



1001 Years of Missing Martial Arts

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1001 YEARS OF MISSING MARTIAL ARTS

Master Mohammed Khamouch

Early Muslim merchants and travellers of Arab and Persian origin, voyaged to China in their quest for the silk trade, enduring perilous journeys to establish strong trade relations that endured for centuries. This produced a dramatic increase in economic growth within Muslim mercantile communities, especially in the ancient imperial city of Chang'an (present day Xian) in Shaanxi Province, the eastern terminus of the Silk Roads and the Maritime (Silk Route) port cities of *al-Zaytun* (Quanzhou) and Guangzhou (Canton).

As Muslims settled and widely dispersed throughout the country, rapid progress was achieved in allowing Muslims to govern their own internal affairs, build Mosques and appoint a *Qādi* (Muslim judge) who adjudicated according to Islamic (*Sharia*) law. When a military commander An Lu-Shan revolted against Emperor Su T'sung in 755 CE, an urgent plea was made to the Abbasid Caliph Abū Jafar al-Mansūr who immediately sent a contingent of 4000 soldiers who eventually quelled the unrest and recaptured the city.



Figure 1. A contemporary multicultural scene of the Shaolin Monastery with the Abbot and a senior monk at the back, attentively observing how diligently their foreign disciples (left) apply the art. Shaolin Temple witnessed the rise and fall of dynasties, and experienced both glory and destruction for its great pride, heritage and legacies, that left a discernible influence on world martial arts today. It was once said, "One Shaolin Monk was considered to be worth one thousand soldiers".

Chang'an, the "*City of Eternal Peace*", retained its normality once more and continued in its splendour under the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), as the world's most thriving metropolis. During the Tang period a variety of different cultures, knowledge and spiritual beliefs, all interacted with each other; thus attracting many keen Japanese and Korean scholars who wished to learn and observe Chinese arts.

Many Abbasid warriors who helped the Emperor accepted the invitation to stay and settled in China, marrying Chinese wives thus beginning a natural process of integration into Chinese society while maintaining Islamic identity and stressing a common lineage and descent from venerated Muslim ancestors. These ancestors were colloquially known as "Hui Hu" down the centuries, and founded one of the longest lived and rarest of all Muslim minorities in the world. This colourful pattern is implicitly mentioned in the following Quranic verse:

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into Nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (Not that ye may despise each other)"(Qur'an 49:13).

During the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368 CE), founded by Kublai Khan, Muslims were granted special status and were known as "Da'shma" or "Da'shman" (meaning the learned one), because of their outstanding ability and contribution as statesmen, astronomers, astrologers, doctors, pharmacist, architects, businessmen, philosophers and authors. P'u Sung Ling, popularly known as one of China's few great novelists, wrote stories considered as the Chinese equivalent of the Arabian "1001 Nights", obtainable in many languages.

The efficient management of Kublai Khan's royal court and palaces, which included over thirty high Muslim officials, was noticed by Marco Polo (1254-1324 CE), who was awe-struck by the mighty ruler. Out of twelve administrative districts, eight had Muslim governors and Muslims occupied numerous other senior positions in civil power. They were also military advisors, as well as martial arts experts and bodyguards who escorted caravans on long perilous journeys. Muslim scientists were invited to participate in various projects including the construction and running of the famous observatory in Shensi (Shaanxi).

Many distinguished Muslims responded to the Chinese need to fill strategically important gaps and excelled in all fields. Two expert technicians, who made "Hui Hu" (Muslim) cannon, were Allah-uddin of Mufari, who was later promoted to Deputy Wan Hu, the second in command of an army of 3,000 - 7,000 men, and Ismail of Syria, who became the chief superintendent in the manufacture of "Hui Hu" cannon. Cannon made by these Muslim technicians was deployed during the Yuan Dynasty to shell the Hsiang Yang Fort in Hubei Province. The two technicians were possibly some of the earliest to use gunpowder.¹

Syed 'Umar Shams-uddin (known as Sayyid al-Ajall), a noble figure and descendant of the Prophet, contributed a great deal to the achievements of the Yuan Dynasty, and with his son Nasir al-Din actively proselytised and converted thousands of people to Islam. As a young boy, he was surrendered by his father (king of Bukhara) as a hostage to Ghengis Khan, who took him to Peking, where he was educated in both Chinese and Arabic. Being very intelligent, he was able to assimilate both Mongolian and Chinese cultures. In 1271 CE he was appointed by Kublai Khan as Governor of Yunnan and posthumously awarded with title of "Prince Hsien Yang". He shed new light on education, Chinese law, improved agriculture and was the first to establish the Confucian temples in Yunnan, despite being a devout Muslim.

Shams-uddin studied three types of ancient Chinese books, called the "Books of Changes" dating back to 909 BCE, which are understood by only a few scholars today. Shams-uddin was responsible for the origin of the "Tai T'si", Yin and Yang symbol, an ancient concept centred on the Daoist philosophy and principle of unity of the two cosmic forces.² When he died in 1279 CE, aged 67, many attended his funeral, and the non-Muslim Chinese people built a shrine in his honour, and a cenotaph in Guangzhou.

The opposing forces of *Yin* and *Yang* flow into one another and neither the positive or the negative aspect of the universe can exist without the other. In the West, the term martial arts denotes the art of war, derived from the name of *Mars*, the Roman god of war.³ However the philosophical background to Chinese martial arts is contained in the common idiom of "*Go-Ju*", "*Go*" meaning "hard" and "*Ju*" means "soft". The negative (*Yin*) element is the hard Kung fu, and the positive (*Yang*) element is the soft Kung fu.

There are literally several hundreds of different types of martial arts in China, all stemming from a just a few distinct branches. These consist of mainly the *external* (hard) Kung fu, and there are much fewer *internal* (soft) Kung fu styles. Muslim Kung fu, however, ranks amongst the best of both, the internal and the external popular styles of China.

Ever since the dawn of civilization, man has had a desire for unarmed combat and warfare to defend himself and his property. Different martial arts have sprung naturally from many nations in their long centuries of continuous struggle, incorporating similar fighting techniques tempered with cultural and spiritual values, transmitted from many generations that nurtured the ideals of the legendary fighting skills of the warrior's archery, swordsmanship and horsemanship. There is historical evidence dating back several thousands of years for the origins of the various organized fighting arts that have existed in Southeast Asia.



Figure 2. A frozen action depicting Shaolin monks engaged in unarmed combat welcomes new disciples at Shaolin Temple today, reminiscent of ancient past tradition.

One of the earliest references to unarmed combat is detailed in a Babylonian plaque dating back more than 5,000 years, which represents two figures in unarmed combat, using fighting stances and counter-blocking characteristic of Asian fighting arts.⁴ Another object, found in 1975 during an archaeological excavation in a tomb in Jiangling County, Hubei Province, dating back to the Qing Dynasty (221-207 BCE), is a decorated wooden comb depicting two bare-chested wrestlers, competing with one another in front of an official referee.⁵

In China however, elements of the Chinese martial art, known in the Western world by the popular name of "Kung Fu", can be traced back to *circa* 2700 BCE during the rule of legendary Yellow Emperor Huang Ti, who fought and defeated his opponent Chi Yuo, using traditional Chinese wrestling methods.⁶ Such a wrestling style is different to that of western wrestling or judo, and was known as *Shuai Chiao*, or *Shuai Jiao*. It comprised hand and low leg tangling and kicking and evolved around 700 BCE as one of the earliest forms of organized fighting systems, sharing strikingly similar techniques to those of Kung fu.⁷

The late Grandmaster Ch'ang Tung Sheng (1905-1986), a Hui Muslim from Hubei Province, was one of China's most prominent exponents of the ancient art of *Shuai Chiao*. According to Matt Mollica (5th Teng), a senior student of Grandmaster Ch'ang, "*attacking Ch'ang Tung Sheng was like sticking your hand in a blender*". The latter accepted all challenges from many different styles and was undefeated for over half a century.

Wrestling was often performed before the Emperor and as part of military training, until unarmed combat developed further into a complexity of different fighting systems. During the Shang Dynasty (1523-1027 BCE), warriors fought wearing animal horns, performed folk dance, then grabbed and threw each other to the ground. During the Chow Dynasty (c.1027-256 BCE), at the beginning of Iron Age, archery and horsemanship was encouraged by all gentlemen and scholars of the schools of philosophy that had sprung up.⁸

Martial arts, emanating from the Far East, have deep mystical and spiritual foundations, and are entwined with the doctrines and philosophical beliefs of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and finally Islam. Islam aroused the appetite of its followers to practice and excel in Wu Shu (*military arts* in Chinese), as a sacred practice. This is reflected in a famous Islamic proverb (some consider it a saying of the Prophet Muhammed, inspiring Muslims to "*seek for knowledge, even unto China*").

An example of how the Prophet applied such a principle occurred during the "*Battle of the Trench*" in 5/627 CE. He adopted a stratagem put forward by Salmān al-Fārisī (the Persian), to defend Madina by digging a defensive trench around the city. This proposal was judged by its merit not by nationality. Such a plan was hitherto totally unknown to the Arabs, but was commonly used by the Sasanids in Persia.

Spiritual belief played an influential role in the development of the Far Eastern fighting skills that we know today. Although the origins of Chinese martial arts go back to well over 5000 years, a major celebration took place a decade ago to mark the 1500th anniversary of Shaolin Monastery, where centuries of careful study of various animals and their fighting techniques have been incorporated to produce a uniquely skilful fighting techniques. Some of these are physically imprinted on the interior and exterior of the Shaolin temple complex; such as the "*Thousand Buddha's Hall*" where years of treading and stamping by monks during training has worn depressions on the surface of the brick floor.⁹

Various patterns of fighting skills gradually evolved into effective human forms of combat. The ferocious Kung fu style popularly known in China as "*Tong Lun*" originated nearly four hundred years ago towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, when Master Wang Lang of East Shan-Tung Province of China observed a fight between a praying mantis and a grasshopper.

Shaolin Temple, *Si Lum* in Chinese, one of the most famous religious establishments in all China, is situated near Mt. Songshan, 15 kilometress northwest of Dengfeng County town in Henan Province. It was built in

495 CE, on the orders of Emperor Hsiao Wen of the Northern Dynasty (386-534 CE) in honour of a visiting monk, Batuo (*Fu Tuo* in Chinese) from India.¹⁰



Figure 3. The author's martial arts demonstration at the Shaolin Temple's 1500th anniversary, was received with a round of applause, and saluted by Chinese television crew members and this young Shaolin monk.

An enigmatic legendary figure Bodhidharma (*P'u-t'i-ta-mo* in Chinese or *Daruma Daishi* in Japanese), third son of the Brahman king and twenty-eighth patriarch, left Southern India and voyaged to Guangzhou, where he was granted audience by Emperor Wu Ti of the Liang Dynasty (502-577 CE). When Bodhidharma finally arrived at the Shaolin temple, in his search for spiritual enlightenment, he began to preach Ch'an Buddhism to his disciples, along with various breathing techniques and exercises to improve their ability to withstand long periods of static meditation. Such training exercises are believed to have been the foundation of modern martial arts, and his Buddhist teachings formed the basis of a new school of Buddhist philosophy recognized as "*Ch'an*" in China and "*Zen*" in Japan.¹¹

Over a century later, in 651 CE, during the Tang Dynasty, a delegation was sent to China by Caliph Uthmān Ibn Affān (r. 644-656 CE) from Madina, led by S'ad Ibn Abī Waqqās (d. 674 CE), from *Bani Zuhrah*, the clan of Aminah daughter of Wahb, mother of the Prophet Muhammad, who arrived at the port of Guangzhou to deliver the peaceful message of Islam. Sa'd was one of the most courageous warriors and commanders, was the first to shoot an arrow in defence of Islam, one of the best archers who never missed his target, and was renowned for his bravery and his generosity.¹²

Before S'ad journeyed to China, he had engaged in many battles along with many prominent Companions like Alī Ibn Abī Tālib, a skilful swordsman, who was honoured with a famous sabre "*Dhul Fiqr*", by the Prophet who exclaimed: "*No sword can match Dhul Fiqr, and no young warrior can compare to Ali*". Alī demonstrated exceptional bravery in his courageous fighting skills, and his spectacular swordsmanship earned him the epithet of "*Asad Allah*" (The Lion of God). Alī's mastery of the sword gained him popularity

and had a tremendous influence on the Muslim *Ummah* (nation), from the heart of Morocco to North-Western China where early Muslims choreographed an art of stick fighting that was named "*Ali's stick*". Amongst other arts of swordsmanship "*jiar*" (meaning straight sword), which existed in the past, were various sets like the "*Qur'an's sword*" and the "*Sulaiman sword*" (Arabic for Solomon).¹³

When Alī Ibn Abī Tālib was engaged in combat, during the *Battle of the Trench* and had knocked an enemy warrior to the ground and raised his sword to kill him, the enemy suddenly spat on his face; Alī halted and refrained from killing him. "*Why have you spared me?*", the enemy asked. Ali then said: "*O Gracious God, you made property and life sacrosanct*", and then replied:

"It is only permissible to kill a life while in holy combat, but when you spat on my face, you aroused my personal pride and anger so instead of striking you with a sword, I struck my passion for the sake of Allah".

The enemy gazed in awe by Alī's noble character, especially when Alī offered him to freely escape; instead the non believer immediately accepted the faith of Islam.

Imam Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292-1350 CE), in his book of "*Zād- al-Ma'ād*", stressed the importance of exercise and its effect on the body, how it strengthens, enhances its immunity and protects it from diseases. He described strengthening one's memory, thought and reading, as well as the art of exercising one's hearing, talking, observation, and walking gradually starting from slow to a fast pace. Also self-discipline of the "*nafs*" (soul) in the case of happiness, sadness, patience and steadiness, forgiveness, piety as well as courage. These commended elements of the above exercises are to be found at the core of Asian philosophical teachings which form the basis of martial arts as we know them today.

Trying to achieve such profound wisdom which clearly emphasizes the need for perfecting and conditioning the body, and obtaining a high level of fitness, is followed all over the world by the Muslim way of life, in fulfilling both religious and worldly duties. The obligatory five times daily "*Salah*" (ritual prayers), "*Salat tahajjud*" (supererogatory night prayers), all help stimulate the "*nafs*" (soul) and the body. The rituals duty of *Hajj* (pilgrimage), which demands a great deal of physical and mental effort, in turn sustains the heart and helps maintain a healthy body. "*A sound mind in sound body*", just like the Roman poet Juvenal quoted over two thousand years ago.¹⁴

Spectacular Arab swordsmanship was displayed during the course of the rise and fall of the Islamic empire, and today swords may still be found in every part of the Islamic world from Marrakech to Jakarta as part of the flags of some Muslim countries or as part of a wall decoration. In Muslim countries of South East Asia annual sword ritual processions are performed during "*Muharram*", the first month of the Islamic calendar, which marks *ra's al-'ām*, (New Year), where all "*mata*" (blade in Malay) or "*wilah*" (in Javanese), are ritually cleaned. In Java, the month of *Muharram* also coincides with "*Surd*", where the Javanese prepare for cleaning their "*Kris*" (a unique 30 inch long wavy-edged bladed sword) accompanied by a relevant *Qur'anic* recitation prior to beginning the cleaning procedure, by owners who are desirous of rejuvenating the spiritual power of their *Kris*.

During the period of 900s CE, Sun Tzu's Chinese military classic the "*Art of War*", was keenly read by Japanese Samurai warriors, who were originally taught with real (bladed) swords before changing to training swords called "*Bokker*", made in a similar weight of red oak and having the balance of a real sword

except that it too could severely injure or kill an opponent. Special ceremonial rituals which were handed down by masters for centuries, were also performed during Japanese sword-making. Takuan, the great *Zen* master and swordsman was the first to apply *Zen* to the psychology of swordsmanship.

More uncharacteristic than the Chinese sword "*jian*" or the fine Damascus sabre, is the "*Urumi*" (Spring Sword) of the Indian art of *Kalaripayattu* (normally kept coiled-up), which is made up of four steel bands, sharpened from both edges. This makes incredible sparks and causes confusion when released, swung through the air in a circular movement. A deadly weapon, mastered by only a few, it could cut off the heads of many attackers when rapidly swung through the air. However, a sudden loss of control can mean that its exponent can suffer a similar fate.¹⁵

Under the Umayyad Dynasty (651-750 CE), infantry men deployed weaponry such as bows, arrows in quivers, lances, double edged swords and javelins; they also wore helmets to protect their heads and leather shirts with several folds to guard their body. According to Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406 CE), there were two methods of fighting, one by attacking and retreating and the other by charging at close quarters, until the last Umayyad Caliph introduced small compact bodies of troops differing from of early Arab troops who fought in ranks of single and double lines.

Master Salāh ad-Dīn al-Ayyūbī or Saladin (1138-1193 CE), son of the Kurdish general, was honoured by Muslims and Christians alike; he was the epitome of a great warrior, being chivalrous with a strong sense of justice towards the defenceless. He fought courageously and achieved remarkable success in defeating "*al-Salibiyyah*" (the Crusaders) at the Horn of Hattin near the Tiberias, and recaptured "*al-Quds*" (Jerusalem) in 1187CE, ending eighty-eight years of occupation by the Franks.

Richard the Lion-heart showed off his skills in swordsmanship by cutting through an iron bar, and was immediately opposed by Salāh ad-Dīn, who unsheathed his finest Damascus steel curved and narrow bladed scimitar and dropped a piece of silk across the edge, instantly cutting it in two. There is a similar contrast in the previously mentioned internal and external styles of Kung fu, where the external is hard in action, using muscular strength and is quicker to master, than the internal, which is soft in action and utilizes "*Chi*" internal energy and requires many years to master.

In China, however many thousands of martial arts practitioners of all ages begin their daily routine at the local park, for a session of *T'ai Chi Chuan*, one of the most popularly used of the "*internal*" styles after Hsing-I and Pakua. This style has attracted for decades many due to its gentle movements and calmness of the mind, vision; yet its fundamental principle is not to resist or oppose an attacking force, but to reverse the incoming force against itself to restrain an attacker.



Figure 4. A Double sword attack in a forward (split) position, demonstrated by the author

It was the fashion for early Muslim warriors to carry their swords from a shoulder belt, as opposed to the Ayyubid and Mamluk period when scabbards girded at the waist were preferred. Similarly the Japanese Samurai also revered their swords, before an edict was issued in 1868, during the Meiji restoration banning all Samurais from carrying swords in public. Early sword blades from China, India and Malaysia were prized for their high quality, and regarded as the height of functional technology.

The influence of martial arts did not stop at the borders of China. They emerged in America brought by Chinese immigrants during the gold rush of 1848. Karate was introduced post-World War II, through interaction between American servicemen and Japanese experts in occupied Okinawa. Post-war Europe was, however, rebuilding its shattered economy and sport was less popular.

Though rudimentary Judo, then described as “*Jujutsu*” or Japanese wrestling was introduced to several European countries during the first decades of the 20th century, it was not until the early 1950’s that magazine articles arrived from the Far East and the U.S. presenting the general idea of Karate. However Jim Alscheik (*al-Sheikh* in Arabic), a Frenchman of Turkish descent was one of the two Judo exponents who were responsible for introducing Karate to France. *Al-Sheikh* originally studied Judo, Karate, Aikido and Kendo under Master Minoru Mochizuki, head of Yoseikan School of Martial Arts in Japan. Al-Sheikh taught Karate in France and in several North African countries before he died in Algeria, during the uprising of 1961.¹⁶

During the early seventies, martial arts spread with a “bang”, reaching global popularity and gaining a toehold in many countries though the spread of the Japanese Karate way of empty hand and Korean Tae Kwon Do’s fast high spinning kicks. Chinese Kung fu movies were also introduced through the early film classics like “*History of White Crane Heroes*”, by the world most famous Crane Master Kwan Tak Hing and later “*Enter the Dragon*”, by “Lee Jun Fan” (famous under the name Bruce Lee) (1940-1973), who was already a legend amongst martial artists prior to his movie career, which ultimately earned him world recognition for promoting the Oriental holistic principles, previously ignored by the analytical thinking of the West.

At thirteen, Bruce Lee began to practice Wing Chun (meaning “beautiful springtime”), founded by a woman called Yim Wing Chun, over four hundred years ago. Bruce Lee, however, mastered the art in Hong Kong under the famed Grandmaster Yip Man (1884-1972), the father of modern version of Wing Chun, and the

leader of the Athletic Association in Hong Kong. Bruce later developed "*Jeet Kune Do*" meaning "Way of the Intercepting Fist", which he composed by incorporating several martial arts: grappling, boxing methods, low and high kicks as well as disarmament and counterattacking techniques of Islamic arts such as "*Kal*" (*Arnis*, *Eskrima*). According to Bruce Lee, *Jeet Kune Do* is just a name and he denies inventing anything new, but hoped to free his comrades from bondage to styles, patterns and doctrines.¹⁷

In retrospect, the Oriental arts of combat experienced a major change under Bruce Lee's revival of many different martial arts. In reaching such equilibrium in martial arts, Bruce Lee had designed special training equipment and borrowed training techniques from many countries including India, where he borrowed a "*Cat Stretch*" to strengthen his wrestling techniques, from "*Gama*", a famous Indian wrestler, whom he read about.



Figure 5. A jumping side-kick by the author, used for reaching high targets and one of the most powerful and favorite Strikes of the "Hard" Kung fu and Korean Tae Kwon Do.

Lee's philosophical side led to his interrogation and examination of the philosophical tenets of martial arts and the concept of *ying yang*, in connection with physical combat. Lee reached a position in the martial arts that awe-struck people in many parts of the world, particularly the Western world with its view of reasoning (logic). In some respects, this could be compared to that of Ibn Rushd (1126-1198 CE), the philosophical genius better known in the West as the "*Commentator*", whose philosophical works, incontrovertible facts, theories, and conclusions on several philosophical issues had a far-reaching effect on the thought of many philosophers of both the East and West in several spheres of knowledge. Although his thought was rejected

in both the Islamic and Christian worlds, neither was able to refute his philosophical conclusions especially in the curricula of European universities.

A close friend and student of Bruce Lee was the seven feet three inches tall, super athlete Kareem Abdul-Jabbār, who starred with him in the uncompleted film "*Game of Death*". Kareem used to spend hours in discussion with Bruce, who while he jettisoned all restrictions in achieving the tone acquired for his style of *Jeet Kune Do*, also enjoyed discussing philosophy, and particularly admired Jalāl ad-Dīn ar-Rūmī (1207-1273 CE), the Sufi spiritual alchemist, who was one of the greatest and most powerful mystics of Islam.¹⁸

The World's greatest Heavy Weight Boxing Champion, Muhammad Ali (b.17-01-1942) was also one of Lee's admirers. Ali was immensely fond of Oriental martial arts, and was awarded an honorary Black Belt Dan Certificate at the Kukkiwon, located in Seoul, South Korea, on June 28, 1976, by Dr. Un Yong Kim, President of The World Tae Kwon Do Federation.¹⁹ Ali was also warmly welcomed by the White Crane Grand Master Luk Chi Fu in Hong Kong, when he visited Hong Kong in 1979.²⁰

Ali's boxing spirit encouraged Bruce, who would lock himself in a room and minutely watch his boxing matches, to perfect his sparring techniques. Boxing dance movements similar to that of Ali can clearly be seen demonstrated in the film of "*Way of the Dragon*" during the final fight, against Chuck Norris. Bruce also learnt various empty-hand methods and stick fighting techniques of *Kali (Eskrima)*, from Danny Inosanto, (from the Philippines) an influential proponent who was a close friend and student.

Kali is an ancient warrior art that emerged from the Philippines, a group of islands in the South China Sea. These islands are on a prosperous trade route that exposed its inhabitants to other nations for centuries; and so they absorbed different influences, which were transmitted to their own fighting techniques. This effective form of martial art was developed in the Southern Philippines where a large community of Filipino Muslims live known as the *Moro*. However, unlike other Asian martial arts which teach unarmed methods first, *Kali* applies the reverse and teaches weapons first and hand-to-hand techniques last.

About 100 different styles in the Philippines that are grouped under the umbrella term of *Kali*, and are classified as the following: Northern style, Eastern Central styles, Western styles and Southern styles. *Kali* was widely practiced throughout the Philippines archipelago as a means of self-defence, using simply a single stick, or two sticks, a combination of a long and short stick or a dagger; and was strongly inspired by Indonesian Islamic cultural influence, well before foreign intervention. During the festive seasons and coronation ceremonies in the reign of Sultan Abu Bakr, of the Sulu archipelago in 1450 CE, Muslim soldiers often performed sword dances known as "*dabus*".²¹

However, Filipino martial arts first came to popular attention in 1521CE, when the Spanish fleet led by the Portuguese adventurer Ferdinand Magellan invaded the Samar Island of Mactan. Magellan endeavoured to convert the Muslim tribes of Mactan to Christianity. He and his men engaged in a ferocious battle upon arrival, and were repelled by the islander's indigenous fighting art. Despite being heavily armoured with swords and muskets, it proved less effective than the natives who fought using fire-hardened sticks. Rajah "*Lapu-Lapu*" defeated Magellan and became the first Filipino national hero, and a reputation as one of the foremost masters of the ancient art.

During the middle of the 16th century, Thailand experienced the first major separation of *Muay Thai* (Thai Boxing) from the Siamese revered art of "*Krabi-Krabong*" (a stick and sword fighting). This occurred under

the Black-Prince Naresuan in order to reduce the training casualties caused by the *Krabi* (a Thai version of sabre).²² This was the period of zenith for the Filipino Muslims of Sulu and Mindanao which reflected in their ability during the following centuries.

Magellan's last discovery prompted further attempts by the Spanish conquistadors, who later defeated the inhabitants with their superior firepower. The defeat had inevitable consequences for the Muslim sultanates of the island of Luzon in the north, since it was followed by conversion to Roman Catholicism with the exception of the islands of the Sulu archipelago and Mindanao, where the Spaniards met great resistance from the *Moros*.

Long before Spanish colonial rule which left an indelible imprint on the Philippines and its culture, Filipinos had developed their own system of medicine, astronomy, engineering and a written language. Legend has it that in the 12th century, a "*bothoan*" was established by ten *Datus* (chieftains) from Borneo who arrived and settled in Panay. The "*bothoan*" was a central communal school where the *Datus* taught tribal leaders the art of *Kali*, together with other academic subjects and agriculture.²³

Most writings were later destroyed by the Spanish conquerors who enforced their influence on the natives. This prompted the adoption of new methods and terminology in the concept of *Kali* by using the following terms: *Arnis de mano*, means "harness of the hand" and the Spanish "*espada y daga*" (rapier and dagger) which influenced the development of *Eskrima* derived from the Spanish *Esgrima* meaning "fencing".

During three centuries of occupation, the Spaniards imposed a ban on the practice of *Kali* and the carrying of blades. In response to this prohibition, "*baston*" (rattan) or "*bahl*" (hardwood) sticks were substituted and the clandestinely practiced *Kali* changed radically over the 18th and 19th centuries, as old training methods were replaced with new concepts and fighting techniques. *Arnis De Mano* was incorporated into folk dance and "*Moro-Mord*" plays to entertain the Spanish, who never decoded the intricate hand and foot dance moves which were like traditional "*kata*" (forms) movements containing sequential hidden fighting strikes.

Okinawa too, experienced a similar situation in the early 17th century when Japanese forces invaded the island. All weapons were confiscated and martial arts banned, triggering the development of makeshift weapons based on early Chinese models with the later addition of several weapons of Southeast Asian origin such as the "*kama*" a sickle and the "*nanchaku*" composed of two wooden batons linked together with a rope or chain, originally used as a rice flail, and much popularized in several of Bruce Lee's movies.

Another surviving Filipino fighting system of empty-hand techniques used by Muslims of the Sulu and Mindanao Island during the Spanish occupation is "*Kun-tao*", which was developed by the Tausug tribe of Mindanao, from animal movements and uses both the soft and the hard form of combat. Tremendous efforts were made by the Spanish to capture and subjugate the south-western parts of Muslim Philippines for its rich resources and gold, but such endeavours always ended in defeat by the *Moro* "*Kalistas*" (*Kali* warriors), who zealously clung to their Muslim faith and responded with "*juramentados*" (holy war).

Moro mastery of *Kali* reached distinctive level attributable to diligent training that enabled them to strike accurately at precise nerve points of the body with lightning speed. *Moros* honed and preserved the art for centuries, by utilizing various methods in their continued efforts demonstrating a coherent strategy in their fighting spirit; as referred to by one of the leading contemporary Gurus of America, Danny Inosanto who

exclaims: "Muslim warriors opposed the Spanish conquests with their religion, their courage, and their unparalleled fighting ability".²⁴



Figure 5. A security guard in Manila, standing ready to attack, using two baston (rattan) sticks.

Muslim *Moro* strongholds earned respect and remained independent by their knowledge and exceptional bravery in *Kali* martial skill, which helped them remain undefeated. *Kali* is a complete self-defence system and embraces over a score of different types of bladed weapons, and sticks differing in shapes, sizes throughout the area of the Southeast Pacific islands. It includes popular weapons such as the "*Kalis*", better known as a "*Kris*", or "*barong*", an 18-inch long sword with a single edge, both popularly used by the *Moros* and Indonesian traders who originally introduced it to the Philippines. One of the favourite blades used by *Kalistas* is called the "*Balisong*" or "*Butterfly Knife*" and dates back more than 1000 years. Many "*panday*" (*Moro* sword-smiths) and artisans continue to produce various authentic blades, some of which are replicas of ones that are on display at the Aga Khan Museum in Mindanao Island.²⁵

After the end of the Spanish rule of the Philippines in 1898 CE, as a result of the Spanish-American war, *Moro* sultanates the South who had previously sworn their allegiance to the Ottoman Khilafah of Istanbul and continued to resist. The American's³⁸ gun had little effect on *Moro* wielding *Kris*, and they had therefore to step up to a 45 calibre revolver. A similar defeat was also experienced by the Japanese who clashed in battle with *Moro* warriors wearing a red head-band, as epitomized by Abu Dujana, the "*Red-Banded Warrior*" (*Companion*), and congruently fought to the finish (*death*).²⁶

Red-bands are worn together with traditional costumes by *Eskrimadors*, as worn by Bruce Lee's chief *Jeet Kune Do* protégé, Dan Inosanto in the film of *Game of Death*. In Thailand, where Thai fighters are distinguished as "*spiritual fighters*", to elevate their status from that of a modern day gladiator. The Thai boxer therefore begins by having a "*monkhon*", an elaborate stiff headband (crown), a sacred object which has been blessed by seven Buddhist monasteries, placed on his head prior to entering the ring, followed by

a pre-fight ritual dance known as "*Ram Muay*". Many Thai boxing contenders and champions like former Thai lightweight champion Abdul Sri Sothorn, were of Muslim origin and displayed a tremendous ability in the art.

Unlike other Asian martial arts, Moro *Kalistas* excelled by their discipline and ideological coherence during half a millennium of struggle in defence of their integrity and independence; where supreme ability and accuracy had to be achieved, both in hand-to-hand combat and using weapons that are still seen in use today. All of this arose from the particular environmental conditions of the Philippines.

Some of the best Kali Masters of the last century who were the first to introduce and contribute their knowledge of Kali to America were inspired by Muslim gurus. Such were Master John (known also as *Jaunito*) LaCoste (bt. 1887/9-1978 CE), one of Master Danny Inosanto's teachers. Master Danny believes Master John trained in many parts of the Philippines including with the *Moro Kali Masters* of the South, where Master *Juanito* adopted Islam and a Muslim name in order to gain acceptance by Muslim martial arts instructors of the bladed weapons in the Philippines.²⁷

Another well known *Kali* exponent is grandmaster Floro Villabrille (1912-1992), born in Cebu in the Visayas, who learnt *Kali* from his uncle and grandfather as a child and later ventured to a tribal village where he mastered his greatest *Kali* skills under the guidance of a blind Muslim princess.²⁸

Modern *Arnis* is based more on the use of stick and hand movement techniques, rather than the traditional complexity of ancestral forms previously used in *Kali*; where masters secretly trained selected loyal students in remote places. Today *Arnis* is currently taught as a formal course in the Physical Education Department of Manila University, and its growing popularity has aroused the interest of many martial arts enthusiasts from all over Europe, Australia and America, who travel to the Philippines in their quest to learn the spectacular Filipino art from both native Muslim and Christian masters, to help bridge their knowledge gap and extend their knowledge of this ancient art, undisputedly long considered to be the backbone of Filipino society.

The spiritual framework contained within the boundary of Islam was successfully exploited by Chinese Muslims, whose achievements were at a peak for many centuries. They left behind a perfect example of their mastery and scholarly achievements in the martial arts by creating historical lineage and opening the door of inquiry for many Muslims and non-Muslims to follow and learn the real rudiments of Kung fu. A fascinating story of a Sufi master, which shares its wisdom with that of a Japanese Zen master, is about Imam Abū-l-Hassan Alī ibn Abd Allāh ash-Shādhilī (1196-1258 CE), who desired to find the "*Qutb*" (spiritual axis), of his age. He was advised by Abū-l-Fath to travel to Morocco, where he was to find his definitive teacher, Sheikh Abd as-Salām ibn Mashish of Fez, who lived in retreat in the Riff on the *Jabal* (mount) *Alam*. When ash-Shādhilī first met Master Ibn Mashīsh, he told him to perform "*ghusl*", or greater ablution, and when he did so, Master Ibn Mashīsh told him to perform "*ghusl*" again. It was not until the third time that ash-Shādhilī finally understood, and said: "I wash myself of all previous knowledge and learning". Imam ash-Shādhilī had to empty his mind from the obstacle of previous knowledge prior to accepting the spiritual illumination of the saint.

Such "*hikmah*" (wisdom) was exemplified by a learned man who wished to be instructed by a *Zen* master. When the teacher began to talk, he was constantly interrupted by the learned man, who went on saying: "*Oh, yes, I know that already*". The master listened patiently before finally suggested they have some tea.

The master then poured the tea into his visitor's cup and continued pouring until it overflowed. "Enough! Stop!", exclaimed the learned man, "my cup is already full". "Indeed", said the master, "like this cup, your mind is full of your own opinions and speculations. So if you do not empty your cup first, how can you expect to taste my cup of tea?". To help the body respond instantly to situations, the Japanese apply the principle of "Mu" (Zen, emptiness or nothingness) to help the martial art practitioner clear his mind of all thought.

Such wisdom is deeply rooted in Muslim thought, throughout the long history of Sufi orders and brotherhoods, which existed in China. Thus, Sufism has played a major role in sustaining Islam during the centuries of repression, and there are several major Sufi "Tariqah" (paths) that the Hui people revere which had great influence on the philosophical aspect of their martial arts.

The essential doctrines of esoteric Islam have been taught in combination with martial arts by great masters, who passed on their wisdom on to succeeding generations. Disciples have journeyed across the world in search of prominent masters whose reputation spoke of their martial skill and were revealed in their mastery of internal power. Prominent Hui Sufi Sheikhs frequently beat Buddhist monks in various contests determining whose magical power is more superior. Sufic inspirations have even shed light on a Muslim Kung fu style called "Qa Shi" meaning Seven Warriors. *Qa Shi* was originally named in commemoration of seven "Muslim Sufi Saints", before the name was changed to "Seven Forms". It is a very popular style amongst Muslims, living in Henan Province and was later spread to Shaanxi Province.

Another popular is the internal Kung fu style of Hsing-I Chuan, which was handed down by Master Ma Hsieh Li and practiced amongst Chinese Muslims of Henan. Hsing-I Chuan has lost some of its links with Taoist cosmology, as further development took place under Muslim dominance; many prominent masters infused the art with Islamic influence and popularized it as Henan style.²⁹

Through in depth study of the true meaning of "internal Jihad" (internal struggle), Muslim Kung fu masters were able to tame the enemy within and harmonise their intrinsic energy, which later resulted in the contribution of the development of "Ch'i Kung" meaning internal energy (or "life force") in Chinese, a universal force which is harnessed through the practice of a series of special breathing exercises that cultivates and strengthens the inner body. Such development was exercised by many Muslim Kung fu masters who are to this day spoken of in reverential tones whenever Kung fu is mentioned.

Ch'i Kung or *Qigong* has been practiced for centuries by many Kung fu masters, who would spend a lifetime to accomplish and perfect their internal energy, which translates as "Ki" in Japanese. Unlike the Chinese form of internal energy, the Islamic art of Pentjak-silat of Malaysia and Indonesia is mostly comprised of both the "hard" and "soft", and are influenced by the Qur'an. *Silat* (Malay word for martial arts) exponents strive in their martial arts training to seek "Ilham" or spiritual inspiration. However, the secret of intrinsic internal energy power is not confined only to one particular race, despite the endeavour by many contemporary Kung fu masters who demonstrate their amazing ability to prove its existence within their boundaries.

The indigenous art of *Silat*, is one of the most complete and sophisticated systems the world has ever known, backed by centuries of ethnic diversity and spiritual dominance stretching through thousands of islands in the Indo-Malaysian archipelago. Before European colonisation of the islands, much of the flourishing Malay culture was influenced by Arabia, China, India, Thailand and Indochina.

Pentjak-silat (meaning "training for combat") sprung into existence around the 4th century CE. Legends say the art owes its origin to a Sumatran peasant woman who went to fetch water from a stream and witnessed a duel between a tiger and a large bird. Her husband berated her and tried to hit her for being late, but she easily evaded him using the methods she learnt from watching the two animals. Her astonished husband was subsequently taught the art by his wife. This story is still traceable in the affirmation by Sumatrans that some women are still amongst experts in the art.³⁰ There are incalculable numbers of different distinctive styles of *Pentjak-silat* indigenous to the region.

An excellent example was witnessed for the first time at a gathering of *Silat* Masters in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra on Sunday 14th December 2003, when 79 "pendeka" (masters) of "Silek Tud" (Old Silat), all over the age of seventy, demonstrated the ancient art of *Pentjak-silat*, showing graceful but effective techniques full of youth and dexterity. The oldest *bersilaturahmi* performer was Master Ibu Inyiaq Upiak Palatiang, a 104 year old female *Silat* Master.³¹

One of the most distinctive and curious styles in *Pentjak-silat* in Sumatra, originated by the Minangkabau people, is called "Harimau" Tiger style because it resembles the antics of a tiger. Due to the damp and muddy conditions, a ground-hugging position like a crouching tiger was favoured to the normal and upright stance and movement. A universal fighting system that could be used in any given condition, whether on wet slippery ground, soft ground, rocky ground or even in the ocean. *Harimau* fighters are skilful with their feet as they are able to effectively strike an opponent by kicking and sweeping by launching their body forward from their crouching position until the fighter is within striking range.

The student who desires to learn *Pentjak-silat* must undergo a negotiation procedure with the teacher before carrying out the required offerings. There are five offerings: 1) a chicken is slaughtered and its blood spread on the training ground, as a symbolic substitute for blood that might come from the student; 2) a piece of white cloth, large enough to wrap the corpse if the student dies in training; 3) a knife, which symbolizes the sharpness expected of the student; 4) tobacco for the guru to smoke during his rest periods; 5) some money to provide the guru with new clothes if they get ripped in practice. This unworldly request is followed by an oath, sworn by the *Qu'ran* which makes all trainees blood brothers.³²

Pentjak-silat was forbidden under Dutch rule, but was secretly practiced until its encouragement as an effective defence system prevailed during the Japanese occupation in the Second World War. It later replaced the callisthenics previously taught by the Dutch as a compulsory one year of study for both Muslim boys and girls, offered by the I.P.S.I (*Ikatan Pentjak-silat Indonesia*) established in 1947.

In Malaysia, "Bersilat", (meaning "to do by fighting") is practised. It embraces both bare-hand and weapon techniques and is attributed to a woman by that name who acquired knowledge of the art in her dreams. *Bersilat* derived chiefly from Indonesian *Pentjak-silat* which it resembles and divides into various forms.³³ However it is technically different and divides into two styles, known as the "Buah" (meaning "fruit"), an effective combat form of *Bersilat* never seen in public as only a few selective students sworn to secrecy are exposed to its innermost mystical knowledge. It uses effective leg techniques and looks acrobatic in nature. The other style is the "Pulut" (meaning "glutinous rice") which has lost much of its fighting realism and its aesthetic movements are these days performed as a dance, displayed at wedding ceremonies and public holidays.

The "*Tjabang*" is an iron truncheon used in pairs resembling the Okinawan "*Sa*". Perhaps its forerunner originated within the Hindu culture, which penetrated into Indonesia around the 4th to 5th century.³⁴ The *Tjabang* is used in Indonesia and Malaysia by *Silat* masters, who could effectively defend themselves against a sword and other weapons. The "*Badik*", a straight blade Malayan dagger shaped like a butterfly, became a symbol of resistance, after Raja Haji of Malacca, a famous warrior who courageously fought the Dutch at the highest point of their supremacy.

One of the most revered and mysterious bladed weapon of all is the *Kris*. The legendary warrior *Huang Tuah* is ascribed as the bearer of the first *Kris*, which is believed by some Malayan Muslims to be a *Kris* from the royal regalia of the Sultan of Perak, that was forged from the remains of the "*bolt of the holy Ka'bah in Mecca*".³⁵ The *Kris* has served its people in their way of life for centuries and possesses supernatural powers that can be either beneficial or noxious. There are some forty different types of *Kris*, and it is said that when danger is near the owner is warned by the rattles from the *Kris* in its sheath. According to Western experts, "*though Westerners scoff at these alleged superstitions, however such beliefs remain as strong as ever*".

Of all foreign interventions, the peaceful arrival of Islam through Arab traders left the most indelible imprint on the life of the inhabitants of the archipelago. According to official Chinese annals under the date 674 CE, there are records of an Arab chief, who headed an Arab settlement on the west coast of Sumatra.³⁶ Unlike the 16th century Spanish, Arabs did not conquer or use the sword nor claimed superiority to dominate the inhabitants; instead they offered peace and shared their culture and civilization with the people of a country feared as one of the most savage on earth. Marco Polo (1254-1324 CE) who spent several months on the north coast of Sumatra in 1292 CE described all the inhabitants as being adulterers and cannibals as opposed to the kingdom of Parlak on the north-east corner of the island where Muslims resided.³⁷

Such profound inner energy, which dates back over fourteen centuries, has left a lasting imprint on the Islamic world. In-depth study of the knowledge revealed in the Qur'an provided Sufi masters with the essentials to metaphysical understanding of the "*ma'rifah*" (gnosis) or "*ilm*" (knowledge) of "*al-Bātin*" (the inner) and "*al-Zāhir*" (the outward), which spiritually cultivates the "*Nafs*" (soul) which exists along side the "*al-Ruh*" (spirit), known as "*al-Aql al-Awwal*", meaning "first intellect".

Since the power of Sufism combines both Bhakti Yoga and Jinani Yoga, "*Tafakku*" or meditation is perceived by many masters through "*Dhikr*" (remembrance of God), truly strengthening their "*exoteric*" and "*esoteric*" ability by reaching the oneness of God. In one Prophetic tradition (*hadiih*) it is clearly stated: "*An hour of meditation is better than sixty years of acts of worship*". When in the Maldives, Ibn Battuta recounts a legend of a spiritual feat in 1163 CE by Abū al-Barakāt, a pious Berber from *al-Maghrib* (Morocco), who became a hero by ridding the islands of a terrible demon by reciting the *Qur'an*, whilst taking the place of the virgin girl offered as a sacrifice to the demon by the islanders. He subsequently converted the islanders to Islam from Buddhism.

Another form of inner energy was displayed in Jakarta by a *Silat* master in 1964. During a big martial arts demonstration, which included the late Master Nakayama, a leading figure of Japan Karate Association and other Japanese Karate men displayed their wood breaking power. After the applause faded, there appeared a frail Indonesian man carrying a large rock, which was fully inspected by Master Nakayama and his Karate team who declared no bare hands could break the rock. When every one was satisfied, the frail *Silat* man concentrated intensively for five minutes, poured a cup of water on his fingers, uttered a *Du'a* (prayer) and

a loud shout was heard; crumbling the boulder without the *Silat* man even raising his hand.³⁸ A *Silat* master can apply a similar principle if he wishes to deliver a punch, by uttering a *Du'a* and simply blowing over his arm before punching his opponent, who would feel full the effect of the punch. This can even harm an attacker from a distance.

An Islamisation process took place in the conduct of the martial arts within the Muslim countries of Southeast Asia, which shaped the traditional practices. In China Kung fu amongst Muslims took place at the local "*Qing Zhen Si*", meaning Temple of Purity and Truth (Mosque), instead of the Buddhist Temple and the Arabic religious language was used. For example "*Bismillah*" (in the name of God) would be used to begin an action, instead of bowing or yelling "*Ki-a!*", as the Japanese do to cause "*spirit meeting*".



Figure 6. A group of Hui Muslim youths demonstrating their Kung fu skills, during a religious (Eid) festival

Kung fu was embraced by the Hui and became part of their *madrasah* (school) curriculum, social life, and religious life, especially during the festive season's celebration of Ramadan's *Id al-Fitr* (the feast of breaking fast), *Id al-Adha* (Feast of Sacrifice), and *Mawlid an-Nabawi* (the Prophet's Birthday). The Hui communities gathered in Mosque court yards for celebrations and entertained by Wu Shu demonstrations and exhibitions after ritual prayers had been offered. Such performances would include the "*Hui Qashi Forms*" known as the "*Seven Warriors*" or the old Muslim style of "*Liuhequan*" (Six Harmonies Boxing), a name derived from the six cornered Muslim cap.

However over the centuries, Muslim Arabic names were converted into Chinese, which suited both cultures, but caused Chinese historians to fail to mention the faiths of individuals and misrepresent Chinese Muslim achievements listed in the National Records. Some men adopted the surnames of their Han wives, and others used such names as "*Ma*" for Muhammad, "*Ha*" for Hassan or "*Hu*" for Hussain, "*Ta*" for Tahir, "*Na*" for Nasser, "*Sha*" for Salem and such surnames as *Ma*, *Sha*, and *Zha*. Thirteen surnames alone derive from the name of Syed Sini. One of the most popular surnames is that of the "*Ma*" family of Cangzhou County in Hubei Province. This originally belonged to the legendary Master Muhammad Ma Ho (*Cheng Ho*), also

known as Zeng He (1371-1433 CE), the seven foot naval hero, explorer and martial art expert from Yunnan.

A prominent Ming military strategist, General Qi Jiquang recorded in his Martial Classic *Jixiao Xinshu* the excellence of three Schools of Spear Fighting, managed by the Yang, *Ma* and *Sha* families, during the mid and late Ming Dynasty.³⁹ Further, the late Ming Dynasty also witnessed the prevailing fashion of the "*Hui Hui Shi ba zhou*", 18 Fist-Fighting Exercises of the *Hui*, which was considered the best combat exercises, and was later included in the "*Huaquan Zongjiangfa*", (A General Talk on Flower Boxing), written by the famous Shaolin hero Gan Fengchi, founder of "*Bak Sil Lum and Hua Quar*" (Flower Boxing), Gan Fengchi was a popular figure in Chinese folk tales and like other Shaolin Monks he opposed the villainous Qing Emperor, Yongzheng (r.1723-1735 CE). Wu Shu schools also sprung vigorously during the mid and late Qing Dynasty, some established by Muslim Wu Shu masters.

Spear fighting techniques have survived through a chain of Muslim families down the centuries, and are still practiced today. According to Grandmaster Ma Xianda (b. 1932), one of the only four living Wu Shu masters and the youngest ever to obtain "*Ninth Duan*" (the highest level); his late father Grandmaster Ma Fengtu affirms in his *Youi Lu* (List of Games) that both the "*Ma*" and "*Sha*", families were of Muslim origin. Grandmaster Ma Xianda also taught Master Gou Xian, who played a major role in the film "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*", and Li Lin Jei (*Jet Lee*), star of the famous Shaolin Temple movie and the versatile Champion of five National Wu Shu Contests; whose skill and vehement desire blended that of both Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan's performances.

Another Muslim *Hui*, holder of "*Ninth Duan*", is Grandmaster Zhang Wenguang who trained under Grandmaster Xianda's uncle, Grandmaster Ma Yintu. One of the many Muslim Kung fu masters who left an indelible imprint and contributed their whole life to one of China's greatest treasures in the last century, is Grandmaster Wang Ziping (1881-1973) who was best known as the "*Lion of Chinese Kung fu*". Chinese Muslims have been referred to as "*Hu*" since the Yuan Dynasty, which was zenith period of Islam in China, and they have lived geographically scattered throughout China's fourteen provinces and in every major city. However there is a large concentration in the Ningxia *Hui* Autonomous Region in Central China. They have adopted Chinese customs and Chinese surnames, wearing local garments with a Muslim white cap when practicing Wu Shu. Otherwise they were indistinguishable from the local Han Chinese.

However, Muslims in China suffered centuries of internal strife, oppression and devastating atrocities, resulting from foreign invasions of China. The historical works of Al-Masudi (d. 957CE) report in detail the massacre of 120,000 people, of mostly Muslim origin. There was brutality under various rulers, especially during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 CE). There was harsh rule by the Manchus, who unlike the majority of the Han came from a minority group. Muslims were segregated from the Han, and refused to learn Chinese causing animosity between the two communities, resulting in the political intrigues of the Manchus, who despite Muslim loyalty bitterly oppressed them and imposed restrictions on the way the Muslims dressed, worshipped, the building of mosques and performing their annual *Hajj* pilgrimage.

Emulating the bravery of their Arab ancestors several centuries previously, they refused to perform the traditional "*K'o tou*" (bow) to Emperor Hsuan Tsung. Discipline of such high order was fostered, through religious teachings, embedded in the Islamic doctrine, which paved the way for seriousness and obedience to Wu Shu masters, who often also played the role of an *Imam* (exemplar).

Generally speaking when the word “*Kung Fu*” (Gung fu in Cantonese) is mentioned, the generic term seems to cover literally hundreds of individual fighting arts of the Chinese martial arts. However the actual definition means “*mastery of an art*”, “*hard work or practice*”, for example the mastery that archer Imam Muhammad Ibn Idrīs ash-Shāfi‘ī’s (767-820 CE), achieved when he was able to hit the same target ten times out of ten.⁴⁰ One Muslim scholar, who without doubt would have participated in Muslim Kung fu, had he visited China was Master Scientist and genius Abū Rayhān al-Bīrūnī (973-1051 CE), who spent four decades of his life travelling to various parts of the Muslim world, including India, where he spent over ten years, mastering Sanskrit and Hindu astronomy. *Japa-Yoga* was chanted in Sanskrit by the Hindu philosophers with whom Master al-Bīrūnī sat and engaged in discussion about their Hindu beliefs. His interest in the Indian art of *Yoga* was expressed in his erudite translation of the *Yoga Sutra of Pantanjali* into Arabic.

Explorer and traveler, Ibn Battūta (1304-1369 CE), also met many yogis in India. He described them as men of marvellous abilities, who followed strict food diets and were held in high esteem by the sultan. In Ceylon (Sri Lanka) four yogis, accompanied his entourage, on their way to the annual pilgrimage to the “Mountain of Serendib” (Adam’s peak). In China, Ibn Battūta was well received and admired the talent and mastery of the arts attained by the Chinese people. Trumpets, bugles and drums were played on his arrival, followed by a variety of entertainment, including jugglers, who undoubtedly blended Wu Shu and acrobatics in their performance. He also reported seeing female warriors and bodyguards throughout Southeast Asia, where practice of the ancient arts of Silat and Kali were essential.

In Calicut, Southern India, from where Ibn Battūta sailed to China on a diplomatic mission, there exists a northern style of an ancient Indian martial art, called “Kalarippayattu”, Kalari meaning battlefield or place, and ppayattu means practices. It is geographically divided into northern and southern style, similar to Chinese Kung fu and is composed of armed and unarmed combat and uses secret techniques of striking vital points. Ibn Battūta would have been intrigued by their fighting skill, which would have been useful once he left Delhi for China, to defend himself against his attackers. About a decade or so after Ibn Battūta left China, a peasant uprising was led by Zhu Yuangzhang (1328-98 CE). He was an orphan was raised at the Shaolin Monastery, where he attained mastery of martial arts, which he demonstrated in his early career as a bodyguard. Later, Zhu deposed the Mongols and founded the Ming (brilliant) dynasty (1368-1644 CE).

Many Muslims took part and contributed to the founding of the Ming Dynasty, including famous generals like Chang Yui chong, Hu Da Hai, Mu Ying, Lan Yui, Feng Sheng and Ding Dexing, top martial arts experts who were part of Emperor Zhu Yuangzhang’s revolutionary army and his closest allies. General Chang Yuchun is said to have been responsible for developing the famous “Kaiping Qiangfa” (Kaiping Art of Wielding Spear), which is popular amongst Wu Shu practitioners even today.

According to one scholar, Jing Chee Tang (author of A History of Islam in China), Emperor Zhu Yuangzhang (Chu Yuan Chang) and his cousin, Koh Shiao-Tze, were both Muslims. Zhu’s Empress, Ma, was from the Ma family of Chee Men, in Anhui province, where the Ma family has been a well known Muslim surname throughout the Ming and Ching Dynasties. Mr. Jing added; “when one reaches the second of the highest rank in office, one is prone to discard one’s religion”. However discarded the Ming period was without doubt considered the “golden age” of Islam in China, where Muslims fully integrated into Han society and were praised for their support.

Once Zhu had established his government in Nanking, he built a very large mosque called Chin Juieh (Pure Enlightenment), which he dedicated with a one hundred letter poem, mentioning the holy book of the Qur'an. A great many challenges were faced, before Muslim communities lived under the motto developed during the Yuan Dynasty, of "All Muslims are Brothers". Mosques were built in many parts and Muslims were employed in various fields of government. An example is Chen You, a Hui Muslim military commander and a martial arts expert who in 1447 CE financed the restoration of Beijing's Dong Si Mosque also known as "Faming Si" (Temple of the Propagation of Brightness). It was also a period when the Muslims developed and practiced martial arts on a wide scale.



Figure 7. The author (left) narrowly escapes a springing jumping double "Front Kick" dynamically used in the "External Styles of Kung fu", which focuses on muscle power, speed, and high kicking aerial manoeuvres in combination with "Arabian Handsprings". Culminating in a spectacular visual interpretation of Eastern impromptu; through a symbolic display of profound synchronized manoeuvres.

When a Chinese Muslim demonstrates his Kung fu skills, by performing a "form" (the equivalent in Karate is called a *Kata*), which is a series of choreographed hand and feet movements, followed by an Arabian Handspring, a foreign observer will immediately detect the manoeuvres, of the well known all China style Kung fu. However, despite the superficial resemblances, as if they come from the same root, they come from completely different inner religious and spiritual climates and so are inherently incompatible.

Such divisions were noted within the ethnic minorities, each having their own fighting skills, and were labelled as "*Jiao-men*". More particular, is the division within the different schools of Kung fu styles, of the *Hui* Muslim communities living in the Northern and Southern parts of China, which were categorized by the famous saying of "*Southern Fists*", "*Northern Legs*" and "*Cha Boxing*" in Shandong Province was originally

bestowed upon, throughout the whole of China. Further more, many Muslim styles of Kung fu are also classified according to their city or province, in which they live.

Emperor Cheng-Te reigned between 1506 and 1521 CE and was immensely influenced by and avidly interested in Islamic arts. He even knew the Sanskrit, Tarter and Arabic languages, and there were even rumours from the palace that he had converted to Islam; most of the eunuchs at the palace were Muslims. Muslim designs were visible on porcelain plates that had Arabic scriptures, especially the blue-and-white ware which was the most numerous and characteristic of the period, and was divided into "Muslim" and "Dragon" designs. 41 A lid from a writing box from this period, bears an Arabic aphorism saying "*Seek perfection in calligraphy for it is one of the keys to existence*" and on the walls of its central compartment, the inscription in Persian "*Knowledge is an inappreciable elixir, Ignorance is an irremediable evil*". Hui Muslim calligraphers made an impact on Chinese characters, adding their own distinctive style and design.

Although in the old empire, a man who excelled in Kung fu could hardly earn a living, Muslims bridged the gap and left a legacy filled with tales of great Kung fu masters, who in their search for Islamic spirituality and inner truth, were confronted with tyrannical Emperors, marauding bandits and civil wars. Muslim Kung fu masters, have striven and were successful in reaching a pinnacle of innovative physical and awesome internal power with expanded dimensions, which have been a valuable asset to China for many centuries.

The spiritual key is the sacred *Qur'an*, which is only ritually valid in Arabic, and has miraculous powers to communicate and externalize thought. The Arabic writing system has an alphabet of 28 consonants and almost every word is derived from a simple "*root*"; The *Hui* still stress the importance of Arabic and consider it as one of their languages. Al-Biruni was not an Arab, but was a guest in both tongues, expressed his feelings by writing:

"Our religion and our empire are Arab ... subject tribes have often joined together to give the state a non-Arab character. But they have not been able to achieve their aim, and as long as the call to prayer continues to echo in their ears five times a day, and the Qur'an in lucid Arabic is recited among the worshipers standing in rows behind the Imam, and its refreshing message is preached in the mosques, they will needs submit; the bond of Islam will not be broken nor its fortresses vanquished.

Branches of knowledge from all countries in the world have been translated into the tongue of the Arabs, embellished and made seductive, and the beauties of the language have infused the veins and archeries of the peoples of those countries, despite the fact that each considers its own language beautiful, since it is accustomed to it and employs it in its daily offices. I speak from experience, for I was reared in a language in which it would be strange to see a branch of knowledge enshrined. Thence I passed to Arabic and Persian, and I am a guest in both tongues, having made an effort to acquire them, but I would rather be reproved in Arabic than complimented in Persian. 42

To ensure that the Arabic language, which was commonly used amongst the *Hui* community, would never be forgotten, there emerged the deadly art of *Tan Tui* (Springing or Snapping Legs). It was based on purely on the Arabic alphabet, and originally had one road set of practice for each "*harf*" (letter) of the 28 characters in the Arabic alphabets, before its compilation into its current name, "*Ten Road Spring Leg*". The mystical procedure of "*Ilm al-Huruf*" the science of letters in Islam consists of adding up numerical "*abjad*"

values of letters in one word and constructing other words. The art of *Tan Tui* was originated by Master "*Cha Mi Er*" (Jamil in Arabic), from Sinkiang (Xinjiang) about 400 years ago, during the Ming Dynasty.

Tan Tui is a universally influential style, embraced by many different other styles including Shaolin Kung fu, a branch of praying mantis and contemporary Wu Shu, and also Gan Fengchi's "*Bak Sil Lum Pai*" (Northern Shaolin), one of the four systems originally taught at Shaolin monastery of Henan, where the Shaolin monks combined *Tan Tui* with their repertoire. The mystical power of the Arabic language which was in common use by the *Hui* community in China is however understood by few great masters of the past.

The new version of contemporary Wu Shu, which was created after the newly formed Republic of China, was based on the Muslim version of Cha Chuan "*Jamil Fist*", by adopting the Ten Sets, such as Long Fist and various other sets. Special consideration was granted by the Chinese Government for adopting the Muslim (Fist) version of "*Jiao-men*" meaning "*Sect Fighting*"; out of many other Wu Shu styles that existed; thus Chinese Muslims have kept close within their communities and had less illegal involvement with other minority groups. There is therefore a consensus that Muslim Fist is "purer", and one of the most powerful, hence its depth and sacred techniques which have remained unchanged for centuries.

An example of such divination by "*huruf*" letters was given to Master Ibn Arabi when he was in the city of Fez, discussing with a pious man the prospects of the Almohad armies which had sailed across the straits into Spain. The pious man said; "*God promised his Apostle a victory this year*", as revealed in God's book in the words "*Indeed we have given you a clear victory*" ("*Fathan Mubinan*"). Astonishingly, the numerical value of "*Fathan Mubinan*", when added together equals the year 591, which is the exact *Hijri* year of the Muslim calendar, that the Almahadic Caliph Ya'qub al-Mansur gained victory over the Christians at Alarcos in 591/1194 CE.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the secrets of knowledge which have been transmitted amongst Muslims down the centuries had enigmatically transcended through the application of their vividly applied methods of Kung fu. It is also a unique system providing links with the language of (Arabic) Heaven, and the linguistic heritage inherited from their ancestral Arab forefathers, as well as a beneficial self defence application. In *Baiqi* Island of al-Zaytun (Quanzhou) there are some ten thousand Arab descendants by the surname of "*Guo*", and their tombstones are inscribed in both Arabic and Chinese. Many centuries of Kung fu practice by the *Hui*, resulted in the formation of many coherent systems, widely popular amongst the *Hui* Chinese community.

However, because of the persecution which they have suffered over the centuries, Chinese Muslims have kept their martial arts confined within their local communities. Muslim martial arts also may have travelled to Arabia centuries ago, during the pilgrimage season, by Chinese Muslims who subsequently never returned. The spread of martial arts in Arabia may have been limited because of the nature of the society in which Arabs are accustomed to live. At the daily call to prayer, shop keepers need not shut their shops for fear of thieves; they simply head for the Mosque to join the congregational prayers.

Muslim Chinese Kung fu masters contributed enormously to indigenous Chinese martial arts for many centuries, and have reached pinnacle of their careers with an unstoppable tide of professionalism, though very little of their magnificent ethos and formidable reputation is noticed by the outside world. However, modern technological advancements in communications have paved the way to deliver an introduction of

Islamic martial arts to the outside world. Yet, the disproportionate misrepresentation of the *Hui* community and their current plight within secularist's movement is yet to be resolved.

A great many changes took place before the end of the 20th century which had a mass impact on oriental martial arts. Developments were encouraged which disengaged the core philosophical concept that forms the basis of the art and as a consequence by compromising its combative value, reducing the art to a leisure sport or even a computer game like those which have now come into vogue filling the life of many youths in the West and the Oriental East. In Japan, amusement arcades are full of new combat games like the Americanized Kick Boxing, or games based on the stunt-hero films of such as Jackie Chan. The spirit of Kung fu has circulated in the blood of many civilizations, especially in the latter quarter of the 20th century. It has frustrated the minds of many intellectuals from all walks of life, who hungrily squeezed every drop of sweat in reaching just that little bit further, in mastering a technique that was perfected previously by thousands of years.

It is the plight of modern Western society, that let one think has finally found the elixir of life, but it has only found oneself in an anomalous occidental world of modernity and engulfed by an infinite panorama of an art, backed by a myriad of intricate patterns, and mythological behaviour, inexplicable to modern science, which one desperately yearns to achieve.

Chinese *Hui* Muslims however, were indissolubly attached to the martial arts for many centuries, and have resolved every riddle in the book, through an arduous journey requiring the patience of a saint, in bridging the knowledge gap that is anxiously desired by the Western World. This is clearly demonstrated by the many Western pilgrims who perform their sacred journey to the Eastern world, searching to absorb and increase their knowledge with boundless enthusiasm.

Once on board the mystical carpet to the "*Eastern Den*", the magical force is felt with a powerful outflow of thrusting power, and on return the magical power fades, as if it is polluted by the air. Until the Kung fu dilemma is intellectually comprehended and resolved, civilization of the West is yet to respond to that of the East. Martial arts today, is no longer a rare phenomena as it once used to be half a century ago; it now belongs to the whole world although it's ethical tradition and extraordinary supernatural feats remain in its place of birth. Hassan al-Basri (642-728 CE), a famous scholar who attracted a large number of students to his circles, which regenerated intellectual activity when it declined during the Umayyad Dynasty, once said "*Hard is the life of a man if he be prudent, dangerous if comfortable, being wary ever of catastrophe, certain of his ultimate fate*". He also famously quoted "*The world is a bridge upon which you cross but upon which you should not build*".



Figure 8. The author is “bridging the gap between the East and West”. An ancient wisdom which extends its existence from the very background of this Lixus Roman ruins, near Larache, Morocco.

The Muslim legacy of martial arts influence, which stretched from the deserts of Arabia to the Shaolin Temple of China, will continue to be like a huge pulse in the heart of mother China, for the cup will stay barely empty embracing each drip with virtue, and will only fill once the bridge is finally crossed. Mistaken is to never be, of our master with whom we shall be, to enlighten the dimmed light of our hearts. At the crack of dawn, Hui Muslims gather in their quarters, ready to begin the journey of a thousand steps, supplemented by a melodious “Eastern” (*Mashriqi*) *Adhan*, for *Fajr* prayer.

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