

GATE OF NINE DRAGONS

**Searching for
Kung Fu**

Laurence Brahm

“天下武術本一家。”

“Under heaven all martial artists are one family.”

— Ancient Chinese saying

This book is dedicated to all martial artists in the world, who strive to achieve the potential that can enable them to be all that they can be.

Be like clouds. Arrive undetected with the wind. When moving float. Be ethereal, always present never apparent, always changing and unfathomable. Let others guess what you are thinking. But don't think. Feel. Embrace and exist in the electromagnetic field that is both emptiness and overflowing, with all energy at once in unison. Be that energy. Be the shadow that fades into darkness in the sky when humidity rises. When pressure condenses respond like thunder. When there is an opening, strike like lightning. When the storm is over become a rainbow spectrum of all light forms. In the space of light, possibility knows no limitation. Become that possibility. Remember at all times you are only emptiness nothing more. Never forget this. But remember in the state of emptiness you can be creator of all flow. So be like clouds my friend.

— Laurence Brahm

Preface I

FOK Chun Wan

(Honorary President of the Asian Martial Arts Federation; President of the Hong Kong, China Wushu Union; President of the Hong Kong Yiquan Society; CEO of the Hong Kong Fok Ying Tung Group; Permanent Honorary President of the Hong Kong Chinese General Chamber of Commerce)

Kung Fu is a conduit of traditional Chinese culture, sharing the philosophical principles of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Therefore, high-level martial arts cultivation is to realize the development of human potential and achieve unity of heaven and humanity, that is the unity of martial arts and The Way. This is the lifelong goal pursued by traditional martial artists.

The author of this book, Laurence Brahm, is an American, but his words and actions remind me of traditional Chinese intellectuals. He is versatile, both in the fields of culture and martial arts. In his early years, he was a lawyer and was one of the first Americans to settle in Beijing during the early stages of the country's reform and opening up in the 1980s. Later, he became the top economic think tank of the government. He has always had a great interest in Eastern culture, especially in-depth research on religion and high attainments in art. He has also directed many films, including an internationally award-winning documentary exploring Buddhism from a scientific perspective.

This book mainly explores high-level Kung Fu and is divided into two parts. The first part records his own journey of searching for Kung Fu since child-

hood, which has a wide range of contacts and is a very precious experience. Through the practice of Kung Fu, he has enhanced his understanding of the world and himself, especially recognizing the differences between Eastern and Western cultures. It has great reference value for all martial arts enthusiasts.

The second part introduces his high-level understanding of the transition from martial arts to the Way. Through his understanding of Eastern culture, it points out the relationship between the nine levels of martial arts practice methods and traditional Chinese culture, as well as the realm of moral cultivation. Furthermore, it is pointed out that the martial arts community, regardless of whether they are from outside or inside, all come together through different paths. It thoroughly introduces that the ultimate goal of martial arts is the fusion of body and mind, making it clear to everyone that the highest goal of martial arts is rare and insightful. It is worth further exploration and research.

So I recommend this book to friends who love martial arts.

2024.05

Preface II

Du Deping

(Chinese Martial Arts Eighth Degree Holder, Chairman of the Beijing Martial Arts Association, renowned practitioner of Tai Chi culture, 12th generation lineage holder of Chen style Tai Chi, lineage holder of Chen style Tai Chi intangible cultural heritage.)

As an American, Laurence Brahm's love and dedication to Chinese martial arts surprised me at first. However, as I delved deeper into my understanding, I gradually realized that he not only loved martial arts, but also was a steadfast practitioner and enthusiastic disseminator of traditional Chinese martial arts.

I remember in 2018, in the small courtyard of Dongsì Liutiao in Beijing, I had the privilege of being interviewed by Laurence Brahm. We met at first sight, and although I was a few years older than him, our communication was as friendly as brothers. What surprised me even more was that twenty years ago when I lived in Dongsì Shitiao, we were neighbors. Although we had not met, our fate could continue at this moment.

During the interview, we both deeply regretted meeting each other too late, especially in our understanding of traditional martial arts culture. We seemed to have found a kindred spirit, which can be said to resonate with the same frequency.

In my opinion, the three elements of heaven, earth, and man correspond precisely to the three levels of cultivation in Chinese martial arts. Earth

represents the three basic elements of Perseverance, Loyalty, and Balance, as the cornerstones of martial arts cultivation. Humanity possesses three major elements of self-cultivation: Change, Centering, and Harmony, which reflect the character and cultivation of martial arts practitioners. Heaven represents the three realms of Flow, Emptiness, and Non-violence, which are the highest goals pursued by martial arts practitioners.

I firmly believe that stopping the past does not mean giving up martial arts or not being able to use them, but rather emphasizing that we should have the ability to control the timing and methods of using them. To control others, one must first be able to control oneself, selfless and fearless. By using the means of “martial arts” to stay in an “empty” state and strengthening the cultivation of “emptiness,” conflicts can be effectively prevented and peace can be maintained. This is exactly the essence of Chinese martial arts.

In fact, every warrior should never forget their original intention, to persevere, uphold chivalry and righteousness, love their country and the people, be loyal to their teachers, and respect others. This is the basic principle for martial arts practitioners, and also the bottom line that we must adhere to when pursuing the path of martial arts.

Everything recorded in this book is based on Laurence Brahm’s years of interaction with numerous martial arts masters, as well as his profound insights into daily martial arts practice. It truly, vividly, and sincerely demonstrates Laurence Brahm’s love and pursuit of Chinese martial arts, and also allows us to glimpse the vastness and profoundness of Chinese martial arts.

The way of literature and martial arts is relaxed and relaxed. Laurence Brahm exudes a sense of respect and love for martial arts through his words and actions, revealing his literary and martial spirit. His attraction lies in his persistence and passion for martial arts, and his books are worth reading because he records the charm and wisdom of martial arts with sincere words. And his words and actions are even more admirable, because he has demonstrated what a true warrior’s demeanor is through practical actions.

2024.04

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The Gate of Nine Dragons: An Anonymous Story

There is a story. Mysteriously it has no author. I came across this story one day by coincidence when wandering through the streets of Dashalar, an old, rough quarter of Beijing just outside the front gate of the ancient Tatar city. A place where bustling crowds once gathered to watch Kung Fu performers demonstrating Qigong (氣功) and fighting skills, at a time now forgotten by all. But somewhere in the dust, maybe still remembered by just a few.

This story remains without any identifiable author. It came to me without warning. Believe it or not, it simply appeared in my cell phone one afternoon. When wandering through the *hutong* (胡同) alleyway labyrinth of twisting turns, dead ends and juxtaposed cross-over interludes that can be found when lost in the time warps of old Beijing.

This city is ancient. Layered in battles, political turbulence and moments of unimaginable cultural sophistication and creative splendor, this energy field is a knowledge repository that can sometimes be downloaded with the speed of photons on amphetamines, when one is quiet enough in the bustling crowd, to listen and hear the voices of those souls who are still lost in the matrix of timelessness that forms a web of seamless information that is waiting, just waiting, to be downloaded.

That is how this author-less story appeared in my cell phone just-like-that. It just appeared that afternoon without any explanation or logic. So I saved it, wrote it down, and now I am going to share it with you.

You may be asking, why?

The story became inspiration for this book, *Gate of Nine Dragons: Searching for Kung Fu*. Sparking the idea of a non-lineage set of principles that embraces all Kung Fu styles expressed within nine traditional Chinese values that can also be understood as nine stages of martial arts training, development and self-cultivation. The book is written in two parts.

Part I - *Searching for Kung Fu*, recalls my own journey coming to China searching for the origins of Kung Fu, seeking out great masters and learning from them. In fact my own journey is every

martial artist's collective shared journey.

Part II - *The Gate of Nine Dragons*, presents the teachings learned from masters during this lifetime journey, distilled into nine principles corresponding to the Nine Dragon Sons of traditional Chinese mythology.

This book *Gate of Nine Dragons: Searching for Kung Fu* was totally inspired by this anonymous mythical story I am about to retell.

So let me tell it. Here it is.

The story begins with a map. The map can be found in the *Shan Hai Jing* (《山海經》), or *the Sutra of Mountains and Seas*, an ancient text shrouded in mist, said to have first emerged during the turbulence of transition between the Warring States period (476-221 B.C.) when the sutra remained hidden. People spoke of it, but nobody recalled ever seeing it.

It is said that the very first glimpses of this sutra were only seen during the early reigning years of China's first Emperor Ch'in Shih Huang-ti (259-210 B.C.). It may have been the source of knowledge that enabled him to defeat all surrounding kingdoms to become China's first emperor. So one cannot underestimate the GPS mapping power of this sutra.

Shan Hai Jing is said to have its own source in Shamanistic witchcraft. Serving as a sorcerer's blueprint of our world. It provides mystical geo-coordinates delineating a world comprised of forty nations, five hundred and fifty mountains, three hundred canals, one hundred historic personalities, four hundred mysterious spirits that protect places and things. It also provides a map of the metal resources that are hidden in earth and mountains, as well as the ethnic groups that inhabit forests, hills and valleys. For an alchemist, it is indeed a trove of wonderful information.

Following the coordinates on this map, the story reflects a timeless journey. The destination is a place on the farthest western reaches of *Shan Hai Jing* where the Nine Dragon Mountain rises to the highest reaches piercing shrouded mists where clouds dance and sheets of lightning electrify the mind.

The Nine Dragon Mountain, located somewhere in the Kunlun mountain range, is said to be one of the sacred Taoist realms for retreat and meditation. Nobody can see the mountaintop because of these swirling mysterious clouds. That means in order to envision the peaks that touch heaven to access its clarity, one must climb crevices, cross fragile rope bridges over sharp endless ravines, and scale the narrow pathways hugging shear cliffs, to reach the heights of this mountain.

It is a journey that requires great perseverance, calm and fortitude

of mind. Without utmost determination to reach the summit, it cannot be attained. But if one visualizes something, anything can be realized. Such is the power of the mind.

It is said that upon arriving at the peak of the mountain, one will find the most powerful Kung Fu lineage of all, the Gate of the Nine Dragons. Legend tells how the lineage was founded. A mystic spirit of the clouds once single-handedly defeated an evil dragon in mortal combat.

From this act of heavenly ethereal power over negative intention, the lineages of Nine Dragon Gates ultimately opened, symbolized by eight dragons protecting the eight directions and one dragon at the central harmonious vortex of all universal energies evoking golden light from the rays of the sun concealed in the timelessness of ever shifting clouds that sometimes darken the moon.

The Nine Dragon Kung Fu lineage consists of passing through Nine Dragon Gates representing nine levels of accomplishment, which include both physical and spiritual attainments. According to the story passed down through generations by the various lineage holders from the mystic spirit of the clouds, the Nine Dragon Gates could be best understood as a set of traditional Kung Fu principles or value constructs applicable to both martial arts training, and just living in general. The Nine Dragon Gates are represented by nine Chinese characters or singular principles that can be considered as

universal values on their own. These nine characters are:

忍 *Ren* the Chinese character for “Perseverance” which embraces determination. The character is written as a knife (刀) over a heart (心) with a dash indicating blood. That means perseverance requires personal sacrifice of consistency and determination over vast periods of time. That is why the term Kung Fu literally means “time.”

忠 *Zhong* means “Loyalty” and encompasses respect. This involves Confucian concepts of devotion to the lineage, one’s master or teacher, and deep mutual respect toward fellow practitioners or disciples of the lineage. Moreover, such standards of loyalty and respect are to be projected beyond the martial arts school or lineage into society as a whole.

平 *Ping* means “Balance.” Achieving physical balance is a foundational stage of martial arts development. Cultivating internal balance is the desired outcome of all martial arts training. Balance goes beyond solid footwork. It requires synchronizing the Yin and Yang elements within oneself. Then projecting that sense of balance to those around you. Moreover, cultivating balance in all aspect of life and living.

易 *Yi* is the character for “Change.” As it appears in *the I-Ching: Book of Changes*, an ancient highly advanced system of calculat-

ing future changes through sixty four combinations of the Eight Trigrams. Acceptance of change allows us to achieve non-attachment. Recognize the impermanence of all things.

中 *Zhong* is the character for “Center.” We train martial arts to achieve centering of body and mind. Centering allows us to not lose balance. By centering our mind, we can be calm, peaceful within, and clear-headed when making decisions. Buddhism emphasizes always taking a middle way, not being drawn to extremes on either side of the path.

和 *He* means “Harmony.” In practicing martial arts we are seeking to achieve both physical and mental harmony with our own body and also our natural world. At a higher level we realize our body is only a derivative of the natural world. At this point we are in harmony with the rhythm of a natural order. Things happen naturally.

無 *Wu* is a core Taoist concept. *Wu* could best be translated as “Flow.” The Taoist term Wuwei (無為) translates literally as “to do nothing.” But this translation does not do justice to the concept. Wuwei does not really mean non-action. Rather it means to just flow with the natural order, don’t try to go against it. That is the difference between navigating with the currents versus trying to sail upstream.

空 *Kong* is a core Buddhist concept. *Kong* is translated as “Empti-

ness.” It is a state of synchronized body-mind-spirit undistracted by anything. No attachment. No distractive thoughts. No negative or positive. This state of mind or no-mind, does not mean that there is nothing, because nothing is everything.

武 *Wu* of the term Wushu (武術) “martial arts” is commonly translated into English as “martial.” This is an incorrect translation. The character *Wu* (武) consists of two characters *Zhi* (止) meaning “halt” and *Ge* (戈) an ancient term for weapons. So *Wu* literally means to “halt the use of weapons.” Or better translated as “Non-violence.” So Wushu, translated as “martial arts” literally means “the art of Non-violence.”

In taking this journey, one experiences and internalizes the underlying foundations of nine principles held in common by all forms of martial arts.

According to the story, to achieve entering all Nine Dragon Gates involves tireless practice bordering on the extreme. One loses their consciousness when entering the unified field where change becomes central to harmonizing the Yin and Yang co-emerged into flow that re-emerges as emptiness when the timing is right.

Ultimately one’s own energy field has nine dragons achieving an electro-magnetic spectrum with the resounding echo of thunder and unrequited potential of lightening that can strike with devasta-

tion across sublime distances. One can control things with just the singularity of intention within their own mind. Including destiny. Actually, everyone has the potential to do it. They just have to climb the mountain, open the Nine Dragon Gates, and enter each one.

It is not advised to practice at these heights unless one is prepared to sacrifice all material pursuits and the attachment to ones own self. Only the founder of this lineage was able to achieve this Ninth Dragon Gate level in his lifetime. And it is said that he came from the clouds.

As for the evil dragon defeated in mortal combat by that mystic spirit of the clouds, yes the founder of the Nine Dragon Gates lineage. Well, let me tell you something. The evil dragon was not a force from outside. The evil dragon was within.

INTRODUCTION

The Kung Fu Code: Gate of Nine Dragons

The Code

Kung Fu represents a set of cultural values for body-mind health that can be understood and embraced across countries and continents. It came from China, but belongs to all humanity. In some ways Kung Fu is a common language that can bring people together. Everyone loves a great Kung Fu movie. Right? Certainly the Wu Tang Clan does.

Through this book I hope to share with global audiences the values learned across four decades in China. Kung Fu is a mirror of Chinese culture. Everything from traditional medicine, calligraphy and tea can be understood by looking through the Kung Fu looking glass.

The code of Kung Fu has always been about perseverance, loyalty and righteousness, respect for one's brothers, and standing up against unfair odds in doing what is correct for others. Kung Fu training enhances awareness, harmony with nature, balance and acceptance of change.

A master of Kung Fu is the last person to use violence. In fact the word Wushu, loosely translated by most westerners as "martial arts," in Chinese literally means the "art of Non-violence."

For every Chinese, if they look deeply inside, Kung Fu values and traditions are within. Now it is time to share these values with the world. Kung Fu values present a code that can be understood as a set of universal values. If we all practice Kung Fu, and the teachings embedded within, our world just might become a place of greater shared understanding and mutual respect, with a little less violence.

The first part of this book *Searching for Kung Fu* recalls my own journey over decades in the search for both the most traditional Kung Fu practices and the philosophical teachings embedded within. It begins as a teenager studying Karate in America, learning from one of the great Okinawa masters Shihon Kenneth Funakoshi. Realizing that the root of Karate is actually Kung Fu, the journey brought me to China, to the legendary Shaolin (少林) Monastery seeking the source of Kung Fu. During these years I have had the opportunity and privilege to train under many of China's great

masters whose stories and philosophies are imparted in this book. I am sharing the story of my journey, as it is really the shared journey of every martial artist.

The second part of this book *The Gate of Nine Dragons* reflects nine key Kung Fu principles presented through the traditional “Nine Dragon Sons.” These are nine Kung Fu concepts that can be understood as a code shared by and belonging to every school of martial arts. As a code this set of nine principles represent a set of integrated mind-set values that we can adopt in our daily lives: **Perseverance** (*Ren*, 忍), **Loyalty/Respect** (*Zhong*, 忠), **Balance** (*Ping*, 平), **Change** (*Yi*, 易), **Centering** (*Zhong*, 中), **Harmony** (*He*, 和), **Flow** (*Wu*, 無), **Emptiness** (*Kong*, 空), **Non-Violence** (*Wu*, 武).

These nine Kung Fu principles can be understood as nine stages of training, nine aspects of Chinese philosophy, or nine values shared by martial artists offered here as a code.

Through each of our own individual actions adhering to these principles, we can strive toward achieving global good citizenship, which in itself is a Kung Fu value. Many Kung Fu masters have repeatedly told me, the purpose of martial arts is not to fight but to cultivate oneself to become a better and more responsible person.

Self-Cultivation: Heaven, Earth and Humanity

Core to self-cultivation is the ancient Chinese concept of *Tian Di Ren* (天地人) Heaven-Earth-Humanity. There is an old saying “人在天地間” (“Humanity exists between Heaven and Earth”). Simply put, Humanity must understand, respect and work within the bounds of natural phenomena arising between Earth (Yin, 陰) and Heaven (Yang, 陽) in order to exist. In our era of climate distortion, to survive.

Earth is the deep force of Yin while Heaven is Yang. Humanity is in between and we are all composed of Yin and Yang elements, regardless of sex or sexual preference. Humanity is connected to the universe, or just a derivative of the universal order. In ancient times the Emperor of China played an important role representing Humanity as interlocutor between Heaven and Earth. On the spiritual level through ritual. On a political level through good governance in finding balances between diplomatic, social and economic forces. The Emperor’s job was to offer guidance through a middle-way, avoiding extremes.

During the Qing Dynasty (1636-1911) and throughout the turbulent Republican Period that followed (1911-1949), secret societies adopted the name *Tian Di Hui* (天地會) or Heaven and Earth Society as a revolutionary force to displace governance on the grounds that the powers that be, had lost their mandate from Heaven to rule on Earth.

The infamous Triad gangs of Hong Kong, Taiwan and many overseas Chinatown communities are called San He Hui (三合會) meaning Triad, as reference to the triangular relationship between Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. Historically, many of these gangs evolved as offshoots of original revolutionary secret societies that belonged to Kung Fu lineages. Today some of these gangs retain their rituals and Kung Fu lineage practices, adhering to their own strict ethical codes. This goes right back to the higher standard of protocol that is expected of martial arts practitioners belonging and upholding a Kung Fu lineage.

Kung Fu has become a global symbol of righteousness, standing up against unfair governance, and re-balancing the order of things when it goes awry. No wonder Kung Fu movies and images have become popular among hip hop and rap celebrities as epitomized by the Wu Tang Clan. Their music genre arose as part of a struggle for racial and social equality against imbalanced economics, elite governance and repression.

Heaven, Earth, Humanity and the Gate of Nine Dragons

During the writing of this book, Du Deping, Chairman of the Beijing Martial Arts Association, suggested that the nine principles or concepts comprising the Gate of Nine Dragons, be divided into three sets of three according to the concept of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. He suggested that these represent three stages or tiers of

development for any martial artist.

“Earth” (地) represents the three foundation principles:

- Perseverance (*Ren*, 忍)
- Loyalty/Respect (*Zhong*, 忠)
- Balance (*Ping*, 平)

“Humanity” (人) encompasses the three cultivation principles:

- Change (*Yi*, 易)
- Centering (*Zhong*, 中)
- Harmony (*He*, 和)

“Heaven” (天) embodies three aspirational concepts:

- Flow (*Wu*, 無)
- Emptiness (*Kong*, 空)
- Non-Violence (*Wu*, 武)

In truth, the concepts articulated in each of the nine principles or codes of the Gate of Nine Dragons, are all present in every martial arts style and lineage. While one style may emphasize the codes of a particular gate more than the other gates, at their core, all martial arts are interactive aspects of each other. They all seek through perseverance in training, loyalty to the lineage and respect to others, to achieve physical and inner balance, centering, response to changing circumstances, harmony with nature, to enhance flow, through being in the state of emptiness, to prevent conflict and preserve peace.

This is the essence of the “Kung Fu Code.”

Everything contained in this book is based on my own experiences, over years of training under different masters and schools. This includes nearly a half-century of accumulated teachings, practices and thoughts that I apply daily, both in martial arts training and just living. When practicing these different styles and exploring their inner teachings, I learn something new, something more, each day. I then live it.

So one could call the Gate of Nine Dragons a map or guidebook to begin understanding and appreciating all martial arts and the interconnectivity between them. It draws together aspects of many different Kung Fu and martial arts lineages into a philosophical framework that can be used to understand the principles and values that are inherent in each and every one of these lineages. Gate of Nine Dragons is not a lineage. It is a code.

Actually, the Gate of Nine Dragons can be applied to business, school, finance, family, friends and life in general. Attainment of the Gate of Nine Dragons is not a mystery. It is rather a way of living. Actually, we can all live it. You just have to climb the mountain to that point where you are above the clouds. Then when you can see the sun and the moon clearly, it means the Yang and Yin together as one. Then, everything is clear. When thoughts are clear, action is clear.

Aware that the time has come to record these thoughts before they are lost, I feel a responsibility to share the ideas written in this book, with everyone who loves Kung Fu and all fellow martial artists, who just want to find emptiness in the kinetics of being able to move like the clouds.



尋找功夫
九龍門

PART I

SEARCHING FOR KUNG FU



Remembering Master Pi

I remember Master Pi.

He was a short man. Bald. His right hand had no fingers at all. It was just like a club. He smiled frequently, like an elf.

Touching his stomach that protruded slightly, Master Pi would laugh, and challenge each of his black belt students to punch it with all their strength. “You see it is all muscle.” he would smile almost as a smirk, at their hapless efforts to penetrate that rock-like-mass. Master Pi simply felt no pain. As a young white belt just starting my first Karate classes, I did not yet understand that the rock hardness of Master Pi’s stomach had less to do with muscle than it had to do with something call Qi (氣).

Actually, it was the black belts who taught the Karate classes. Master Pi simply sat silently at one end of the practice hall. Legs crossed under him, hands folded on his lap, head slightly down, eyes almost closed, he seemed oblivious to the commotion. Maybe just lost in a trance. So it seemed. Actually, he was meditating.

Those moments assuming he was not watching us were just our own self-delusion. Actually Master Pi knew everything happening in the room before him. He did not need to watch us practicing. He could just feel it.

In a fraction of a second, he would be on his feet. Almost as if he flew like a Himalayan monk from the place where he sat cross-legged meditating, to the middle of the practice area with lightening speed, to correct mistakes of his students.

The westerner black belt instructors seemed to tower over his squat rotund frame, as he moved in the center of the room. They stood in silent awe as Master Pi explained the correct move, or the philosophy behind the way of that move.

We were all searching for the Way. Without knowing it, we were all searching for Kung Fu.

When Master Pi finished speaking in his broken Korean-accented English, the black belt instructors would bow with deepest respect. Then shuffling backwards with the utmost of deference facing him before turning around at a respectful distance to continue teaching us.

There was this energy, an aura that Master Pi had. It just consumed the entire room. It oozed everywhere. You could just feel it.

Master Pi ordered me to stand in a corner of the room. I was the newest student, a white belt. Actually, that means exactly what it says. Nothing. I knew nothing. So he showed me how to get into a horse stance. Everyone, regardless of the martial arts style, begins

with the horse stance. It is the most basic foundational stance of any martial arts form. Master Pi told me to hold the stance and punch the air in that position. “Just do that.” he said. “Keep doing it.”

I did it. At first I was frustrated, then impatient, bored, tired, exhausted, and suddenly energized. I was in some energy zone as I punched away in that position. I stopped thinking for a moment. I was just in that space, feet solid upon the earth, arms punching emptiness. There was something about that moment that made me feel like I was in another capsule of time and space.

Master Pi was at the other end of the hall, meditating. I could see him through sweaty contact lenses. He could not even bother looking at me.

Then suddenly he was up again in the middle of the room. He held out his club like hand demonstrating a punch that missed the nose of one of those tall black belt instructors, only because Master Pi decided to miss. He laughed. He then explained the importance of an absolutely precise punch. It had to be perfect. Your hand had to fit into the space your mind envisioned with perfection that could be absolute. This depended upon the mind, not the punch. There could be no room for error. The mind had to seek more than precision. Perfection.