

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
THE CHINESE MARTIAL ARTS  
AND IT'S INFLUENCE  
Prof. Carl Totton (Revised June, 2011)**

**This article was adapted from the book “Wu-Men Kuan Kung- Fu”, by Carlos Perez and Johnny J. Williams Jr. (1996).**

The most influential streams of Chinese Wu Shu (martial arts), that have had the greatest impact on the development of the combat arts in general, are the *Shaolin and Wu Tang schools of Ch'uan Fa (Law of the Fist)*. These schools, in conjunction with the theories of internal physiology detailed in the *Yellow Emperor's Classic on Internal Medicine (Shih Huang Ti Nei Ching Su Wen, c. 2700 B.C.)*, have become the foundation for all of the many derivative combat systems that have developed in the last millennium.

The development of the Shaolin Ssu Ch'uan, (Shaolin Temple Boxing), is attributed to the founder of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism, the *Indian Monk Bodhidharma, (P'u-t'i-Da Mo, or just Tamo or Damo in Chinese, Taishi Daruma in Japanese, c. 520 A.D.)* who traveled to the original Shaolin Temple, located at Mt. Songshan in Honan province. Damo taught the monks residing there two sets of exercises: the *I Chin Ching (Classic on Muscle/Sinew Changing, Ekkin Kyo in Japanese)*, and the *Hsien Sui Ching (Classic on Marrow Washing, Senzui Kyo in Japanese)*. From these exercises an additional method was developed known as the *Shih Pa Lohan Shu (the Eighteen Hands of the Lohan)*. Some authorities claim Damo as the source for the Shih Pa Lohan Shu.

History notes that a young man of the Yen family, joined the Shaolin temple, *assumed the name Chiao Yuan (Chueh Yuan, Kiao Yuen, Kwok Yuen)*, attained the master rank of *Shang Jen*, and expanded the original Eighteen Lohan Hands to 72 movements. Later, with the assistance of *Pai Yu Feng (Pak Yook Fong) and Li Chien (Li Ch'eng)*, Yuan expanded the 72 movements to 170. These methods were then classified into the "*Five Formed Fist" or Five Animal System (Wu Hsing Ch'uan), of the Tiger (Hu), Crane (Hao), Leopard (Pao), Snake (Sher), and Dragon (Lung)*.

There is some dispute as to when this process occurred. Some sources claim that Chiao Yuan joined the Shaolin temple in the 12th century; others note that he was a Shaolin monk in the 16th century.

Dates and times notwithstanding, all sources agree that Yuan along with Li and Pai, developed the Shaolin Five Animal System. In time, the Shaolin Temple became famous as the birthplace of Ch'an (Zen) and Ch'uan Fa, which were disseminated throughout China, South East Asia, Korea, Malaysia, and Japan.

The Southern Shaolin temple (Si Lum in Cantonese) located in Fukien province became a resistance center against the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644 - 1912 A.D.). The Ch'ing army eventually destroyed the Fukien Temple (c. 1735 A.D.). Among the Shaolin survivors were the elders, Pak Mei, Fung To Tak, Mui Hin, Chi Shin, and Ng Mui; who formed the "***Hung-Men-Hui or the Red Gate Society***", the original "***Triad***" secret society, dedicated to destabilizing the Ch'ing and restoring the Ming Dynasty to power.

***During the Sung Dynasty, Shaolin Master Chang San Feng (c. 1200 A.D)***, established his spiritual retreat on Mt. Wu Tang, in Hopei province. Chang reconceptualized Shaolin to produce ***Tai Ch'i (Grand Ultimate), originally known as the art of Dim Mak, based on the "esoteric nei kung" exercises of Taoism (Tao Yin) and the Yellow Emperor's classic.***

The Shaolin order established several major temples throughout China, i.e., Honan, Kwang Tung, E Mei, Wu Tang, and Fukien, each of which was renowned as a center for martial arts training.

### **CH'UAN FA SPREADS TO OKINAWA**

Okinawa is the main island of the RyuKyu Archipelago, and is equidistant between Japan and the Asian mainland. Ch'uan Fa was introduced to Okinawa as early as the T'ang Dynasty (618 - 907 A.D.), by a variety of Chinese sources, e.g., exiles, sailors, military attaches, Imperial officials, settlers, merchants etc. In the 14th century, Okinawa, then a vassal state of China's Ming Dynasty, became a receptacle for a great influx of Chinese culture and trade.

During this period, Ch'uan Fa, pronounced as ***Tode (T'ang Hand) or Kempo***, flourished and became an integral part of Okinawan culture. Tode was simply the Okinawan version of Ch'uan Fa, modified to the physical characteristics and temperament of the Islands indigenous population.

## CH'UAN FA INTRODUCED TO JAPAN

*Martial art historical revisionists of modern times, assign*

*Ch'uan Fa's introduction to Japan to the late 16th century (c. 1559 A.D.); in order to prove that the Japanese warrior arts (Bu-jutsu) are indigenous, and developed without foreign influence, or origin. Modern scholarship though, has proven that Ch'uan Fa was introduced to Japan several centuries earlier.*

The classic Chinese text, *Sun Wu Tzu Ping-Fa Su Wen* (Sun Wu Tzu's The Law of Strategy aka The Art of War), was introduced to Japan during the T'ang Dynasty (618 - 907 A.D.), and had a revolutionary impact on the development of Japanese Bu-jutsu, military strategy and intelligence operations.

**In the 9th century A.D., (T'ang Dynasty), Ch'uan Fa was imported to Japan, by ex-T'ang Dynasty officials seeking refuge from persecution by the Ming Dynasty. Teijun Fujiwara, son of Emperor Seiwa (C. 875 A.D.) developed the primitive form of Daito Ryu Aiki Jutsu from these sources.**

**The art of Kosho Ryu Kempo (Old Pine Tree Ch 'uan Fa), a derivative of Shaolin, was introduced to Japan in the 13th century!**

**During the Ming Dynasty, a Chinese monk named Chen Yuan Yen, lived in Japan and taught an art of "grappling and seizing" of "the Ming" also referred to as Chin-na. Is it possible that this Chen Yuan Yen could be the same young man "Yen", who joined the Shaolin temple, and developed the Five Animal System???**

## THE CHAN YUAN PING CONTROVERSY

In 1559 A.D., the Ming ambassador, *known as Chan Yuan Ping (aka Chen Yuan Ping, Ching Ping, Chin Gem Pin)* emigrated to Japan, and is *officially noted in Japanese history* for introducing Kempo, and teaching three Samurai; *Fukuno Hichirouemon, (founder, Ryoji Shinto Ryu Ju - jutsu), Isomi Irozaemon, and*

*Miura Yojiuemon, (co-founders, Kito Ryu Ju-jutsu).* The Ryoi Shinto and Kito Ryu Ju-jutsu schools are the source, from which many derivative systems of Ju-jutsu and Aiki-Ju-jutsu evolved.

Whether due to personal bias, school loyalty, or nationalism on the part of the many historians who make mention of this event, Chan Yuan Ping's *profound influence* in the development of Samurai Ju - Jutsu is too frequently diminished. Many writers are guilty of not objectively examining the significance of this exchange between Chan and the three Samurai.

The Samurai (Bushi) were the most elite combat force of feudal Japan. Pragmatists of the first order, they would only study or practice a method if it proved effective for combat. It was incumbent upon the Samurai to test the effectiveness of any martial art system by simulating actual combat or through a duel. The Bushi would not waste time practicing weak techniques; preferring instead to train in the most deadly and effective armed and unarmed combat methods. *For three elite Bushi, to submit themselves to be instructed by Chan, suggests that Chan's combat prowess must have been par excellence.* And lends credence to the disputed claim that Ju-jutsu evolved from Ch'uan Fa sources. *The late Ju-jutsu master Jigoro Kano founder of Kodokan Judo*, states in his writings that the arts of Ju-jutsu were not formalized until the late 16th century; which corresponds with the time Chan resided in Japan.

#### CH'UAN FA INFLUENCE IN JAPAN GROWS

In 1659 A.D., the Ming Ex-Patriot *Cheng Tsu U*, settled at the Kokuseyi Ji (Temple) in Edo (now modern Tokyo), and gave lectures and demonstrations on the art of Ch'uan Fa to the Samurai class.

In the same century (17th), *Akiyama Shoribei Yoshitoki* traveled to China to study medicine and Ch'uan Fa. Yoshitoki trained in the *Pao Ch'uan (Leopard Fist)* and *Haku Tei*. (*"Tei" is sometimes pronounced "Tsuru" in Japanese, which means, "Crane".*) *Haku Tei could very well be a cryptic translation for Pai Hao or White Crane.* Ironically, the White Crane Ch'uan Fa is famous for its "grappling and seizing" method of Chin-na. He later founded the *Yoshin Ryu Ju-jutsu (Willow Heart school)*, from which many Samurai Ju-jutsu/Aiki-jutsu systems were derived.

*Many Classical Bu-jutsu methods evolved from Ch'uan Fa. In fairness to the historical revisionists, these methods origins were considered ultra-secret until recently.*

### MODERN CH'UAN FA INFLUENCE

From Ch'uan Fa, hundreds of Asian combat arts, e.g.: *Kun-Tao, Kempo, T'ang Su, Tae Kyun, Kali, Bukulan, Pentjak, Silat etc*, Hawaiian, and Western systems have developed over the last millennium. To even attempt to name them now would be exhaustive and time consuming. Note: most of the famous, modern figures in martial arts history were either trained in the art of Ch'uan Fa, or were heavily influenced by these systems, e.g.: Satunushi Sakugawa (Tode), Matsumura Sokon (Shuri - te), Gusukuma (Tormtri-te), Higaonna Kanryo (Naha-te), Motobu Choki (Shorei Ryu), Otomo (Mushindo ryu), Miyagi Chojun (Goju ryu), Uechi Konbum (Uechi ryu), Go Kenki (Hakutsuru-Ken), Mabuni Kenwa (Shito ryu), Chitose Tsuyoshi (Chito ryu), Ueshiba Morihei (Aikido), Matayoshi Shimpo (Kingainoon - Hakutsuru Ken), Hwang Kee (T'ang Su Do), Oyama Masutatsu (Kyokushinkai), So Doshin (Nippon Shorinji Kempo), Henry Okazaki (Danzan ryu ), James M. Mitose (Kosho ryu), William K.S. Chow (Kara - Ho Kempo), Adriano Emperado (Kaju-Kenbo), Robert Trias (Shuri Ryu), Wally Jay (Small Circle Ju-jutsu), John Keehan (Dan-Te) and Bruce Lee (Jun Fan/Jeet Kune Do), were either direct products of instruction in, or profoundly influenced by, Ch'uan Fa.

The term Gung - Fu (Kung - Fu in Mandarin, Gong Fu/Pin Yin), is a misnomer, mistakenly known as the name for the art of Ch'uan Fa. ***Gung - Fu describes: "skill, energy, human effort, or hard work"***. **Ch'uan Fa (Law of the Fist)** is the correct name for the art of Chinese Boxing.

### THE PURITY OF STYLE MYTH!

Another pillar of this "traditional dogma" nonsense is the insistence on being faithful to the purity of the martial art style, i.e., never deviating from its forms or methods of training! Every great martial arts Founder was a maverick and eclectic! In other words they ***studied more than one method or version of the martial arts***, and also ***changed the structure and manner in which they executed forms and techniques!*** ***If the Founders of the Traditional and modern martial arts were eclectics, why do their successors demand and insist that the purity of their styles be adhered to; and prohibit similar***

*experimentation, expression, and synthesis?*

**Chiao Yuan:** It is quite clear, that Chiao Yuan, the famous *Shaolin Shang Jen*, *went beyond the traditional Shaolin instruction in the I Chin Ching, Hsien Sui Ching, and Shi Pa Lohan Shu*, in order to develop the Five Animal System of Shaolin Ch'uan. Thus, from the very institution acknowledged as the source for most traditional martial arts, *we discover the process of going beyond the traditional forms, and synthesizing new techniques* in order to formulate newer methods and styles of training.

**Chang San Feng:** The originator of the Wu Tang branch of the martial arts, Chang San Feng, also *went beyond his traditional Shaolin training* in order to formulate' the art of Tai chi Ch'uan.

Let's take a closer look at history and see how many of the most esteemed martial artists of all time approached the issues of cross training, innovation, and experimentation:

**Grandmaster Ark Yuey Wong**



FOUNDER: ART	<u>STYLES STUDIED</u> <u>INNOVATIONS</u>
<p><b>Higaonna Kanryo: Naha-te.</b></p> <p><b>Uechi Konbum: Uechi Ryu.</b></p> <p><b>Funakoshi Gichin: Shotokan Ryu.</b></p> <p><b>Kano Jigoro: Kodokan Judo.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Shoreiji Ch’uan, Hsing-I, Pa-kua, Mi-tsung-i.</u></b>  Originated the Okinawan school of Naha-Te. Adopted formal combat exercises (Kata: Ch’uan, Kuen in Chinese) from Ch’uan Fa to develop his syllabus.</p> <p><b><u>Pan-gai-noon, Lung Ch’uan, Pai Hao.</u></b>  Excerpted forms from the Tiger, Crane, and Dragon styles of Ch’uan Fa to establish the <b>Naha-Te</b> art of Uechi Ryu.</p> <p><b><u>Shorei, Shuri versions of Tode.</u></b>  Changed the names of the original Okinawan kata to Japanese names, made technical innovations in technique and traditional kata, <b>Created the Ten No Kata.</b></p> <p><b><u>Tenshin Shinyo and Kito Ryu Ju-jutsu, studied other Ju-Jutsu Ryu academically.</u></b>  Modernized the Ju-jutsu syllabus, eliminated Combat techniques, and <b>created new kata for Kodokan Judo.</b></p>

FOUNDER: ART	<u>STYLES STUDIED</u> <u>INNOVATIONS</u>
<p><b>Miyagi Chojun: Goju Ryu.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Naha-te, Pa Kua, Hsing-I, Shoreiji Ch’uan Fa.</u></b>  <i>Changed the San Chin kata</i> as taught in Naha-te by Higaonna Kanryo from an open hand (Kaishu) to a closed fist (Heishu) form. <b>Created the Tensho kata from the original Ch’uan Fa, Rokkishu fist set.</b></p>
<p><b>Ueshiba Morihei: Aikido</b></p>	<p><b><u>200 bu-jutsu styles e.g. Tenshin Shinyo, Kito, Daito Ryu Aiki-jutsu, Ch’uan Fa etc...</u></b>  Synthesized the various schools he studied to create the new art of Aikido.</p>
<p><b>Mabuni Kenwa: Shito Ryu</b></p>	<p><b><u>Shuri-te, Naha-te, Goju Ryu, Haksuru Ken.</u></b>  Combined the techniques and kata of Itosu (Shuri-Te), Higaonna Kanryo (Naha-Te) and Go Kenki (Hakutsuru Ken/ White Crane) to create Shito Ryu.</p>
<p><b>Shimabuku Tatsuo: Isshin Ryu</b></p>	<p><b><u>Shorin Ryu, Goju Ryu, Shoreiji Ryu.</u></b>  <i>Modified blocking techniques and postures</i> of Shorin/Goju Ryu, <i>Changed the traditional</i> fore fist (seiken) with the standing/vertical fist (Tate-zuki) <b>in all of the kata</b>, which derived from both Shuri and Naha-te.</p>
<p><b>Oyama Masutatsu: Kyokushin Kai</b></p>	<p><b><u>Chinese Kempo, Korean Chabi, Shotokan Ryu, Goju Ryu, Daito Ryu Aiki-Jutsu.</u></b>  Adopted kata from Shotokan and Goju Ryu, <b>made technical changes in the kata</b> from both styles, synthesized Daito ryu Aiki-jutsu, Ch’uan Fa, Korean Mu-Sool principles and techniques with Karate.</p>



<b><i>FOUNDER: ART</i></b>	<b><u>STYLES STUDIED</u></b> <b><u>INNOVATIONS</u></b>
<b>Chitose Tsuyoshi: Chito Ryu</b>	<b><u>Chinese Kempo, Shoreiji Ryu, Shorin Ryu, Goju Ryu, Shotokan Ryu.</u></b> Combined all of the kata from the styles that he studied and created Chito Ryu karate.
<b>Ohtsuka Hironori: Wado Ryu</b>	<b><u>Shindo Yoshin Ryu Ju-Jutsu, Shotokan Ryu.</u></b> Combined the principles and techniques of classical Ju-jutsu with Shotokan Karate. Founded the modern style of Wado Ryu.
<b>Bruce Lee: Jun Fan, Jeet Kune Do</b>	<b><u>Wing Chun, Jeet Kune, Judo, 26 other Asian systems, Western Boxing, Le Savate, and fencing.</u></b> Abandoning the stagnant dogmas and methods of the traditional martial arts while using the principles of Wing Chun; Bruce Lee synthesized the most effective principles and techniques from other systems of martial art and physical culture, which fit his personal criteria, and created Jeet Kune Do.
<b>So Doshin: Nippon Shorinji Kempo</b>	<b><u>Pei Shaolin Ch’uan Men Kuan (Northern Shaolin Giwamonken), Okinawan Shorinji Karate, Daito Ryu Aiki-jutsu, and Hakko Ryu Ju-jutsu.</u></b> Synthesized the art of Northern Shaolin Ch’uan with Daito/Hakko Ryu Ju-jutsu to create the art of Nippon Shorinji Kempo (Japan Shaolin Ch’uan Fa).
<b>Okuyama Ryuho: Hakko Ryu Ju-jutsu</b>	<b><u>Daito Ryu Aiki-jujutsu, traditional Chinese Medicine.</u></b> Synthesized Daito Ryu with the theories of Traditional Chinese Medicine and developed his own art of Hakko (Eight Lights) Ru Ju-jutsu.

**FOUNDER: ART**

**STYLES STUDIED**  
**INNOVATIONS**

**Choi Yung Sul: Hapkido**

**Daito Ryu Aiki-jutsu, Yu-Sool, T’ae Kyon.**

Synthesized Daito Ryu with Korean Mu-Sool (martial arts) of T’ae Kyon, developed Yu Kwan Sool Hap Ki Do.

**Choi Hong Hi: Tae Kwon Do**

**Shorin Ryu, Shoreiji Ryu, T’ae Kyon.**

Synthesized the Okinawan styles of Shorin and Shoreiji with traditional Korean T’ae Kyon to found the modern art of Tae Kwon Do. He created a whole series of formal exercises (Hyung: The Korean equivalent to kuen and kata i.e., Chon Ji, Hwa-Rang, etc.)

**James Mitose: Kosho-ryu Kempo (Japan & Hawaii)**

Studied family art of Kosho-ryu Kempo or Old Pine Tree Style Kempo in Japan for 15 years. Awarded black belts to only a few students: Thomas Young, William K.S. Chow (actually promoted by Thomas Young), Jiro Nakamura, Arthur Keawe, Paul Yamaguchi, and Bobby Lowe. Grandfather of all kenpo systems in America.

**Adriano Emperado: Kajukenbo (Hawaii)**

Mixed martial art synthesized by Peter Choo (“ka”, Tang Soo Do Korean Karate, boxing), Joe Holck (“Ju”, Jiu Jitsu) Frank Ordonez (“Ju”, Judo), Adriano Emperado (“Ken”, kenpo), Clarence Chang (“Bo”, Chinese boxing or kung fu)

FOUNDER: ART	STYLES STUDIED INNOVATIONS
<p><b>Edmund K. Parker: American Kenpo (Hawaii &amp; Mainland US)</b></p>	<p><b><u>American Kenpo</u></b> Early training to black belt in Judo and Jiu Jitsu. Later received black belt in Kenpo Karate from the Mitose graduate William K.S. Chow and had influences from several Chinese kung fu stylists including James Wing Woo and Ark Y. Wong, among others. Founded IKKA.</p>
<p><b>Tino Tuiolosega: Limalama, “Hand of Wisdom” (American Samoa, Hawaii, &amp; US Mainland)</b></p>	<p><b><u>Limalama</u></b> Hybrid Polynesian American (Samoan) martial art synthesized by Tuumamao “Tino” Tuiolosega after receiving black belts in several arts, including kenpo karate from Ed Parker, and five family/five animals kung fu from Ark Yuey Wong. Tino also skilled in boxing. Started Lima Lama Assn. in 1965 with five black belts: Richard Nunez, Haumea “Tiny” Lefiti, Saul Esquivel, Solomon Kaihewalu, and John Louis.</p>
<p><b>Al Garza: The Matrix System (US)</b></p>	<p><b><u>The Matrix System</u></b> Studied limalama, kung fu, kenpo, boxing, and other systems from Tino Tuiolosega, Tiny Lefiti, Ralph Shun and others. Garza created the Matrix System as a flexible blueprint for responding to changes in combat using natural body-mind response patterns related to pure self defense.</p>
<p><b>Carl A. Totton: The Core System (US)</b></p>	<p><b><u>The Core System</u></b> Totton received black belts and/or instructor’s certificates from several sources including Ark Wong, Tiny Lefiti, Tino Tuiolosega, Doo Wai, Ralph Shun, &amp; Ed Parker among others. Synthesized kung fu (ch’uan fa), qigong, limalama, tai chi chuan, pa kua, hsing-i, lu ho ba fa (water boxing), arnis, aikido, kenpo karate &amp; kenpo ju-jitsu into a complete system of internal &amp; external training including health and healing, and psycho-spiritual development.</p>

As is clearly evident, innovation leads to greatness when effectiveness and efficiency are the primary considerations in the development of a martial art and martial science!

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