

Kung Fu

Kung Fu is a broad term that is used to describe all martial arts of Chinese origin. Kung-Fu existing under many different names through China's history. Initially Kung Fu was called Ch'uan Fa (fist way).

The Shaolin monastery housed many fugitives from justice, and many warriors turned monk, which sets the roots of Kung Fu in the Shaolin Temple in Northern China. In fact there were five different Shaolin temples in five districts, and so five distinct styles of Shaolin Kung Fu developed.

Martial arts historians stress that Kung-Fu did not start at the Shaolin temple, but simply began to flourish under Shaolin's influence. Kung-Fu became eventually categorised into Northern and Southern styles. In the south, Cantonese people pronounce Kung Fu as gung-fu. Southern styles use low stances and kicks and strong hand techniques because they are shorter and stockier than Northern (Mandarin) people. The Northern systems are characterised by stylish and difficult patterns and acrobatic legwork, presumably because it was colder in the North so hand movement was restricted by thick robes and the mountaineous terrain enforced the development of strong legs.

Kung Fu as one of the oldest martial arts has been a great influence to other and younger martial arts styles, such as Okinawan Karate styles and subsequently Japanese Karate styles.

In modern times, Wu-shu emerged as a mixture of circus-like acrobatics and martial arts, and in China, national competitions are held in this sport. Jet-Li is a famous exponent of Wu-Shu, popularising the art in the West by appearing in martial arts movies.

Typical [Kung Fu weapons](#) are the broadsword and the butterfly knives.

Origin of Kung Fu: China