

About Wushu:

Taolu

Taolu refers to the set routine (form) practice component of wushu. Taolu routines comprise of a continuously connected set of pre-determined techniques, choreographed according to certain principles and philosophies which incorporate techniques and stylistic principles of attack and defense. These include hand techniques, leg techniques, jumps, sweeps, stances & footwork, seizing, throwing & wrestling, balances etc. Traditionally, Taolu routines were originally compiled to preserve the techniques and tactics of a particular lineage or system, and would gradually improve a practitioner's flexibility, stamina, strength, speed, balance and co-ordination, and would "imprint" a tactical order into practitioners. Taolu routines include individual routines and group routines, as well as partner/duel routines with 2 or more practitioners involved. They have a rich and diverse content utilizing a wide variety of techniques and include both bare-handed routines and those performed with weapons.

Sport wushu has developed from traditional wushu and is presented to the world in the form of a modern Olympic sport with a perfect combination of ancient practices and modern sports principles. Athletes perform routines (barehanded or with weaponry) based on specific rules, highlighting their athletic strengths. Routines are appraised by a panel of judges who evaluate different aspects of a performance, namely quality of movements, overall performance and degree of difficulty, and award a score based on an athlete's performance. Individual taolu routines include optional routines, compulsory routines, choreographed duel/sparring routines and group routines. Taolu competition takes place in a specialized 8m x 14m arena, which comprises of high density foam covered by a low-static carpet.

At official World Wushu Championships, the main taolu event categories include:

Chang Quan (Long Fist): Comprising of styles that originated and are popular in the northern geographic areas of China (north of the Yangze River) including Cha Quan, Hua Quan, Hong Quan, Shaolin Quan, Fanzi Quan and Pao Chui, this style is defined by open and long-range strikes, and a wide variety of leg techniques and circular motions. Changquan utilizes open and expanded postures, high speed techniques as well as many aerial and acrobatic techniques. It is a fast, dynamic and exciting style, incorporating many breathtaking movements.

Nan Quan (Southern Fist): Comprising of styles that originated and are popular in the southern geographic areas of China (south of the Yangze River) including Hong (Hung Gar), Li (Lei Gar), Liu (Lau Gar), Mo (Mok Gar), Cai (Choy Gar), Wu Zu Quan, Yong Chun Quan (Wing Chun) and others. Nanquan is defined by low stances with fewer leg techniques and a focus on short, powerful arm strikes often accompanied by vocal articulation. Focusing on a solid stance and stability, Nanquan has relatively fewer

acrobatic techniques, but rather concentrates on generating extremely powerful techniques with intricate and highly developed hand techniques. It is a fierce and powerful style whose practitioners exude a strong spirit.

Taiji Quan (Tai Chi Chuan): The most widely practiced and popular martial art in the world today, Taiji Quan is characterized by its slow and graceful motions and its combination of both hard and soft techniques. Taiji Quan comprises of well-known styles including Chen, Yang, Wu, Sun and Wu (Hao), and is popular due to its health building and longevity benefits. Taiji Quan is defined by slow motions, coupled at times with explosive bursts of force, which require total harmony of motion and breath, concentration and co-ordination of the entire body and spirit in a continuous practice.

Taiji Jian (Tai Chi Straight sword): Taiji Jian features the double-edged straight sword employed with Taiji Quan principles and characteristics. Taiji Jian is defined by slow motions, coupled at times with explosive bursts of force, which require total harmony of motion and breath, concentration and co-ordination of the entire body and spirit in a continuous practice.

Daoshu (Broadsword): As one of the prominent short bladed weapons in Chinese history, the broadsword was widely practiced throughout China. It is a single-edged curved blade and its practice is characterized by vigorous attack and defensive techniques. Its fierce and powerful movements primarily utilize wrapping and entwining techniques with relentless hacking, upper-cutting, slashing, blocking, thrusting and circling. Its performance requires great strength and co-ordination between the practitioner's body and the weapon. Categorized within the "Changquan" (northern) stylistic grouping, daoshu is likened to a fierce tiger.

Jianshu (Straight sword): The straight sword is one of the most widely practiced short bladed weapons in Chinese history; its influence goes beyond the realm of Wushu (martial arts) and has deep cultural connotations. It is a double-edged straight bladed sword and its practice is characterized by graceful, elegant, brisk, agile and naturally flowing motions. It focuses on a harmonious balance between hard and soft techniques with variable and flexible changes in speed. Its primary techniques include thrusting, pointing, tilting, shearing and sweeping combined with intricate footwork, and flexible body work. Categorized within the "Changquan" (northern) stylistic grouping, jianshu is likened to a flying phoenix.

Gunshu (Cudgel): Considered the "father" of all weapons, the long cudgel is fast paced which focuses on far reaching sweeping techniques. Combining offensive and defensive techniques, it is characterized by quick and heavy movements, with fast and numerous changes. The most commonly used techniques include, chopping, butting, sweeping, smashing and rotating. Gunshu is categorized within the "Changquan" (northern) stylistic grouping and is likened to a heavy rainstorm.

Qiangshu (Spear): The spear is considered the “king” of all weapons, and is the major long shafted weapon practiced widely throughout China. Its practice is characterized by agile footwork, flexible body work, smooth transitions, fast and precise techniques, with both short and long range techniques. While its core technique is thrusting, it also includes coiling, circling, circular blocking as well as slamming movements. The spear requires unity between the body and the weapon, and relies on force generated from the entire body. This creates a breathtaking and mesmerizing display. Qiangshu is categorized within the “Changquan” (northern) stylistic grouping and is likened to a soaring dragon.

Nandao (Southern Broadsword): “Nandao” is the collective term given for all the different types of broadsword styles which have originated in and are practiced in the southern parts of China, such as the double butterfly sword, the long broad sword etc. Nandao utilizes similar techniques to Daoshu, yet with Nanquan (southern) principles and style. It fully embodies and displays the characteristics and spirit of southern styles, such as a short and sharp exertion of power, with the broadsword kept close to the body for practical defensive application, with supporting hand techniques. It is a fierce and bold style with powerful techniques accompanied by vocal articulation.

Nangun (Southern Cudgel): “Nangun” is the collective term given for all the different types of cudgel styles which have originated in and are practiced in the southern parts of China such as the “Double Headed Cudgel”, and “Single Headed Cudgel” as well as techniques from other southern cudgel styles. With a rich and practical content which includes varied techniques, a fast-paced rhythm nangun fully embodies and displays the characteristics and spirit of southern cudgel styles by utilizing double handed techniques, with natural extension and withdrawal methods and devastating applications. Its techniques are clear, accurate and exact accompanied by vocal articulation.

Duilian (Choreographed Sparring/Duel): This is a choreographed routine with two or more participants emulating a combat situation featuring bare-handed combat as well as that with weaponry. Displaying both attack and defensive applications, it requires accuracy, high level mastery and supreme conditioning. With great speed and momentum featuring leaping, jumping, tumbling and falling, it is highly energetic and visually entertaining.

Baguazhang (Eight Trigrams Palm): Baguazhang uses circle walking as its foundational training, and its techniques emphasize horizontal and vertical crossing, and changing techniques while walking. Applications emphasize changing to follow opportunities, and constant adjustment to whatever situation presents.

Shuang Jian (Double Straight Swords): Utilizing two straight swords employing straight sword techniques, shuang jian demonstrates harmony and coordination between the left and the right hands as well as between the weapons and the body of the performer in a graceful and precise manner.

Chun Qiu Da Dao (Spring & Autumn Halberd): Also popularly referred to as the Guan Dao, it is popularly associated with the historical figure, Guan Yu of the Three Kingdoms Tale. This long halberd features a shaft with a large curved blade at the top, and a pike on the bottom. Its techniques feature continuous circular slicing & slashing actions which utilize the momentum of the heavy blade driven by the harmonious bodywork of the user.

Xingyi Quan (Shape & Intent Fist): Xingyi Quan is derived from traditional Chinese culture of Yin and Yang and the five elements, to elaborate on the law of motion in the five element techniques, and uses the twelve animal forms and characteristics which result in practical attack and defense techniques. It features a powerful exertion of force.

Sanda

Sanda is a modern unarmed combat sport which developed from traditional wushu techniques, and primarily makes use of punching, kicking, throwing, wrestling and defensive techniques.

Competition bouts take place on an elevated platform called a “leitai”, which is 80cm in height, 8m in width and 8m in length and comprises of a frame covered in high density foam with a canvas cover. On the ground surrounding the platform is a protective cushion that is 30cm in height and 2 meters in width. Competing athletes wear protective gear which includes a head-guard, chest protector and gloves, as well as a mouth-guard and a jockstrap.

Competition bouts comprise of 3 rounds in total, each lasting two minutes with a one minute rest period between rounds. Apart from illegal blows and methods, sanda athletes may employ punching, kicking and throwing techniques from all styles of wushu. Valid striking areas are: the head, the trunk (including the chest, abdomen, waist and back) and the legs. The full-contact bouts are free flowing and exciting, and athletes are awarded points by the sideline judges for successfully executed techniques based on the scoring criteria. An athlete will be declared the winner if he or she wins 2 out of the 3 rounds of a bout, or if their opponent is knocked out.

Sanda competition includes 11 weight categories for men and 7 weight categories for women.

Traditional Wushu (aka Kungfu)

Traditional Wushu (commonly referred to as kungfu) is the root of sport wushu, and has a long and diverse history. As wushu originated in China, traditional wushu practices have developed and spread throughout its geographical terrain and absorbed distinct cultural, ethnic and philosophical characteristics of the various groups in China.

Originating from the need for self-defense, survival as well as an art of war, over its thousands of years of development different styles and practices emerged featuring various methods, content, philosophies, tactics and techniques. While at its core traditional wushu is a method of attack and defense, its practice has surpassed a simple means to an end and it is deeply intertwined with ethical and moral principles. Traditional wushu's practice is aimed at preserving the principles, methods and legacies of previous generations which developed and relied on these arts as a method of survival and for life improvement.

A wide variety of styles and practices can be found, some featuring mainly hand techniques, other focusing on leg techniques, some featuring wrestling; some focus on attack and defense while yet others strive to promote and preserve health and well-being. Traditional wushu also includes an extremely vast array of traditional weaponry which has been handed down from the age of cold weapons with methods that have been preserved by subsequent generations. With numerous clans, sects, family systems and styles, traditional wushu is diverse and colourful and is an extremely deep and complex physical culture. It is practiced by people from all walks of life, irrespective of race, gender, age, social class or physical condition. Traditional wushu is the cultural and sporting gem of the Chinese people.

The International Wushu Federation (IWUF) preserves and promotes traditional wushu as the practice has steadily entered the realm of sport for all. Traditional Wushu conforms to the aims and values of promoting social cohesion, cultural and educational value and the development of healthy lifestyles and habits. In 2004 the IWUF held its first edition of the biennial World Traditional Wushu Championships. As a sport-for-all event, the nature of the competition is to promote its practice through large scale participation and exchange. The event features thousands of competitors in all age groups competing in a wide variety of divisions, the majority of whom are awarded prizes for participation. With a spirit of interaction, the event aims to build friendships and interest in the practice of traditional wushu.

(Written by Byron Jacobs, IWUF Technical and Event Manager)