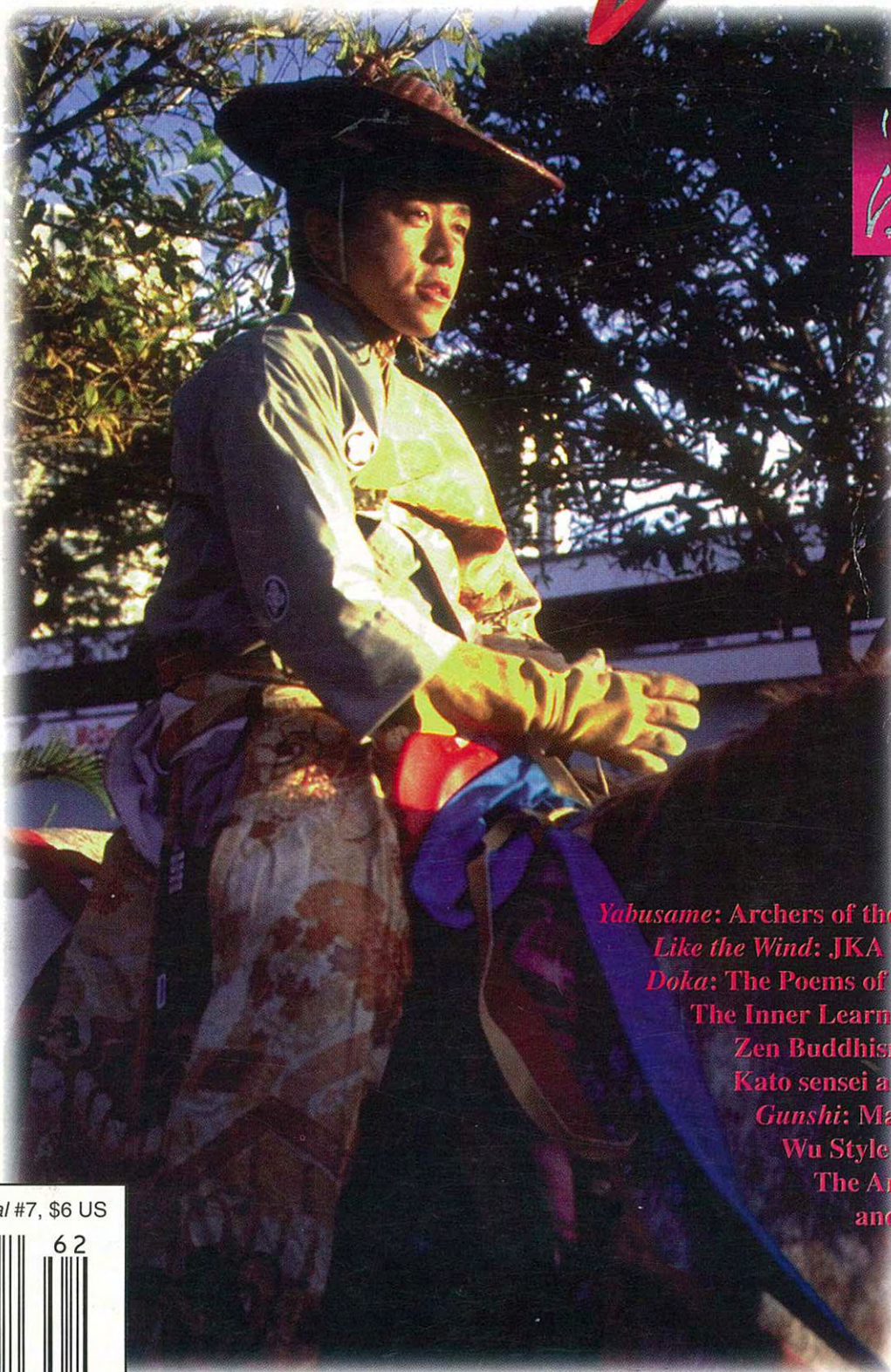


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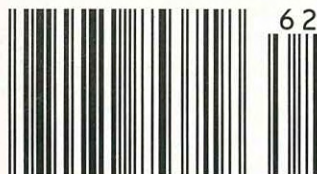
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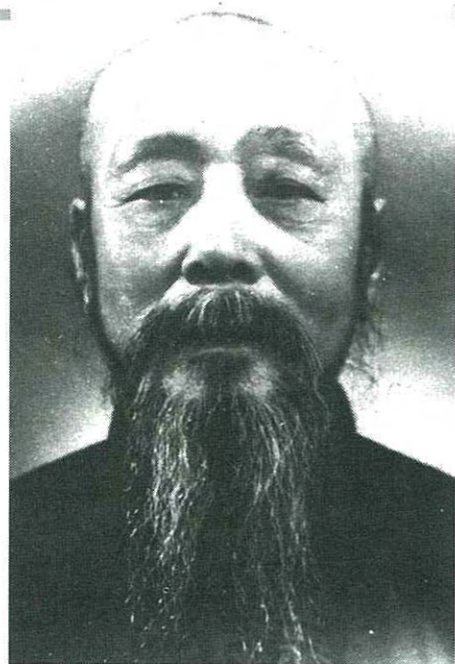
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"All parts of the body are connected like a string of pearls"
—Theory of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, quoted in the book *Wu Tai Chi Ch'uan*, by Wu Kung-tsao



HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE THE GRAND ULTIMATE FIST, T'ai CHI CH'UAN, ONE OF THE MOST SUBLIME OF MARTIAL ARTS, IN A SHORT ESSAY? YOU CAN'T, REALLY, SINCE PEOPLE SPEND A WHOLE LIFETIME SEEKING ITS ESSENCE.

But perhaps I can begin with own hesitant steps, which might explain my wonder at this distinctly most Chinese of arts. I had previously dabbled here and there in Chinese martial arts, taking a couple of Yang style T'ai Chi Ch'uan classes at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Then one day, I was casually listening to a public radio talk show in which a T'ai Chi master was being interviewed. She spoke with an obvious "local"-style accent to her English. But what I remembered most was her down-to-earth statements and her laughter, which came frequently. I made a mental note to track her down to observe her class one day. Someone with that much humor might be a good teacher to study with. Oh, one day.

One day came when I subsequently saw a flyer for classes in ch'i kung exercises. The mysterious nature of this related art had stirred my interest after I had seen a Bill Moyers series, *Healing the Mind*, on Public Television, in which Chinese theories of ch'i were demonstrated and studied. I called up Patricia Leong, and as soon as she answered the phone, I recognized the voice as the teacher on the radio.

Coincidence? Perhaps. Or, as my wife liked to quip (affecting a fake Japanese accent, like a character from James Clavell's pot-boiler novel, *Shogun*), "It is karma, Anjin-san!"

I watched a class, and was hooked. *Lao shih* (the second word is pronounced *sher*, and the term is a courteous form of addressing a teacher in Mandarin; it's not literally translatable as "teacher" per se, just as the Japanese word *sensei* is not strictly limited to meaning just "teacher") Patricia Leong had all the traits of an exceptional teacher; she was patient, explained clearly,

demonstrated logically, and set the proper atmosphere and pace. She had a grasp of the theory, history, philosophy and culture of the underlying arts that she taught, and she had a spirit that I found matched my own in terms of what I was looking for in a teacher.

In any case, through those memories of tales and advice, through a voice on the radio, and my own dumb luck, I stumbled into what would become another thread in my own journey on the budo trail. I can't say it's been easy. But it's never been dull.

The Wu Family Legacy

THE ORIGIN OF T'ai CHI CH'UAN GOES BACK INTO THE MISTS OF LEGEND. The backdrop of Buddhism and Taoism are important. From Taoism came the concepts of internal energy and its concepts of cosmology/physiology. From Buddhism came a rich dogma of beliefs, not the least of which was the stigma against the taking of life. Conversely, because of this Buddhist doctrine, Chinese Buddhism stimulated martial arts as skillful methods of subduing an attacker with as little collateral damage as possible (although this did not mean complete avoidance of injury or death, should the situation call for it).

"External" systems, based primarily on Buddhist tech-

niques supposedly developed by monks from the legendary Shaolin Temple, are physically demanding, and work from the "outside" (external) in; strengthening muscles, then the internal elements.

Internal systems concentrate on the development of "internal" abilities first, such as breath control, internal energy (ch'i) and a relaxed, flexible response to attacks. In varying degrees, internal systems become stylized to a point where some forms of ch'i kung (literally, "mastery of ch'i") forego any pretense at self-defense forms for movements that are solely for the harmonization and development of the mind and body, like "moving yoga."

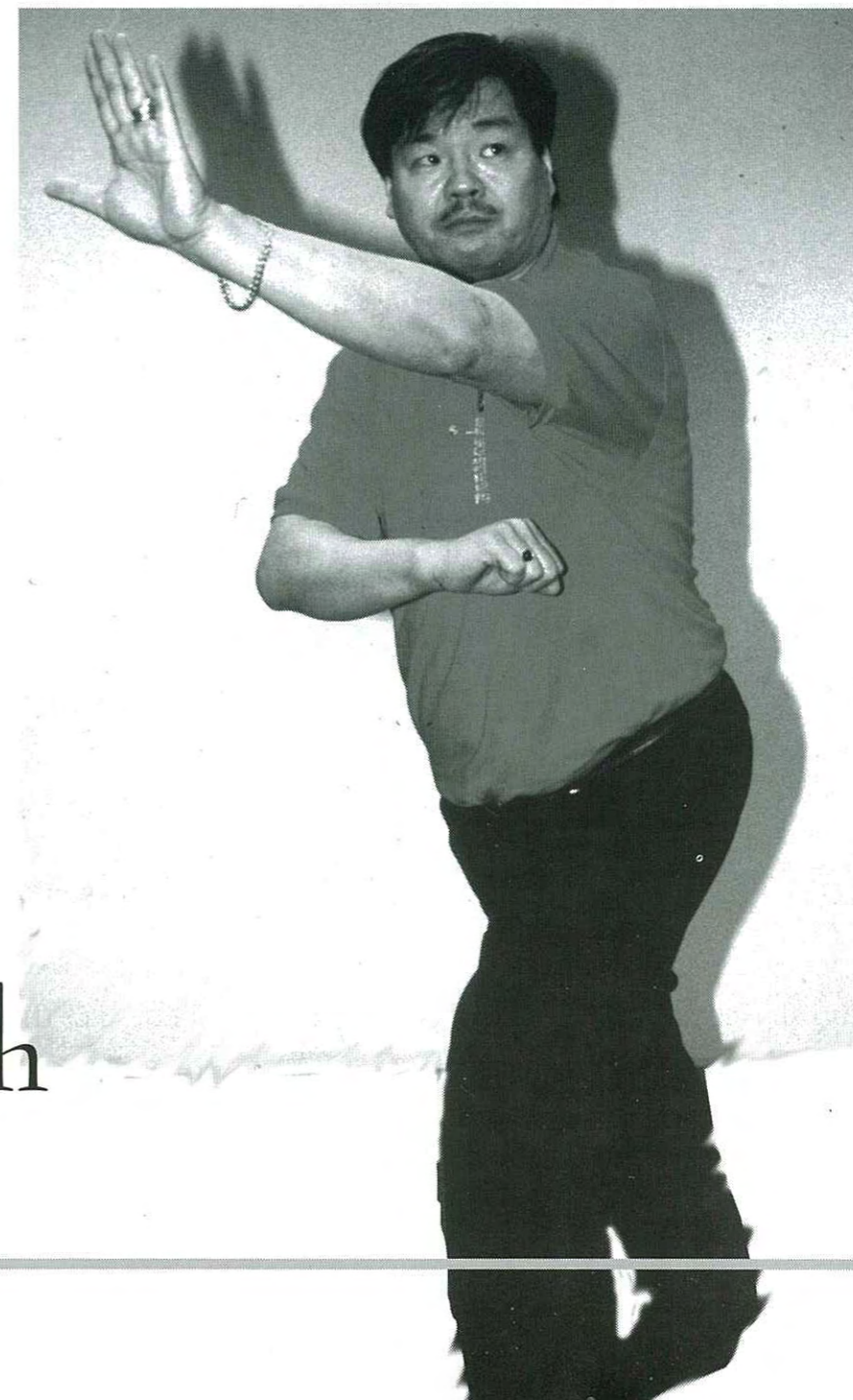
On a higher level, however, some teachers stress that both internal and external methods reach the same ends, but through different starting points.

Combining healthy exercises with meditative practices and maintaining a strong dose of applicability makes T'ai Chi Ch'uan, an internal art of great renown, the quintessential Chinese martial art, because it combines so many goals into one practical training regime.

(Continued on page 67)

Facing page: Wu Chien Ch'uan, the renowned master of Wu style T'ai Chi Ch'uan. This page: Eddie (Kwong-yu) Wu, the current master of the family style. He is framed by two sayings, from the "Song of the Thirteen Postures": (Left) Mastering the art requires unceasing self-cultivation and (Right) Entering the gate, one is guided along the path by oral instruction.

功夫無息法自修



入門引路須口授

Wu Style T'ai Chi Ch'uan:

The Endless Journey on the Path of the Grand Ultimate

to review the innumerable technical points made by Kato sensei during the seminar (there seemed to be hundreds!). During each session, Kato sensei very patiently corrected and encouraged all the participants. Everyone was most impressed by his presence and skill. I very was fortunate to participate in the seminar.

Afterwards, one of the things I discussed with members of my dojo was the way Kato sensei's hands swung naturally as he walked during tachiwaza. As a beginner, I tend to keep my hands still.

But Kato sensei looked as if he were out for a casual stroll. Without breaking his stride or rhythm, he would draw his sword for a perfectly timed and unwavering cut.

Thanks to Kato and Onuma sensei, and the Hawaii sensei

who have maintained the art over the decades, iaido seems certain to blossom in the Hawaiian Islands.

About the Author

Charles C. Goodin is an assistant instructor of Matsubayashi Ryu (Shorin Ryu) and is also a student of iaido and kendo at the Aiea Taiheiji Kendo Club in Aiea, Hawaii. Excellent notes of the seminar were provided by Dr. Jinichi Tokeshi and Rick Warrington.



Kato sensei performs the eleventh kata of the seiza no bu (seiza section), Omori-ryu, called nuki uchi. (Dr. Noboru Akagi of the Hawaii Kendo Federation is in the background). From a seiza sitting position, Kato draws out the sword (top left photo), brings it over his head in a simultaneous rise and deflection, grasps it with both hands, cuts down at the attacker in front of him, performs yoko-chiburi (side chiburi), and the puts away the sword and returns to seiza.



Members of the Honolulu delegation to the first international Wu style gathering, held in Toronto, Canada, in 1995, with Wu family members. From left to right: Dennis Yee, Walter Cassidy, Noel Eto, Patricia Leong, Kuo Hsiao-jong, Wu Yen-hsia, Wu Da-hsuan, sifu Eddie Wu and Bobbie Maurer.



Wu Yen-hsia with her student Patricia Leong, at the Toronto, Canada gathering of Wu stylists in 1995. Leong is one of Wu Yen-hsia's senior students in the art of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. (Black and white photos in this essay are courtesy of Patricia Leong.)

(Continued from page 45)

The Chinese characters mean literally "great" (t'ai) "ultimate" (chi) "fist" (ch'uan); or the "supreme ultimate boxing method." Whatever its origins, it was a closely-held fighting and health art, kept within strict circles, and came to encompass a long, slow-paced solo exercise that taught breathing, movement, balance internal strengthening of the organs, muscles and mind, and practical fighting tactics and techniques. Also included were forms for various weaponry, including the saber, knife, spear and staff. In addition are various exercises, including ch'i kung forms, and two-person forms called "pushing hands" which develop the ability to sense, absorb and deflect energy and attacks. The earnest student will encounter a rich lore of history, Chinese traditional philosophy, cosmology and body mechanics.

T'ai Chi Ch'uan has expanded outwards, brought to other countries by Chinese immigrants, teachers and sojourners who trained in the heartlands of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Thousands, if not millions, of people all over the world practice a form of T'ai Chi Ch'uan in nearly every country imaginable. Many who do so aren't aware of the harsh martial nature of their art, because its forms are so cloaked in beautiful dance-like movements. (Consider some of the poetic names for the techniques: "wave cloud arms; snake creeps down; needle in the deep sea;" the movements are as poetically beautiful as they sound, but as effective as any technique in any "hard style" art.)

At present, there are several schools of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, all originally based on family traditions.

The Wu family style has its origins in Wu Ch'uan-yu (1834-1902), a military officer in the Manchurian army of the Ch'ing dynasty. Ch'uan-yu was originally from Hopei province, and many Manchu princes studied martial arts as part of their schooling. The teacher to the princes was Yang Lu-ch'an, who was aided by his son, Yang Pan-hou. Yang developed three top students; among them was Wu Ch'uan-yu. The legends say that each student acquired a specific character from Master Yang, Ch'uan-yu's being the ability to neutralize attacks. Later, Ch'uan-yu studied under Yang's second son, Yang Pan-hou.

It is significant, historians say, that Wu Ch'uan-yu studied under under both father and son, for he learned two divisions of T'ai Chi Ch'uan; the Big Circles and Small Circles. The Big Circles was the variant of the art taught to the princes primarily for health reasons. The Small Circles were more applicable, it

seems, for fighting purposes. Belying the stereotype T'ai Chi Ch'uan may have among some non-practitioners, Wu Ch'uan-yu's training was so intense that his left leg became slightly lame due to the numerous injuries sustained in practice sessions. (1)

There is a story indicating the strong bonds that developed between teacher and disciple during those bygone times. When it came time for Yang Lu-ch'an to return to his home in the Huang-p'ing district, he took a horse-driven carriage. After several days, the driver noticed that someone was following them and brought it to the attention of Yang Lu-ch'an. Calling the person forth, he was surprised to discover that it was Wu Ch'uan-yu. Why, Yang asked, was Wu following him?

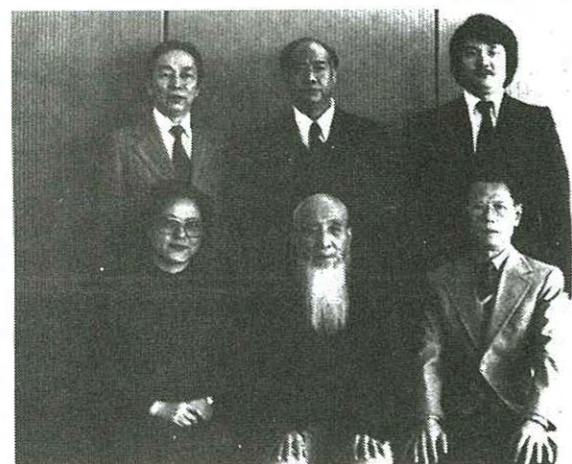
Wu replied that he wanted to return home with Yang and to continue training with his master. Yang was touched by the devotion, "searched his heart" and told Wu that he had learned all there was to know of the art and that there was nothing that had been concealed from him. He could now teach others. So saying, Wang drove away, bidding Wu Ch'uan-yu to return to the capital and become a master in his own right. With Yang Pan-hou's permission, Wu resigned from his military post and opened a training hall to teach T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

Wu stated that, while wishing to be true to his master's teaching, he would make some changes in the system. First, he would only teach "common people," not Manchu princes. Secondly, his style would emphasize the Small Circle style. Hence was born the Wu style of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

After the 1911 revolution that overthrew the Ch'ing dynasty, Wu Ch'uan-yu left Peking and moved back to his ancestral homeland of Ta-hsing, in Hopei province. In his homeland, he concentrated on teaching the art to his son Wu Chien Ch'uan.

Wu Chien Ch'uan (1870-1942) became renowned as a boxer, archer and horseman. Legends say that he could stand on his head on the back of a galloping horse without falling off! (2)

When China became a Republic, Hsu Yu-sheng opened an athletic center in Peking and invited Wu Chien Ch'uan, Yang Ch'eng-fu and Yang Shou-hao to teach there. A story goes that Hsu Yu-sheng visited the Wu family to persuade Wu Chien-ch'uan to teach in Peking. Upon stepping through the door, he was horrified to see smashed furniture strewn all over the place. What had happened? Was there a robbery or fight? No, Wu Chien-ch'uan said. It was merely the result of the daily practice sessions, which were so tough and excruciating that chairs and



Wu family members, from the book *Wu T'ai Chi Ch'uan*, published in 1981, in Chinese. Seated: Wu Yen-hsia, Wu Kung-tsao (deceased); the second son of Wu Chien Ch'uan, and Wu Ta-chi (deceased). Back row: Kuo Hsiao-jong, Wu Ta-hsin and sifu Eddie (Kwong-yu) Wu.

tables were ripped apart from the bodies flying through the air or fists and legs slamming into them.⁽³⁾

Wu Chien-ch'uan accepted the invitation.

The Wu style prospered in Peking. Wu Chien-ch'uan was later assisted by his sons, Wu Kung-yi and Wu Kung-tsao. They were the third generation of the Wu style.

In 1928, Wu Chien-chuan moved to Shanghai and established the Shanghai Chien-ch'uan T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association in 1932. He left his sons to continue teaching in Peking.

After Wu Chien-ch'uan, the leadership of the system fell upon Chien-ch'uan's oldest son, Wu Kung-yi (1900-1970). It was this Wu who, in the 1950s, participated in a famous bare-fisted match with a White Crane kung-fu master. (See the accompanying sidebar.)

The first son of Kung-yi, Wu Ta-kuei (1923-1970) went with his grandfather Wu Chien-ch'uan to Shanghai. At the time, he was barely ten years old, but was already being taught the family system. Chien-ch'uan taught at the Ching-Wu Association.

When open hostilities began between Japan and China, Wu Kung-yi closed his school and was forced to flee with his family to Ch'ang-sha. Wu Chien-ch'uan, who was in Nanking, took Ta-kuei to Hong Kong. There, he formed the Chien-ch'uan T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association at Lockhart Road. Wu Kung-yi and Wu Kung-tsao joined him. Later, Wu Kung-tsao left to set up a branch in Macao. When Hong Kong fell to the Japanese Imperial Army, Wu Chien-ch'uan left for Shanghai, where he died. Wu Kung-yi and Wu Ta-kuei fled to Macao.

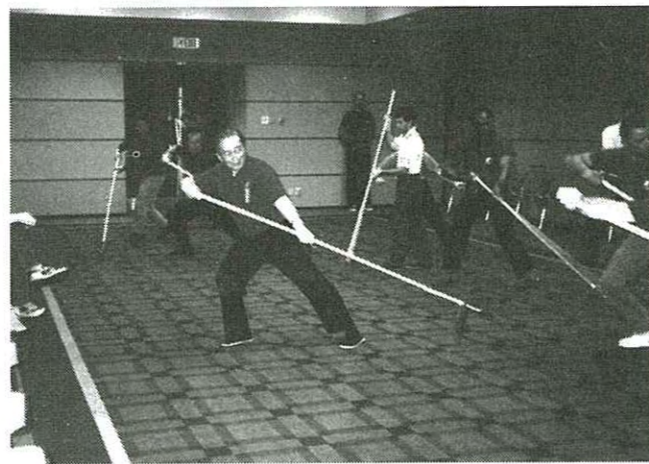
At the end of World War II, Wu Kung-yi returned to Hong Kong and reestablished the family tradition.

Wu Ta-kuei was one of the first Chinese martial artists invited to demonstrate in Japan after World War II, journeying there in 1956 at the invitation of Japanese judo teachers and other martial arts enthusiasts.⁽⁴⁾

Wu Ta-kuei was succeeded by the current family leader, Wu Kwong Yu (Eddie Wu; born 1946).

The Engineer-T'ai Chi Master, Eddie Wu

AT FIRST GLANCE, SIFU (THE CANTONESE TERM FOR TEACHER OR MASTER) EDDIE WU LOOKS LIKE WHAT HE WAS; A CHINESE ENGINEER. Born and raised in Hong Kong, Wu was handed over for instruction in T'ai Chi to his famous grandfather, Wu Kung-yi, until he



Kuo Hsiao-jong teaches the 13-form Wu style spear style at the Toronto gathering in 1995.

reached the age of 12, when he was given back to his father for further training.

"I hated it!" Wu says of his initial childhood training. "All the other kids were playing marbles. All I did was train, train, train. I had no children's games or New Year's games. They only let me train in neutralizing, defense. As a kid, it took the joy out of things. Then, I found out later on, that neutralizing is much harder than offensive (movements)."

As a pouty 12-year-old, Wu also thought that the stuff he was being taught wasn't only boring; it didn't work. When he told his grandfather his opinion, he "found out it really works." They went at each other and Wu found himself flying across the room, "left and right!"

In spite of his initial obdurance, Wu was raised in the environment; he grew up in T'ai Chi Ch'uan and by his early teens, it had sunk inexorably into every pore of his body.

His training was broken only when he went to Perth, Scotland, to study for an aeronautical aircraft engineer's license from the British Air University.

Upon his return, Wu helped teach T'ai Chi Ch'uan at the family's club and worked by day at the Hong Kong airport. Wu spent four years in Singapore in the 1970's working for Lockheed and helping a club there. He returned to Hong Kong to help run the T'ai Chi organization and to open a club in Kowloon.

In the meantime, Wu's second uncle, Wu Ta-chi, moved to Canada in late 1975 and tried to start a club. Wu Da-chi subsequently asked Eddie Wu for assistance. From May 1975 he taught in Canada. Or, as he put it, laughing, his uncle "left me (stranded) in Canada!" In a more serious vein, Wu says that once there, the family felt that their growing presence in the Western Hemisphere meant that a Wu family member should be there to properly oversee the growth of the system. So it was decided that he would take care of North America and Europe.

Wu style affiliate clubs are currently all over the place: besides clubs in Canada, there were groups in New Jersey, Michigan, Detroit, Buffalo, London, Israel, South Africa, Paris, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, San Francisco, New York, mainland China.

T'ai Chi Ch'uan, and indeed many traditional Asian arts, were once closed-door systems that were taught to only a few initiates. In this day and age, attitudes have to change and secrets have to



Wu Kung-yi, who engaged the White Crane master Ch'en Ke-fu in a match that proved the martial practicality of T'ai Chi Ch'uan to a doubting public.

order to maintain standards internationally.

"Because I have an engineering background, I try to apply logic and reality into T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Everything's got to have a logic, it has to work."

The International Wu Style T'ai Chi Ch'uan Federation was thus formally established. In October, 1995, its first international convention was held in Toronto, Canada. Members from some 25 different clubs from all over the world gathered together to receive training from Wu family members.

Eddie Wu characterizes the Wu style as being more "martial" in its art than some other T'ai Chi styles. The Wu style, therefore, has an emphasis on martial applicability, a "tighter circle," and an ever-present emphasis on neutralizing attacks. You can philosophize all you want, Wu says, but you have to break a sweat and experience reality by training, and training hard. You can "sit there and drink a cup of coffee (and philosophize) like a Taoist monk. But you'd be kidding yourself. What good is it? The other way is to try to learn the form and apply the philosophy into it. That's the proper way."

Having trained with some legendary family members, and having to bridge the gap between the past and the modern, the Chinese and Western, Wu had some other observations about T'ai Chi Ch'uan in particular, and martial arts in general.

He stressed the need for discipline as a way to better learn martial arts. "If you don't have discipline, there is no learning, no respect, no concepts. I'm so impressed with Japanese culture (that manages to maintain) respect. In martial arts, in the old traditional way, only when your sifu stands do you stand. The Japanese still have that tradition. In China, we lost that consistency due to wars in China, materialism, Western influence.

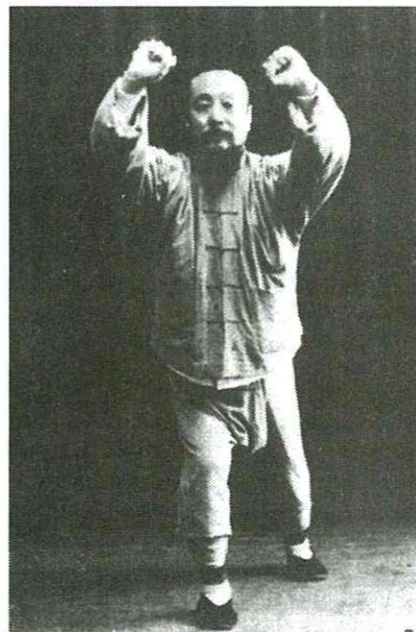
"Martial arts in the 21st Century is very much catering to entertainment. Most people want to be recognized as the next Jackie Chan or Bruce Lee. They want to get a name for themselves and go commercial, have a school. So it's a matter of how

be let out for the survival and growth of the art, Wu believes.

"I have a guideline: I will not keep any secrets, but I will not give the art to someone who will use it badly. . . If you have a genuinely good personality, you will be a good disciple. You didn't trust people in the old days. But as long as the students are good people, it doesn't matter if they're black, white, in between. The ultimate point is, everyone (in the Wu style) should do the same set, try to keep the tradition, the quality of the Wu style, so it can go on forever and not die out."

To that end, Wu's engineering background made him see the necessity of organizing a world-wide association of Wu stylists in

Wu Chien-ch'uan demonstrated various postures from T'ai Chi Ch'uan that are both martial and healthful in meaning and application. From the book *Wu Family T'ai Chi Ch'uan*.



many trophies did they win? Things have become very commercialized.

Eddie Wu chuckles. Then he adds: "... If I relied on T'ai Chi Ch'uan to make a living, I'd have starved a long time ago!"

Instead, he decided to branch out in order to generate income from other ways besides teaching. His own club in Toronto charges only \$45 a month, which barely covers the overhead and is an incredibly cheap fee, considering that he is the nominal master of the living, breathing Wu tradition.

Wu feels, however, that quality will win out. This is due to an increasing sophistication and awareness on the part of Westerners involved in martial arts. "In the old days, if you were Chinese and had a beard, a white coat, they'll follow you! Now people have books, they read, they want to find out who you are."

Wu, trained in both traditional Chinese martial arts and Western technology, believes that the melding of West and East may bode well for the art. While he decries the degeneration of old traditions such as respect and humbleness, he thinks that modern technology may aid in the preservation and regeneration of Asian martial arts through the use of computers, video, and the Internet.

"T'ai Chi Ch'uan is a trend in the '90s," he forecasts. And finding a good teacher is no longer hampered by the art's oncesecretive nature. Now it's just a matter of "luck and fate. If it is fate to find a good teacher, you will find one."

When Wu said that, I almost dropped my chopsticks into my plate of pot-stickers. Was he talking to my wife (—"Karma, Anjin-san!")? It had, indeed, seemed like fate that I met my lao shih, who I consider one of my current major teachers of martial arts.

Patricia Leong, From Modern Dance to Wu T'ai Chi

PATRICIA LEONG IS A CHINESE AMERICAN, BORN AND RAISED IN HAWAII, WHERE SHE GREW UP IN A VERY TRADITIONAL CHINESE HOUSEHOLD. Still, she had never seen or heard of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. By 1960, she was living in New York City and teaching modern dance at Hofstra University, in Hempstead. By chance (or karma?) she saw a picture in the *New York Times* of the T'ai Chi Ch'uan Club at the United Nations demonstrating a movement called "Snake Creeps Down." Curious, she asked around and the name Sophia Delza floated up. Leong phoned Delza and was invited to watch one of the last sessions for the quarter before the summer break at Carnegie Hall.

Sophia Glassgold Delza (who just died on June 27, 1996) is considered one of the early pioneers of T'ai Chi Ch'uan in the West. Delza had lived in Shanghai immediately after World War II, when her husband was aiding wartime refugees relocate, and she studied Chinese theatrical dancing and T'ai Chi Ch'uan there from 1948 to 1951. In 1954 Delza founded a T'ai Chi school in New York and subsequently authored four books on the subject, the first of which was the first book in English on the subject.

"I immediately fell in love with it!" Leong says. Unwilling to wait for autumn, Leong asked to be taught privately by Delza that summer.

"As soon as I saw T'ai Chi, I knew it. Like it was a hand fitting the glove, almost as if I had known it in a previous existence," Leong says. "I immediately knew that, no matter what, I had to learn this. . . It was like something I knew in the depths of my being. I knew this thing, I recognized it, as if it had happened to me already. . . Like love at first sight. It was beyond words."

Right after that, Leong moved to San Francisco and then to Hong Kong in 1962. Delza had written a letter of introduction that enabled Leong to be accepted into the Wu family. She spent ten years training with the Wu family, then another few years

teaching in Singapore, before returning back to Hawai'i in 1975.

Leong was taught by various family members, according to their own "specialty," but her main teacher was Wu Yen-hsia (born 1930), Eddie Wu's aunt. Wu Yen-hsia is head of the Hong Kong Chien Ch'uan T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association. Leong is one of the senior disciples of Wu Yen-hsia.

Being in Hong Kong in the '60's was, as Leong puts it, "a little schizophrenic." She supported herself by being the first instructor of Western modern dance in Hong Kong, teaching at New Asia College, Hong Kong University and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. At the same time, she was studying one of the most traditional Chinese martial arts there, Wu family T'ai Chi.

She was taught only in Chinese, which was, in hindsight, a good thing. "You had to learn really quickly in order to simply survive! The way you learned was you just plunged in. . . It was challenging, just wonderful. I was so young, in my mid-20s, and I had boundless energy, so eight-hour (training) days were nothing to me then!"

Leong was one of the last students to train in the "old way," before the increase in student numbers and incorporation of larger, more regulated classes. She studied with her teachers literally "one on one." The positive thing about that was that she absorbed everything directly from her teacher. "I never got any bad habits, because I didn't know any better."

Currently an instructor of Chinese movement and T'ai Chi Ch'uan at the University of Hawai'i theatre and drama department and teaching the general public at the Moiliili Community Center, Leong sees herself as being a cross-cultural conduit. "I've been the communicator, if anything, the explainer of Eastern culture to the West, and Western culture to the East. But being of both cultures, it's easier for me, in a way."

Leong's love affair with T'ai Chi Ch'uan continues because after all these years, she still finds something new, something challenging. "There's just more and more because you have eyes to grasp that. When you get on another level, it becomes more subtle, different. You move into the mental, spiritual and other realms."

She notes how sifu Eddie Wu talks about levels in T'ai Chi:

- first level: form
- second: linking form
- third: with *ch'i*
- fourth: with *i* (mental "intentionality")
- fifth: *shen* (spiritual)

The first two levels deal primarily with physicality; learning the form and then being able to link them into a seamless whole. The third level occurs when you are able to join physicality with incipient spirituality; it is a juncture between energy and matter. The fourth level integrates the mental with everything, and finally the fifth refines T'ai Chi Ch'uan to its highest degree. To rise up the levels requires life-long training. "That's what makes it exciting," Leong says. "It really then becomes a matter of self-cultivation."

Hmmm. Maybe It /s Karma, Anjin-san

I BEGAN THIS ESSAY WITH A LITTLE PERSONAL COMMENTARY. Perhaps I should end it the same way. I am not a naturally gifted athlete. My clumsiness in my youth further isolated me from boyhood games and sports, and I cooped myself up in the town library reading nearly every book I could get my hands on, until I got beat up one too many times and decided to take up judo. Thus began my own long journey down the road of physical self-discipline, moving on

to weights, running, football, wrestling, karatedo, aikido, a bit of kendo, naginata. . .

The journey was marked by encounters with great teachers, mediocre teachers and simply bad teachers. I moved on from some teachers, due to changes in geography, life situations, and sometimes catastrophic disagreements and disillusionments. In the end, I also realized that too many arts in too short a life meant that I was only dabbling, and like many *budoka* (martial artists), I forced myself to focus on a few chosen arts, currently iaido and classical jujutsu. But my teachers were in Japan, and I knew that bereft of their guidance, I needed some kind of superior instruction to keep my form proper, my skills growing.

Fate or karma led me to lao shih Patricia Leong, and through her came an introduction to Eddie Wu and the Wu family T'ai Chi Ch'uan system, which now is part of the core group of martial arts that I endeavor to comprehend. It is an interesting balance. The noted martial artist and writer Donn Draeger once admonished me to study a Chinese martial art, if I had the time, in order to better understand Japanese martial arts. I would recommend any such experience for a practitioner of a Japanese budo. Or anyone, in any case.

Doing T'ai Chi has no doubt sharpened my abilities in my other arts. But that's on a physical level. On a higher level, T'ai Chi Ch'uan has also indelibly marked my mental and spiritual processes, in ways I am still not completely aware of. This change is inevitable. It happens under any instructor, so I say choose your teachers well. Try as you may to separate the personal from the public, if you train diligently, you will absorb many of the attributes of your teacher, both good and bad, not just his martial skills, including whatever personal weaknesses a teacher may have.

In years past, I would have said that my own path was established by a simple series of interesting coincidences. Now, reaching middle age and having experienced some unexplainable and mysterious events, I mellow and allow for the spiritual realm to enter into my everyday life. And I think, perhaps, that when we choose a road for ourselves, the universe answers and gives us what we seek, whether or not we can see what it is that is being given to us. On this path, in this life, it was, indeed, my karma to touch a bit of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, and to be led by such masters, who shape not only my body and movement, but my heart. And it might have been truly auspicious that I first encountered my present teacher through her laughter on a radio. While the martial ways are indeed serious and weighty matters, they should also be beloved and enjoyable, as my lao shih enjoys her art and her life.

And that, perhaps, is why I do T'ai Chi Ch'uan (and other budo). It is a matter of the heart, most of all. Anything less and why do it? Why do nothing less than the Grand Ultimate?

Anyone interested in Wu style T'ai Chi Ch'uan may contact Patricia Leong at (808) 941-3782 or by writing: Patricia Leong, PO Box 22116, Honolulu, Hawaii 96823-2116 USA.

References

- (1) Page 1, "An Essay on Wu Kung-yi (1900-1970) Highlighting the Wu-Ch'en Fight," by Lu Ta-lu, translated by Patricia Leong. First published in Chinese in 1971, it was reprinted in 1986, again in Chinese, following the release of the movie *Fei-ho* (Flying Crane), to explain the significance of a documentary film clip of the famous Wu-Ch'en fight in the beginning of this otherwise unusual kung-fu film. Ch'en Ke'-fu, Wu Kung-yi's opponent in this real-life fight, had a starring role in the film. At the time, Ch'en was around sixty and Wu Kung-yi had passed away.

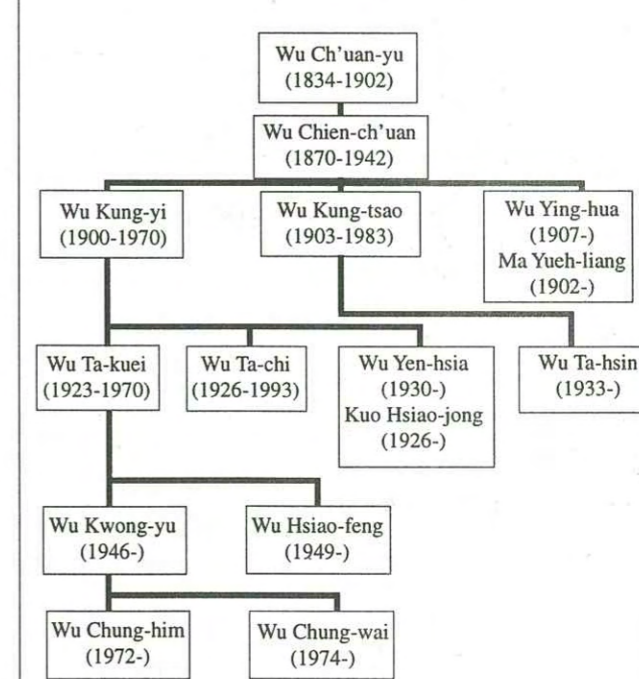
(2) Page 8, *Wu Style Taichichuan Tuishou (Push Hands)*, by Ma Yueh-liang and Zee Wen, Shanghai Book Co., Ltd, Hong Kong 1986.

(3) Page 4, "An Essay on Wu Kung-yi (1900-1970) Highlighting the Wu-Ch'en Fight."

(4) Interview with Eddie Wu, March 1995.



Direct Descendant Teachers and Masters of the Wu Family*



(* Based on a chart provided by Patricia Leong.)