



***American Kenpo Karate Academy***  
Student Hand Book

***Mission Statement:*** *To teach traditional values/ethics, and self defense in a professional and motivating atmosphere that encourages and empowers students to reach their goals in all areas of their lives*

***Vision:*** *To see the community, both local and possibly global, influenced and/or changed in a positive way by our students, past and current, through the study of martial arts and the application of the care values associated with it.*

Welcome to American Kenpo Karate Academy. We hope that your association with our school and Chinese Kenpo is a long and fruitful one, and that this small booklet answers some of your questions as you begin your study with us.

We hold to firm principle, first, that the control and rule within the Martial Arts rests with those who have dedicated their lives to the study and teaching of the martial Arts in their most complete and correct form. It is self-evident that men and women fear what they do not understand. Such ignorance inevitably leads to irrational action such as brute force. Replace ignorance with understanding and you have built confidence and the ability to build from this foundation.

Second, that as new and competent practitioners arise within the ranks of the Martial Arts, in particular Chinese Karate, their experience and counsel shall be added to the overall plan of AMERICAN KENPO KARATE ACADEMY.

Third, that the constant and energetic practice of these arts is of noteworthy and lasting physical and mental value.

We extend our hand in friendship to those who uphold these principles and invite them to share the responsibility of preserving our historic rights to self-defense and individual dignity.

## AKKA History

The earliest and, therefore, most speculative sources of our current Kenpo Style are several.

1. Hua T'o (approx 109-165AD) was a surgeon who proposed a series of health exercises involving animal postures (bear's neck, fowl's twist, etc). He is the source of the southern long-hand forms, and introduced animal attitudes as physical and mental models, and also Taoist breathing techniques.
2. Daruma (Bodhidharma Ta Mo, approx. 520-585 AD) was a successor to Buddha and an Indian prince. Daruma traveled to China to preach Buddhism at the age of 23. He retired at the Shaolin Monastery where he introduced exercises to strengthen the physical and spiritual natures of the Buddhist monks. From this beginning, the Shaolin monks developed martial techniques to aid in the protection and defense of the monastery from bandits. Fighting techniques of the five animal patterns developed. These are the crane, snake, dragon, leopard and tiger. The Shaolin Monastery became a central source location for martial arts development for the next 1000 years (The monastery was burned down and relocated a few times in Fukien and elsewhere.), and remained a center of the Ch'uan Shu (Kenpo) Styles. Daruma's most famous quote comes down to us and is restated again by Mitose: "...to fall down seven times, to rise eight times, life starts from now."
3. Yuan Fei (Sung Dynasty 960-1279 AD) wrote the Pa tuan Chin movements. Notions of 'rooting' and breathing through the heels of the feet originated with him. The contributions of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism became identified in the style.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1643 AD), several things resulted in the dispersion of the style outside of China. In 1372 an official Chinese tributary relationship was established between China and Okinawa's King Sho-en where Chinese martial arts began to mingle with Okinawan fist fighting called Tode. It was during this time that a permanent Okinawan settlement was established in the Chinese capital of Ch'uan Chou and in 1392 the migration of 36 Chinese families from Fukien Province of China to Kume-mura, Okinawa. In this way Chinese Boxing was passed on to many Okinawans. In 1492, the feudal Lord of Okinawa (then part of China) Sho-Ha-She banned all weapons, which stimulated bare hand training. At the same time there was a group of Chinese-Japanese who developed an incredibly tough Shaolin course of study, giving credence to the story of the red-hot urn. Apparently, any student could leave at any stage in his training, and a great majority left before they finished the monastery training.

This system represented only about 25% of the Ch'uan Fa. Kosho Ryu contained a complete system of self-defense (Kosho-Shorii) and a system of teaching in religion, the arts and humanities (Kosho-Ryu).

The fame of the Shaolin training spread partly through the successful activities of pirates throughout the China Seas causing many others to learn the Ch-uan Fa Style, especially the Okinawans.

In 1609 Sinazu conquered Okinawa and took it for Japan, but the Okinawan Te Style (Ch-uan Fa) was firmly established within the populace. The various Okinawan Ch-uan Fa groups and Tode societies banded together in 1629 and formed a new fighting style called Te. At his time, many Okinawans secretly were sent to China to learn fighting systems.

With the advent of the Manchu or Mongol takeover of China (1644-1912), the former Ming Dynasty officials, principally the Emperor's guards, took refuge and plotted revolt in the Shaolin Monastery, the monastery moved to Fukien Province and later moved again into various southern capitals. During this time, the old Ming Dynasty Imperial Guards began to codify their particular styles which had become represented in the eclectic Ch'uan Fa style.

Five particular styles emerged from the ruins of the Shao Lin Temple in Fukien after its destruction by the Manchus, with the help of European General McCartney, in 1674-5. These styles were: Bak Fu Pai (White Tiger Style) as preserved by Fung Doe Duk; Bak Mei Pai (White eyebrow System) as preserved by Bak Mei; Plum Flower System as preserved by Ng Mui; Eighteen Taoist Palms System as preserved by Mew Hing; and

Jee Shin Shim Shee's revamping of the original Northern Shao Lin. The influences of these particular styles are still present in modern Kenpo.

After the occupation of the Okinawan islands by the Japanese, the Ryukyu Islands became a part of the Japanese Empire and secret study of the Okinawan Te was relaxed. Between the years of 1915 and 1940, a great popularization of karate occurred.

In 1916, Gichin Funakoshi and Knewa Mabuni, Okinawan Te stylists, exported a form of sport karate to Japan. This was the Showa Era in Japan and there was a great proliferation of martial arts, as well as the beginning of introducing many styles to the general public. By 1936, the term karate became adopted by the principal martial art leaders in Okinawa. At this time Choki Motobu (1871-1944), an Okinawan karate master, was translating the secret Ch'uan Fa tradition into what is now known as the current basic structure of Kenpo Karate.

4. Great Grand Master James Mitose (1915-1981) was Motobu's student and we trace our lineage directly to him. At the age of five, Mitose was sent to Japan to study the Mitose family tradition. This tradition (the original Ch'uan Fa, or Kenpo in Japanese) had been modified by successive Mitose Masters until it became Koshu- Ryu Kenpo (Old Pine Tree Style).

After fifteen years of training in Japan, Mitose returned to Hawaii. After World War II he began introducing his family art to the general public by opening the Official Self-Defense Club. After fifteen years of teaching, Grand Master Mitose awarded black belt ranking to only six of his students: Giro Nakamura, Thomas Young, Paul Yamaguchi, Arthur Keawe, Edward Lowe, and William K. S. Chow.

5. William Chow (1914-1987), had studied with his Chinese grandfather before studying with Grand Master Mitose. Master Chow began to incorporate many of the things his grandfather had taught him and the style began returning to the Chinese roots of the original Ch'uan Fa.
6. Ed Parker (1931-1990), one of William Chow's students moved from Hawaii to Southern California and began teaching the system in 1956. Thomas Conner became a first generation student of Ed Parker. Thomas Conner and Ed Parker were founders of the Chinese Martial Arts Association.
7. Master Connor had a background in many martial arts, in particular the southern Kung Fu system of Hung Gar as taught by Y. C. Wong. Master Connor went on to develop one of the largest Karate organizations in the world, "Traco International". Master Connor modified the system further, inserting more of a southern Chinese influence. During the growth process of Kenpo in the United States and abroad, Master Connor was a major contributor and developer of the Kenpo system, both how it was taught and how a Kenpo school was operated.
8. Mr. Bill Packer is a first generation student of the Late Grand Master Thomas Connor. Mr. Packer is founder and President of American Kenpo Karate Academies, Ltd. (AKKA) established in Albuquerque in 1972.

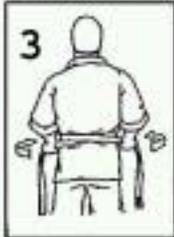
AKKA Karate USA (as it is now known) is a highly motivated, success-minded and goal-oriented professional karate organization that is totally committed to the students enrolled in our academies. It is our desire to extend to you all the benefits karate has to offer through a systematized, charted, belt (goal) system.

## Tying Your Belt...

1. Place the center of your belt in the middle of your stomach.



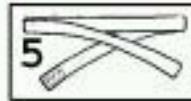
3. Cross both ends and continue towards the front of your body. The left part you are holding should be tucked under the top of the right part.



2. Wrap both ends of the belt around yourself.

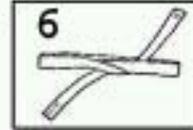


4. Have two equal ends ready to make a knot. The left part should be the inner most layer (nearest your body).



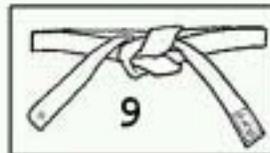
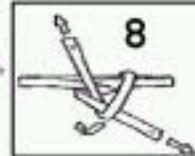
5. Cross the right part over the left.

6. Continue the right end up under both wrap.



7. Place the right end (the one coming out of the top) on top of the other end making an "X".

8. Continue bringing the top end up through the hole that is formed by the "X".



9. Tighten the knot by pulling equally to the sides. End result should be a neat, tight square knot.

- 1) Take your belt, fold it in half to find the middle. Crease it by pinching it. Open belt and put crease over uniform by your belly button
- 2) Take ends and wrap around the back
- 3) Switch ends in your hands and bring back to front
- 4) Bring ends forward toward to the crease of your belt that you made earlier.
- 5) Cross the right end over the left end
- 6) Wrap it over the left end and the part that is closest to your body. The right end is now the left
- 7) Wrap left over right. This will make a "hole" to bring the same end back
- 8) Bring end through the hole and pull both ends away from each other left and right ( not up and down
- 9) Belt is tied. Tighten accordingly using the opposite side pull

## **Karate Pledge of Honor (Creed)**

With Honor, we will apply ourselves  
to the study of Karate.

Placing foremost the improvement  
of both mind and body, to develop a  
better understanding of our fellow man.

Striving for the ultimate serenity,  
that can only come through  
a complete understanding of ourselves.

We approach life's problems with  
the patience karate has given us.

Never will we unjustly dishonor  
our fellow students, our teachers,

the AKKA organization,

or the art of Karate,

through misusing the secrets  
we are learning.

To this, we the students of AKKA,  
do swear.

## STUDENT TESTING

Student advancement is very important to both the student and the AKKA staff. Students must keep progressing to maintain high levels of interest and motivation, thus allowing them to achieve the inherent life values of Kenpo Karate.

Our evaluations consist of the following procedures:

Every student must complete the basic requirements of each belt level before they are allowed to test.

**Gold Belt**  
**Orange Belt**  
**Purple Belt**  
**Blue Belt**  
**Green Belt**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Brown**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Brown**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Brown (Red/Black)**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Black**

In order to be eligible to test, students must have their account current, and have a good attendance record. Students are required to complete a 'pre-belt' test which will include calisthenics and all of the self-defense postures and katas, including both the previous belt material and the current belt material.

If a student passes the pre-belt test, he or she is ready for the formal test for advancement to the next belt.

The belt is a signpost on the path of development. Proficiency in the technical aspects of the movements and an understanding of the animal-element metaphor is required for the student to be given the opportunity to test for any particular belt.

The formal test will be witnessed by advanced degree Instructors. Please be prepared for a **\$35.00** testing fee to include both the pre-test, formal test, belt diploma and filing fees. Black Belts pre-tested here in the facility and formally tested offsite at assigned times twice a year. Testing fees for Black Belt are set for each test to reflect the cost of the testing procedure.

Students will be tested on their belt material four separate times before they can pre-test. These tests are informal and are called stripe testing. The students receive a stripe, which symbolizes stepping-stones to the next belt level.

## **STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND CANCELLATION OF CLASS**

You must attend at least two classes a week to be a student at AKKA, and these two classes are considered standing appointments. If you cannot attend one of your standing appointments during a particular week you must call and make it up at a later date.

Please remember that attendance is not a factor in the payment of your tuition.

## **MANUALS AND VIDEO TAPES**

Manuals are available for each level of your training. They are invaluable as a lifetime reference for all concerns within each belt. Students are able to enhance their physical instruction with written information to help make the learning process easier.

Videos are also available and are aligned with the manuals. Most students use them as visual aids for pattern exactness. They are excellent for test preparations and reference checks.

## **KARATE EQUIPMENT**

Each AKKA School offers a complete line of Martial Arts equipment to serve our students. Our prices are designed to give our students the best value for their money. Orders must be paid for in advance. If you receive defective equipment, please return it for an exchange. We do run specials, so please watch for these products 'on sale'. If you have any 'special order' requests, please ask a staff member for ordering procedure.

We ask all of our students to be properly equipped to insure safety and to help us promote the disciplined augmentation of the Martial Arts.

## **TOURNAMENTS**

There are several AKKA Tournaments each year with all of our local schools participating. We ask for full support either as a competitor or as a spectator. So when you see our tournament poster, please try and put us on your calendar.

Our tournaments are well run with a children's first-in-first-out policy, which allows us to complete competition within a 2 ½ hour period.

Please remember that student do compete for different reasons. Some like to calibrate their technical skill level, some are taking a quantum leap using mock combat to overcome the paralysis of fear, and then come students who just plain like, the thrill of competition. Regardless of the reason, safety comes first, and we have some disciplined contact rules. Please come and attend in the spirit of control.

## TRANSFERS

Students may transfer from the school where they originally began their lessons to any other local or national branch of the AKKA family under the following conditions:

- 1) Their account is up to date.
- 2) They have a good record of decorum and attendance at the location from which they are transferring.
- 3) They have sought and received approval of the transfer from the manager of the location they are presently attending.

The transfer privilege is to be used in those instances where there is little option for the student to attend at their present school because of factors such as distance to lessons and scheduling.



This booklet concludes with the Karate Pledge of Honor and breakdown of the Pledge in relation to the staircase of development of the belt ranking system. We have included the other verbal affirmations and responses to instructor directives as well.

The use of the voice is an essential part of our training program. The voice represents a seam, as it were, between the mind and body: the mind chooses to say something and uses the body to say it. The continual reinforcement of the mind/body connection throughout the lesson counteracts the tendency to 'space out' because of the increase in endorphins in the blood brought about by the body's reaction to exercise.

Just as important are the things said in the pledge, affirmations, and directive responses. The pledge and affirmations focus the class on the values and intentions that we feel one should bring to serious training in the Martial Arts. Though the good intentions and high values of our students are an assumed fact, we feel it is important to reiterate those same values and intentions to each other whenever we train together. The directive responses help to focus the student's mind on the task at hand during each part of the lessons.

## **Affirmations and Directive Responses**

I intend to hold myself to the highest standard of a Martial Artist.

We are a professional Black Belt organization,

We are motivated,

We are dedicated,

We are on a quest to be our best.

### **The Three Rules of Focus**

Focus in the Eyes

Focus on the Mind

Focus on the Body

### **The Three Rules of Karate**

Honesty in the Heart

Knowledge in the Mind

Strength in the Body

### **The Three Rules of Kata**

To Elicit a State of Mind

To Train for Total Awareness

To Encode Movement and Breath Properly

### **The Three Rules of Self-Defense**

Do Not Anticipate

Perfect Your Technique

Move Swiftly with Focus

### **The Three Rules of Basics**

They Must Be Accurate

They Must Be Focused

They Must Be Fast

### **The Three Rules of Kumite**

Safety First

Respect Your Opponent

Total Self-Control

I intend to develop myself in a positive manner and avoid anything that would reduce my mental growth or physical health.

I intend to develop my self-discipline to bring out the best in myself and others.

I intend to use what I learn in class constructively and defensively to help myself and my fellow man, and never to be abusive or offensive.

## STAIRCASE OF DEVELOPMENT

### Gold Belt, Pa Chi (8<sup>th</sup> Grade)

Personal decision of the individual to apply themselves to the staircase of development.

### Orange Belt, Chi Chi (7<sup>th</sup> Grade)

“With honor, we will apply ourselves to the study of Karate, placing foremost the improvement of both mind and body.”

**Intended Outcomes:** Through physical design of specific motions and movements and basic self-defense techniques and postures we begin to understand the positioning of the body; we can, at will, elicit any state of mind we desire at any moment in time, under any conditions, thus giving us optimum choice at all times.

**Ultimate Outcome:** Each level will compound the previous level of development until a natural body-mind fusion emerges into focus allowing us to approach life's challenges as an individual. (Body-Mind as one)

### Purple Belt, Lui Chi (6<sup>th</sup> Grade)

“To develop a better understanding of our fellow man.”

Recognizing the mold of the human is determined by past reference. One's experience will adopt for them beliefs, ideals, values, and rules through which they will continue to live until change becomes more resourceful or pleasurable for them.

The ego (Reticular Activation System) functions as the doorkeeper to our consciousness. Anatomically, it is the cone-shaped complex of nerves radiating from the brain stem. The nerve fibers filter incoming sensory information and determine, based on the mold of the human, whether it is to be a part of the very tiny trickle of information that is permitted in our 'precious' consciousness.

**Ultimate Outcome:** Understanding the development of perspective and holding ourselves to that higher level of understanding.

### Blue Belt, Wu Chi (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)

“ Striving for an ultimate serenity, that can only come through a complete understanding of ourselves.”

**Intended outcomes:** We depart and develop from the previous by researching our own mold, understanding our own rules and recognizing certain realignments that must occur for peace of mind.

**Ultimate Outcome:** Recognizing the interdependence of I and others bursts the fluffed ego and we now focus on true mastery.

### Green Belt, Ssu Chi (4<sup>th</sup> Grade)

“We approach life's problems with the patience karate has given us.”

**Ultimate Outcome:** By understanding the power of state, the human mold and our own rules for peace of mind, we are now properly equipped with the tools necessary to overcome challenges that may have previously seemed unconquerable.

**Brown Belt, San Chi/Erh Chi/I Chi (3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade)**

“Never will we unjustly dishonor our fellow students, our teachers, the AKKA organization, or the art of Karate, through misusing the secrets we are learning.”

**Ultimate Outcome:** We now root in traditional values through an experienced insight of our now highly valued discipline (Kenpo).

**Black Belt, I Tuan (1<sup>st</sup> Fragment)**

“To this, we the students of AKKA, do swear.”

**Intended Outcome:** We absolutely commit to human development and excellence.

**Ultimate Outcome:** Extract the essence and live it.

***Belt Tests***

White Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

Gold Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

Orange Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

Purple Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

Blue Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

Green Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> Brown Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> Brown Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> Brown Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> Black Belt Date \_\_\_\_\_

## AMERICAN KENPO KARATE ACADEMY DOJO RULES

- .. Observe Dojo etiquette by bowing (facing the deck) upon entering and leaving deck area
- .. Address all instructors as Mr, Mrs, Ms, Ma'am or Sir
- .. Arrive 10 minutes prior to your class, to allow time for you to collect your chart, get dressed and stretch out before your class.
- .. Please be silent & still during all Creeds and Salutations
- .. No talking to students while in class
- .. Do not congregate on deck in training area
- .. Please get permission from an instructor before crossing deck during class
- .. No horseplay
- .. No street shoes on deck while in class. You may wear deck approved shoes
- .. Please help keep school clean
- .. No obscene, vulgar, offensive or abusive language.
- .. Maintain respect at all times before, during & after class
- .. Juniors must remain inside the school until parents arrive to pick them up
- .. Please do not allow unattended children to run freely about the school
- .. Maintain courtesy at all times inside & outside the school
- .. No smoking
- .. Respect others with your own personal hygiene
- .. Do not leave clothing, or bags & equipment in the school. Please double check before you leave.
- .. Please do not touch stereo equipment, ask staff for assistance
- .. Please do not leave class without instructor permission
- .. Please remove jewelry before attending class.
- .. Proper protocol when enter school is: "In State, Asa!"
- .. Turn cell phones off when in school
- .. Speak to an instructor if special permission is necessary
- .. Use restroom BEFORE starting class
- .. No gum chewing during class
- .. No eating or drinking on deck
- .. Always bring sparring equipment to every class...you never know
- .. Students must have ALL sparring equipment in order to spar:
- .. Keep eye contact with instructor during Student Creed
- .. Please do not swing, climb or hang on equipment
- .. Do not kick bags or shields without permission
- .. Please give the school a courtesy call if you are unable to attend class
- .. Please adhere to instructors' requests – most will be in regards to all of the above

Thank you,  
AKKA Karate USA- Thornydale

## **ORANGE BELT: The Tiger (Chi Chi)**

### **Element: Sun, Lightning, Fire**

The intensity of this color corresponds to the harnessed strength and endurance of the Tiger stylist. Fire--violent, strong, consuming with an impassioned intensity that will penetrate with enthusiasm and disregard for self to win at any cost. When properly directed, it can be totally positive; when misdirected it burns to self-destruction. Orange is the color of the Tiger who is a directed eruption of flame continuously searing and hammering at his intended goal.

### **Image**

The Tiger's image is a searing orange firestorm annihilating everything in its path. Rather than letting fear cripple him, the Tiger stylist uses his fear to emotionally fuel a linear and pre-programmed jack-hammer offensive. The best defense is taken to be a continuously and aggressively maintained attack. The Tiger builds his style upon a firm physical foundation; physical conditioning and power are essential for the Tiger's aggressive style.

### **Stance**

The feet are generally a double shoulder width apart and equally weighted in a classical fighting horse stance. The arms are slightly bent at the elbows and the hands are in the form of claws and stacked with the front hand lower and closer to the front than is the rear which is higher.

### **Commentary**

The Tiger stylist re-channels his fear to make it work for, rather than against him. First, that fear provides the drive to physically condition the body and the motivation to learn the basics with both mind and body. Second, it will be this same fear which drives the Tiger where it impeded the novice. Fear is the Tiger's fire. The tangible character of the Tiger stylist consists in his linear movement and theory of pre-planned combat techniques. All of the Tiger's movement is straight line. His object is to get in first and fastest, and the straight line between himself and his opponent is shortest. The Tiger seeks to circumvent the indecision and hesitancy born of fear by prearranging offensive and defensive combination techniques which anticipate all contingencies.

It is as if the Tiger stylist seeks to create an encyclopedia of combinations techniques comprised of at least three separate moves, but still learned as if it were a single continuous technique, each of which is represented by a letter of the alphabet. If a combat situation arises, then all the Tiger stylist needs to is mentally push a letter button of choice and the corresponding combination technique is unthinkably and mechanically executed. Hesitation and indecision play no part after the button is pushed, the combination technique has been so often practiced that no further physical or mental input or analysis is required.

The intangible elements of the Tiger dovetail with the tangible; after all, body and mind are not separate entities, but merely two different perspectives of the same whole. For Tiger, these intangibles are the elements of discipline and intention. Discipline is almost too obvious to mention. Without a commitment to rigorous physical conditioning and without honestly engaging oneself in an attempt to learn new modes of behavior, nothing is gained. However, mentally shaking one's head and saying, "Oh, Yes. Discipline is a must!" is far different than actually that commitment on a daily basis.

Intention means a settled direction of the mind toward the doing of a given action. The Tiger is completely intentional. The prearranged character to the Tiger's combat response, presupposes this kind of intentionality. But, this attitude transcends the obvious level. Such intent means the Tiger's mind is fixed and attentive, he had both specific purpose and aim. His intentionality indicates an initial visualization of his intended weapon striking his intended target followed by the actual occurrence of this event. The Tiger stylist is an animal of specific purpose and preconception; he 'Creates' the objects of his environment. The Tiger stylist's appraisal of any situation gives meaning and life to the objects of that context. Things do not come with meaning. Our relative intentions provide the meaning. A stick for a weapon is a toy for a dog, or fuel for a fire. The thing as it is, is as we intend it. The Tiger is a phenomenalist; that is the world is and can be nothing other than the sum of our experiences of it. Our experiences are the world. This inward turning is the first significant meditational step toward enlightenment.

## **PURPLE BELT: The Crane (Liu Chi)**

### **Element: Smoke, Shadow, Wind**

The tenuous character and subdued color of the Crane stylist stands in stark contrast to the intense orange fire of the Tiger. Now the purple talons of evening smoke and shadows replace the raking claws of the fiery noonday sun. The Crane is the complement of the Tiger. Where the Tiger is bold and aggressive, the Crane is deceptively retiring and defensive. Where the Tiger emotionally charges, the Crane waits and thinks. Just as the testing caress of a smoky evening breeze may suddenly become a choking and inescapable hurricane, so too does the Crane continually test, evade, and suddenly attack from an unexpected quarter. The royal purple represents the element of thought: analysis, evaluation, and subsequent counter-attack. The purple Crane evades, evaluates, and then executes.

### **Image**

A quietly circling purple Crane silhouette watching for its prey to expose itself to the waiting whirlwind.

### **Stance**

The Crane generally stands with the lead leg lifted, bent, and cocked in front of the body. The arms are bent at elbows and wrists with the thumb and fingers of the hand touching at their tips. The lead hooked crane hand is at head height and slightly to the side. A vision corridor is bordered by each hand and the thigh of the raised leg; this corridor is sighted directly at the opponent.

### **Commentary**

The proper feeling when adopting such a style and stance is one in which the stylist feels as if his stance is at once the result of and the preparation for a leap; it is an intermediate pose within a series of expanded and contracted movements. Just as in natural breathing where each exhalation is followed by an inhalation, so too in movement for the Crane in this expanded and contracted pattern retained. The Crane is always circling, staying out of a direct

line of attack, the emphasis is on intermediate movement and not on beginning or end positions. The tangible aspects of the Crane's style reaffirm the color-animal-element choice. The Crane is a defensive counter-fighter who forever attempts to avoid direct confrontation and is ever attempting to place himself out of visual as well as out of contact range.

The Crane tries to live in the purple shadows of his opponent. The one-legged intermediate stance coupled with the flying kicks and wing-like elbow and forearm strides are very much like an actual crane. This together with a circling and continuously defensive harrying is also characteristic of that bird. The element of wind (smoke or shadow) depicts to tenuous presence, and this sticking without risking being stuck is an ideal of this stylist.

#### **Coordination**

and agility are prerequisites for a successful Crane stylist. Continuous movement and the ability to quickly leap to angles require great balance and coordination. Quickness, rather than power, and agility rather than pure exertion is emphasized. The fear of the Crane finds relief in the Crane stylist's strong defensive gifts.

However, much more must be said concerning the combat theory of the Crane than just making mention of his defensive counter-fighter nature. Point-and-Circle strategy dominates the Crane's combat posture. The Crane visualizes a dynamic sphere of influence surrounding any person, the radius of that sphere being the possible limits to which hand or foot may reach. At a defensive resting stance, the potential sphere is perfectly round from any angle. However, whenever a person makes a committed hand or foot extension (e.g. punch or kick) in any given direction, that sphere is deformed. Imagine that you are standing on a clock face and you are facing twelve o'clock. If you were to kick or punch at twelve o'clock you would fully realize the potential limits of your range in that direction. But you would simultaneously deny your ability to defend yourself with that some hand or foot in the ten-eleven or one-two o'clock direction.

So, while your attack to twelve o'clock also provides for a formidable defense to twelve o'clock, your effective sphere collapses on the sides and exposes you to counter-attack. This is precisely the opening sought by the Crane. The Crane does not merely wait for an attack, but rather tries to force a poor attack so that the subsequent opening may be more easily exploited. To this end, the Crane stylist will make many probing feints to elicit such an attack;

he pokes at the sphere to make it burst in his direction and then quickly sidesteps the attack to counter-attack from an angular position. The Crane has taken the attack as the point of a circle advantage of the collapsed sphere of his opponent to strike to the point of the opponent's circle, that point being of course the opponent himself. The intangible side of the Crane consists in an emphasis on adaptability and adjustment joined with a spiritual level of

awareness which might be called "presentness." Being able to successfully adapt and adjust presupposes this "presentness." "Presentness" is an awareness of the moment, a responsiveness to things as they are rather than a preconception of how we intend them to be.

Mind and body must parallel one another in terms of perception and response. The Crane is almost completely focused upon his opponent, to the exclusion of all else. Thus, the Crane is the opposite of the Tiger. Where the Tiger is self-directed and internalizes the world, the Crane is other-directed and moves largely in response to the demands of the world. While such concentration means that the Crane has access to all of his opponent's actions, it also

means (on the negative side) that the rest of the context is largely ignored. Concentration and focus is always abstract, and abstraction requires that something must be left out. It may well be that the something dismissed as irrelevant might turn out to be crucial. And, too much procrastination may lose the day.

The Crane style also invokes the Taoist dynamic harmony of the Yin/Yang tension of opposites. Wherever there is pressure, the Crane gives way, wherever there is withdrawal, the Crane moves in. The expanded/contracted motion of the Crane is also a facet of this Yin/Yang harmony of opposites. Ebb and flow, give and take are the hallmarks of the Crane style. Most importantly, however, is the dynamic aspect of this tension. When we look at the familiar circle

divided into black and white portions by an "S" shaped line, we should not think of the diagram as being in a static balance; rather, properly seen, the diagram should appear about to move, to rotate. Understanding the motion born of a dynamic tension of opposites is fundamental if the Crane stylist is to successfully manifest his thoughtful circling style.

## **BLUE BELT: The Leopard (Wu Chi)**

### **Element: Mercury, Mirror, Water**

The Leopard is the third animal in the Kenpo system; it marks the final stage of the student or beginner level. The Leopard combines the aggression and discipline of the Tiger with the defense and spontaneity of the Crane. The extremes of fiery day and purple night resolve into the smooth reflection of the moon in a simple temple garden pond. The pond is as quiet as a pool of mercury and perfectly mirrors its surroundings. Padded feet softly stalk the temple garden and burning blue eyes reflect the shadows of the night. Cat and bird become a single creature, fang and claw join talon and wing to become that composite stylist, the Leopard. Ferocity and rationality are married by blinding speed.

### **Image**

The intense gaze of a Leopard reflected into our own as he drinks from a smooth pool of blue water.

### **Stance**

The Leopard fights from a close-cat stance with hands in half-fist forms. He is concave in the torso with the hands circling out and back over one another, with the palms facing down.

### **Commentary**

The physical characteristics of the Leopard embody elements of extreme acceleration, physical power, and balance. Without extreme speed and acceleration, the Leopard stylist would be unable to synthesize the aggressive power of the Tiger with the rationality of the Crane. The Leopard requires time to evaluate, but at the same time, literally, must be able to intentionally move and develop a situation. Both aggressive speed and appropriate response are required of the Leopard; these are the separate attributes of the Tiger and Crane, respectively. The way in which the Leopard combines these apparently antithetical elements of unconscious aggression and thoughtful analysis is varied. First, the leopard makes use of body-braking. Body-braking is a technique in which the Leopard uses his own or his opponent's body (or limbs) as a springboard for his next movement. Rather than locking a block out, the blocking hand (arm, etc.) rebounds into the next motion.

Time is saved by not having to first extend a strike or block, lock the muscles to stop it and focus, and then relax the locked muscles in order to recover the striking or blocking limb. Ideally, the motion is continuous and without any one lockout focus, continuously rebounding from opponent and himself in a flurry of continuously pressuring strikes. While no one single strike may be intended to stop the opponent, the cumulative effect of such a jack-hammer pressure accomplishes this. In order to maintain such a style of attack, an extremely strong physical constitution is necessary. And, without an intuitive sense of balance, no such attacking flurries could be long maintained. The Leopard obtains his power from the speed of his strike more than from its total committed weight. Remember that impact, power, or momentum is the product of mass and speed. Since the Leopard tends not to massively commit whole body weight to his strikes, he must make up for this potential loss in power by increasing the speed of the strike. The Leopard's favorite phrase is: "Speed kills."

In general, the movements of the Leopard are short and choppy, with only a few low kicks. The Leopard stylist works on getting a "snap" feeling to all motions regardless of whether or not body-braking is being used. Shoulder rolls, torso twists, and wrist snaps all contribute to that last significant bit of acceleration which distinguishes the strikes of the Leopard from those of the Crane and Tiger. In combat the Leopard also works the angles, front left and right forty-five degree angles being preferred; evading, rather than confronting the attack while maintaining constant pressure gain both time and security for the Leopard. Also, the Leopard makes extreme use of "Sticking-Hands" (Chi Sao) techniques of trapping. Tactile awareness is another aspect of the Leopard's tremendous speed. Rather than relying solely on visual perceptual clues, the Leopard begins to "listen" with his other senses. Touch awareness, tactile sensitivity, is the first of these to be developed after visual. As the Leopard is almost necessarily an in-fighter, physical contact is unavoidable. And, the Leopard learns to read the status of his opponent by retaining this contact, sticking and running with the opponent. Not only may shifts in balance be read through this touch awareness, but changes in intent as well.

No amount of verbalization convey the lessons to be learned in close sparring and simple sticking hands exercises. Attacking or defending limbs are briefly immobilized or trapped by the Leopard and actually augment the power

base of his response. Onslaughts are redirected utilizing defensive sticking hand skills which have this potential offensive result. The Leopard stalks his opponent on the basis of these perceptual clues, and when the listening indicates an opening, this stalk is at an end. Overall, the Leopard combines the rigidly predetermined conceptualization of the Tiger (who sees everything as "black" or "white") with the rationality of the Crane. Where the Crane might hesitate, and be lost, through over thinking, the Leopard cannot; his rationality allows only for a spontaneous response to an unexpected development with a rigidly pre-determined technique. Both the pure robot-mechanics of the Tiger and the Pure rationalism of the Crane are dangerous by themselves; each may lead to one sort of destruction or futility, respectively.

But the Leopard combines discipline with a creative intelligence. Such a combination allows him to respond with the speed acquired from disciplined practice, but his intelligence allows him to pick the appropriate technique and then improvise as necessary. Improvise with speed because the Leopard does not make utterly new techniques, but only recombines those he already knows. The Leopard is the smartest of the cats, but is still a cat, which means aggression and agile power. The intangible components of the Leopard's style are several, some of which have already shown their tangible sides in the preceding paragraph. Listening, Mind-Like-Water, and the Specious-Present comprise these interrelated intangible elements. Listening means to sense with more than any one or two senses (eyes and ears being the most common); listening means to hear with more even than all the five senses. Listening is the mental counterpart of the whole body commitment ideal of the physical level.

The listening sense is the product of the mind and all the senses, visceral, somatic, and external. Only when the listening mind is like a perfectly smooth pool of clear water can it accurately reflect the world as it is. Any bit of anxiety or anticipation causes ripples in our pool, and the reflection is distorted. Mind-Like-Water means that the ideal listener has so mastered his fear that there are no perceptual distortions; he is calm under fire. Such a calm in the midst of strife provides no room for anxious anticipation and an incorrect reading of a developing situation. For example, many on the sidelines see others sparring, and say to themselves: "Why that person is not fast at all; I could easily defeat him." Then they find themselves sparring with that same person and find that his speed and skill have dramatically increased over that which they observed from the sidelines.

The point is that this is the same person with the same speed and skill, the only difference is that rather than calmly observing, he who was the spectator is now engaged and his anxiety causes his previously perceived slow opponent to now appear to be more effective than he really is. There are ripples in the water. While the Leopard gains speed by the methods of body-braking, snap-striking, angles, pressing, and accurately listening, there is yet another factor accounting for his speed. This can be called the Leopard's sense of a "Specious-Present". This is a difficult and a somewhat mysterious concept to develop. This is a time sense which incorporates the intensity of the Tiger with the presentness of the Crane. The present may be thought of as that dimensionless instant of time which separates past and future.

The Leopard, as an ideal, seeks to add dimension to this instantaneous present, to stretch his time sense such that the conventions of past, present, and future come to be seen as naive abstractions. All there is the NOW; there is no reality to the rest. An entire life is more than the accumulation of an infinite series of NOWS, it is a single NOW. Accurate listening allows the Leopard to actually respond to strike before his opponent initiates it. The more that the NOW can be stretched to encompass, the more mystical and effective the Leopard stylist. Even on a less eerie level, the better the Leopard can predict and subsequently frustrate possible future events, attacks...whatever, the more it will appear that he has moved impossibly fast.

## **GREEN BELT: The Dragon (Ssu Chi)**

### **Element: Heaven, Cloud, Mountain**

From high atop the Green mountain the Dragon observes the flux of fiery day and purple night as they are reflected in the temple pool of blue water. Green is the color of a spirited and vibrant life force. No temperate emotion or behavior can be part of such an emotionally charged being. Everything is done with an almost exaggerated commitment. In combat the Dragon rushes down his green mountain in a fit of barely controlled rage.

### **Image**

A coiling Green Dragon descending from his Mountain in a controlled rage. The Dragon is the fourth animal in our system and represents the beginnings of an intermediate level of awareness and competency. The three previous animal styles (Tiger, Crane, and Leopard) are all modeled from real animals; while the mystical Dragon represents a spiritual rather than physical emphasis. Such an emphasis is possible only after the physical has been established.

### **Stance**

A twisted stance with a trailing hidden-foot. Claw hands, rear above head, lead hand about a foot in front of midsection. Both claw hands tend to point palm to the front. Weight distribution is about 80/20 with the 20% being on the trailing hidden-foot.

### **Commentary**

The Dragon is known by its obvious fury, flexibility, and strength. Anyone watching a Dragon stylist perform cannot fail to pick up the intense emotion expression of the Dragon. The yell of the spirit, Ki-Ai, which accompanies a forcefully completed strike is most authentically voiced at this level. Twisting and sweeping legs and body movements are characteristic of the Dragon, no part is static; everything is continuously coiling and uncoiling in broad whole-body movement. The Dragon's long movements, twisted stances, and whole-body principle of movement account for his power. Long movements allow the Dragon to take advantage of the body's maximum leverage; working at full extension allows for maximum impact momentum as well as providing the longest lever arm movement. Much of the Dragon's tangible power and technique stem from its adherence to a Point-and-Circle fighting style.

As with the Crane, the Dragon stylist perceives both his opponent and himself as being the central point of a dynamic sphere of potential influence. The reach of one's hands and feet in all three dimensions roughly describe the periphery of this personal sphere; twisting at the waist allows for extension to the sides and rear. When one moves, one's personal sphere is carried and is always centered at one's physical balance point as well as a mental and spiritual focal point, the T'an Tien (The Elixir Field). The personal sphere is a fluid structure which remains spherical only at rest. The slightest movement deforms and extends the sphere in the direction of movement and collapses it in all other directions. It is as if this sphere must contain a constant volume and a positive deformation in one direction necessitates a complementary negative deformation in the others.

The Crane took advantage of this aspect of Point-and-Circle combat theory when it waited for and then evaded an attack only to strike at the collapsed side of the attacker's dynamic sphere. The Dragon augments this by taking advantage of an offensive aspect of this Point-and-Circle theory, namely that of the energy stored in twisted stances being released in a whipping circular motion. Allowing hands and feet to be led by the untwisting or uncoiling of the hips and shoulders in rag doll fashion adds a massive amount of impact momentum to strikes. Even to the uninitiated, the commitment of the whole body is obvious in the movements of the Dragon. Maximum speed, leverage, and impact is achieved at the edges of one's dynamic; and it is the Dragon's crushing offensive object to place his opponent's center at this edge and subject him to a continuous and circling series of fully extended strikes.

The Dragon continually circles his opponent's perimeter to unbalance and force opening; such circling is never passive, the Dragon fighter attacks continuously and furiously. In addition to gaining the Dragon leverage, speed, and power, uncoiling from a twisted stance also provides the opportunity for a number of hidden techniques. Trailing hands and feet are literally hidden from an opponent, and, in the act of untwisting, those hands and feet suddenly become all too apparent. The Dragon also utilizes probing feints to disguise his real intentions; even a skilled

opponent may be caused to have misleading preconceptions and expectation which force him to improperly anticipate the actual attack. Testing, probing, and feinting can also be the precursor of what comes to be another sort of hidden technique. The last and most obvious facet of the Dragon's tangible character is his fury. A Dragon pressures his opponent, as did the Tiger, and again like the Tiger his fury makes him blind to the odds. However, the key distinction between the fury of the Tiger and Dragon is that the Dragon's rage is subtly controlled. Just how this can be so carries us over into the intangible components of the Dragon.

The Ki-Ai, or yell of the spirit, provides some insight as to how the Dragon unites thought and emotion. This yell forces the practitioner to vocally emphasize a movement at the proper time. Such timing requires that the mind be with the body if the practitioner to vocally emphasize a movement at the proper time. Such timing requires that the mind be with the body if the emphasis is to be both appropriate and effective. The Ki-Ai not only has the advantage of forcing the mind and the body to be mutually attentive, but has a straightforward physical rationale as well. This yell is best formed from short exclamations ending in a "TS" sound; generally, the sound "IGHTS" ('lights' minus the 'l') is the recommended sound to yell. The "TS" ending tends to readily tighten the diaphragm and generally cause the body's musculature to lock at the focus of an impact, thus strengthening the strike. The strike is augmented because there is no room for absorption of the strike's power when the body is so locked. And, defensively, the Ki-Ai armors the stylist by tightening the muscles and thereby diminishing the potential damage done by a received strike.

The successful Dragon stylist must be able to imagine that all thought and movement arise from his T'an Tien. The more the stylist is able to imagine his mind to be at this center, the better the Dragon. The Dragon is a creature of the mind, and the more powerful the ability to imagine, to reshape the world in his own terms, the more powerful the Dragon. The previous three animals have attempted to secure a mind/body harmonization by stressing the physical aspects, the Dragon emphasizes the mental and spiritual. So, in order to fully understand the Dragon it is important to see that the Dragon is not only a creature of an imagined mythology but is a maker of myth. The Dragon perceives his world in an exaggerated manner, as if seeing everything from a high mountain aerie. Everything is imbued with brighter color, sharper contrast, stronger tastes, and headier odors. For the Dragon, even the smallest event assumes the greatest import, every act is seen as in on a grand scale, every inconvenience becomes an adventure, a quest. The Dragon's power of imagination cast his world in heroic proportions where every course of affairs is a saga. He is more than flesh and blood, he is spirit. Unleashed emotions energize his actions. Imagination and emotion unite in a single coordinated expression of a whole mind/body commitment.

The Dragon does what he is doing while he is doing it. His emotional fury is simply another way of looking at his supercharged imagination. The Dragon fights with a controlled rage because there is no longer a distinction between thought and emotion, the two are inextricably interwoven. Obviously, this heightened level of thought and activity cannot be continuously maintained. Only one thing can keep the Dragon from consuming himself, the ability to both physically and mentally detach oneself from this super-charged domain. Physical exhaustion and collapse following periods of furious action is part of the Dragon's Do What You Are Doing While You Are Doing It philosophy which extends to all areas of his life. When you are hungry, eat. When you are tired, sleep. For mind and body to harmonize, you must mentally and physically commit to each and every activity. You cannot worry about what's for lunch or your job and still perform your Dragon form. Mind and body must be co-present with each and every activity. The Dragon is ever lost in the moment. Such a physical detachment may appear to be impractical and inappropriate in a world regulated by the clocks and schedules of others.

But, the Dragon is the ruler of his world, perhaps even a soloist. His world is literally taken to be His world, a world whose very hierarchy and constitution is of his making. Everything perceived by the Dragon is as it is only by virtue of his perceiving it as such. The apparent character of any object in the Dragon's environment may be variously perceived: a stick may be alternately constituted as fuel for fire, a weapon, or a toy for the dog; its reality is dependent upon how it is perceived. The Dragon creates and is responsible for the world in which he lives. The Dragon is a phenomenalist; he takes the expressions of his ego to be the furniture of the world. This is both his virtue and his curse. The Dragon takes himself to be the ultimate center of the cosmic sphere; when he dies the world dies with him. His training and technical expertise allow him to take control and direct the course of his situation. He no longer distinguishes Self from Other, but all is now taken to be a feature of his own ego.

The Dragon doesn't so much fight with an opponent as he choreographs a dance; he contests with himself alone. Mastery in combat and success in the world are achieved at the potential expense of full enlightenment. The Dragon's intermediate stage of myopic awareness coupled with its corresponding non-mechanical technical mastery of Kenpo skills at once comprises a major step forward and a major obstacle to further progress. The ego has reached its maximum

size, encompassing the whole world. If this balloon is ever to burst and true equanimity be realized, some absolutely novel stimulus is required. The fangs of the snake seek to rupture this balloon and again place the Kenpo student on this evolutionary path.

## **BROWN BELT: The Snake (She) (San-I Chi)**

### **Element: Rock-Roots-Earth.**

Suddenly crushing coils and poison fangs erupt from the Rocks and Roots of the Brown Earth in the temple garden as the Snake's Ch'i flows from coil and fang, entering the victim, and then returns to the earth and back into the Snake, completing a circuit of flowing energy. Brown is the color of concealment and rooted power. What is vital energy to the Snake, Ch'i is deadly poison to his opponent, to be effective the Ch'i must flow into controlling coil or disabling fang techniques; without sensed Ch'i flow the Snake is helpless. The Snake fights from fear and seeks to quickly inflict whatever damage is necessary to avoid being hurt. If possible, a Snake will always attempt to "bluff" his opponent in order to prevent a confrontation in which the Snake might be hurt. Snakes do not play with their opponents, they immediately disable or kill them.

### **Image**

A flicker in the Brown Earth undergrowth, a brief cry, then silence as the Snake again disappears.

### **Stance**

The Snake fights from soft-cat stance with a stacked mantis-like forearm cover. Both hands are softly curled into a Snake hand form in which the index and middle finger, the fangs, of each hand protrude while the other fingers and thumb loosely touch at their tips (this hand-form is sometimes known as Twin-Dragons Search For Pearl). Hand movements are characteristically sinuous and oscillate from side to side.

### **Commentary**

The Snake is the fifth animal form in the Kenpo system and its three degrees represent progress into an expert level of technique and awareness. A Snake stylist has both constrictor and viper elements, each of which pre-suppose the presence of Ch'i. Ch'i, Ki in Japanese, literally means "Breath," however, for the martial artist the word 'breath' has both this literal meaning and, analogously, but more importantly, a metaphorical meaning. Ch'i represents the energy and commitment given to an action. Ch'i is often mysteriously equated with a psychic or spiritual flow of occult force. Such statements have the advantage of disclosing the extraordinary feeling accompanying a good Ch'i flow, but they do nothing to assist one in learning how to develop such a sensation.

Simply put, Ch'i flow stems from the harmonization of a smooth, relaxed physical action with imaginatively focused mental attentiveness. This goes somewhat contrary to the Dragon's Do What You Are Doing While You Are Doing It philosophy in that the role of the imagination is stressed. In order to clarify that cryptic definition, try the following "Unbendable-Arm" demonstration: Stand erect with your right arm extended to the right, parallel to the floor. Then have a cooperative friend attempt to bend your arm at the elbow and wrist, respectively. He should try to bend by pulling up on your wrist while pushing down on your elbow so that your arm is not stressed against the joint.

You should tighten your arm to keep it from bending. Usually even a person weaker than yourself can bend your arm with relative ease. But, now couple your physically stiff arm with an imagined component. Visualize as best you can that a current of water is flowing up from the ground through your heels, up your torso, out your shoulder and down your arm to rush out of your loosely extended finger to splash at some imagined target on a level with your shoulders. You will find that the better you can really "see" this imagined flow, the more easily you will be able to keep your arm unbent, even with several people attempting to bend your arm at the same time. Without an ability to imaginatively "see" what is apparently not there, there is no Ch'i. (Please do not confuse the preceding demonstration as anything more than a simple demonstration of the effects of Ch'i flow. Ch'i cultivation and use is an immense subject well beyond the scope of this presentation.) Tangible elements other than bluffing include the Snake's completely different choice of soft targets.

All of the previous animals have, at best, chosen broadly defined and therefore "hard" target areas: face-mask, neck, chest, floating ribs, kidneys, groin, and knees. The Snake stylist must be much more precise in his choice of target and much more accurate in the delivery of his strike. Soft tissue targets are typically much smaller in area and so much more difficult to accurately target. Examples of such targets would be: eyes, filtrum, lips, hyoid bone, larynx, frenic nerves, armpit gland, diaphragm, and stomach, groin and inner thighs, etc. In order to effectively target such areas, the Snake must not only be extremely accurate and fast, but must augment the energy of the strike with a real Ch'i flow, the Snake's poison. What is life energy for the Snake, can be poison for his enemies.

The Snake does not have opponents, but enemies. This more emotively charged term discloses the kill-or-be-killed attitude which is most peculiar to the Snake stylist. Weapons training constitutes the last major tangible aspect of the Snake stylist in our system. The object of the weapons training first encountered in Brown belt work is not so much to teach one how to fight with cane, sword, staff, etc., as it is to force the student to enlarge his dynamic sphere. Prior to the Snake each animal's sphere of influence has limited the physical reach of the stylist. For the Snake, however, handling weapons forces the stylist to extend his awareness further into his environment.

First, simple coordination and dexterity are stressed to new limits until the stylist begins to feel the weapon to be an extension of himself and unconsciously avoids his initial clumsiness. Second, a transition from physical dexterity to a correspondingly enlarged mental awareness is attempted. At that point the tangible slides into the intangible elements of the Snake's style. These intangibles are the feeling of Ch'i and Wu Hsin, or No Mind. Enlarging the Snake stylist awareness through weapons training compels the stylist to spread his ego-identity so thinly that ideally, distinction between self and other, him and would no longer make sense. Weapons tend to get longer and more flexible as training progresses; this lengthening and flexibility extrapolate into an ever more comprehensive level of a fluid awareness.

To further complicate things, rigid weapons are made to appear as if they were flexible, while the flexible weapons should appear rigid. Harmonizing opposites and physically and mentally enlarging our perceptual domain further undermines feelings of separateness from the world. The ego begins to disappear by becoming ever more tenuous and more and more identified with a whole which encompasses the old concepts of self and other. The goal is to be with rather than apart from the world, at home rather than alienated. No-mind means precisely this unconscious blend.

## **BLACK BELT: The Monkey (I Tuan)**

### **Element: Space, Emptiness, Void**

The developing Sage, the Monkey, snuffs out the candle in the temple of our analytical intellect, and only the pure possibilities of a Black Void remain. Speculation and theoretical guessing of any sort are abandoned as the Monkey opens himself to the immediacy of merely being.

### **Image**

A White circle drawn and colored with Orange, Purple, Blue, Green, and Brown divisions. Blackest ink is spilled and the carefully drawn circle and fine paper are obliterated with a barely heard chuckle.

### **Commentary**

The Monkey combines the attributes of all the previous animals. Where each previous animal represented a characteristic sort of physical and mental attitude, the Monkey combines each of the five separate animals into a single whole. In this respect, the Monkey is not so much a hidden sixth animal of our Kenpo system as he is its composite expression, just as the fist may be seen to be the combined expression of its separate fingers. The Kenpo system embodies a kind of evolution for its practitioners in that the maturing Monkey evolves from the synthesis of Tiger, Crane, Leopard, Dragon, and Snake attributes. And, ultimately, the Monkey becomes the Sage. The system attempts to isolate and develop the separate abilities each of us share in varying degrees. When these basic five pieces have been explored and developed at some length, they are again fused together into a new and complex animal one which has been broken down and then reassembled with discipline, strength, and a better understanding of himself and his world. No two Monkey stylists are alike. The difference between Monkey stylists and other more specific animal stylists is much more pronounced.

Each individual has preferences and attitudes which make them an individual, and these differences find room for their fullest expression in the Monkey. However, there are still features, both tangible and intangible, of the Monkey stylist which overshadow individual interpretation. The most tangible physical aspect of a Monkey stylist is his versatility. Being a composite, the Monkey may draw on any one or combination of the five animals in a given situation. However, Monkeys seem to emphasize low crouching foot sweeps and climbing an opponent's attack (actually climbing a leg or sliding down an arm) and often use jumping attacks which begin low and suddenly leap into an opponent.

More specifically, the Monkey is a Tai Chi Ch'uan Iron-Palm stylist. Loose jointed, rag-doll-like movements in which the power transfer is from rooted feet through hips and shoulders then to hands or feet are emphasized. Characteristic strikes are the traditional five Iron-Palm hand forms: Dotted (wrist flick, snapping fingers, and thumb forward), Cutting (vertical angular chop or willow-palm also delivered with a wrist snap), Slapping (whole hand strike with palm and extended fingers delivered with a wrist snap), Falling (back-hand strike with fingers extended and wrist snapped into impact), and Stamping (Iron-Palm strike with heel hand and characteristic wrist snap at impact). The Monkey also has some peculiar hooking ape-hand blocks in which the arms are nearly fully extended and the hands are hooked at the wrist to trap and control incoming hand and foot attacks. Versatility, low crouching sweeps, Iron-Palm strikes, and hooking ape-hand techniques capture the tangible elements of the Monkey's style.

The combat theory and intangible components of this style are not so easily indicated. In combat, the Monkey stylist is a thinking fighter who adapts to situation and circumstance. He is primarily defensive and always sneaky. He usually adopts a mirror-image theory of force in which the fury of his attack or defense is directly proportional to that of his opponent, the principle of equal force. The Monkey strives to blend Oak and Willow Tree theories of combat into his flexible style. When overpowered, the Monkey bends, absorbs, and avoids (the Willow); advantages are crushingly pressed when open (the Oak). The Monkey borrows his combat theory from the three major philosophies of ancient China: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. From Confucianism stems the Monkey's firm regard for courtesy, discipline, respect, and generally ritualized deportment.

Also from Confucianism comes the concept of the Unwobbling Pivot. This is a key component of Point-Circle combat theory which calls attention to the necessity of maintaining a stable center for our dynamic sphere; the idea of a rooted Ch'i flow. From Taoism comes the concept of animal components of the human personality and the emphasis of vitalism. Taoism is also the source of the Yin/Yang dynamic harmony of opposites. Oak and Willow, Sticking and Running Hands are aspects of this balance. Give and redirect when attacked, and take and fill

when the opponent withdraws. From Buddhism come the concepts of "presentness" Doing-What-You-Are-Doing-While-You-Are-Doing-It, and the corresponding notion of Wu Hsin, No Mind. The Monkey thus fights a Point-Circle style with himself as the mobile unwobbling pivot point of his personal dynamic sphere, adopts a Give-and-Take Yin/Yang attitude of defense and attack, and strives to lose himself within and be one with his situation. The Monkey's Tai Chi Ch'uan style is as much meditational as it is a theory of combat. For the Monkey, the mind comes first, the body later; the body should follow the mind as a shadow follows an object.

The mind must imaginatively move the Ch'i and the Ch'i then moves the body. Physical movements are to resemble the unwinding of a spring: the mind feels the tension and triggers the catch, the unwinding is automatic. The Monkey stylist is Relaxed, Fluid, Rooted, and fully Present to his situation. Relaxation under stress can only be gained through extensive meditational training to control physical and mental processes, or by frequent exposure to mock-stress situations. Calmness is the product of experience. Fluidity comes from balance and grace, from practice. The Monkey stylist must at first be consciously aware of which leg is full (weight bearing) and which empty, and how this emptiness and fullness smoothly and successively induce one another.

Only later does this feeling become intuitive. Rootedness for the Monkey is practiced through the mental imagery of Sinking. Here, his imagination lowers his feeling for his center of gravity to successively lower and lower levels: from chest to Tan Tien, from Tan Tien to thighs, to knees, to ankles, to heels. The heels are the roots of the Monkey's Oak and Willow, the bubbling Ch'i spring. Presentness means total commitment to the Here and Now. An old story tells of a Monkey relentlessly chased by a Tiger until the Monkey was forced over a cliff and barely managed to catch and hang on to a stubby branch to keep himself from falling to his death. With the Tiger growling and slashing from above and the bush slowly pulling from the cliff face, the Monkey still has time to notice that the bush has the best darn berries he's ever tasted. The Monkey does not train, he practices at and is his art. His art is a continually changing and creatively personalized expression of how he sees himself in his world. Rigid formalisms of classical styles no longer constrain him, he is his style.

He is a constant physical/mental koan to himself, a puzzle whose object lies not in its resolution but in its being lived. He is a composite creature and a consummate fighter. His trained mind is nevertheless as open and receptive as that of the beginner's; the difference being that the world doesn't so much intimidate and impose itself upon him as it did the beginner, but that he and world are seen as one. The world does not force itself upon him, nor does he seek to dominate it. There is no self and no world to conflict in this fashion, rather there is only a singleness, a wholeness whose meaning and truth lie in experience and action.



*“Learn this:  
The mind of every creature,  
great or small, is the master of its  
own body.  
But only as the mind flows  
with nature may that mastery  
be exercised to its fullest.  
There is no limit to the wondrous  
powers of the body;  
nor is there a limit to the ways  
one may harness those powers to  
the mastery of the harmonious  
mind.  
It may take half a lifetime  
to master one system.”*

*Author Unknown*