

## A MARTIAL ARTS LIBRARIAN'S SUGGESTIONS.

(Facebook post by Manuel Adrogué, June 2016)

My martial arts library started in the mid 80s and has been growing in dialogue with my training and learning from great teachers.

Among my first books, I got Bruce Lee's extraordinary Tao of Jeet Kune Do and Richard Chun's Tae Kwon Do.

At this point I have around 200 books, approx. 30% of them on Taekwon-Do: Gen Choi Hong Hi's 15 volume Encyclopedia, its condensed version, his autobiography and moral handbook, the 1965 manual, the Kukkiwon manual, Kang & Song's official explanation of tkd poomsae, Kyong Myong Lee's TKD philosophy & culture, Korean Karate by Son Duk Song, Henry Cho, Jhoon Rhee's and dozens of others including golden era books like Pu Gill Gwon's (counterattacks, breaking), Jun Chong's (sparring), Hee Il Cho's, Chong Lee's on kicking, etc. Among the most recent and worthy are authors are Stuart Anslow, Rhee Ki Ha and Hogan. But to me it seems the era of good TKD books is almost past.



Other books I own are devoted to other martial arts like Tang Soo Do (Hwang Kee, HC Hwang's 5 vols.), Karate (Shotokan, Kyokushin, Goju, Shorin, Sabaki/Enshin, Ryukyu Kenpo including authors as Funakoshi, Egami's jewel The Heart of KarateDo, Nakayama, Nishiyama, Ohshima, Mas Oyama, Nagamine, Yamaguchi, Mc Carthy, Bishop, Oyata, etc), Judo, American Kenpo (Ed Parker's 5 volumes), Hapkido (most of the classics including Ji Han Jae/Kimm and Tedeschi's), Aikido (K. Uyeshiba), Taekkyon, Kuk Sool, Tukkong Musul, HwarangDo (Lee / Cheng), Shibpalki (Kim Kwang Suk, Theros' "Korean Kung Fu"), Kali, Malay Silat, Orlando's Indonesian Kun Tao, Choi Kwang Do, Ninjutsu (unarmed fighting by Hatsumi).

Kung Fu has been always highly regarded for me (my books include Shaolin White Crane, Choy Li Fat, Wing Chun, Chen Taichi, Hsing Yi, Bagua, Chin Na, Weapons and Ki Gong by authors like Yang Ywing

Ming, Robert Smith, Mancuso with his great Plum publications, Bracy, Frantzis, Kernspecht's On single combat, Patterson, Starr, etc).

History (Reid & Croucher's Way of the Warrior, Dave Lowry's incredible books, He Young Kimm's, Alex Gillis' breathtaking opus on Taekwondo, Drager, Harry Cook and Clayton on Shotokan, Shahar on Shaolin Monastery, Canzonieri on Chinese Internal Arts, Mc Carthy's Bubishi, S.H. Kim's Muyedobotongji, Ratti & Westbrook's Secrets of the Samurai, History of Jin Wu academy), biographies, Michael Demarco's exquisite Via Media publications (especially the unforgettable Martial Musings), Amdur on Uyeshiba's power hidden in plain sight.

Specialties include specific books on physiology and training, kicking, joint locking, the US Marines Martial Art Program, Krav Maga, Vale Tudo, Miller's meditations of Violence, Tim Larkin's must-read how to survive the most critical 5 seconds of your life, Kane's Surviving armed assaults, S.H. Kim's Junsado strategy, Little on Bruce Lee's training, Dillman on pressure points, Rick Clark on Martial Arts for University, and the awesome Book of Martial Power by Pearlman). If I were to add Internet authors the list would expand a lot to include blogs by Dan Djurdjevic, Sanko Lewis, Colin Wee, Soo Shim Kwan, Ryan Parker, and the inspiration of clips and knowledge evidenced by Dan Inosanto Kent Nelson, DK Yoo and Tamotsu Miyahira among countless others.

I just mentioned a select portion of books or authors that I consider relevant either for their content, historical value, editorial beauty, comprehensiveness or impact they have had in my growth (beware however, some are strong in some areas and quite weak in others). I take pride in the fact that so far I have only bought two books which are lacking all value, written by people with very shallow knowledge about the matter they were writing about (a 1% failure; Just a tip: I betted that a guy could write about grappling and Taekwondo knowing about both, and lost in the second half of the game, he was just taking a shot at a bigger market for his jujitsu skills).

This is a list I would suggest my friends to consider, there is something for every taste, training level and focus. Just google whatever attracts you from the list. To the extent possible, I will briefly answer any inquiries in connection with good books (please inform your age, background and interest because not all books are good for everyone). Just don't ask me where to get them. Thanks to all the people that have worked hard to share their knowledge through books. If you wonder how I afforded all these books, the answer is that the money I get from teaching at 9.00 pm goes to pay the rent of the space and to buy books (my crazy activities pay for my craziness); I have a full time day job as corporate lawyer after my early morning training to pay the "normal guy" bills.

My suggestion in connection with martial arts learning at black belt level is:

- 1) If you want to learn, seek for knowledge \*that is the point of reading books\*, if you want to improve, train hard.
- 2) During the first 15 years of your training, become really good at one thing (do not diversify) yet do some cross training (but make sure you are learning your stuff at a good school: if you feel your punches and kicks are weak and no one is telling you, leave that place and do not fool yourself just because those surrounding you accept mediocrity);

- 3) Do not judge other martial arts you do not fully understand, and always suspect you might be missing something;
- 4) Invest training by repeating the traditional methods but do not accept tradition as something written in stone (notwithstanding, keep faith on things beyond your current comprehension if stated by a trustworthy person);
- 5) Someone who does not have superior skills will never lead you to superior skills not matter his rank or certification (let me remind you that martial art skills are essentially physical fighting skills);
- 6) After 25 years of training the same thing, cost of opportunity raises dramatically and for every hour you spend training the same stuff in an unrealistic hope to improve would be better spent in adding a new skill;
- 7) If you misdirect your energy on arguments over terminology, legitimacy, heritage or details about style you are not getting any better and actually working for the evil industry by refreshing the "organized despair" Bruce Lee was talking about in 1970;
- 8) Loyalty in the martial arts is not a commitment to limit yourself to one teacher (when you start school as a kid just one teacher teaches you reading and basic math, but as studies get higher, more specialized teachers show up, and in university they multiply by dozens. I do not see any reason for high martial art education to be different);
- 9) If you are a martial arts books fanatic, at minimum try to double your readings with other books (for me it is some legal readings plus history/religion/politics but any serious area will work –hey, superhero stuff qualifies as serious to me) so that you develop your rational thinking and a different referential point, plus that is what you will probably be making a contribution to the martial arts world by knowing that extra material; and
- 10) If you have read all this up to this point, you are in danger. I recommend you try to get a life outside the martial arts (I picked a beautiful gal who gave us four kids and for those two reasons I have a great excuse to spend some time out of the martial arts). Pick a sport, an art, or something that will make you smile and live! The martial arts are highly addictive and will attempt to override more important aspects of existence: GOD, LOVE TO BE FOUND IN PEOPLE. *Ridendo dicere verum.*