



The Origin of Hwa-Yu T'ai Chi  
A Biblical Perspective

By

Sensei Mark McGee



# Origins

The origin of Hwa Yu T'ai Chi is traditionally believed to be in China during the 9th and 10 centuries AD. Tradition is that Chen Tuan lived on Mount Hua (Hwa) in Shensi during the latter part of the Five Dynasties period (907-960 AD) and early part of the Sung Dynasty (960–1279 AD). The mountain is located in the north-central part of modern China in Shaanxi province about 75 miles east of Xi'an. It is the western mountain of what is known as the Five Great Mountains of China.

Chen Tuan, also known as Chen Hsi I, is credited with being a martial arts expert who developed a style known as Liu Ho Pa Fa (also known as Hwa Yu T'ai Chi). Centuries later a master of Liu Ho Pa Fa, John Chung Li, brought the art from China to the United States. My teacher, Grand Master Robert Xavier, was a senior

student of Grand Master Li and received the lineage of Hwa Yu T'ai Chi in 1980.

## Training on Wudang

Chen Tuan was an expert in Chinese martial arts before he created Liu Ho Pa Fa. Tradition is that he studied martial arts at the Rock of Nine rooms on Wudang Mountain (also spelled Wu Tang). Wudang is located in Central China about 405 miles from Mount Hua, certainly within travel distance for Chen Tuan to have trained there.

Wudang has a long history of “internal” or “soft” martial arts. Liu Ho Pa Fa (Hwa Yu T'ai Chi) is one of the internal martial arts. Other internal arts from Wudang are Hsing-I Ch'uan (Form of the Will Boxing), Pa Kua Chang (Eight Trigrams Palm) and T'ai Chi Ch'uan (Grand Supreme Boxing). It's believed that these arts were created during the Ming Dynasty, many years after Chen Tuan created Liu Ho Pa Fa.

Some historians believe Chen Tuan taught Liu Ho Pa Fa on Mount Wudang and that he may have taught Huo Lung, who was the teacher of Chang San Feng (also spelled Zhang Sanfeng). Chang is said to be the creator of T'ai Chi and the concept of internal strength (*neijia*). It's also believed Chang may have spent time on Mount Hua before finally settling in the Wudang mountains.

Some historians believe that Li Tung Fung was the senior student of Chen Tuan (Chen Hsi-I) and continued the lineage of Liu Ho Pa Fa. Others believe Li Tung Fung discovered a description of Liu Ho Pa Fa that Chen His-I wrote before his death.

Here is a short lineage of masters of Liu Ho Pa Fa (Hwa Yu T'ai Chi) beginning with Chen His-I.

## Hwa-Yu Martial Arts Masters Lineage

- Master Instructor Chen Hsi-I – Creator of Liu Ho Pa Fa (Hwa Yu T'ai Chi)
- Master Instructor Li Tung Fung – Senior student of Chen Hsi-I ... Master Fung was the author of the “Five Word Song”
- Master Instructor Kwan Kit
- Master Instructor Lan Wan Sing
- Master Instructor Wong Tak Wai
- Master Instructor Tai Yai Chin – Changed the name from Lop Hop Pak Fat to “Swimming Boxing”
- Master Yeung King Kun – From Fon Shan, called the exercise “Twelve Movements of Exercise Before Birth”
- Master Instructor Shut – Called the exercise “Idea Six Combinations”
- Master Instructor Chen Kong Ta – From the town of Yellow Flower in the district of Cheung Pin of the

Hopei Province. He studied the exercise under the names of “Idea Six Combinations” and “Idea Spiritual Kung Fu.

- Master Instructor Wu Yiek Tai – Taught Lop Hop Pak Fat in the Republic of China. General Cheng Jee Kong brought Master Tai to the Chinese Martial Art Government School in Nanking to teach Lop Hop Pak Fat. Master Tai later lived in Shanghai and taught a few students until the Communist Government appeared. He died in 1967.
- Master Instructor Chan Yik-yan
- Master Instructor Lo Chi-wan
- Master Instructor John Chung Li
- Master Instructor Robert Xavier

You can learn more about Hwa Yu T'ai Chi and its history by reading the following books:



[Hwa Yu T'ai Chi Ch'uan: Unlocking the Mysteries of the Five-Word Song](#) by Grand Master Glenn Newth

[Hwa Yu t'ai Chi Ch'uan Part II: The Inner Workings](#) by Grand Master Glenn Newth

The Chinese Five Word Song by Grand Master John Chung Li

## A Biblical Perspective

While this lineage takes us back to the Sung Dynasty, the history of Hwa Yu T'ai Chi and Chinese Martial Arts goes back even further.

Chinese Martial Arts is thought by many to have originated with a legendary figure known as the [Yellow Emperor](#). Huangdi (Huang – yellow .. di – emperor) is believed to have been one of ancient China's earliest emperors. He was known as a great warrior and intellect and was given the name "Yellow Emperor." He is reputed to have been born on Xuanyaan Hill in Xinzheng County in the Henan Province. His birth name was Youxiong Xuanyuan and the beginning of his rule is believed to have been in the middle of the third millennium BC.

That's interesting in light of the nations that descended from Noah. We find them listed in Genesis 10.

*“Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.” Genesis 10:1*

All the peoples (nations) of the earth descended from the sons of Noah. So, which son (or sons) of Noah was an ancestor of the Chinese people? Let's begin with the lineage of Japheth.

*“The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. From these the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone*

*according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.” Genesis 10:2-5*

Some historians believe the Chinese came from the lineage of Japheth through his son Javan and grandson Kittim. Though the Bible does not list how long Japheth and his sons and grandsons lived after the Flood, we do know how long Shem and his descendants lived.

- Noah was born 600 years before the Flood and lived another 350 years after the Flood
- Shem was born 100 years before the Flood and lived almost 500 years after the Flood
- Arphaxad was born two years after the Flood and lived to be 438 years old
- Salah was born 37 years after the Flood and lived to be 433 years old

That gives us some idea about the possible ages of the sons and grandsons of Japheth. Javan and Kittim may have lived for several hundred years after their births.

Genesis 10 informs us that “the earth was divided” during the days of Peleg. It would appear from what we read in the Bible that the division of the earth refers to the confusion of language at the Tower of Babel that we read about in Genesis 11.

According to the record of Shem’s lineage in Genesis 11, Peleg was born about 101 years after the Flood. Peleg was the great-great grandson of Shem. He lived to be about 239 years old, so the confusion of language at the Tower of Babel occurred sometime between 101 and 340 years after the Flood.

The significance of this is that God scattered the descendants of Noah who all lived together at Babel (Babylon). Genesis 11:8 and 9 read – “So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.”

That means the descendants of Noah and his sons were scattered across the earth sometime between 101 and 340 years after the Flood. Noah and his sons would have still been alive when God confused the language and scattered the people. Noah lived 350 years after the Flood and Shem lived almost 500 years after the Flood.

The sons of Noah and their descendants who were scattered abroad over the face of all the earth would have had the time and energy to establish many cities across the world. We know from the life of one of Noah's great-grandsons that he set up cities throughout ancient Mesopotamia.

*“Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.’ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).”*

*Genesis 10:8-12*

Nimrod would have lived about the same time as his cousin Selah, who was born about 37 years after the Flood. If Nimrod was born about the same time and lived as long as Selah did (433 years), then Nimrod would have been living long enough after the confusion of language at the Tower of Babel to build all the cities attributed to him. He may have been stronger than members of other families since he built cities in the same area as Babel. Genesis 10 does say that Nimrod was a mighty hunter and a kingdom builder – which would possibly make him the first king after the confusion of language.

Nimrod would not have been the only person building a kingdom and cities across the world. His uncles and cousins would have also been looking for places to build their new lives after the confusion of language and many of them would establish themselves as kings and rulers in the new world.





# Traditions

Even though we are talking about a Chinese martial art created about a thousand years ago, the origin of Chinese martial arts was much earlier than that – possibly thousands of years earlier – as far back as the beginning of China itself.

One tradition is that the **Yellow Emperor** established the beginning of Chinese martial arts. Who was the Yellow Emperor and when did he live?

In the first part of our study we went back as far as Noah and his sons. Noah and his wife and their sons Japheth, Ham and Shem and their wives were the only human beings alive after the global Flood. We looked at how Noah's children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren disobeyed God by staying together and building a city with a tower that reached toward Heaven with the intent of

making their name great, “lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” God intervened by confusing their language, “that they may not understand one another’s speech.” The name of the city was Babel, “because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.” (Genesis 11:1-9)

The families are identified in the Bible by their relationship to Noah’s sons. Family members scattered in multiple directions based on the new language they spoke after God confused the one language they had all shared. Because people continued to live for hundreds of years at that time, Noah and his sons were still alive when God scattered the people from building the Tower of Babel.

One of Ham's grandsons, Nimrod, built cities across ancient Mesopotamia. He was a warrior and used his hunting and fighting skills to build those cities. Genesis 10:10 references Nimrod as being a "kingdom" builder (he may have been one of the first kings in the new world following the confusion of language). The cities he built were known for their military prowess. Other sons and grandsons of Ham also built cities across the earth as they scattered and settled into their new lives in new locations. The information we find in Genesis 10 and in other ancient documents helps us know where many of Noah's family members built their cities.

## Origin of the Chinese People

Our question in this series is about the origin of Chinese Martial Arts, which goes to the origin of the Chinese people. There are many theories about family members from each of Noah's sons establishing roots in China, so which family is it? Or did descendants from two or three of Noah's sons make their way to China? China is a huge land mass with at least eight different language groups along with hundreds of dialects and variations, so it could be that multiple Noahic families moved to the area that became China. Let's take a closer look at some of the theories.

[Because of the depth of each lineage we will have to shorten the information for this article. Please dig further into anything you find interesting or where you have questions.]

## Japheth's Family

*“The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. From these the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.” Genesis 10:2-5*

Japheth had seven sons and we know the names of seven of his grandsons. That we have their names in the biblical account may be a clue to determining origins of various peoples and nations. We also know that the descendants of Japheth became the coastland people of the Gentiles.

The Yellow Emperor (*Xuanyuan Huangdi*) was a legendary founder in China whose rule was thought to have started during the early part of the 27th century BC. He is credited with defeating barbarians in a great battle and becoming the primary leader of various tribes in the Yellow River area. Some historians think Huangdi established an early government and military and trained soldiers in both armed and unarmed combat. Part of the legend about him is that he lived to a great age, which would fit with the ages of the grandsons and great-grandsons of Noah.

If there is some truth to a powerful warrior king (like Nimrod) establishing an early nation with government and military in the Yellow River area (often called the Cradle of Chinese Civilization), can we know the origin of his Noahic family? Might it be Japheth's lineage?

Some writers from the 10th century AD believed descendants of Gomer reached China. Gomer was the eldest son of Japheth. Some writers even believed Japheth may have ruled in China for a time. Some Chinese have identified Japheth with Fu Hsi (also spelled Fu Xi) who was the first of China's legendary emperors (approx. 29th century BC). (Donald Daniel Leslie, Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 104, No. 3 (Jul. – Sep., 1984), pp. 403-409) The legend of Fu Hsi includes his discovering the Chinese trigrams (Bagua), which was used in the development of the Chinese martial art known as *bagua zhang* (ba gua chang/pakua chang).

Japheth's next-oldest son, Magog, is also a candidate for traveling to China. Some historians through the ages have identified Magog with people living in China, Russia and Mongolia.



Japheth's son Javan and his sons are also candidates for traveling to China. The name Kittim is thought to be connected initially with the people of Cyprus and later with Manchuria and China as descendants of that family traveled north into Europe, then east into Euroasia and Asia.

## Ham's Family

*“The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan. Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.’ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city). Mizraim begot Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and Caphtorim). Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; the Arvadite, the*

*Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed. And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. These were the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands and in their nations.” Genesis 10:6-20*

We are given even more details about the family of Ham. The list includes four sons and many grandsons and great-grandsons. We already know that Cush's son Nimrod established major cities throughout Mesopotamia. What about the other sons and their sons and grandsons?

Some historians believe that Ham's descendants traveled to areas of the Mediterranean, Africa, Indian Ocean and South Pacific. Some of the people groups mentioned are the Philistines, Caphtorim, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, Hamathites and Canaanites. The cities and areas mentioned include Babel, Erech, Accad, Calneh, Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, Risen, Sidon, Gerar, Gaza, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Lasha. That information contains many clues as we search for where Ham's family established new residences following the confusion of language.

Some of the areas are identified in what we know today as Africa, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine. Does that mean Ham's family did not travel to East Asia?

One possibility for Ham's family connection to China comes through the Sinites. It appears from the Genesis 10 list that they came through Ham's son Canaan.

*“Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. “*

Isaiah wrote about a people who would come from “afar” — “Those from the north and the west, And these from the land of Sinim” (Isaiah 49:12). The Hebrew word is *סִינִים* *sînîm*, which is also translated into English as Syene, Syenites, China, Southern Egypt, and Aswan. The Orthodox Jewish Bible translates *sînîm* as *Eretz Sinim* [Sinites].

Some historians also refer to Chinese tribes as Sinites. It's interesting that many Chinese believe Siang-fu (translated Father Sin) established one or more city-states in or near Shensi, China. Sinim is similar to Sinae which is a latinization of Qin. The Latin prefixes Sino and Sin are used to refer to China and the Chinese people (coming from the word Sinae). The Sinitic (Chinese) language is a branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family that has hundreds of dialects. You may have heard the following terms used for relations between China and other countries: Sino-Japanese, Sino-Tibetan, Sino-Indian, Sino-Vietnamese, Sino-US, Sino-American, and Sino-Soviet. The word "Sino" signifies China in each case.

## Shem's Family

We know from Genesis 11 that Abraham descended from the lineage of Noah's son Shem. Abraham (Abram) is listed as a member of the 10th generation in the lineage of Shem. Each of the ancestors mentioned in the lineage are there because they lead directly from Shem to Abraham. That is a direct-line history similar to others in the Bible. You may have done something like that in researching your own genealogy.

It's also important to note that each of the men listed in Shem's lineage are also said to have "begot sons and daughters." These men who lived to be hundreds of years old had more than one son. We are not told the names of their other children, but the Genesis 10 list tells about some of them.

*“And children were born also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder. The sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram. The sons of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. Arphaxad begot Salah, and Salah begot Eber. To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother’s name was Joktan. Joktan begot Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. And their dwelling place was from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east. These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.” Genesis 10:21-31*



Shem is identified as “the father of all the children of Eber.” That this is the first statement about Shem in the Genesis 10 Table of Nations may be a clue that we should look carefully at Shem’s great-grandson Eber. When we look at Eber we find two sons – Peleg and Joktan. The earth was divided in the days of Peleg, which means it would have also been divided in the days of Joktan. The importance of Peleg is that he is in the direct lineage of Abraham according to Genesis 11. We are told that Peleg “begot sons and daughters,” but we aren’t given their names.

So, what about Joktan? Anything special about him? Genesis 10 records that Joktan had 13 sons.

*“Joktan begot Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. And their dwelling place was from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east.”*

An interesting note is that their dwelling place was from Mesha “as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east.” Some historians believe Mesha was located in Arabia. The names of many of Joktan’s sons have been traced to cities in the area of Mesopotamia. Others believe Mesha may be Mashad located in northeast Iran. Sephar may have been Mount Sabber in Arabia or a large mountain east of Iran. There are many large mountains between Iran and China. Much of western China is a mountainous region that includes Mt. Everest in the Himalayas.

## Conclusion

It's difficult to know with certainty which of Noah's descendants settled in China, but the way families moved away from each other after the Tower of Babel could have eventually pushed any of them there. The fact that China has at least eight different language groups along with hundreds of dialects and variations could mean that some of the descendants of Japheth, Ham and Shem may have made their homes in what is now China.

We know from history that many of the ancient people who descended from Noah were warriors. A common language kept them together, which is why God confused the language. That caused the families to scatter from each other, which goes to the perceived need for self defense. We know from the history of Nimrod that he was a "mighty hunter" and established many large and powerful city-states. Establishing powerful cities with military force

would mean that other people groups would have also used military force to both defend themselves as well as establish their own places in the new world through offensive means.

Martial (military) arts developed early in the years following the confusion of language and we can trace some the oldest ones, like the Chinese Martial Arts, to a time when Noah's descendants established their foothold in what would become China. Was the legendary Yellow Emperor one of those descendants? Maybe.



Public Domain – 1854 map

## Early Chinese Martial Arts

Many martial arts preceded Hwa Yu T'ai Chi (10th century AD), including Shaolin Kung Fu (from early 6th century AD), Xiang Bo, Jiao Di, Jiǎo Lì, and Shou Bo. Some of them are mentioned in ancient Chinese writings including the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (5th century BC), *Classic of Rites* (5th century BC), *Han History Bibliographies* (2nd century BC), and *Records of the Grand Historian* (1st century BC). The concept of “hard” and “soft” techniques are mentioned in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

The history of Chinese Martial Arts demonstrates an early understanding of military and self-defense techniques that would become the foundation for the arts taught today around the world.

As for the history of Hwa Yu T'ai Chi, we invite you to read the following:

[Hwa Yu T'ai Chi Ch'uan: Unlocking the Mysteries of the Five-Word Song](#) by Grand Master Glenn Newth

[Hwa Yu t'ai Chi Ch'uan Part II: The Inner Workings](#) by Grand Master Glenn Newth

[The Chinese Five Word Song](#) by Grand Master John Chung Li (Foreward by Grand Master Robert Xavier)

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