



## Martial Arts

The famous Shaolin School form of fighting traveled with Buddhism to Korea and Japan. It is the most elegant of the North Asian *kung fu* forms, which all derive from Chinese models. It was once televised *ad nauseum* in an American series that rejected Bruce Lee in favor of starring David Carradine ('I am Kane, I can help you' was his weekly mantra).

The discipline that most displays the kinship of North Asian forms has less to do with grunts, kicks and lightning punches than with dance and elegant Tai Chi exercises – the full name of which translates from the Chinese as the 'great ultimate fist' or some such euphemism.

The most interesting aspect of the endless reels of violent *kung fu* epics churned out for Chinese television channels and movie theaters is the way that different directors choreograph their fight scenes. Which explains why the greatest *kung fu* actors, like Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li, need speak only with their body language. Those directors who are most traditional, like King Hu, almost invariably transform their *kung fu* fighters' body language into something much closer to ballet than boxing.

Japanese martial arts are well represented here by the *ninja* skills of Aikido, Judo and Kendo form of stick fighting, a more famous relative of Chinese Wushu – which taught imperial warriors how to wield spear shafts to fatal effect.

All major Asian cultures have evolved unique fighting methods, many of which are yet to be widely known. Thai kickboxing (Muay Thai) burst upon the scene about 20 years ago, but still to gain international prominence are unique fighting forms from Malay, South Asian and Pacific Island cultures. Likewise, there are many local variations on Chinese fighting styles known only to *aficionados* in Hong Kong.

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