

**A SHORT HISTORY
OF THE
MARTIAL ARTS
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BY KENT HARALSON, PHD, D.MIN

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CONTACT GMAU AT:

**GMAU INTERNATIONAL
1001 E. PALMER ST.
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46203**

OR ON THE WEB:

WWW.GMAU.ORG EMAIL: JRRUSSELL@IUPUI.EDU

What You May Have Been Told

If asked to tell you when and where the martial arts began most people would begin to tell the story of Bodhidharma, a monk credited with founding Zen Buddhism ¹. He left western India for China in the 6th century where he undertook the physical development of monks preparing them to progress on their spiritual journey.

There's More To The Story

Just for the sake of argument, let's assume that the story is accurate. If so, it is clearly not complete. Through a variety of sources, a proliferation of the martial arts can be traced to a number of countries over the past several millennia. Some examples include:

kshatriya in India ⁴	Pre-Christian
fighting arts in Korea ²	108 BC
karate fighting in Rome ²	400 BC
pankration in Greece ³	648 BC
boxing art in China ² (Chou dynasty)	1122 BC
wrestling and stick fighting in Egypt ³	2500 BC
fighting arts in Babylon ⁵	3000 BC
boxing in Egypt ⁴	4000 BC

Maybe We Need To Look Elsewhere

These timestamps from some very reputable authors and martial arts historians should tell us that there is more to the origin of the martial arts than we've been told. Bruce Haines puts it this way ⁶, “the implication, of course, is that karate must have developed in a country that carried on an active and extensive intercourse with the west as well as with all of Asia.” Echoing this thought, Draegger and Smith ² say, “perhaps this similarity of technique in widely separated countries is coincidental. Or, perhaps our history books are simply inadequate.”

This May Surprise You

Did you realize that the Bible itself documents a variety of marital arts activities in the Old Testament? The Old Testament, among other things, documents historical activities occurring from 2000 B.C. (Abraham) until 400 BC. In Genesis 14, we can read of Abraham taking his 318 “trained” servants on a recovery mission. The story of Gideon (Judges 7) and his army of 300 having victory over an army in excess of 120,000 is an example of the application of classic martial arts techniques, from the selection of soldiers to his superb “mind-leading” practices. In the book of 1 Samuel, chapters 13 and 14, Jonathan and his armor-bearer had one sword between them, yet they killed 20 Philistines (the armor-bearer struck an empty-handed “death blow” in his efforts).

The similarity between the Hebrew word for “dance” and the meaning of the Japanese word “kata” is more the coincidental. From the “*kiai*” of Joshua (Joshua 6), to the mind-leading of David (1 Samuel 21), Joseph (Genesis 42) and Jacob's sons (Genesis 34), to the “*ki/chi*” of Samson (Judges 16) we see example after example of traditional concepts and techniques of the martial arts. The “*hara*” or “*tanden*” are spoken of in Genesis 43, Job 32 and Isaiah 11. King David even states that his hands were made for war (Psalm 18 & 144).

How Do You Explain This?

Return with me, if you will to an evening in ancient Babel. A few hundred years earlier, the earth had been covered with a mighty flood, destroying everything except those on the boat with Noah. Since then, there had been a remarkable recovery. Population was booming and business was thriving. Families would sit around the tables at night and share stories with their children about Adam and Eve in the garden and Noah and the flood. They all had a common language. They would talk about their monotheistic, personal God and share the hope for the future. Later that night, they would step out into the night sky and gaze at the heavens. The constellations (Zodiac or Mazzaroth in Job 38:32) revealed their story of the creation and coming events. It would be reasonable to believe that these survivors of the flood also shared a common method of self-defense.

But, there was a problem. This people had become too self-centered and forgotten their creator. They embarked upon a project that would further exalt their own position in the universe at the expense of God. As a result, God came down and scattered them across the face of the earth as recorded in Genesis 11. In Genesis 10:25, it states that in these days was the “earth divided.” Whether this is a reference to plate tectonics is not clear, but it does indicate that the people were scattered.

The Rest Of The Story

These peoples who used to have a common history, story, culture, language, and self-defense system were now dispersed throughout the world. But they took their civilization with them. Some settled in southern Europe. Others migrated to Africa. Some ended up in India, while still others settled in the fertile river valleys of China. Each again embarked upon rebuilding their civilization. While each established a new civilization, their Common culture and background was the foundation for their new lives.

Can This Be Collaborated?

Thus far all we have is an interesting story; one that has some interesting ideas in it, to be sure, but still just a theory. However, in five key areas, it can be demonstrated that this is a valid model for the development of civilizations around the world, as well as an explanation of the diversity of the martial arts systems around the globe.

First, every major civilization with a written history has a common story in their history of the universal flood, the Garden of Eden and the Zodiac. This can be said of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Sumerians, the Aztec, the Norse and the Chinese. This common thread points to a common beginning.

Second, with the exception of a belief in God and the blood atonement of Christ, all the articles of the Apostle's Creed can be detected in the pagan religions found in the third millennium before Christ ⁷.

Third, a comparison of the basic teachings of Hinduism, Taoism and Buddhism to those of the Bible in the area of character and ethical-training indicates more than just a casual similarity. The Martial Arts: A Christian Perspective, Philosophy and Program⁸ written in 1990, identifies a number of similarities between Biblical examples of these principles and those in the life of the Eastern martial artist as recorded by William Scott Wilson in *Ideals of the Samurai* (Ohara Publications). In the arena of evidence the older is considered depository of original truth. Because the Biblical record predates the founding of each of these three religions could we conclude that martial arts philosophies as recorded in the Old Testament were adopted by the founders of the Eastern arts?

Fourth, a Scientific American⁹ article in 1990 published the results of a linguistics study in which the authors had studied all the languages of the world and sought common root elements. This trail could be followed backwards in time to the original language. As this study progressed, the authors were able to peel away the dust of history to locate the one language from which all others have descended. Today's southern Turkey, near the Biblical homeland of Abraham and the location of the Tower of Babel, was the point of origin of language.

Fifth, the written language of the oldest continuous civilization in the world confirms this common origin. In their book on the Chinese language, Kang and Nelson¹⁰ time-stamped early vestiges of the language to just prior to 2000 BC. This corresponds with the estimated date of the dispersion at the tower of Babel of 2218 BC. The authors have been able to identify the Biblical accounts from the first eleven chapters of Genesis (up to the Tower of Babel) in the 214 primitive radicals of the Chinese ideographic language. This also suggests that the Chinese civilization was a people who shared the experiences of those at the Tower of Babel. Notice several of these radicals and the primitives of which they are composed on the next page. Anyone familiar with the story of a Biblical creation can quickly see the similarity.

人 + 一 + 口 = 合 + 艹 = 苔 + 土 = 塔
mankind one mouth united grass undertake clay tower
(speech) (brick)

一 + 冂 + 非 = 雨 + 口口口 + 巫 = 靈
heaven cover water rain three worker Spirit
person of magic

月 + 又 + 示 = 祭
flesh again God to sacrifice
(animal)

二 + 儿 = 元 + 宀 = 完
two person first home complete

手 + 戈 = 我 + 羊 = 義
hand lance me sheep righteousness

土 + 口 + 丿 = 告 + 辵 = 造
dust breath alive to talk walking to create
of mouth

厶 + 儿 + 田 + 丿 = 鬼 + 林 + 宀 = 魔
secret man garden [alive] devil trees cover tempter

What Does It All Mean?

To be sure the modern manifestation of the martial arts can be traced to the Orient and more specifically to China, Okinawa, Japan and Korea. But it would be intellectually dishonest to claim that the martial arts originated with these peoples or nations. A case can be made that the martial arts originated in Biblical Old Testament times. If so, the spiritual and philosophical foundation of the martial arts would have to be that of the Old Testament. Perhaps it is time for some reevaluation by the martial artist of 1994.

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