

NINJA: PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1

INSIDE The Ultimate In
Martial Arts Coverage!

KUNGFU

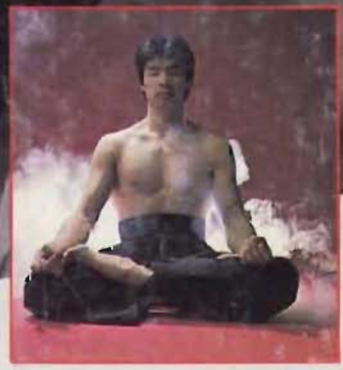
JUNE 1985
\$2.50
\$1.25 U.S.

**HARD
& SOFT**

Two Styles Form
One Brutal
Combination

**Bruce Lee's
JKD Grappling**
Winning Techniques
from the Master of
Close-range Combat

**Fear, Hatred
and Death**
America's Chinatowns—
Part 2



**Learn the Six
Healing Breaths of
Chi Kung**

THE CHINESE BROADSWORD: Descendant of the "Green Dragon"

Whether short or long, light or heavy, this weapon had but one purpose—immediate death.

By Patricia L. Everett

Kuan-ti, the venerated Chinese god of war, was worshipped by his people as a conqueror of demons and helper of those in need. He is depicted as scarlet faced, bushy eyebrowed and heavily bearded. Before being deified, Kuan-ti was a warrior named Kuan-Yu, commonly known to martial artists as General Kuan. He was considered a noble and brave warrior who fought many battles. His martial endeavors are described in *The Story of the Three Kingdoms*, a romance novel set in A.D. 300, when China was being overrun by a rebel group known as the Yellow Turbans.

Kuan-Yu pledged his loyalty to the emperor. With his sworn brothers, Liu Pei and Ching Fei, he fought courageously for his leader. Kuan-Yu was blessed with two invaluable battle aids. He was the owner of Red Hare, a horse 20 feet tall and incredibly fast. At his side General Kuan had the "green dragon" (also known as the "black dragon" or "cold beauty"), a sword-knife weighing over 100 pounds. Only Kuan-Yu was able to wield this great weapon. The "green dragon" served him well in 100 battles. Known today as *Kuan-Dau* (the knife of General Kuan), the weapon was a single-edged knife with a broad, heavy blade attached to a long handle. This great broadsword was the prototype of the modern broadsword or saber (the terms saber and broadsword will be used synonymously throughout this article).

The broadsword, one of the most common and popular weapons developed in China, makes numerous appearances in the country's history and legend. Tsang Ehr is the god directly associated with the

broadsword. The name Tsang Ehr means "arrives and kills whatever it touches." This nickname gives a good indication of the great military power associated with the saber.

Many famous saber-wielding martial artists were chronicled by Chinese historians and poets. Wang Wu was a martial artist known for his saber skills. He wielded a big broadsword with nine rings on the back of the blade. The rings were used to distract the enemy and dull his weapon. The broadsword play of Wang Wu was described

Photos by David J. Everett



The broadsword is carried in the left hand, with the back of the blade resting along the inside of the arm. The fingers are curved around the handle.

as being as "violent as a tiger on a prairie." Chinese poets, fascinated by the beauty, power and grace of the saber, were inspired to chronicle its many uses. One poet described broadsword play as "hurricane sweeping leaves off the trees." Broadswords once were the preferred weapon of the Chinese military. In the 1940s, the saber was used in the anti-Japanese War in northeast China.

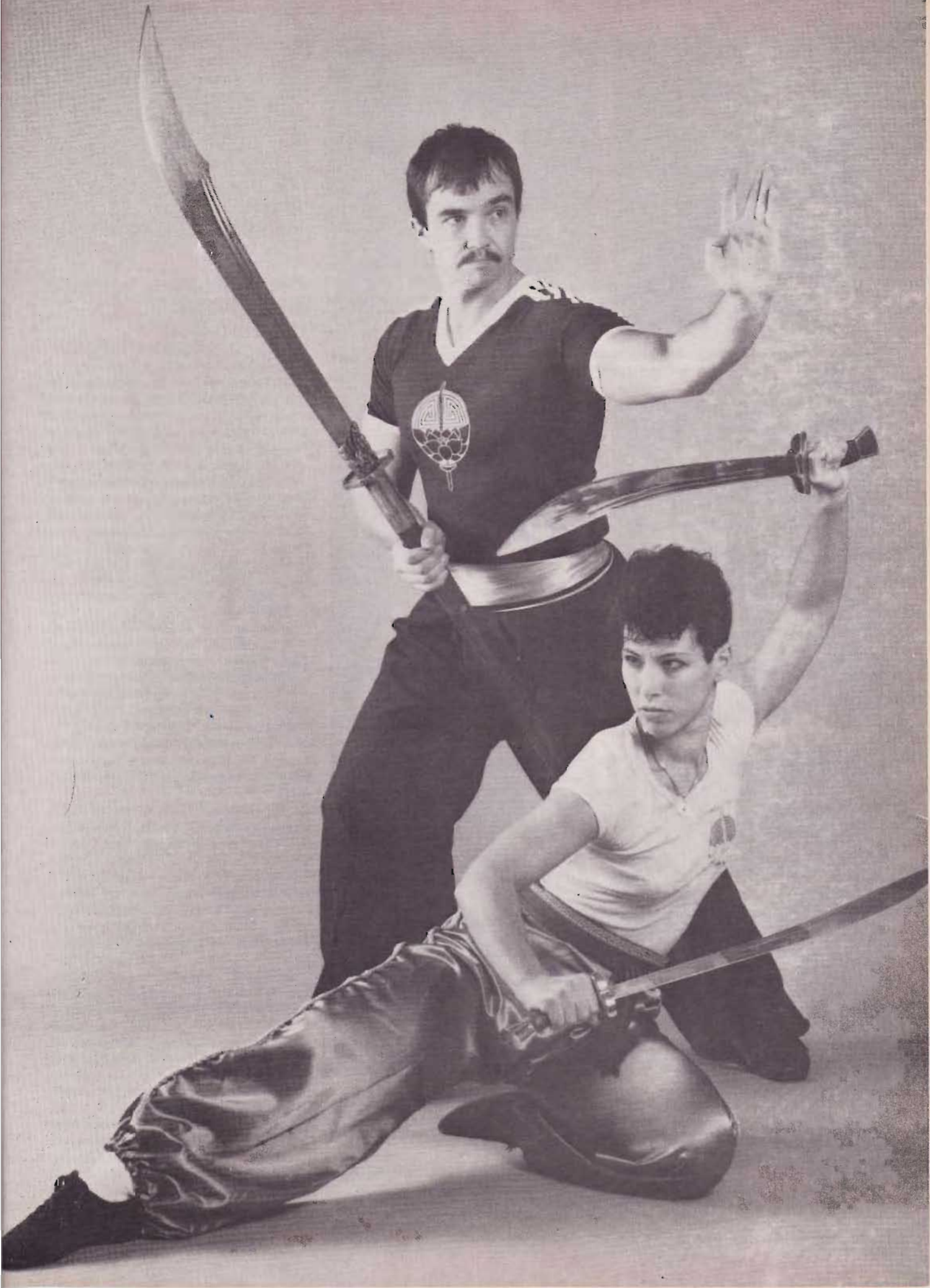
Types of Broadswords

The broadsword is a long knife with one wide and flat edge. Broadswords have existed in China for thousands of years. There are long, short and very short variations of the weapon.

Long-range Adaptation

The prototype of the modern-day saber is the long-handled broadsword, similar to the short, heavy weapon carried by General Kuan. Its size was proportionate to the height and physique of the bearer. The average blade weighed about 40 pounds and was about five-to-eight feet in height. A circular metal guard was attached to the base of the blade to keep the enemy's weapon from sliding down and cutting the bearer's hand. It was also used to keep blood from dripping onto the owner's hand. The long handle was made of either metal or hardwood. A small piece of metal placed at the base of the weapon could be thrust at the enemy.

Three of the most famous variations of the long-handled broadsword are the Kuan-Dau, the Yueh Fei-Dau and the Chay Yang-Dau, named after their famous users. The Kuan-Dau had a hook on the back





The broadsword, especially the solid battle version, can be used to block most weapons. Both blocks are used in this technique. A force-meets-force block (above) can be executed horizontally (1) or vertically (2).



The *shin no gornou* (above) is a deflecting and attacking combination performed with the broadsword. As the opponent attacks (1), the defender deflects the opponent's blade and then attacks with her free hand. She then continues (2&3) the counterclockwise clearing motion around her hand, keeping the back of the blade in contact with her body. Finally, she flows (4) into a sweeping slice.

of the blade, which was used to catch the enemy's weapon. A tassel placed through the hook was used for distraction. The blade of the famous military man, Chay Yang, had rings on the back to distract

the enemy. General Yueh Fei developed a version of the long-handled broadsword to be used specifically for cutting the legs of horses in battle. This weapon had a shorter handle and a long, narrow blade.

Short-range Adaptation

Some short adaptations of the Chinese broadsword include the scrape saber, which is the length of the forearm, and the even shorter saber dagger, which came in pairs. These weapons were less than two feet in length and were used as backup weapons to a longer blade or as a primary weapon of self-defense. The blade was used to stab and cut. These short sabers were either strapped to the forearm or hidden in a boot. Quick and easily reversible movements could be executed with these very short weapons.

The Modern Broadsword—The Don-Dau

The popular modern version of the saber or broadsword is known as the dau or don-dau. Dau means knife, with the saber actually being a long knife developed from an agricultural tool. The don-dau's blade is curved and wide, with the sharpest area near the tip. The back of the blade is thick and blunt and is used for blocking. The average blade length is from 25-30 inches. The don-dau, one of the famous weapons of ancient China known as the 18 ping, is used for combat in middle and close range.

The don-dau is constructed from a single piece of metal. By wrapping the handle with cloth or leather, sweat is absorbed and the weapon is easier to grip. A circular guard keeps the enemy's weapon from sliding down and cutting the bearer's hand. These guards were oftentimes elaborately designed in the shapes of dragons or other creatures. A cloth hung from the handle of the broadsword was used to wipe blood from the blade. The blood groove, an indentation on either side of the blade, was used to break the suction so the don-dau could easily be withdrawn from the enemy's body.

The broadswords were among the earliest weapons of ancient China, with the don-dau considered to be "the root of short weapons" because its techniques are relatively simple to learn. According to a famous Chinese saying, "It takes 100 days to train a soldier with the saber, 1,000 days to learn the techniques of the spear, and 10,000 days to master the double-edged sword."

The don-dau was widely used throughout China, but varied in length to facilitate both the physical makeup and needs of the user. In northern China, the weapon was generally longer because its user was taller and the countryside more open. The southern blade, however, was shorter and heavier because it was used by shorter people in crowded cities.

Soldiers preferred a lighter, quicker blade that could be carried over long distances. Mountain men and farmers chose a heavier, machete-like saber that could double as an agricultural tool. This type of don-dau featured tremendous cutting power, but lacked speed and was difficult to reverse once the user began his motion.

Some of the more popular don-daus include the willow leaf, pok dau, and ghost head saber. Originating in the north, the willow leaf was light with little curve to the handle and blade. The *pok dau* (executioner's saber) was thick, heavy and often welded with both hands. From southern China came the ghost head saber, a short weapon used for chopping. Other types of don-daus are: grain leaf saber, goose feather saber, tiger tail knife, tornado knife, plum blossom saber, oxtail knife, whirlwind, sun-mother saber and crescent knife. Sabers also come in pairs and are referred to either as cern-dau or swang-dau. Double-saber techniques come primarily from northern styles.

Saber Energy

The energy behind the saber comes from the tiger. Hence the famous Chinese saying, "Brandish the saber like a tiger pouncing." Muscular strength is important when using the saber. The energy used is primarily yang or external compared to the soft, internal movement emphasized in the Chinese double-edged sword technique. All movements must be directed from the *tan tien* (sea of chi), which is located three inches below the navel. *Chi* (internal energy) must be projected through the weapon to insure speed and control. The weaponless hand must function as a balancing agent in offensive and defensive maneuvers.

Saber Usage

The don-dau is used to slice, chop or thrust at middle to close range. The sweeping figure-eight slashes require extreme shoulder flexibility. Successful attacking comes from the speed and momentum of the blade. Many times, offensive and defensive moves are combined as blocks and cuts. Attacking techniques are performed fast and hard, while defensive moves are soft and slow so momentum can be transferred without an interruption of focus or power. The figure-eight motions associated with the saber are called flowers. They not only act as attacking techniques, but also create a barrier around the wielder. In saber play, the empty hand is carried in the open-palm position and used as a sight. As the practitioner moves through his techniques, he focuses his weapon in the direction of the empty hand.

Whether a common tool of the peasant or foot soldier or a venerated weapon of the Chinese god of war, the saber holds a high place in the country's culture. The study of saber techniques yields an understanding of balance, positioning and unarmed combat. Only by the continued examination of this great weapon's history, forms and combat-oriented basics will the descendants of the green dragon not be forgotten.



About the Author: Patricia L. Everett is a Connecticut-based martial artist and freelance writer. Her last story was: "Term Insurance for the Pregnant Martial Artist" (IKF, April 1986).



The broadsword can be used to slice horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Diagonal cuts are often executed (above) in figure-eight patterns known as flowers. There is the downward flower (1&2) and the uppercut flower (3&4).



A sliding block (above) can be executed with the broadsword. Ideally, the opponent's sword should be met with the blunt inner third of the blade to prevent damage to the edge. If the opponent's blade slices toward the hand, it will be caught by the guard.