Yokoyama Sakujirô, 768
Yon Mu Kwan, 157
Yong In University, 296
Yongchun County Gazetteer, 691
Yongchun (wing chun), 38, 121, 131, 548, 674, 781–786, 815, 828
history of, 781–784
and technique, 784–785
and weapons, 784
See also Boxing, Chinese; Boxing, Chinese Shaolin; Folklore in the martial arts; Women in the martial arts: China; Written texts: China
Yonten Gyatso, 808
York, archbishop of, 454
York Barbell, 826
Yoshi and Company, 422
Yoshiaki, 517
Yoshikawa Eiji, 762
Yoshimasa, 196–197
Yoshimitsu, 196–197
Yoshinaka, 668, 799
Yoshinkan Aikidô, 15
Yoshin-ryû, 211–212
Young, Mae, 740
Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), 89, 532, 819, 821, 825
and boxing, 46
Shanghai Chinese, 824
Young, Terence, 153
Young, Thomas, 258
Your Physique, 826
Youth Games, 666
Yu Dayou, 747
Yu Kwon Sool, 159
Yu Sool, 159, 161
Yu Yang Za Zu (Miscellaneous Fare from Yu Yang) (Duan Cheng), 795
Yuan Ying, 460–461
Yubi Lakpi, 642
Yudaoshi, 20
Yudô College, 296
Yue Fei, 129–130, 130–131, 775
Yue Kong, 460
Yugaeri, 20
Yugake, 20
Yugamae, 20
Yumi, 20
Yun Pyung-In, 296
Yung Geka, 296
Yungjo, Emperor, 598
Yûryaku, Emperor, 181, 730
Zaiteki, 20
Zanshin, 20
Zappas, Evangelios, 820
Zarrilli, Phillip, 421–422
Zbyszko, Stanislaus, 738
Zeami, 196
Zebra dance, 8
Zen and Japanese Culture (Suzuki), 483
Zen Buddhism, 126, 455, 460, 472, 482–484, 488, 492, 495–496, 497, 730, 794
and meditation, 336–337
and sword, Japanese, 568–569
See also Buddhism
Zen in the Art of Archery (Herrigel), 483
Zen Nihon Kendō Remmei. See All-Japan Kendō Federation
Zen Nihon Kyūdō Renmei, 19
Zeus, 789
Zhang Bangji, 667, 796
Zhang Junfeng, 24
Zhang Sanfeng, 120, 127, 461, 618, 620, 803
Zhang Songqi, 803
Zhang Tingyu, 28
Zhang Zhaodong, 23
Zhaolu Liangliu, 242
Zhao Yi, 665, 791
Zhao Yong, 798
Zhen Bao, 459
Zheng Banqiao, 461
Zheng Li, 691
Zheng Manqing, 825
Zheng Ruozeng, 200
Zhoo Zuihe, 366
Zhou Chan, 456
Zhou Zihe, 41, 244
Zhu Guozhen, 27
Zhu Xi, 137, 479, 799
Zhu Yuanzhang, 802
Zhuang Nationality, 16
Zhuang Zi, 790
Zhuang Zong, 706
Zhuangzi, 16, 766
Zi qiang, 820
Zinoviev, Igor, 513
Zipota, 519, 520, 523, 560
Zour Khaneh (House of Strength), 343, 804
Zulu warriors and dueling, 98, 101–102, 103
Zumbi, King, 129, 132, 440
Zur Khane (House of Strength), 343
Zybyzko, Stanley, 726
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