

Dear reader,

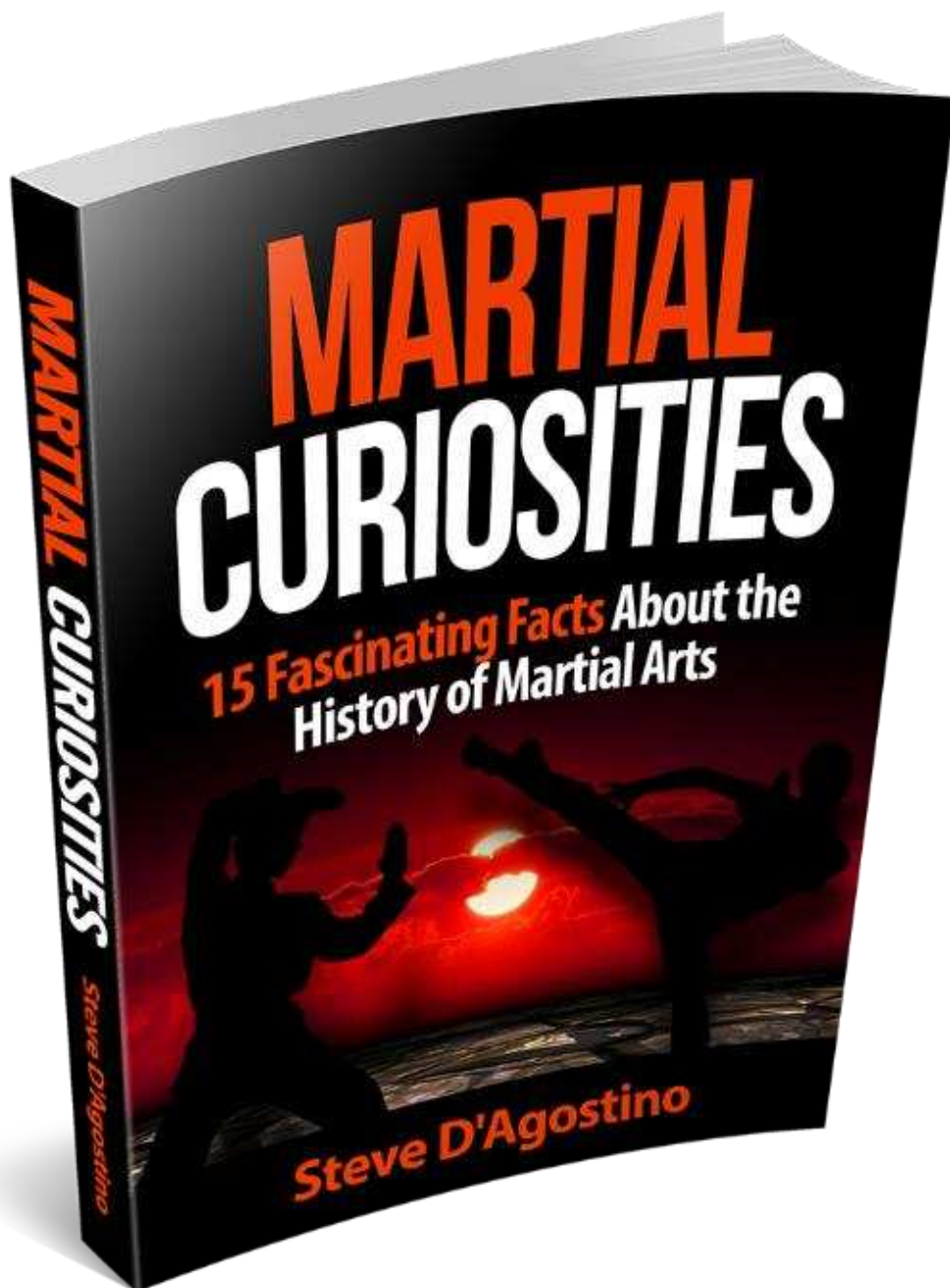
First of all, I want to thank you for downloading this fascinating report. You may not know me from Adam, but you took the time to check us out at Martial Arts Weapons and Training. That means more than you can know, and I appreciate the vote of confidence. I hope that over time you will find value in what we publish and offer and that you enjoy engaging within our community.

Thanks again for your time, and I hope you enjoy this compilation of cool curiosities about martial arts throughout history!

Your friend in the wonderful universe of martial arts,

Steve D'Agostino

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# MARTIAL CURIOSITIES

15 Fascinating Facts About the  
History of Martial Arts

Steve D'Agostino

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## Introduction

Martial Arts has its origins in the Xia Dynasty more than 4000 years ago. At that time in ancient China, martial arts would have been deemed necessary for hunting activities and self-defense as well as military training. An important part of training for Chinese soldiers was hand-to-hand combat and weapons practice. From these basic beginnings, different elements were added to include philosophy, health, and self-development.

Martial arts came to western nations in relatively recent years and is not just the preserve of the military establishments. It now has a worldwide influence affecting civilian society at every level as evidenced by the inclusion of some of the disciplines into the Olympic Games.

Martial Arts is now enjoyed by people of all ages and affects our modern culture in fiction, poetry, and films. Who can talk about martial arts without mentioning Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, whose film exploits have helped to spread awareness of this sport?

As you can imagine, with its feet in ancient history, and its head in popular culture, martial arts is the stuff of myths and legends. Here are 15 surprising facts about the history of martial arts.

### 1. The Samurai were dedicated followers of fashion!

The Samurai were more than just an exclusive Japanese fighting revered for their skills as warriors. They probably made their entrance into Japanese culture in the 8th century and were at their zenith in the 15th century, but they died out as a separate class in the 19th century.

Although they were a noble warrior class when at their zenith, during their decline they were mercenaries, pirates, politicians, poets, scholars, and bureaucrats.

But along with geishas, they are also notable for being the greatest influence on Japanese fashion. During their time they nurtured distinctive colors, fabrics, and styles that influenced the public as a whole.

[The Hagakure, the Book of the Samurai](#), was written by Yamamoto Tsunetomo at a time when they were an administrative class in a time of peace. They had long since left their status of noble warriors.

The time-honored practices of archery, swordsmanship, and martial arts all have their roots in samurai culture. Today, many experts in these martial arts have a great respect for the Samurai legacy.

### 2. In ancient China, Yellow Emperor (2698 BCE) wrote lengthy treatises on medicine, astrology and the martial arts.

Was the Yellow Emperor fact or a legend? A mystery or a myth? There is no firm documentation from this era to support our premise that the Yellow Emperor developed jiao di, or horn-butting, for use in war.

According to tradition, the Yellow Emperor or Huangdi, to use his Chinese name, was a famous general who wrote at length on medicine, astrology and the martial arts, before becoming Emperor.

### **3. President Theodore Roosevelt was America's first Judo brown belt.**

[President Theodore Roosevelt was not exactly not shy about his passion for fitness.](#) Roosevelt acquired a taste for judo when working in Japan and a wrestling instructor showed him a few moves. He eventually took judo lessons from Japanese master Yoshiaki (Yoshitsugu) Yamashita.

During his tenure at the White House, the basement was carpeted with training mats, and he would willingly fight anybody. Among the President's training partners were his sons, the Japanese naval attache, his private secretary and the Secretary of War, William Howard Taft, and Secretary of the Interior Gifford Pinchot. Roosevelt is also credited with demonstrating a Judo hold with a Swiss Minister at an unusually quiet state lunch, much to the delight of his other guests.

He became America's first Judo brown belt, a feat not many world leaders have achieved since.

### **4. An Egyptian fresco, in tombs dated to 3400 BCE, depicts martial arts for military training**

An Egyptian mural, from a tomb at Ben Hassan, shows 400 wrestling pictures with each scene showing a progressive sequence of a wrestling match. This image is the oldest known illustration of an organized fighting routine used for military training.

The artwork dates about 2000 B.C.E. shows pictures of wrestlers carrying out all their moves, throwing each other and attacking arms and legs. The images also show calisthenics and dueling with single-stick. Other weapons depicted are clubs, axes, poleaxes, flails, bows, slings, and swords of various forms.

### **5. Did you know that the earliest references to Chinese martial arts are in the Spring and Autumn Annals of 500BCE?**

500 BCE - Taoist monks are claimed to have practiced early origins of the martial arts that resembled hand to hand combat tai chi chuan, a type of kung fu.

220 BCE – A wrestling system called juéli or jiǎoli, referred to in the Classic of Rites is a combat system that would be recognized in our modern forms of wrestling, as it includes strikes, throws, joint manipulation, and pressure point attacks.

100 BCE - Wrestling is also documented in the Shǐ Jì, Records of the Grand Historian, written by Sima Qian (ca. 100 BCE).[12]

139-92 CE - Six Chapters of Hand Fighting were included in the Han Shu written by Pan Ku. These bibliographies noted that there was a difference weaponless-fighting, which it refers to as shǒubó, which was already in training manuals, and wrestling for sport, known as juéli.

250 CE - The Five Animals concept in Chinese martial arts is attributed to Hua Tuo, a 3rd-century physician.

**6. Did you know that the ten fighting styles of northern India were based on gods and animals according to where they originated geographically?**

In the Buddhist university of Takshashila, the intellectual capital of ancient India (today's Punjab region), the ten fighting styles of northern Sastra-vidya came together.

It was held in high esteem at its peak from the 7th to the 5th century BCE as a great center of trade and learning. This university attracted students from all over northern India because not only was it a center for commerce and education, but it also taught the "military sciences," and archery was one of its original arts.

**7. Studying martial arts is known to improve significantly the lives of children living with ADHD.**

Impact ADHD states that because karate focuses on personal growth, it benefits kids with ADHD more than team sports. In team sports, comes children find themselves comparing their abilities to their team mates. When children start comparing themselves to others, it can be discouraging, and it is especially detrimental to kids who have ADHD, Asperger Syndrome or similar challenges. During karate, or any other form of martial arts, these children not only get to release some of that energy, but they also get to focus on areas like social, emotional, physical and mental development, in a safe and constructive space.

**8. The earliest existing dedicated martial arts manual is the MS I.33 (c. 1300)**

[http://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Walpurgis\\_Fechtbuch\\_\(MS\\_I.33\)](http://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Walpurgis_Fechtbuch_(MS_I.33))

The MS I.33 is a German Fechtbuch (fencing or combat manual) dating from the 1320s and is among the oldest existing martial arts training manuals dealing with armed combat worldwide. It currently resides in the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, United Kingdom.

Known simply as the MS I.33 it is the earliest existing discourse on Medieval martial arts. Although it is an anonymous document, it may have been originated by the secular priest, Lutegerus (or Liutger) mentioned in the text. Three scribes contributed to this work and possibly as many as 17 illustrators.

**9. Bruce Lee's moves were too fast for the camera!**

It's hard to compose anything about Bruce Lee without resorting to hyperbole. Some of the routines he performed seemed impossible to execute. Could he really punch faster than the eye could see? The cameraman recording Bruce Lee's performance as Kato in The Green Hornet in 1966 could not catch the punches and kicks as they were too fast for the camera. The difficulty was resolved by requesting that Lee punch and kick slower!

Here's an example of his speed, demonstrated in this YouTube video:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFfHfmJdkao>

## **10. Did you know that Qigong is probably 5000 years old?**

As far as Martial Arts systems are concerned, Qigong is considered one of the oldest by historians. Some historians believe that Qigong is 5000 years old. This system has its roots in ancient Chinese culture.

Qigong forms have developed in diverse sectors of Chinese society. One form is for prevention and cure in traditional medicine. Another way promotes long life and moral character in Confucianism. Qigong is part of the meditative practice of Daoism and Buddhism, and it improves fighting skills in Chinese martial arts.

Seventy-five ancient forms of Qigong that can be found in ancient literature and there are contemporary forms. Today, millions of people from diverse backgrounds from all over the world practice qigong and believe in its benefits.

## **11. Martial arts have also been linked with improving intelligence and cognitive ability.**

Muscles Ligaments Tendons Journal, published the results of the following test online on July 14th, 2014:-

“Two groups of children, a karate group, and a sedentary group were measured by motor tests, and cognitive tests, and results reveal significant differences between two groups. Karate children show better speed times, explosive legs strength and coordination skills. They scored better on working memory, selective visual attention and executive functions.

They concluded that karate exercise training shows benefits resulting in physiological and psychological gains in children.”

It is fair to state that other sporting activity can also contribute to improving physical and mental health.

## **12. Jackie Chan broke twelve concrete blocks while holding an egg intact in his hand!**

Just watch this clip from a German television program:-

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=fhqdivS8DJk#t=77s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=fhqdivS8DJk#t=77s)

Jackie Chan's unique brand of humor is demonstrated in this sketch for a German television show. He starts by breaking an egg when taking it out of the box which makes you wonder how he will carry off this stunt.

Jackie Chan trained in Hapkido under the grand master Jin Pal Kim and became a black belt. Jackie is famous for his stunts and his film performances. He is also an accomplished singer and screenwriter.

He has trained in some other martial arts like Judo, Karate; Jeet Kune Do and Taekwondo, which you can see to good effect in many of his films; Rush Hour, Police Story, Drunken Master, and Dragons Forever.

**13. The ancient legends state that Kung Fu started in the ancient Xia Dynasty (c. 2100-1600 BC) and was a gift from the Yellow Emperor Huangdi.**

There are many legends about the Yellow Emperor, but no written records exist to prove his existence. So perhaps we should believe there is some truth in every myth. Legends of King Arthur and his Knights, and Robin Hood add color to our history.

But as far as Kung Fu is concerned, one thing is sure – Kung Fu was made for war.

The earliest forms of Kung Fu for which there are written records, date to the Qin Dynasty around 220 BCE but the formal Kung Fu that we know today, the school of fighting, can trace to the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644 CE) and the Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1911 CE)

Kung fu is popular today in western society and is practiced to combat stress and strengthen personal health and character. There are many forms of Kung Fu that serve many purposes including self-defense, exercise, and competition.

**14. Tahtib, or stick fighting, dates back to the Old Kingdom of ancient Egypt.**

It is not known how stick-fighting originated. But the ancient Egyptians probably performed stick fighting as a tribute to the pharaoh. Astick-dance is shown in detail on the reliefs of the archeological site at Abusir. The fighters performed to music while using a four-foot stick called an Asa – this style was part of the training for Egyptian soldiers alongside wrestling and archery.

Stick-fighting or stick-fencing was possibly used with a shield and sword (as with a wooden bukko in Kendo), and although it does not appear to have been used on the battlefield, it was primarily used as a training tool and for sport. This activity helped to Egyptian army to prepare for battle and be ready for war. The stick-fighting then evolved into a system with its own techniques and systems.

Elements of Tahtib can found in some other martial arts like Eskrima (Filipino Stick Fighting), White Eyebrow Kung Fu (Bak Mei), Pencak Silat, Krav Maga, Muay Thai, Hwa Rang Do, Ninjitsu, and various Capoeira styles.

**15. Shaolin was started by a Buddhist monk from India!**

It is said that the cradle of martial arts is the ancient monastery at Shaolin. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of styles of Kung Fu originated from this monastery.

But historians say that Indian monks cross the Himalayas to export martial arts to China. Buddhist teachings had already reached China in 464 CE by Buddhahadra (or Batuo). In particular, Chinese legend has it that an Indian monk named Bodhidharma introduced martial arts to the Shaolin Temple in AD 600.

Bodhidharma who was originally a kshatriya prince, and came from south India. Traditionally, the Kshatriya constituted the ruling and military elite; their role was to protect society by fighting in wartime and governing in peacetime. Bodhidharma was an expert in a fighting style known as Kalaripayattu, educated in the practice of kala-vidya (the martial art), and of bhaktiyoga (the science of devotion to God). He later took his vows as a Buddhist Monk.

## **Conclusion**

Although there are many differing theories and views about the origins of martial arts, we know that the martial arts started in ancient cultures and is practiced today around the world. Martial arts are recognized as a sport in many countries and is known to bring particular benefits to physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. The history of martial arts also produces some surprising facts and provides a fascinating study of so many diverse cultures.

**Thank you for reading, and I can't wait to see you back at [Martial Arts Weapons and Training!](#)**