

Thanks to Bruce Lee & David Carradine, Kung-fu did not disappear

Daniel Otero ^a

a. English Teacher, Shenzhen Guangming Foreign Languages School, Shenzhen, China.

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Abstract

Nobody can deny the impact that Bruce Lee made on the silver screen or David Carradine through the television series, 'Kung Fu'. Almost 50 years after the fact, this influence is undeniable. Truth be told, this amazing martial art that inspires other forms of protection, enjoyed a glorious time. For centuries, it was part of the Shaolin Monks and later, became part in the army training. Not only locally, but worldwide. Understandably so, Kung-fu did come from China more than several millenniums before. It is entirely Chinese, but because of China's closure to the rest of the world and the art's secrecy, it nearly died out into the 20th Century. When a concept like this isn't allowed to expand and have an influx in foreign elements, like Latin which disappeared after the end of the Roman Empire; because the Romans didn't allow or give space for it to grow. The same was happening with the art of Kung-fu or as it is known in its Pinyin form of Cantonese, 'Gung-fu/gongfu'. While the Japanese art of Karate (Japanese boxing) and Jujitsu continued to grow outside of Japan; expanding to the far reaches of Brazil and the United States within the Japanese-expat community. For Kung-fu, it disappeared in many parts of China and people lost interest by the 1950s. What made many take interest and allowed it to become popular once again was a young-rising star who came to Hollywood in the 1960s. Lee Jun-fan (many know him better as Bruce Lee, 李小龍) was starring in a T.V. series called, 'The Green Hornet' in the United States. It caught the attention of millions of viewers and people began to wonder, especially the male population how they could learn this magical art of self-defense. It is through this investigative paper, I intend to show why these two men made a great impact on the art of Kung-fu; and from a martial way that almost disappeared--to one that flourished once again.

Keywords: Kung-fu, Gung-fu/gongfu, Martial Arts, Shaolin Monks, Bruce Lee & David Carradine.

I. Introduction

For all my time in China, I have rarely focused either on the arts of Kung-fu (武术 or 'skill'), Wing Chun (詠春) or Wushu (武术) for that matter. I mean, I loved learning about the arts, but never had a proper teacher to teach me through the techniques. My main focus was to write about it and why it's so important in the patrimonial culture of China. For many who love the martial arts, it has an extensive history that is over 40 centuries in background and knowledge. Thanks to the Chinese, this art became one for peace, but also became without a

doubt one for war. Whether people express one thing or the other, it was used as a mechanism to control violence and in other occasions, in the wrong hands, it had/has destructive consequences.

For these reasons, for centuries, Chinese while in China or the Chinatown abroad kept it a closely guarded secret and never allowed it [the martial art] to get into the hands of the 'laowai' (老外) or foreigner. In this case rather justifiably I might add, given the level of savagery which foreign Empires reeked havoc across China in the past. From the former Island of Formosa (Taiwan), Macao, Hong Kong and into Mainland China for a better part of 500 years. In many ways, China benefited positively by the influx of foreign trade; however, it also caused certain parts of China to be conquered and controlled under foreign rule for centuries. This was common in cities like: Shanghai, Nanjing, Tianjin, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macao. Places where foreign communities were the ultimate rulers and not the Chinese in their own country. The Chinese population suffered, while the foreign elements got rich. This was called by Mao Zedong himself, 'The Century of Humiliation' (1849 - 1949) (Richardson, n.d.). Period in which the British Empire after the first and second Opium Wars began peddling the narcotic into China. This would affect the Chinese population through the latter part of the 19th Century or for over five decades set the stage to turn millions into drug addicts.

No wonder there was a mistrust of anything foreign. And rightfully so, for the abuses and constant racism perpetrated against the Chinese.

The only way to learn Kung-fu 100 years before was to be born in China, live there or become a military service person stationed there. But still, Kung-fu like many of the mysteries of China was a closely-guarded secret, literally 'Top Secret'. Few foreigners knew about the art and even less practiced or participated in it. For the few who knew, they wouldn't teach others about the art. It wasn't allowed or passed down onto the foreign element.

The martial art wasn't allowed to expand. Those whom knew about it, kept it for themselves and to pass it down from generation to generation. This secrecy was only amongst the Chinese. Wherever they went, they took this art into their communities, but only practiced it between other Chinese whom had earned the right to do so. The problem with this was, if the art wasn't allowed to evolve or shared outside of the community, it would eventually become extinct. It's the natural process of nature, languages, species or when people don't adapt.

With Chinese closure, the art began to disappear and only concentrate in areas like Guangdong Province and thereafter, Hong Kong, where it is still immensely popular.

This isolation from the outside world gave way for the Japanese arts of Jujitsu, Judo and Karate to take hold. Since the Meiji era (1868 - 1912), Japan's openness allowed for foreigners to learn more about the Japanese culture (Japan-guide.com, 2019). This gave way for people to merge themselves fully into something they could learn, whether they lived in Japan or studied the Japanese way of life abroad. This cultural exchange was a give and take, and it wasn't the problems often seen in China with past Empires coming in, conquering and taking without giving in return.

When the American born, Bruce Lee (1940, San Francisco, U.S.A.) came into the spotlight, he believed for Kung-fu to not disappear was to share the wealth of the Chinese culture and knowledge with all. This brought him many problems during the beginning of his martial arts career. It also brought him many successes, because many people wanted to learn

what he knew with his quick kicks and lightning-hand strikes. Bruce would develop his career into something that would become bigger than himself. Taking the art from Hong Kong to the streets across America (Biography, 2017).

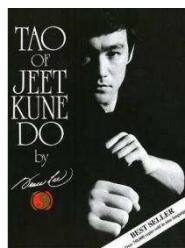
Later, with Mister Lee's untimely death, it was David Carradine who deeply became interested in the art and developed a series for television called, 'Kung-fu' (Crowder & Linnea, 2013). This T.V. show lasted three years, but it was in the 1970s when Kung-fu fever took a hold of American audiences. Therefore, from the music ('Kung Fu fighting' song), to Chinese slippers (Kung-fu shoes) and Kung-fu schools opened for business (Douglas, 1974). Given the term to the 'chopsocky' film craze of the early 1970s (The Culture Wiki, 2017).

Now the secret was out of the box like Pandora and the question on everybody's mind would be, 'What was next?'

II. Method

When I was a columnist with the former website, Hangzhou Weekly (2014 - 2016). I got inspired on writing one critical piece about Kung-fu in China and why it was disappearing and expanding in America. When I wrote it, I did mention the names of Bruce Lee and David Carradine, because they often resonated with the people. The names of these two men and who thanks to them the art continued to proliferate.

China through its social upheavals of the 1960s, could not focus on expanding this method of self-defense. It was focused on dealing with bigger issues within its own country. However, as this was happening, this martial art expanded and went abroad to mix in with different techniques and concepts. It was during this period when Bruce Lee created his own method of Jeet Kune Do, a hybrid martial art. This was something which resonated with the martial arts crowd. People whom for generations had either focused on the Japanese or Korean fighting techniques, began to see a whole new system of protection. This method was practical, better than ever and by no means perfect. But it was one of the styles on how to self-protect and it was consistent for all.



The 'Tao of Jeet Kune Do' by Bruce Lee (Publisher: Ohara, 1975).

I always been an admirer of Bruce Lee, with his perfections and imperfections. This was the man who literally brought Kung-fu to the mainstream and didn't do it without any resistance. What Mister Lee was suggesting at the time was something that for most-traditionalist Chinese could be considered: radical, anathema and sinful. Expose the art to the foreign element. Ha, most scoffed at the idea! It has been said that this might have cost Bruce's death. However, to not get into the conspiracy theories of the times. I'll stick to the facts as much as possible. His death, although tragic, was one that would continue to not only hurt his family: down the road,

it would end Brandon's life [Bruce's son] in an also unfortunate manner ("Kung Fu Curse", 2002).

After Bruce Lee's death, it was David Carradine who brought the T.V. series 'Kung Fu' to life and 'carried the torch'. As a little boy in the 1970s, this was magical and I knew it would be an impact on my life forever. He [Carradine] spread his brand new show through the United States.

But who would be the next Bruce, there wasn't nobody to fill in his shoes to be quite honest. And it wouldn't be till 1978, when a film called, 'Drunken Master' propelled Jackie Chan into international stardom (Yuen, 1978). Here was the point, the turning point, a man to fill in Bruce's shoes and go to greater lengths in cinematographic history with Hong Kong Kung-fu flicks. I think this was my own turning point, when I dreamed of one day of coming to China and learning the art.

What began to inspire and brought me to this point? First of all, it was the motion picture picture, 'Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story'. Before I had seen the movies such as: 'Game of Death' and 'Enter the Dragon'. But the one closest [films] to Bruce's life and to honor his memory was with the actor, Jason Scott Lee (Dragon, 1993; Robert, 1979).

At that point, I still hadn't gotten the 'writing bug'. That would at least take another two years to develop. But I did study a martial art called, Aikido. It wasn't only that Steven Seagal introduced it to audiences in 1987. It was because it came with the perfect timing. The 1990s was a great period for the martial arts world. Actors like: Chuck Norris, Jackie Chan, Jean-Claude Van Damme and Steven Seagal introduced their best onto the silver screen.

Here was when I learned further about the different fighting styles. Through my experiences in the military and after in civilian life, with: Tai Chi, Kung-fu, Capoiara, Jujitsu, Aikijutsu and Hapkido.

It was a special period in time to blow anybody's mind. I also wrote several pieces about the martial-arts world. My desire was solely based on Aikido during the late 1990s. Speaking quite honestly, these pieces/articles went no where.

Then, I purchased some books about Bruce Lee's 'Jeet Kune Do' methods and Master Yip Man on his Wing Chun style. I can't say that it was better than having a teacher, because it wasn't. But I was transfixed in learning more about these methods while in China. Truth be told, I'm a man in my 50s and haven't given up on the idea as of yet. Ha, ha!

Coming back to the topic at hand. I then wrote recently an article about Bruce Lee, because in essence he is still the master and ultimate martial artist in his own right. Focusing not only on Kung-fu, but in Tai Chi Chuan (Tai-ji quan, 'Supreme Ultimate Fist'), as a concept for the older generation whom wants to continue practicing to keep fit. This was published in Hong Kong for Future Handling (Daniel, 2018).

While in China, the importance in living here is picking-up as much about the culture as possible. That's why, upon completion of my latest project, I wanted to do something about the art which I love. Kung-fu has been in my life since I was three years old and like a 'fever', this fire of inspiration has never left. What gave me further inspiration and impetus to write about this project was when the movie, 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood' came out. With the controversy arising in the media about the Bruce Lee scene, where he is behaving cocky, arrogant and looking for a fight. Sharon Lee (Bruce's daughter) was offended or overreacted,

but it has been said that in actuality, Bruce was quite arrogant. Bruce Lee was like any other man, dealing with the prejudices and racism of the times. To shield his heart, like most of us minorities do when suffering from discrimination: well, we act overconfident, cocky to be able to cope and survive on a daily basis. This was also true in Bruce's life. A Chinese-American who came from a family of performers, a child actor who made his mark first in Hong Kong as a star and then in the United States. A man with excellent command of English and one of the best fighters in the world [at the time]. He was a man less than perfect. Today, all his fans, including myself hold his memory with love and high regard; but he wasn't without blemish. Certain parts of this investigative paper will reflect on those moments to prove he had his own demons and behaved arrogantly to survive. However, the method here is to also bring to light the positives [in the majority of cases] on why Kung-fu is still here. And once and for all, state without this man's invaluable contribution, we today would have nothing that is Kung-fu to practice. For this, we have to thank Bruce Lee.

In the same manner, I'll be mentioning about the life of David Carradine. A man who had his deep-personal issues and without his influence, Kung-fu, in my opinion would have gone nowhere.

To explain further, for those who live in China and during these troubled times.

This is not to say that because Bruce or David were Americans Kung-fu proliferated.

Oh, please! Kung-fu grew because these two gentlemen had a vision. That is one of the major reasons to make that point entirely clear. It has nothing to do with these gentlemen and their respective backgrounds; furthermore, has nothing to do with politics or nationality, given the political climate in contemporary times.

The plan in writing this investigative paper is to not only focus on Kung-fu and its history; but on the lives of these two-unique men who in theory kept the martial art alive, well and for generation upon generation to continue enjoying it.



One of the theatrical posters for 'Enter the Dragon'. Starring Bruce Lee.
Produced by Robert Clouse for Warner Brothers & Concord Productions (1973)

III. History of Kung-fu, its beginnings

Four-thousand-plus-years before, traditionalist have come to believe that martial arts was first established in China. And for all intents and purposes, it was!

But it was an Indian-Buddhist monk called, Bodhidharma who came to China in 527 C.E. (Common Era) and observed species interact in the wild with one another (Britannica, 2016). He noticed something quite distinctive, extraordinary and special; how these animals behaved in their habitat. Whether it was the species behaving like predators or being in their instinctive

mode of survival. He watched and took notes. As he noticed their fighting styles/skills. This monk studied how these animals used self-defense in their daily routing, since it was a matter of life and death at a constant scale. This same would apply to the monks, how would they defend themselves against bandits, armies or marauding thieves. One sure way, was to watch these animals and learn from their techniques.

Here was when, this Indian monk through constant meditation or Chan (禪 - Zen Buddhism) picked-up: the Tiger, Leopard, Crane, Snake and Monkey in their fighting ways. Thereafter, monks began to learn this fighting system for self-defense, preservation and protection. It was one way to fight, but only when provoked physically and not verbally or to be used as a method to fight offensively. This way would become a system to train for centuries and millennium defensively. They became the famous Shaolin Monks. These men weren't only those who followed a way or Tao (道, path, right, proper or way) of spirituality, but a method to defend themselves and furthermore, the defenseless.

As centuries passed, by its second millennium, this form of martial art was established into the armed forces of what would later become a unified China.

With the issue of the art becoming martial, it had lost its spirituality. When techniques were developed, so came the schools across the respective provinces. Kung-fu spread from its origins in Henan Province all over China and flourished especially in the Southern parts, along Guangdong.



IV. Bruce Lee

One thing everybody can agree with, without Bruce Lee, Kung-fu or as it is known in Cantonese 'Gung-fu or gongfu' would not have achieved its full potential. It changed Bruce's life forever, because if it wasn't for Martial Arts and acting, I strongly believe that Master Lee would have been nothing more than a thug (Notable name, 2012).

His life began in 1940s San Francisco, to a family of performers. While he was still an infant, his family moved back to Hong Kong, where he became a child actor. But by the 1950s, he joined a street gang, to protect himself against the constant bullying and barrage of prejudices perpetrated by the British (Notable name, 2012).

What made Bruce Lee change from street thug to a spiritually-charged martial artist was when he was under the constant tutelage of Master Yip Man or Ip Man (葉問), Wing Chun Master (Biography, 2014).

When he left Hong Kong, he immigrated back to the West coast of the U.S.; however, this time he established roots in Seattle, Washington. Here, to support himself taught dancing and later, martial arts. But, what placed him in hot water, was when he began teaching Kung-fu to outsiders. He taught martial defense to everybody. This was the period when he studied at the University of Washington.

Once he married Linda Cadwell, he took further control of his career and from Martial Arts teacher, he went back into acting.

Leaving for Hollywood wasn't easy, but he got a juicy opportunity to co-star in 'The Green Hornet' (1966 - 1967). Here was when Bruce's arrogant persona began to show. I cannot infer to what was said or theorized back in Hong Kong; however, I can state having watched his old interviews showing a level of arrogance and cockiness few Asian actors would dare display at the time. From his manor of speech, to his stunts and how he philosophically showed Kung-fu (Lee, 1993).

As time went on and as Bruce's opportunities became better and better, he wanted to create a series called, 'Kung-fu'. A prolific writer in his own right, he wrote the story about a Buddhist Monk. This has also been disputed in controversy, since others say that the T.V. show was inspired on the writings of Lao Zi's (Lao Tzu - Old Teacher) 'Tao-Te-Ching' (道德經) (Lao, 1905). 'Kung-fu' was the story of a Chinese-American Shaolin monk who goes to the United States in search of his half-brother. However and tragically so, with the constant barrage of racism which has permeated in the United States and Hollywood, the lead role was given to the actor, David Carradine. Producers were concerned-afraid at the time that Bruce wouldn't pull in the audience as a lead to hold a successful show.

Bruce then decided to pack his bags and leave for Hong Kong once again. Here was the turning point when his career skyrocketed into stardom. With movies like: 'Big Boss' and 'The Chinese Connection' broke box office records in Hong Kong by 1971.

Successes such as: 'Return of the Dragon' (1972) made Mister Lee not only an established actor, but it was his first-directorial debut. Once 'Enter the Dragon' was released, it made Bruce Lee into an international-household name.

Bruce Lee passed away from a brain edema in 1973, many have speculated about his mysterious death. He died because a prescription painkiller for a back injury he suffered in the United States years before. Conspiracy theorist have often said, he was murdered, poisoned by the Chinese mob (infamous Triads in Hong Kong). While there's no further conclusive proof about his death beyond a brain edema, already he had paved the way for other martial artists to follow in his footsteps (Pitaro, 2007).

But to guess, when one person is the best and with Hollywood, there is always a show of egos. Believing that Bruce was and will be epitomized as the greatest martial artist to have ever

lived in the world. However, with Bruce's behavior [if there was any cockiness] was something to mask the emotions against prejudice (Yap, 2019). Especially when speaking about the 1960s and 1970s, when racism was even more in your face and rampant than today.

'Once upon a time...' it was Bruce Lee, the career maker

Upon the passing of Bruce Lee, one actor whom had done a sequence in the Roman Coliseum was Chuck Norris. Mister Norris built a three-decade career bringing his knowledge of Tang Soo Do to the silver screen.

There was a need for an actor to fill in the shoes as a major-action star, an Asian-martial artist whom could do the same acrobatic feats as Bruce. It came in the name and form of Jackie Chan with 'Drunken Master' in Hong Kong cinema.

Other martial artists arose in the 1980s and 1990s: Jean-Claude Van Damme and Steven Seagal came into the picture.

There is no doubt, that Bruce Lee brought martial arts into the daily lives of millions of American fans and around the world. This could not have been done without an open mind and heart to share one of China's greatest patrimonies with the international community.

Sadly, after Bruce's death, an early demise came to his son 20 years later, Brandon Lee. When he was accidentally shot while filming the film, 'The Crow'. Speculations again arose about Brandon's mysterious death, was it accidental, bad luck or work of the underworld? For now, until otherwise proven, Brandon Lee's death, like his father, was just a tragic coincidence.

Not only did Bruce Lee bring the mantle of power to the martial arts world. David Carradine was another actor after Bruce's death to continue with his legacy and so, it wouldn't expire. Paving the way for martial arts to grow in popularity, and especially in Hong Kong cinema; it was to enjoy a cinematographic cusps for the next 30-years uninterrupted till the opening and rise of the PRC (People's Republic of China). That was when China began exporting its own cinematic martial-arts gold, with examples like: Jet Li and Donnie Yen for world audiences to savor.

With the rise of new controversy surrounding the Bruce Lee name in the film, 'Once Upon A Time in Hollywood'. It has been further stated on Mister Lee's behavior as an arrogant, cocky person, looking for a fight. Has this been proven? Well, more often than not, Quentin Tarantino shouldn't be taken seriously; since he will portray historical figures in a caricature-sort of way (Lori, 2019). This flick will not dissuade Lee's ever lasting legacy, fans and nearly five-decades after his passing, he is still a major influence in Hollywood and worldwide.

Comes to show how this man left a great mark for others to follow in a positive way. People may say [including the critics] what they may say... But, it was Bruce and only Bruce, who made that possible! Hard work did and does pay off.

V. David Carradine

What Bruce Lee did internationally, David Carradine did nationally in the United States. Being epitomized close to the status of a rock star when he lead his successful martial-arts show.

Coming out in 1972 with the character of Kwai Chang Caine in the 'Kung-fu' T.V. series (1972 - 1975), made Mr. Carradine's popularity rise. The story line is about an orphan of Chinese mother and American father who loses his parents and is trained as a boy to become a Shaolin Monk. When Caine's master is killed by the Emperor's nephew. Caine kills this royal in a fit of rage; therefore, becoming a wanted man and leaving China for America to find his half-brother, Danny.

The series lasted three years, it took the concept of Kung-fu and martial arts to a whole new commercial high. Yes, the series did have a Caucasian lead, but it also had [for all the prejudices the producers bestowed] an ensemble/variety of Asian actors. The first to do so. With all Carradine's previous and after successes in stardom, his name became synonymous with 'Grasshopper'(Crowder, 2013).

An actor from one of Hollywood's great-acting dynasties, David had his own inner demons and sadly passed away from sexual-self-asphyxiation in 2009. Whatever the tabloids may say about his turbulent-private life, he was one of the greats!

Why was David Carradine so great?

Other than continuing Bruce Lee's legacy, he was one of the first to embody the spirit of Kung-fu and continue to expose the art for over 40 years and to a new generation. He gave a voice to Asian actors and Asians in America. A limited number of Hollywood actors had/have done this. Many years before the 1970s, the roles of Asians were usually a whitewashed version and lacked understanding in the Asian culture. Here David was different, a maverick who didn't only do martial arts sequences for television or movies; but he continued to promote the martial ways and arts through his career. The height of David's acting-life came with the movie, 'Kill Bill, Volumes 1 & 2'.



'Kill Bill Vol. 2', David Carradine in the scene 'The Bride' (2004).

Director Quentin Tarantino, Production companies: Miramax, A Band Apart & Super Cool Manchu

Often names such as: Chuck Norris, Jackie Chan, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Steven Seagal and Jet Li are mentioned. But few times have I heard the name David Carradine get the respect and honor he deserves in the martial-arts world and community.

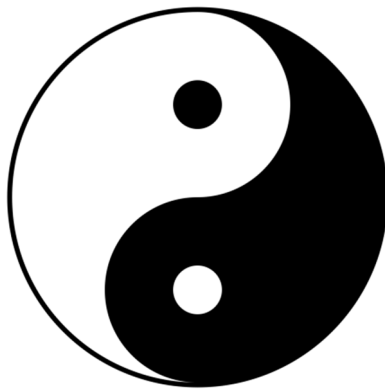
Now, David wasn't without a mouth, controversy or contempt for those who practiced martial arts. David was a kind of rebel, an outsider, who liked to experiment and learn things

in his own way. Here are some words David expressed about his experience in the ‘Kung Fu’ series and about his contemporary, Chuck Norris:

When David realized ‘Kung Fu’ was going to be a blockbuster-success, “Man, I read that pilot script and flipped! But I never believed it would get on T.V. I mean, a Chinese Western, about a half-Chinese/half-American Buddhist monk who enters the gold rush country, but doesn’t care about gold; and defends the oppressed, but won’t carry a gun. And won’t even step on an ant because he values all life, and hardly ever speaks? No way!” (David, 2019).

On his not too kind words about Aikido and Chuck Norris, “How deep can you get into aikido? Aikido’s aikido. Chuck Norris, as you know, has a very heavy competitive background. He’s originally trained in Tang Soo Do, then what he did was competition Karate. Chuck is very fast and very precise. I think he’s really good. But I don’t think that the whole thing that is Kung-fu is even touched on by any of these guys. I just think all they’re into is what they know about fighting and their movie mystique. I don’t think these guys know anything about the history, the philosophy, the inner truth you’re supposed to be searching for. The stuff that we try to do in Kung Fu, which we did in the old series. That’s why, I decided to do it again. It just seemed like nobody’s got the assets. They all thought it was a question of kicking and punching.” (David, 2019).

And indeed he did it again, as he revived the series to run ‘Kung Fu: The Legend Continues’ for another four years (1993 - 1997). He didn’t only continue with the original formula for success, but made it better. However, what is necessary to comprehend, David wasn’t a formal martial artist. He literally ‘faked it, till he made it!’ For the ‘Kung Fu’ t.v. show, he used his former training as a dancer to be able to look good for the camera, while performing his Kung-fu moves. He later would come to practice the art and try to live by its code-with all his tumultuous lifestyle. He would become the embodiment of the art itself and it is what he is mostly remembered for. R.I.P.



The Chinese philosophy of Ying & Yang was created in the 3rd Century Before the Common Era (B.C.E.). Thanks to the cosmologist, Zou Yen who believed that life went in five phrases (wuxing): earth, wind, fire, wood & water

VI. What happened in China?

Why did Kung-fu gradually decline in China and throughout? It didn’t only occur after 1949, but it was way before. The Qing Dynasty (1644 - 1911) saw the dangers of this art expanding and with many of the abuses committed in China against the gentry, there was a fear

people might use these deadly arts against foreigners, merchants, landowners, nobles and royals alike in search for justice or revenge. Therefore, by an imperial decree, Kung-fu was limited on to the Shaolin Monks in Henan and even that was limited or not taught at all during some point. Kung-fu began its slow decline across China, until it nearly disappeared.

Stepping into the 19th Century, what kept it alive [the martial art] was that Chinese expats still practiced it within their communities for self-defense against bullies. However, it would never be exposed to foreign elements. Because knowingly, the art could be used against Chinese and China during that precarious time.

Still, by the early 20th Century, Kung-fu didn't completely die out. It remained an active part of Chinese-daily life in Guangdong Province and later Hong Kong under British rule. One of the biggest reasons for learning it in the latter territory was self-defense against bullies, gangsters and British prejudices during that period in history. There was also another factor in the matter, foreigners stationed in China did learn the art secretly. There weren't many who learned, but a selected few and even less did pass this down to others. This was one of the reasons for it to not completely die out.

It further came to a closure in China, when after 1949 the country completely eliminated the art for a 30-year period. One of the reasons, it was considered a 'waste of time' and something of 'bad influence'. Here is where something of great patrimonial influence was nearly wiped out as dangerous and almost forgotten by the 'Baby Boomers' being born during the 1950s and early 1960s. It wouldn't come back till the beginning of the 1980s (Quora, n.d.)

It was treated in Mainland China more like a relic of the past and schools closed/disappeared entirely. The only way to practice Martial Arts in China was through utter secrecy in those days.

So, what happened was, it was only limited to Hong Kong and Chinese communities outside of China. Little by little, the new generation coming about in the 1950s and 1960s were replacing Kung-fu for other Western elements. Boxing, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, cha-cha, mambo and other forms were making their impact on Chinese values in Hong Kong. It did affect the traditional way of life for the older generation, while the new one wanted to forget completely about the past and embrace Western culture.

Here was where people like Master Yip Man came into the picture. Master Yip a staunch traditionalist who taught the young Bruce Lee. But like many traditionalist, he believed the art ought to be a secret to outsiders and only for Chinese. Bruce learned the art or at least one form of it [Wing Chun] and later took it Stateside. From this simple fact, the art did expand.

Upon Bruce Lee's passing, it was David Carradine who continued to make it an art form and way of life. With no prior knowledge of Kung-fu, Mister Carradine would learn this particular martial way and make it part of his existence for the rest of his life.

Kung-fu expanded in a commercial way. It became also spiritually and a fighting system learned throughout the United States during and after the 1970s.

United States was one of the focal points in the expansion of the art thanks to these two men. But it wasn't the only country, it went far and wide. Impacting in places like: Europe, Africa and South America.

In the meantime, for decades Kung-fu languished in Mainland China. Nothing came of it till the 1980s, when China started opening-up again. The arts came back on the rise, especially

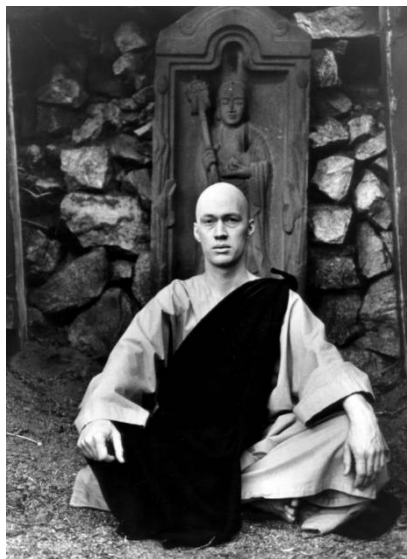
after the 1990s. But in actuality, it wasn't Kung-fu the martial art of popular choice. What became very popular in China was Boxing, Maui Thai, MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) and Taekwondo (Szczepanski, 2019).

Kung-fu wouldn't make a serious comeback in China till after 2010, when schools and teachers began to sprout again across the country. The art was taught, but other foreign martial arts came into the picture, as stated in the paragraph above. It was then [Kung-fu] incorporated as a practicing-exercise tool in public and private schools; making a return for the masses to enjoy once again.



The emblem of 'Jeet Kune Do' (The way of the intercepting fist) is the Taijitu.
The latter above representing Ying & Yang in this hybrid martial-art form created by Bruce Lee

Presently, so popular it has become, that now there are annual Wushu competitions on T.V.; making it something cultural for all to watch, have fun and never forget.



David Carradine in the character Kwain Chang Caine. 'Kung Fu' T.V. series (1972 - 1975), ABC (American Broadcasting Company)

VII. Conclusion

It is without a doubt that Bruce Lee, like David Carradine made huge contributions to the art of Kung-fu. They weren't only responsible for its proliferation, as mentioned before

countless times. The art took hold in America and worldwide, it spread thanks to these two men.

There was the sad reality, that at one point Kung-fu nearly disappeared! This fact cannot be denied nor disputed. However, would it have disappeared entirely in China or without the help of Bruce and David? In truth, I don't think so. China created this martial art thanks to an Indian monk and through the millenniums its popularity went forward to grow and enrich a society. Countries through East and Southeast Asia developed their own fighting systems. But I deeply believe, it was downright thanks to China's influence in certain cultures and societies outside of the Mainland. Other martial arts did grow and take off. What people, especially foreigners couldn't learn from China--often they learned/picked-up from the martial ways in Japan, South Korea or Thailand.

An art almost nearly extinguished in China, made its rise to stay as a cultural element and phenomenon once again in Chinese society. Today is it that meaningful and important, that when a retired MMA fighter, Xu Xiaodong in a bout gave beating to a Tai-chi Master, Wei Lei, the incident was taken seriously nationally and people took it deeply personal. It didn't happen only once, but twice and here the MMA fighter was ostracized from doing any public matches/performances, etc (Wing, 2017; Atkin, 2019).

People have to calm down and see [a certain martial art] for what it's worth. Evaluate what is good or not so good for them. A martial art's validity will only depend on its user and that the way of Tao isn't for public displays, but for self-defense against those who want to harm self and others.

Now, with the previous social closure of China, the country has made its own comeback in the martial arts world to be on top once again. It is a fever that is literally on fire! However, it must undo the past mistakes; because today, other martial arts are more popular in China than Kung-fu itself. The older generation delight themselves in the way of Tai-chi presently. It will be up to China to continue promoting and teaching Kung-fu for the following generations to come.

Nobody could have ever dreamed of what these two men created [Bruce Lee & David Carradine] and continues long after their deaths. It is a methodology, a way of life and practice which shouldn't only belong to China, but for the international community to fully enjoy and understand.

Is Kung-fu meant for peace? I strongly believe Kung-fu is a way to bring people together from all over the world in a friendly and in good-spirited competition. That it is part of the patrimony of China, without a doubt. But without Bruce Lee or David Carradine, Kung-fu may as well had come to a halt in certain aspects. The two latter sentences are facts which should never be forgotten or disputed.

The fact that it almost disappeared from China isn't a criticism, but to confirm that it happened in history during a period of time. Now, it's up to the following generations of Chinese to never forget where this art came from and continue honing it for all (Chinese or non-Chinese alike).

For Bruce Lee, honors still continue to be bestowed upon him, even after his death. Whether it's through the 2019 T.V. series, 'Warrior' [which he influenced in its creation through his writings] or to be ridiculed-mocked in the film, 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood'

(Tropper, 2019). Bruce will continue to be remembered long after, as the greatest influence for martial arts and martial artists for all time.

Without a doubt, Bruce and David did something great. Leaving an undeniable mark in the martial arts world and silver screen for generations to come.

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