

CONTRIBUTORS

Swen Körner is a Professor of Pedagogy at German Sport University Cologne and Head of the Institute of Pedagogy and Philosophy. His work covers various aspects of martial arts, self-defense, police use of force, and conflict management.

Mario S. Staller is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Applied Sciences of Public Administration North-Rhine-Westphalia. His work covers various aspects of martial arts, self-defense, and police use of force training aiming at understanding and professionalizing current practices in these domains. His research focuses on disentangling influencing factors within real-world conflict situations in order to equip professional practitioners with the tools necessary to cope with conflict.

*Benjamin N. Judkins is co-editor of the journal Martial Arts Studies and a Visiting Scholar at the Cornell University East Asia Program. With Jon Nielson, he is co-author of *The Creation of Wing Chun: A Social History of the Southern Chinese Martial Arts* (SUNY, 2015). He is also the author of the long-running martial arts studies blog, *Kung Fu Tea: Martial Arts History, Wing Chun and Chinese Martial Studies* (www.chinesemartialstudies.com).*

THE CREATION OF WING TSUN: A GERMAN CASE STUDY

SWEN KÖRNER, MARIO S. STALLER & BENJAMIN N. JUDKINS

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ABSTRACT

Ip Man's immigration to Hong Kong in 1949, followed by Bruce Lee's sudden fame as a martial arts superstar after 1971, ensured that *wing chun kung fu*, a previously obscure hand combat style from Guangdong Province, would become one of the most globally popular Chinese martial arts. Yet this success has not been evenly distributed. Despite its cultural and geographic distance from Hong Kong, Germany now boasts a number of wing chun practitioners that is second only to China. The following article draws on the prior work of Judkins and Nielson [2015], as well as on systems theory, to understand possible reasons for why this is the case. Drawing on both local historical sources and various theoretical approaches, we outline which constellations, structures, and semantic strategies proved decisive.

INTRODUCTION

Wing chun is one of only a few well-known Chinese martial arts to succeed within the global marketplace.¹ Bruce Lee's rise to superstardom in the early 1970s, and the commercial success of the more recent *Ip Man* films (beginning with Wilson Ip's 2008 biopic) have done much to promote this once obscure southern Chinese fighting style.² Unfortunately, our scholarly understanding of this phenomenon has not kept pace with its rapid popular expansions. As with other Chinese martial arts, it often seems that the popular folklore associated with these practices is taken at face value, even within more serious discussions.³ This results in fundamental misunderstandings about the nature and significance of these arts.

Judkins and Nielson's 2015 study, *The Creation of Wing Chun: A Social History of the Southern Chinese Martial Arts*, was the first scholarly monograph to explore the development and global spread of these practices, as well as their evolving place in both regional and national identity. This work posited that the success of this fighting system is best understood as a result of complex social transformations which were set in motion by Southern China's sudden (and sometimes violent) exposure to the global economy starting in the early 19th century. The authors then argued that, during the later 20th century, wing chun once again connected with new audiences by advancing streams of communication that spoke directly to the social and cultural dislocations of globalization [Judkins & Nielson 2015: 270ff].

According to Judkins and Nielson, Ip Man is perhaps the most famous wing chun 'grandmaster' and pioneer, and they postulate

1 A note on the spelling of a key term is necessary. 'Wing chun' (Cantonese) or 'Yǒng Chūn' (Mandarin) is a Southern Chinese hand combat tradition (comprised of multiple lineages) which emerged in the Pearl River Delta region of Guangdong during the late 19th century [Judkins and Nielson 2015]. 'Wing Tsun' refers to a specific style of wing chun successfully promoted by the EWTO in Germany from the late 1970s. This article provides readers with a historical discussion of Wing Tsun (a specific school) in an effort to explain the current popularity of wing chun (a more diverse style) in Germany today.

2 While wing chun previously appeared in a number of kung fu films (*Invincible Shaolin* and *Warriors Two*, both released in 1978) and Chinese television programs (*Wing Chun* [1998]), these more recent, widely distributed, films have done much to shape the style's popular image in the West. Herman Yao's *Ip Man: The Final Fight* (2013) and Wong Kar Wai's *The Grandmaster* (2013) are especially noteworthy in that they won critical acclaim while expanding the reach of wing chun within global markets.

3 Note, for instance, the trenchant criticisms made by Stanley Henning in his classic article 'On the Politically Correct Treatment of Myths in the Chinese Martial Arts' [1995].

that close study of his work will yield insights for students of martial arts studies regarding how a parochial fighting system could be consciously repositioned within a global context. Forced to flee to British-controlled Hong Kong by the Communist advance in 1949, Ip Man had to reevaluate what his art had to offer, as well as the cultural and commercial strategies necessary to succeed within a modern, cosmopolitan, marketplace [226]. His customers, mainly young men, needed practical tools to compete in the contemporary world of rooftop fights. Yet, student retention proved to be a persistent challenge, as Hong Kong's economy and cityscape offered many distractions and little stability. Confronting the realities of this new environment, Ip Man changed both the ways that he taught and described his art. His sons, who were familiar with the more traditional teaching methods of Guangdong, reported being surprised by these innovations after they themselves managed to escape the mainland and join their father in Hong Kong in the mid-1960s [256].

Indeed, modes of communication dominate Judkins and Nielson's arguments about wing chun's success in the global marketplace [277ff]. Building on Peter Beyer's discussions of the changing place of religious institutions within a globalized world [Beyer 2000], we propose that two distinct modes of communication can be detected within the modern wing chun movement. The first of these can be termed *transcendent communication*, which allows for the exploration of issues like tradition, origin, and collective identity. In contrast, what might be called *immanent strategies of communication* emphasize wing chun's ability to address the more concrete secondary problems that emerge in periods of rapid economic or social change. These might include the perceived need for self-defense, a community that allows students to engage in social networking, or a type of exercise that staves off increased instances of 'lifestyle diseases'. Immanence thus stands for wing chun's material and individual benefits. On the other hand, transcendent approaches to the martial arts tend to be favored by individuals who are primarily motivated by a need to establish or defend more fundamental notions of individual or group identity. They emphasize the creation of fundamental social meanings.

In their epilogue, Judkins and Nielson remind readers that both modes of communication are available to modern martial artists and can be seen to varying degrees in any and every community. Indeed, this rhetorical flexibility has been key to the success of such supposedly 'traditional' institutions in the modern world. Judkins and Nielson further note that both the overall success of the wing chun movement, as well as the emergence of debates that sometimes threaten to fracture the community, can largely be explained through the adoption (or rejection) of strategies based on these 'immanent / transcendent' modes of social communication.

While most of their research focused on events in either China, Hong Kong, or the United States of America, their theory suggests that this same dialectical competition within the wing chun community will manifest itself in other places as well. It should help to explain the unique characteristics that wing chun takes on as it becomes localized in different national markets. It may even describe the situation in Germany, which might be thought of as a critical test of their theory. After all, the largest wing chun enclave in the world outside of Hong Kong and mainland China was established there during the 1970s and 1980s under the brand name of *Wing Tsun*.

While wing chun has proved to be popular everywhere, Germany seems to constitute a special case. How did this Southern Chinese practice become so well established so quickly? After all, Bruce Lee's films were not more popular there than they were in other Western European nations. And many of these states had longstanding colonial and economic relationships with parts of Asia, as well as preexisting martial arts communities. The present article outlines a number of relevant factors which may help to solve this puzzle. Drawing on both local historical sources and theoretical approaches, we explore which constellations, structures, and semantic strategies proved decisive.

OUR THEORY

To explore these issues, we turn first to social systems theory. It suggests that the success of wing chun in Germany may be the result of difference-based communication strategies. Following Luhmann, we formally define communication as a transmission of information that finds a social connection [Luhmann 1984; Körner 2008]. In our model, this takes place on two levels. On the first level, we refer to wing chun as a mode of physical communication established through the concrete and practical interaction of fighting bodies. The second level is analytically- and textually-oriented. This level includes the entire body of published works and media representations that surround the community. More specifically, it comprises any type of communication that situates wing chun within the scope of discursive practices. Because these two levels are mutually constitutive, they must be analyzed together [Bowman 2014, 2015].

We relate the communication of both levels to their potential for unfolding social dynamics, but we replace the differentiation between transcendent and immanent strategies as outlined by Judkins and Nielson with a more general distinction of 'internal' and 'external'. This dichotomy is less weighted with religious connotations and thus

seems a better fit for the German case.⁴ Whilst an emphasis on internal communication allows for the creation of a more closed and 'inward looking' wing chun network (one that will likely focus on what might be termed 'identity work'), the external mode of communication opens wing chun up to contemporary social needs. In this later case, meaning is established through identifying and addressing the sorts of practical and material problems that modernity and economic globalization have created. In that sense, the fundamental structure of our argument remains similar to the one outlined by Peter Beyer [2000].

The body of our analysis focuses on events and publications that date to the founding decade of the German wing chun community. As in other states, the practice began to take root in the mid-1970s. Our analysis is therefore deliberately selective and incomplete. We will return to reflect on these limitations at the end of the article.

According to the underlying premises of social system theory, wing chun is best understood as a practice of communication. As such, it must reckon with the usual improbability thresholds that go along with communication in general [Luhmann 1984]. That is, in order to succeed on any level, the transmitted information has (1) to arrive (the problem of accessibility), (2) be understood (the problem of understanding), (3) evoke approval (the problem of acceptance), and (4) be kept (the problem of commitment). Luhmann's improbability thresholds of communication provide the formal structure for the following analysis.

ACCESSIBILITY AND UNDERSTANDING

In order to become globally accessible, wing chun, originally based in the Pearl River Delta region of the Southern Chinese Province of Guangdong, needed to find a channel of communication. Thus, the first barrier was the political geography of travel and trade in the post-war years of the mid 20th century. Simply put, the modes of social communication that were derived from most Chinese folk practices did not spread into the global marketplace, as they enjoyed no (or very limited) access to this system of commercial and cultural exchange during the early years of Communist rule on the mainland.

4 This is not to say that wing chun is never experienced in spiritual terms or seen as a replacement for more conventional religious modes of association by its Western students. Other scholars have already addressed this trend within English-speaking countries. See Jennings, Brown and Sparkes [2010]. Such discussions are even more common in the Daoist-focused sections of the taijiquan community [Phillips 2016].

Ip Man's move in 1949 from the relatively small city of Foshan to British-controlled Hong Kong (a major shipping nexus within the global trade system) fundamentally changed the fate of this martial art. Still, wing chun's eventual success in Germany was far from an inevitability. Quoting Ip Man's younger son, Ip Ching, Judkins and Nielson note that while wing chun enjoyed more than its fair share of students from middle class families it was really the underdevelopment of Hong Kong's higher education sector that set the stage for the art's subsequent spread through the global system [Judkins and Nielson 2015: 272-273].

Several of Ip Man's students and grand-students (Moy Yat, William Cheung, Duncan Leung, Hawkins Cheung, Augustine Fong, Kenneth Chung, Ben Der, etc.) began to emigrate to the West in the 1950s and 1960s to attend universities and/or to seek employment. Of course, the best-known member of this wave of students was Bruce Lee, who brought his own approach to wing chun to the West Coast of the United States. Unsurprisingly, much of the discussion of wing chun's global success focuses on both Lee's cultural legacies and the American case.

Yet, it was a single individual of non-Chinese descent who established Germany's contact with Hong Kong-based wing chun in 1975, and who was responsible for much of the subsequent growth of this community. Although it was Lee Sing who first brought wing chun to London, and thus to Europe, in 1956 [Kernspecht 2013a: 91], wing chun's establishment in Germany is closely linked to the name of Keith R. Kernspecht [1945-present]. In the mid-1970s, Kernspecht became the first European student of Master Leung Ting, a wing chun practitioner from Hong Kong. While Leung Ting has been the focus of some controversy over the years [cf. Chiu 2010], he is often accepted as being one of the last students to study directly with Ip Man [Kernspecht 2013a: 85; Leung 2003: 163-187].

In 1976, Kernspecht founded the European Wing Tsun Organization (EWTO) as a division of the Wing Tsun GmbH, an independent limited company in Kiel. Thus, from the start, German commercial law structured the creation of a corporate entity focused primarily on the provision of commercial services related to martial arts and self-defense training. As in the case of Ip Man's earlier reforms in Hong Kong, the Wing Tsun of the EWTO reached the public through the social structures of market based *economic communication*: services and a specific training schedule were transmitted in exchange for monetary payments. The person behind the development of this specific pedagogical structure was the then-31-year-old Keith Kernspecht. In addition to solving the basic problem of accessibility, he also provided the specific framework that would make Wing Tsun communication understandable (and deeply attractive) to German martial artists.

Aspirations, however, would not be enough. Dedicated channels of domestic communication were necessary to realize Kernspecht's larger goals. An essential step towards the dissemination and popularization of Wing Tsun in Germany was taken with the creation of an EWTO-owned publishing house in 1976. In the same year, the *Wushu Verlag Westdeutschland* (Wushu West-Germany Publishing House) published the first book about wing chun in German.⁵ The author of this volume (*Wing Tsun Kung Fu*) was Leung Ting. Kernspecht, his student and the EWTO Founder, provided the translation.

Once the press was established, several other publications arrived in quick succession, effectively monopolizing the small domestic market for wing chun texts. In 1977, Kernspecht released *Kung Fu – Praktische chinesische Selbstverteidigung (Kung Fu – Practical Chinese Self-Defense)*, followed by translations of Ting's basic work *Wing Tsun Kuen* in 1981 and 1982. Perhaps most significantly, Kernspecht's iconic *Vom Zweikampf (About Fighting)*⁶ was published in 1987. This volume is now in its 17th edition and has been translated into four languages [*Wing Tsun Welt*, no. 24 2000: 3]. Few other publications on the subject have achieved this same level of popularity.

This corporately-owned publishing house also provided a range of German translations of Chinese language sources on the practice of wing chun. At the same time, it served as the central marketing and distribution hub of the EWTO brand. Thus, the EWTO made the message of Wing Tsun more generally available to German consumers. More than other fighting systems in Germany at this time, the EWTO created a unique communication channel for establishing contact with martial artists who may have been interested in this Chinese style (wing chun) and its products, then sought to convert them into committed students and members of the organization.

The EWTO's sophisticated communication strategies went beyond publishing books for the general public. The magazine *Wing Tsun Welt (Wing Tsun World)* released its first issue in 1982 (it now appears

5 To put these dates in context, the first English language book on wing chun, written by R. Clausnitzer and Greco Wong, was published in the UK in 1969. Perhaps the best-known manual of the art, James Yimm Lee's slim volume **Wing Chun Kung-Fu: The Chinese Art of Self Defense** [Ohara 1972] had been released four years earlier. Finally, several years later, Bruce Lee's landmark appearance in the 1973 box office hit **Enter the Dragon** made kung fu a household word and created widespread demand for wing chun training throughout Europe and North America.

6 This is sometimes encountered in an English language edition titled **On Single Combat** [Wu Shu Verlag Kernspecht; 3rd English language edition, 1997].

annually). Despite their external dissemination efforts, however, the EWTO seemed to operate with an eye towards 'internal closure': accessible only to those readers who were already members ('Over 60 Local Groups or Schools' [WT Welt No. 1 1982: 25]), the magazine focused on the cultivation and dissemination of descriptions of an idealized EWTO community within the EWTO itself.

This inward-looking rhetoric notwithstanding, *Wing Tsun Welt* continued to regularly deliver the types of information necessary for the organization's membership to accomplish their goals. The stated occasion for the creation of *Wing Tsun Welt* was the 'ten-year anniversary of our martial arts in Germany' [WT Welt 1 1982]. At first, this assertion appears to be mistaken. Apparently, the jubilee was calculated through a generous rounding of the years 1970-1975 when Kernspecht learned from Joseph Cheng in London (Cheng was a student of the previously mentioned European wing chun pioneer Lee Sing). All of this occurred before Kernspecht became a disciple of Leung Ting [Kernspecht 2013a: 91].

Hence our preliminary conclusion: The massive growth of wing chun in Germany should be understood as a direct consequence of the founding of the EWTO in 1976. If one were to model the EWTO as sitting at the intersection of converging streams of communication, two levels can be distinguished. On the first level, wing chun appears as an embodied system of communication between a group of fighting persons whose bodies and movements recursively refer to each other – until the end of a training sequence, fight, or educational curriculum has been reached. Socially, this level of embodied communication is marked by internal closure. It perpetuates and seeks to reproduce the air of secrecy seen in certain traditional Chinese practices and which is often taken to denote 'authenticity' and legitimacy in Western market contexts. While the EWTO always maintains a public presence, in some sense the door to the training room remains firmly closed. It can only be opened to those who actually expose themselves to physical practice and hence interaction.

The EWTO simultaneously adopts a second discursive strategy. On this second level, wing chun is the subject of textual- and media-based modes of communication. Through its own publishing house, the EWTO publishes books and magazines. The organization bears the costs of production and distribution and oversees both quality control and the selection of content. In that way, it has played an important role in controlling the spread of German language information relating to wing chun and determining the general accessibility of different sources.

As we have already seen, *WT Welt* is available only to those who are already members. And even the EWTO's other communication

strategies, which are open to 'outsiders', are characterized by a high degree of self-reference. This rhetorical strategy, when paired with the newness of the practice, allowed a relatively young organization, located outside of China and founded by a European, to quickly establish a high degree of legitimacy by creating a field of communication in which it would sit perpetually at the center. Indeed, this textual strategy displaced other traditional centers of authenticity that one would have found in martial arts communities in Hong Kong or South East Asia. In an early European environment where individuals worried about the authenticity of their practice, this constant signaling of the organization's legitimacy would have provided a solid anchor.

Since its inception in 1976, the EWTO has been operating in the double sense of the genitive: communication over wing tsun vs. wing tsun as communication. (It hegmonized both the practice of wing chun, the sorts of embodied messages that one could express, as well as what it was possible to say, and even imagine, about wing chun in a more public or mediatized framework.) This strategy has proven very effective. It instills a notable degree of unity within the understanding and actions of its members as they come to share a common set of goals, it allows the organization to influence the production of external self-images (what others think and say about the group and their practice), and it connects the organization with solvent and teachable customers. However, that potential students can be reached and images of Wing Tsun can be crafted through a variety of media outlets is not enough to explain the organization's success or the subsequent growth of their art. There must be some precise reason why students during the 1970s and 1980s found the specific communications of EWTO Wing Tsun desirable and wished to pay for extensive training. To be a successful organization, the EWTO needed a membership. That can only be gained by expansion through outward focused strategies. This leads us to the third and fourth improbability thresholds of communication [Luhmann 1984], the issues of acceptance and commitment.

ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT

One cannot analyze the growth of the EWTO without considering the unique constellation of internal and external conditions that explain the communicative success of wing chun in Germany. From the middle of the 1970s and early 1980s, the EWTO proactively framed the practice of wing chun in ways that provided answers to the pressing social questions of the era. Much of this was accomplished through a strategy of 'product differentiation' in which the EWTO stressed the unique aspects of wing chun in comparison to existing martial arts and sports. Our analysis proceeds as an examination of the organization's inner semantics and rhetorical strategies, which contained models designed to

promote acceptance of, and commitment to, the new practice. We then relate these orientations to the larger socio-structural developments of this period of German history.

Practical Orientation

Within the realm of *practical* discussion, the EWTO immediately set to work establishing a phenomenal, programmatic, and organizational distance between itself and what was commonly available in Germany in the 1960s and early 1970s. At that point, the German athletic landscape was dominated by Japanese (judo) and Korean (taekwondo) martial arts, as well as Western boxing, wrestling, and fencing. Each of these better-established communities had adopted a similar *organizational* approach and were constituted as non-profit sports with constitutionally anchored autonomy vis-à-vis the state. The EWTO, on the other hand, eschewed any relationship with the traditional non-profit sports sector. It was founded purely as a business enterprise.

Phenomenally, wing chun was introduced as a close-contact-fighting system, containing special ‘ingenious and effective’ [Kernspecht 1982: 9] training exercises such as the rolling or sticking hands (*chi sau*), which emphasized the importance of tactile sensitivity in fighting [Ting 1989: 390; Kernspecht 1994: 126]. The ‘chain punch’ (a sequence of quickly delivered straight punches) also gained fame as a core technique of the system. This was explained as an operationalization of the (para-) military principle of attacking opponents by a fast course of repetitive actions [Kernspecht 1994: 91ff]. *Programmatically*, the EWTO was able to draw a clear line separating wing chun as a ‘self-defense art’ and the other ‘combat sports’ like judo or boxing that dominated the German landscape. The EWTO’s communicative strategy framed wing chun as a martial art through the extension of claims that it was primarily an ‘effective’ form of self-defense [WT Welt 1982: 9].

From the start, the EWTO defined wing chun’s identity by emphasizing what it is not. In addition to the distinction of ‘true’ wing chun / ‘not true’ wing chun (a rhetorical strategy seen in the popular discussion of several Chinese martial arts), the EWTO has drawn a sharp line within the diversity of existing wing chun styles and lineages [Hirneise & Pertl 1988]. For example, the first edition of the magazine *WT Welt* exposed a Spanish master who had claimed to possess the ‘10th master degree’ as ‘not genuine’ [WT Welt No.1, 1982: 16].⁷ If true, the Spanish master

7 It should be noted that, traditionally, Chinese martial arts were organized around systems of lineage descent and seniority that reflected the organization of the family and clan structure. The importation of ‘degrees’ or colored sashes into these systems is a recent (post-1970s) development inspired by the prior success of systems like karate and judo. It goes without saying that Ip Man and the other masters of his generation did not claim (or seek to explain their careers through the accumulation of) belt ranks. However, these ranking systems are now commonly encountered in the schools of Chinese styles that have localized in the West.

might have been perceived by potential students as better-qualified than the founder of the EWTO. Early authors within the popular German language literature also sought to emphasize the distinctions between wing chun and the other Asian martial arts. Of course, these styles were the EWTO’s main commercial rivals. The differences between wing chun and karate, for instance, were a central subject of the first wing chun book published in 1976, as well as articles in the first issue of *WT Welt* [1982].

The creation and repeated emphasis of these distinctions encouraged German readers to imagine the art in simple binary terms. One must practice either wing chun or karate. One’s lineage of wing chun is either authentic (descendent from Ip Man through Leung Ting) or inauthentic (and possibly fraudulent). In each case, the EWTO rhetorically positioned itself on the normatively positive side of the distinction [Spang 2001: 16]. The fact that the EWTO introduced wing chun to Germany under the brand name of Wing Tsun was a deliberate demarcation strategy expressing its reformative approach in opposition to traditional ‘Ving Tsun or wing chun’ [Kernspecht 2013a: 111].

The pattern of normative self-placement is also illustrated in the first issue of the organization’s magazine, in which great emphasis is placed on new students discontinuing the study and/or practice of any other fighting system(s) on the grounds of the absolute superiority of EWTO’s Wing Tsun. Under the heading ‘On the Incompatibility of Wing Tsun and Karate Lessons’ [WT Welt No. 1, 1982: 25], it is stated: ‘Karate, Taekwondo, Ju-Jutsu etc. athletes enjoy[ing] the logical and practical Wing Tsun (WT) method’ is encouraged, but these words of encouragement are followed by a warning that ‘the retrainee [should] no longer practice his old style of fighting’ and should instead ‘concentrate exclusively on Wing Tsun (WT)’. This same article attempts to ameliorate the socially isolating effects of such language by going on to brag about the successful retraining of ‘several thousand former Budoka’ [ibid.].

Nor were the students of Japanese arts in Germany the only ones slated for reeducation. In another piece, a student’s journey ‘From Taekwondoka to wing chun’ was explored. Articles such as these appear to have self-consciously modeled a standardized narrative of disillusionment and conversion to be shared among new wing chun students. The subjects universally regretted their previous training after realizing that ‘the techniques I have practiced confidently for years have been ineffective against Wing Tsun’ [ibid.: 12].

While highly self-referential, and in many ways circular, these articles helped to establish a common discourse within the new body of German wing chun students. Indeed, the success of the EWTO in creating a closed and hegemonic narrative around Wing Tsun is an important factor in understanding why the early history of wing chun

progressed differently in Germany than in other areas of the world.

For instance, in the United States there were many teachers who had studied either with Ip Man himself or with one of his senior students. Each of these individuals was free to establish his own interpretation of the art. Further, the anti-authoritarian views and radical pedagogy advocated by Bruce Lee, perhaps the most famous early practitioner of the art in the USA, would have complicated a campaign like that employed by the EWTO [Lee 1971, 1975]. This is not to say that certain North American teachers did not agree with them on many of these points. In the larger and more competitive North American marketplace, though, it was impossible for any one school or philosophy to totally dominate the public discussion and practice of the style.

Of course, Bruce Lee was also an important force in German popular culture. In 1974, *Der Mann mit der Todeskralle* (*Enter the Dragon*) was the 11th highest grossing film in the country (beaten only by such blockbusters as *Der Exorzist* [*The Exorcist*, 1973], *Emanuelle* [1974], and *Ein Mann sieht rot* [*Death Wish*, 1974]), selling 1.7 million tickets.⁸ As with audiences elsewhere, German viewers marveled at Lee's charisma, his stunning physical development, and the seeming efficiency of his fighting techniques. This last trait was cinematically staged through careful fight choreography and the logic of action film storytelling. Yet, to audiences at the time, it felt 'real' [Bowman 2010].

One wonders, though, whether Lee's films were understood by German audiences as emphasizing the differences between his own brand of kung fu and the other Asian martial arts which were more commonly taught. Lee's character in *Enter the Dragon* clearly put more emphasis on individual attainment rather than following the strictures of style. That lesson seems to dominate the later part of his career. This was masterfully illustrated on screen when he teaches a lesson to a boorish individual who taunted him with the pointed question 'What's your style?' It seems more likely, however, that many moviegoers were more captivated with the grand spectacle of Han's secret martial arts tournament pitting schools and styles against each other.

The potential of the Chinese martial arts for facilitating social resistance or encouraging individual triumph was the central theme in all of Lee's films. This message resonated with German audiences and Lee's films all ended up in the top 20 for the year of their respective releases (1973 *Todesgrüße aus Shanghai* [*Fist of Fury*] with 1.2 million viewers and 16th place, 1975 *Die Todeskralle schlägt wieder zu* [*Way of the Dragon*] with 1.5

million / 12th place).⁹

The worldwide kung fu craze, triggered by Lee [Bowman 2010, 2013], captivated the Republic immediately after the 'fat' years of the German economic boom. While the limits of economic growth and the culmination of the 1970s social problems loomed on the horizon, the scope of Germany's 'leisure culture' continued to expand. 60% of gross household income was spent on food in the early 1960s, by the mid-1970s things felt very different for the average family. Within a decade, incomes doubled and food bills slipped to only 40% of household expenditures [BpB 2002]. This increase in income triggered growth across the leisure sector of the economy. According to data from Emnid, average household leisure spending increased by 25% between 1969 and 1982 [ibid.].

This was a tide that lifted all ships. Everything connected with sports and athletics benefited from these economic trends. Between 1970 and 1987, the number of members in the German Sports Federation doubled, expanding from 10 to 20 million individuals [BpB 2002]. German consumers not only had the disposable income to watch Bruce Lee in the cinema, they had enough money left over to look for instruction in Chinese kung fu.

Lee's cultural importance can be seen in a number of ways. References to Lee were omnipresent during the founding years of the EWTO, including in the very first German language publication, Leung Ting's *Wing Tsun Kung Fu* [1976; see also later, Kernspecht 2013a: 282]. Of course, this is not unique to Germany or even to the 1970s. Lee has always been a critical, if sometimes polarizing, figure within the global wing chun community. Nonetheless, early German language publications made a point of emphasizing the triangular relationship between Ip Man, Bruce Lee, and wing chun [Ting 1976; *WT Welt* 1982: 6], and there is no doubt that this helped the EWTO's advertising efforts, as Lee's association with wing chun was something that no other Chinese art could claim.

Other, more domestic, social trends must also be considered. The 1970s were characterized by a rapid acceptance of feminism within German society. It is not implausible that Bruce Lee was adopted as a role model by adolescent males at least in part because models of masculinity were in flux. Lee thus served as a subcultural protagonist of male identity development. By extension, the wing chun system could be seen as speaking directly to transcendent aspects of personal and group identity which were coming under threat.

8 <http://www.insidekino.com/DJahr/D1974.htm>

9 <http://www.insidekino.com/DJahr/D1973.htm>; <http://www.insidekino.com/DJahr/D1975.htm>

This aspect of the wing chun discourse had other important resonances as well. Defined as self-defense, wing chun explicitly addresses the phenomenon of interpersonal violence. That too touched on the larger social ills which were just appearing on the horizon at the moment of the EWTO's creation. Social violence was an omnipresent subject in Germany in the 1970s. The public increasingly feared both terror from the outside (e.g. the 1972 terrorist attacks) and the growth of domestic threats such as the Red Army Faction (also known as the Baader-Meinhof Group). And there were more mundane threats to consider as well. Period crime statistics reveal a notable increase in all types of civil offenses [Birkel & Thome 2004: 110].

In summary, the EWTO's early discourses offered individuals multiple strategies to understand both their personal challenges and fundamental identity in a moment of rapid social change. It claimed to provide very practical solutions for the era's crisis of repressed masculinity and the widespread perception of increasing violence. All of this would fall within in the realm of 'immanent communication' according to the framework laid out by Judkins and Nielson.

On the other hand, Wing Tsun as crafted by EWTO created two additional dyads of potential conflict. The first was designed to differentiate it from other wing chun styles, schools, or lineages. But, above all else, the EWTO sought to rhetorically stand above other martial arts and combat sports. Gang, fandom, and party researchers [Fuhse 2003] demonstrate that these sorts of manufactured conflicts are an essential mechanism of collective identity formation. The basis of this exercise is the creation of plausible difference. The cognitive and normative orientations in EWTO Wing Tsun sought, at every turn, to announce and accentuate such differences.

Cognitive and Normative Orientations

The EWTO employed other communication strategies to encourage commitment to the newly created Wing Tsun clan. It consciously cultivated the image of being both a highly traditional and 'orthodox' kung fu school as well as a modern fighting art. In a broader sense, it sought to appropriate for itself the great philosophical and ethical traditions of Chinese culture. The EWTO claims to have turned to Confucianism for the blueprint of its social structure. Like other Chinese martial arts associations, it emphasizes the idea of the family throughout its internal organization [Kernspecht 1982; 1994: 266]. The relationship between *sifu* and *today* (i.e. fatherly teacher and pupil), and all other kinship roles, fit surprisingly well within the organizational structure of a modern corporate enterprise. Both are hierarchic and marked by asymmetric systems of responsibility within the organization. Functionally, this kinship model served to hierarchically

structure the legitimacy of all communication within Germany's early wing chun community. It also naturally leads to the asymmetrical distribution of positions of authority: one person leads, all others follow.

While some very traditional martial arts lineages within China still restrict discipleship to immediate family members, instructional or business relationships within the EWTO Wing Tsun clan are rarely based on blood. Nevertheless, they are often explained and understood using quasi-biological concepts. As with a family, once a member, there is no real means of exit. Membership in the formal organization is terminable, but the underlying bond of social responsibility 'does not end with leaving a union, and not even with death' [Kernspecht 2013b]. A father always remains a father. This worldview is also evidenced in other highly traditional Chinese martial arts communities and other types of secret societies. It creates not just a sense of belonging, but also a subtle mechanism for continually strengthening one's commitment to the group. After all, almost everyone has only one father.

This quasi-patriarchal social structure has important implications for the distribution and control of the Wing Tsun curriculum.¹⁰ A letter to the editor of the EWTO's in-house magazine put the question like this: 'What happens if one of your students begins to teach without your blessing and transmits WT techniques?' The EWTO founder replied: 'Apart from the legal consequences ... a brother cannot become the father of his siblings. All his future so-called students are according to general kung-fu intuition my *Today*. I am their *sifu* even if I never meet them ... Irrespective of that, of course, I do not claim the member's monthly school fee' [WT *Welt* 1982: 22]. The business enterprise EWTO adapts a family semantics in which crypto-biology supercodes the legal conditions of modern societies. 'Those who are learning WT enter a world in which other laws prevail, different from the outside' [Kernspecht 1994: 281]. Through its largely invented connections to 'Chinese tradition', the EWTO sought to create its own self-contained society. Its very structure seemed to promise an escape from the mores of mundane European culture through the adoption of a more legitimate and meaningful set of relationships.

As emphasized in both early and recent publications, wing chun is not simply a collection of techniques [Kernspecht 2013a: 171ff]. Rather, it is typically seen as a conceptually driven system of hand combat. Among other sources, the EWTO selectively draws certain principles from Daoism. This practice reflects the common misconception (challenged

¹⁰ For a comparative discussion of how a similar conflict regarding authority and the right to economically profit from the sharing of 'secrets' manifests itself within the global taijiquan community, see Frank [2014].

by Henning, Lorge, Wile, and others) that the Chinese fighting arts are fundamentally a product of esoteric Daoist and Buddhist practice. While recent scholarship has greatly clarified these questions, such orientalist views were widely accepted throughout Western popular culture during the EWTO's formative years in the 1970s and 1980s.

For instance, it is popularly asserted that the slogan '*Loy Lau, Hoy Sung*' ('Welcome what comes, follow what departs') frequently encountered in discussions of hand-to-hand exchange is originally of Daoist origin [Kernspecht 1987: 263ff; 2013a: 126, 155ff, 193ff]. The same applies to the duality of Yin and Yang as mapped onto 'hard' and 'masculine' techniques versus 'feminine' and 'soft' techniques. The inclusion of a concept of the feminine within the realm of fighting widens the horizon of possible theory and policy. In the EWTO's rhetoric, the hard can (and often should) work to become soft. Thus, female students are explicitly welcomed within the organization. Within the group's self-understanding, it is the focus on core concepts such as this which differentiated the Wing Tsun of the EWTO from the other lineages and schools which are increasingly popular in Germany today. They too tend to differentiate themselves in conceptual and technical terms. Yet, the EWTO continues to claim a degree of superiority as they supposedly practice their principles more 'strictly and consistently than the others' [Kernspecht 2013a: 52].

The cultivation of a tradition also played other roles in the organization of the EWTO's Wing Tsun. Kernspecht has claimed that in switching to Leung Ting (after previously studying with Joseph Cheng from 1970-1975) he was able to learn from Ip Man's most talented student [Kernspecht 2013a: 85]. Leung claims that his background is unique because he was initiated as a personal disciple by Ip Man, thus giving him access to 'the highest theories and techniques' of the art which were purposefully withheld from the other students [ibid; Leung 2003]. Through its connection to Leung Ting, the EWTO has inherited these exclusive claims to 'truth' and 'authenticity', along with the vicious intra-community debates that come along with them. The family-based model of the EWTO (and much of the rest of the wing chun community) reinforces questions of legitimate inheritance and genealogical authority.¹¹ All of these issues remain central topics of communication within the EWTO Wing Tsun community today.

Ironically, the law of 'non-interchangeability of the father' does not

11 For one of the best discussions of this general pattern of behavior and contestation within the traditional Chinese martial arts, see Jeff Tacaks [2003]. When discussing communities in Taiwan, Tacaks notes that the creative manipulation of lineage rhetoric and relationships is one of the standard means by which challenges can be launched and innovations legitimated.

seem to apply to Kernspecht himself. After all, the EWTO founder moved his loyalties from sifu Cheng to sifu Leung. Doing so even contradicted the example of Confucian rectitude set by Ip Man himself. While Ip Man would later go on to study with Leung Bik (son of the famous master Leung Jan), he always made a point of honoring and acknowledging Chan Wah Shun as his personal sifu in accordance with Chinese social etiquette. While Confucianism is often invoked in the modern Western wing chun community, the actual substance of its principles is poorly understood.

If one accepts a more utilitarian model of authority, the logic behind this shift is clear. By aligning himself with Leung Ting, Kernspecht (and by extension his German students) could claim to move up a generation in the wing chun family tree. They placed themselves in closer proximity to the teachings of Ip Man and even the mythological creators of the style such as the Shaolin nun Ng Mui. As Judkins and Nielson would suggest, this genealogical leap provides a permanent occasion for the production of transcendent communication about identity and legitimacy mediated by the supposed purity of one's transmission.¹² Traditionally and mythically, the Wing Tsun of the EWTO advanced social norms that sought to orient the thoughts and actions of its members: family, descent, hierarchy, leadership, and a conceptually specific approach to the art.

Still, the EWTO's internal structure is perhaps best understood as a reflection of the social situation in Germany at the time of its creation. One could easily juxtapose the strong emphasis on the production of family values within the organization with the more acute erosion of traditional family values and the institution of marriage which was taking place in the 1970s. Feminism had become a political and legal force throughout German society. Divorce rates were on the rise, as were non-marital partnerships and single households [BpB 2002]. These disruptions, linked to the advent of a postindustrial society, allowed the EWTO to explicitly position itself as a counterbalancing force. In an era when basic social institutions seemed threatened, they argued 'We are family' [Martin 2012: 17].

As we found in our own survey of motivational issues, 'family' was identified as a core priority of wing chun practitioners in Germany [Heil, Staller, and Körner 2017]. The art was being discursively tied to these values at the same time that other pillars of civic life seemed to be losing their relevance. The number of regular churchgoers dropped by one-third in Germany between 1968 and 1973 [BpB 2002]. At the

12 For a trenchant theoretical critique of this sort of lineage-based understanding of the problem of transmission, see Bowman [2017: 93-94].

same time that German Catholic church membership plunged, the EWTO wing chun program succeeded in expanding and reinforcing its membership. Many of its communication strategies focused on the re-contextualization of values that, while still held by larger segments of civil society, were losing importance in other sectors and contexts.

Perhaps the EWTO succeeded where better established organizations failed because, as a relatively new group, it was well-positioned to incorporate certain progressive trends within what remained a basically traditional social discourse. This semantic flexibility allowed the organization to better communicate its values within a modern media environment. Again, women were a frequent target of EWTO communication [Kernspecht 1994: 212], and the timing of these messages could not have been better. When seeking to reach this audience, the group promoted and leveraged wing chun's creation legend, according to which the origin of the art is attributed to a Shaolin nun (Ng Moy/Ng Mui) and her teenage female student (Yim Wing Chun). While a few other Chinese martial arts refer to important early female figures, wing chun is unique in the degree of emphasis that it places on female figures. All of this would have resonated in a period when feminist values were gaining an ever more prominent place in German public discourse, as illustrated by the 1977 launch of the magazine *Emma*. Yet, these progressive images and ideas remained embedded within a larger set of communications on social issues that were fundamentally conservative and hierarchic in nature.

The organization's 'family structure' also led to the differentiation of other roles in ways which were compatible with German society of this time. Students need teachers, and the more students there are, the more teachers are needed. The rapid growth of EWTO Wing Tsun forced the group to pioneer an innovative model of professional education. This was the first time (within the German martial arts sector) that a commercial program undertook the complete training of a large number of novice students destined to become professional martial arts instructors and franchisees.¹³

The process was organized and monetized through an extensive system of grades. Even a single rank might be subdivided into sub-levels. Limited area instructional licenses, restricted to certain post-codes, were distributed to members under franchise contracts. This allowed for a rapid expansion of EWTO schools which was essential as the

organization sought to capture the demand created by Bruce Lee and initial popularity of the Chinese martial arts. Needless to say, this highly disciplined and centralized organizational structure is a modern construct of the EWTO built on German corporate law and bearing little resemblance to the way that wing chun schools replicated and spread in China and Hong Kong during Ip Man's time.

The EWTO's approach to instruction and franchising may also have been boosted by contemporary economic trends. The first issue to consider is structural changes in the Federal Republic of Germany's labor market. Structural changes within the national educational system, along with growing youth unemployment, characterized the shift from an industrial to a service economy in the volatile mid-1970s [BpB 2002].

The same decade was also perceived by social observers as an era marked by increased hedonism. Youth cultural movements such as punk, or the entry of the personal computers and game systems into private households, indicated both an individualization and pluralization of the lifestyle challenges facing traditional German values. Achievement and discipline seemed to take a back seat to personal freedom and self-development [BpB 2002]. Indeed, Ronald Inglehart has explicitly theorized about how sustained periods of economic growth has led to the development of 'post-material' values in advanced Western societies [see Inglehart 1990, 1997; see also Judkins 2018]. Given the structural changes within the labor market, and the growing social emphasis placed on the process of individualization, training to become a professional EWTO-certified Wing Tsun instructor began to seem like an economically attractive option in ways that likely would not have been the case a generation or two before.

All of its orientalist and traditional rhetoric notwithstanding, the actual mechanisms that underlay the transmission of Wing Tsun within the EWTO illustrate that the movement was strongly rooted within Western modernity. In many early publications, this was even embraced and celebrated as a core value of the art itself. The organization's first textbook, published in 1976, presents wing chun as the 'most scientific and practical' martial art [Ting 1976]. In a sense, this approach to the art more accurately reflected Ip Man's actual views on the subject than an over-emphasis on Confucian and Daoist philosophies does. In his interview with R. Clausnitzer, an early Western student of the style, Ip Man explicitly characterized his practices as 'a modern form of Kung Fu' [Clausnitzer 1969: 10]. Indeed, Clausnitzer prophetically predicted that, of all the Southern Chinese fighting systems, wing chun would be the first to gain a widespread following in the West precisely because of its modern approach to hand combat and progressive (often English speaking) student base.

¹³ A similar model of commercial instructor training had been pioneered by the Pure Martial (Jingwu) Association in urban China during the 1910s and the early 1920s. That was also an era that saw the rapid expansion of the martial arts in response to modernization and social change [Judkins and Nielson 2015].

The EWTO expanded upon these preexisting tendencies, touting the supremacy of wing chun by repeatedly emphasizing the 'scientific nature' of the logic, geometry, physics, and physiology that characterized Ip Man's art [WT Welt 1982: 9]. For instance, the EWTO publication *About Fighting* went so far as to discuss the mathematical calculations behind the timing of a defense against a conventional punch [15ff]. Their model included the speed with which the human nervous system could perceive and carry out a movement, as well as all of the relevant environmental factors including distance, position, and line of attack. This analysis was carried out to the thousandth of a second. The argument attempted to demonstrate that 'traditional self-defense methods cannot work' through the construction of a mathematical and scientific rhetorical framework [ibid.: 14]. Unsurprisingly, this same discursive strategy revealed that wing chun methods were far superior to boxing, wrestling, or even karate [see also Kernspecht 2013a: 12].

While promoting traditional social values, such arguments sought to demonstrate that the wing chun of the EWTO could withstand the rigors of scientific testing. Indeed, these early articles argued that its 'hypotheses' had already been confirmed. While other martial arts were a mere matter of faith, EWTO Wing Tsun was unique, for it embodied both scientific principles and proper social relationships. '*COGITO ERGO EWTO*' ('I think, therefore I am with the EWTO') [cover slogan 1987].

Of course, there have been many pathways to modernity. The EWTO's vision of the Wing Tsun system seems to express a uniquely Western vision of modernity, perhaps different from what Ip Man sought to teach his students in the 1950s and 1960s. The organization's preferred modes of communication suggest that in some ways it has attempted to transcend pure scientism, or some of the other problems with modern Western thought. By emphasizing their connection to the Daoist duality of yin and yang, the EWTO seems to imply that the seeds of the modern lay within traditional wisdom and that modern experimentation will bear out the wisdom of traditional practices. Thus, their model of wing chun seeks to transcend, in some way, the duality of Western thought, or at least the labels 'East' and 'West'. According to the theorem of contradiction, something cannot be itself and its opposite at the same time. Within the EWTO's carefully constructed map of communication strategies, this might be possible. Still, one must note that the academically inspired marketing slogan '*COGITO ERGO EWTO*' undercuts this essential claim in a subtle way. It was René Descartes who established the modern dualism of body and soul with

his pronouncement *cogito ergo sum*. Rather than truly transcending the limitations of the West in a fundamental way, the EWTO has merely established strategies of communication which accept and seek to remedy the social contradictions of rapid modernization, much as Peter Beyer would have predicted [2000].

SUMMARY

Processes were set in motion in Germany during the 1970s which would result in the creation of the largest wing chun community outside of China. We conclude that the success of the EWTO is best understood in organizational terms. Founded in 1976, the organization (which claims to have more than 50,000 members at present [see Kernspecht 2013a: 148]) employed two fundamental modes of communication. First, the practice of EWTO-trademarked Wing Tsun was treated as a conversation between fighting bodies. Secondly, the organization sought to impose its own frame of reference for all regional communication about wing chun in Germany.

On the practical and semantic levels of cognitive and normative function, the Wing Tsun of the EWTO is organized as a system of binary opposites. It sought to position itself as synthesizing tradition and progress, myth and logos, Western science and Eastern philosophy, employee and entrepreneur, domestic self-reliance and foreign exoticism. By employing modes of communication based on a strategy of transcendence [Beyer 2000], the EWTO created an inward looking and largely closed community which addressed fundamental questions about what it meant to be German in a time of social and economic upheaval. These strategies are further illustrated by a strong emphasis on membership, group loyalty, clothing codes, symbolically shared values, and homogeneous body choreographies. Like many other Asian martial arts, it attempted to reorient the individual's relationship with modern society through the construction of shared physical experiences and identities [Gainty 2013]. This was an 'imagined community' that one could feel [Anderson 1991].

The semantic and organizational structures of the EWTO demonstrated a great deal of flexibility in their ability to adapt to a changing environment. Its approach to Wing Tsun has been varied. It proved suitable both for the compensatory alleviation of socially produced effects (change of values) and at the same time has forged connections to post-modern currents (individualization, pluralization).

Our analysis has focused on the EWTO's first decade in Germany. This paper has neither addressed other wing chun lineages found in Germany [Hirneise & Pertl: 1988] nor later periods in the EWTO's development. Nevertheless, our theoretical approach to the problems

of communication and identity formation provide starting points for further analyses of the spread of wing chun in Germany and the rest of Europe. We conclude by quickly reviewing some of the EWTO's later history and noting instances that may suggest fruitful avenues for future research.

The EWTO's ability to adapt in response to both external and internal developments has been repeatedly proven through the decades. The organization proved to be well-positioned to handle the political upheaval which emerged after 1989. Thanks to its teaching model and franchise system, the EWTO's vision of Wing Tsun could quickly expand within the marketplaces of the new federal states after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The *WT Welt* Special No. 1, published in 1993, on the occasion of the '100th birthday of Grandmaster Ip Man', featured an advertisement for the group's training and education center in Langenzell Castle in Heidelberg ('Training like in a monastery' [11]). Such an allusion was designed to excite the imagination with images of the legendary Shaolin temple, while tempting the rational mind with the promise of exciting franchise opportunities in the new federal territories. After all, leaders of Wing Tsun schools all over Europe (and other continents) had received their training in the 'WT-Castle'. So, why not those seeking to establish the tradition in the German 'East'?

This ability to quickly expand into new areas through a system of corporate franchise licenses has become something of a double-edged sword. In some ways, the EWTO may even have become the victim of its own success. Once the value of these rhetorical strategies and organizational structures had been proved, there was nothing to stop individual students from attempting to replicate the group's incredible success on their own. Indeed, the 1990s saw a proliferation of splinter groups, each trained and socialized in the EWTO's methods. Most relied on the larger group's tried and true business strategy, and simply rebranded the product. The low cost of entry into the commercial martial arts marketplace seems to have encouraged this behavior. The EWTO is now dealing with the consequences of its own successful innovations – a typical effect of reflexive modernization [Beck 2015].

Other topics for future research might focus on the group's rhetorical and technical adjustments in the face of ongoing external crises. The martial arts and self-defense landscape continued to evolve throughout the 1990s, and in many respects became quite different from the marketplace of the 1970s. New or previously suppressed martial arts have appeared and entered into direct competition with the EWTO. The availability of free communication and video services on the World Wide Web accelerated trends that were already starting to take shape by the middle of the 1990s. Indeed, advances in information technology

have proved to be a critical engine of change within the martial arts. The production and dissemination of information about wing chun is now polycentric and collateral, available to anyone, anywhere, 24 hours a day. A single voice or commercial press, no matter how well-positioned, can no longer dominate the dissemination of information or shape opinion. The age of 'Internet wing chun' has arrived. Needless to say, understanding how these processes have played out in the current case will shed light on the parallel processes which have been underway in a number of martial arts and other sporting disciplines.

Spin-offs, intensifying market competitions, and the fundamental transformation of communication technologies have all created the need for adjustment within the EWTO. These are important subjects for further analysis. An initial assessment suggests that the organization's mission has changed in important ways since the new millennium.

Its training programs, which had come to celebrate a certain fixation on technique, seem to be returning to an emphasis on first principles and basic concepts. Rather than memorizing extensive sequences of movements or choreographed partner exchanges, the focus has been shifted to the 'big seven' [Kernspecht 2013a: 157].¹⁴ According to the EWTO's literature, this signals 'nothing less than a new paradigm' [Kernspecht 2013a: 24]. In the face of new pressure from practices like MMA and krav maga, the EWTO is struggling 'to put Wing Tsun back on its feet' [Kernspecht 2013a: 102].

Ironically, this 'back to basics' strategy seems to be leading to a greater degree of product differentiation within the German wing chun community. Sensing the need to take seriously the growing demand for adult self-defense (a need that has been signaled by the explosive growth of krav maga within the German market in recent years), the EWTO has released a new 'Blitz Defense' program. At the same time special programs seeking to popularize Wing Tsun among children are seen as necessary to expand the EWTO's customer base by providing an entirely different range of services. Likewise, after a long period of exclusion [Kernspecht 1987], the EWTO has started to embrace the importance of ground fighting.

That such drastic shifts in strategy can even be undertaken illustrates the inherent flexibility in wing chun's engagement with modernity

14 The 'big seven' are introduced as a set of unspecific skills, containing 'Achtsamkeit' (attentiveness), 'Gewandtheit' (dexterity), 'Körperinheit' (body unity), 'Gleichgewicht' (balance), 'Training der Sinne' (training of senses), Timing (timing), and 'Kampfgeist und Resilienz' (fighting spirit and resilience) [Kernspecht 2013a: 311ff].

as outlined by Judkins and Nielson [2015]. The EWTO achieved tremendous growth in the 1970s and 1980s by establishing a community focused on essential questions of identity in the face of globalization and social dislocation. Yet, in recent years, the organization has increasingly turned outward, establishing a strategy that seeks to identify problems in the lives of students and offer concrete solutions.

As Peter Bayer might have predicted, this change in approach necessitates a move towards the acceptance of increased specialization and professionalization. In 2008, the EWTO even sought to manage the risk from both external and internal shocks by bringing additional shareholders into the management of Wing Tsun GmbH and Co. KG. While many proponents of wing chun continue to rhetorically emphasize the 'ancient' and unchanging nature of their practice, the case of the EWTO reminds us that these are fundamentally modern practices adapted to Western market conditions. Their future success

will be the result of further organizational innovation and an ability to localize what have become global products to meet the needs of regional and national markets.

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EDITORS

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To discuss publication or to submit
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martial.arts.studies@gmail.com

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Gina Marchetti *Hong Kong University*
Meaghan Morris *The University of Sydney*
Daniel Mroz *University of Ottawa*
Meir Shahaar *Tel Aviv University*
Dale Spencer *Carleton University*
Douglas Wile *Alverno College*
Phillip Zarrilli *Exeter University, Emeritus*