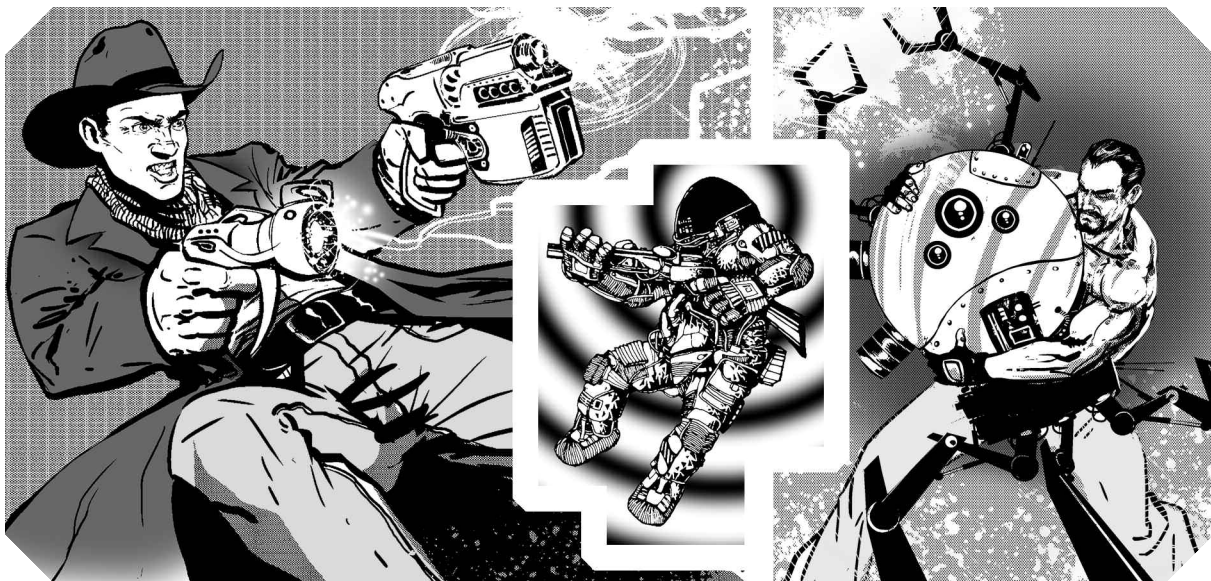


GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

TRANSHUMAN SPACE

MARTIAL ARTS 2100[™]



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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all **GURPS** releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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INTRODUCTION

Martial arts might seem like an irrelevance in the world of *Transhuman Space*. Why spend years training to throw slightly more powerful punches when a dozen different high-tech weapons are available to do much more damage? Why discipline your body and mind when biomods are available to enhance the former and nanodrugs can adjust the latter any way you want? Why burrow into the subcultures of ancient combat forms when you can find a thousand exotic and satisfying memplexes on the global Web?

Yet, the martial arts survive for several very good reasons. Advanced training provides proven, often satisfying routes to discipline and physical fitness, without the expense of other methods, the problem of finding a reputable clinic or doctor, or the risks to the sense of self that come with quick high-tech self-modification. Martial-arts training can teach *focused* aggression and efficient crisis response. High-tech spacecraft, domed off-Earth communities, and underwater bases still depend on reliable sealing and somewhat fragile technologies to keep their occupants alive; even governments with a tolerant attitude toward weaponry tend to restrict the possession of powerful sidearms in such places. Moreover, they have the full support of the inhabitants, and can enforce the ban with advanced technologies. Unarmed combat thus may be the only legal or available way of settling violent personal conflicts such locations.

Furthermore, not all martial arts are concerned with *unarmed* combat, especially as the term is used in *GURPS Fourth Edition*. Many teach how to use the technologies of combat as precisely and efficiently as possible, so that the development of new technologies inspires the creation of new arts.

Finally, the martial arts remain popular in the entertainment business in 2100, as heroes who win through superior skill look better than those who depend entirely on technology do. This has created countless job openings for stuntmen, fight arrangers, and motion-capture models. These jobs are eminently suitable for certain PCs, who may need a source of honest income and an excuse to wander the world between adventures.

USING THIS BOOK

This supplement is concerned with martial arts in the world of *Transhuman Space* in Fourth Edition terms. Using it therefore requires the current edition of *GURPS Martial Arts*, the *Basic Set*, and the *Transhuman Space* main book, and preferably *Transhuman Space: Changing Times* for general guidance on running *Transhuman Space* games under Fourth

Edition. The text also makes reference to other *Transhuman Space* supplements, although none of these are mandatory.

In addition, a couple of the “gun arts” in this supplement use techniques and perks that can be found in either *GURPS High-Tech* for Fourth Edition, *GURPS Gun Fu*, or *GURPS Tactical Shooting*, so access to one of those is required to use those styles. A few perks that first appeared in *Gun Fu* are reprinted in Chapter 2 of this supplement for the convenience of readers who only have access to *High-Tech*. In any case, *Gun Fu* is highly recommended to anyone who wants to include wilder cinematic gun arts in their *Transhuman Space* campaigns, while *Tactical Shooting* would be very useful to anyone looking to focus on more realistic gunplay.

You were prizefighting. “Misty Steele,” augmented featherweight. Eight fights, I made book on five of ‘em. Blood matches, sweetmeat. Illegal.

– William Gibson,
Mona Lisa Overdrive

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Several of the styles detailed here, and some parts of the background notes, originally appeared in Third Edition form in the 2004 *Pyramid* article “Transhuman Martial Arts,” by Peter V. Dell’Orto and Werner H. Hartmann. It’s been a pleasure to bring them into line with the new edition. In addition, a number of things in this supplement – especially style descriptions and concepts – previously appeared in Third Edition *Transhuman Space* supplements; these are referenced where appropriate.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Masters is the *Transhuman Space* line editor and author of *Changing Times* and other material for the line. In addition to a lot of *GURPS* material dating back to *Arabian Nights*, he has written a number of e23 products, including a couple of books for the *Dungeon Fantasy* series. He lives in Britain with his wife and the usual couple of computers, which know better than to talk back to him.

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The stress for some troops could sometimes be considerable, but the best-trained “virtual veterans” became experts in a startling range of problem-solving methods.

FAST PROTOTYPING IN THE DOJO

The civilian world wasn't too far behind the military – and the most committed teachers and combat scholars brought a great deal of ingenuity to the topic. Not only could virtual reality model all manner of combat situations and facilitate training, modern somatic modeling software could actually analyze skill use down at the level of individual muscles and joints.

In short, martial arts moved into the realm of computer-aided design. Specialist software allowed whole martial-arts styles to be designed and redesigned in virtual space before

being tested in action, and AI aides could talk the tester-stylists through the process of learning and deploying the new ideas. Traditionalist martial-arts masters might disdain this “hasty and fantastical” approach – many of the systems developed this way proved to be ineffective, inefficient, or just unremarkable – but over time, some genuinely new and interesting ideas came out of the VR dojos.

Hence, although many of the styles developed to deal with new extraterrestrial environments were created by people who were on the spot, working through old-fashioned, painful trial and error, others came from either keen army training specialists or interested martial-arts masters working with VR programmers and biomechanics experts. Furthermore, the analysis software made cross-fertilization between new styles and ideas significantly simpler to manage. For a while, the solar system seemed to be experiencing a golden age of martial-arts development.

The Quest for the Ultimate Style

The culmination of the VR analysis trend, around the 2080s, was a serious and systematic attempt to formulate the “perfect style.” Actually, there were several separate attempts, but they all had a lot in common. The pattern was to apply the best computers and software available to the largest possible set of recordings of real combat – thousands of hours at minimum. This equipment analyzed what worked and what didn't, mapped that onto actual tactics via physiology and weapon-expert systems, and fine-tuned the resulting style using simulated VR combat. It ultimately exploited teaching technology (including mnemotopic drugs, VR, and the young science of memetics) to generate a maximally effective teaching regime.

This approach was by no means a total failure; it produced some useful synthetic styles and some formidable martial artists. However, it didn't actually render all previous martial-arts study redundant, despite the hopes of its proponents. For a start, the styles it generated were often *difficult*, occasionally verging on being impossible to learn properly. To become as effective as the experts, a student had to master a significant set of techniques (though not too many – inefficient moves were deliberately eliminated, after all). He had to internalize them, instinctively triggering the optimum response to any given move by an opponent. The high-tech training regimes were supposed to resolve this problem; instead, they made learning the styles expensive and stressful.

Furthermore, soon after most of these “ultimate” styles were developed, rival trainers began developing counters to them, designed to exploit the gaps left by their single-minded devotion to efficiency and to trigger responses that left the fighter open to specific follow-up attacks. This was nicknamed the “rock-paper-scissors” problem: A given approach could often be defeated by a specific counter-pattern that in turn could be defeated by other styles that weren't *better*, just *different*. An arms race

developed, only to be abandoned by most protagonists who recognized that it would never end.

That brought up the simple question of what these styles were *for*. They were too hard and expensive for casual students seeking simple self-defense skills and cheap fitness training, and too brutal for many sporting contests; students found it difficult to break the habits hammered into them by training when contest rules treated them as fouls. Military forces might see some use for them, but armies were mostly in the business of using high-tech weapons, and the best martial-arts styles still offered little protection against a bullet fired from a cheap handgun by a semi-trained shooter.

Nonetheless, elements of the various “ultimate” styles developed during this period survive to 2100, and there remains a tantalizing and not *entirely* crazy possibility – at least in the eyes of martial-arts fans – that a true ultimate style exists somewhere, presumably known only to a few reclusive experts. “Ultimate Combat,” as detailed in *Martial Arts* (p. 144), would be a valid basis for this. In the fairly realistic setting of a *Transhuman Space* campaign, the style probably would not include cinematic skills and perks (or the need for Trained by a Master), but it might permit some Unusual Training perks to give access to some of those. However, many of the styles developed in the 2080s included some weapons training – computer analysis confirmed that, yes, weapons *are* deadlier than bare hands – so this hypothetical style might include some weapons skills, too.

At a lower level of intensity, some dojos have incorporated ideas from this period into their own training regimes, particularly for military and unlimited combat-sports use. Styles that may have added some new ideas in this period (which could mean *dropping* combat art or sports skills) include Jeet Kune Do and Tae Kwon Do. One new style that owes something to the process is Cocerdelmi (p. 24), which was optimized for use against opponents in body armor.

While most “legit” practitioners of Kill Fu use their skills only in meatfighting contests, some people have certain real-life applications for this style. Rumor has it that some Maple Syndicate families keep teams of Shan Chuan-trained Spartan bioroids as enforcers and personal bodyguards . . .

Skills: Brawling; Karate.

Techniques: Aggressive Parry; Axe Kick; Counterattack (Karate); Ear Clap; Eye-Gouging; Ground Fighting; Head Butt; Jam; Knee Strike; Targeted Attack (Brawling or Karate Punch/Face); Targeted Attack (Karate Knee Strike/Groin); Spinning Punch; Stamp Kick; Two-Handed Punch.

Cinematic Skills: Breaking Blow; Power Blow; Pressure Points; Pressure Secrets.

Cinematic Techniques: Lethal Strike; Pressure-Point Strike.

Perks: Biting Mastery; Iron Arms; Iron Legs; Neck Control (Brawling); Rapid Retraction.

Optional Traits

Advantages: Combat biomods; Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Bully; Reputation.

Skills: Lifting; Physiology; Running; Stealth; Wrestling.

ZHUA

4 points

This style was originally described in *In the Well* (pp. 92-93). It is a martial art that has evolved in the Chinese community on Mars, with features that enable stylists to exploit the planet’s low gravity – primarily the use of spectacular leaping acrobatic moves that would be considered hopelessly cinematic back on Earth. Zhua is an unarmed style, partly as a point of tradition but also because it developed in the Chinese-governed domes where weapons were severely restricted for multiple reasons. However, Zhua training does allow for the range of “street” combat biomods that are available in the Martian martial-arts underworld, with hand strikes that are highly effective when used with claws (see p. 10). Throws, on the other hand, are not emphasized, as falls are much less likely to hurt an opponent in Martian gravity – but some schools do cover that topic and a bit of grappling, or at least teach basic counters for use when grappled.

In combat, Zhua stylists balance on their toes, with one foot far in front of the other; the feet are mostly used for mobility, the hands for attack and defense. Kicks are limited to flashy opening and finishing moves, and the occasional passing strike when jumping clean over opponents. While Zhua fighters can be aggressive when they have the advantage, they begin most fights with several Defensive Attacks, until they have the measure of their foe. Because transhuman opponents can have such a range of body types, Zhua instructors pay little attention to attempts to read a foe or strike at vulnerable points; they prefer direct blows to obvious targets. Wiser instructors also teach that, if the opponent proves too tough for that to work, a Zhua fighter should use agility and speed to get away.

Different Zhua courses teach striking methods that are closer to Boxing or Karate, for slightly different purposes. Karate is certainly better for *most* purposes, and includes kicking, which stylists do use occasionally. Boxing is easier to learn (making it good for basic self-defense students) and doesn’t take encumbrance

Rival “Martian” Styles

Uninformed observers occasionally confuse Hishōjutsu (p. 26) with Zhua (below). However, they are very different, and some rivalry exists between the two.

Zhua is very much “Rust China Kung Fu”; it has evolved in the specific Martian environment. While it has a fair number of non-ethnic-Chinese practitioners, it is still linked to Chinese culture. It also focuses on barehanded combat, making it useful in strictly controlled Chinese domes where *any* weapon may be spotted and confiscated.

Hishōjutsu, by contrast, is adapted for a wide range of gravitational conditions, from Martian 0.38 G to free fall (which is the usual excuse given for all its flashy, flamboyant kicks), and incorporates plenty of weapon use. When confrontations occur between practitioners of the two styles, which one wins often depends heavily on the specific circumstances.

In addition, Zhua has some associations with the Martian underworld and the Triads – although it also has plenty of perfectly respectable students. Meanwhile, Hishōjutsu has some long-standing if vague associations with more politically idealistic radical movements on Mars and in the outer system. These two stereotypes create a degree of friction, while making some of the ruling power structures suspicious of both.

penalties (making it useful for fighters in heavy vacc suits or outdoor gear – although encumbrance is rarely a major problem in Martian gravity). With cumbersome outdoor gear less required as Martian terraforming progresses, Boxing moves are falling out of fashion in Zhua schools, although they’re likely to survive as options for teaching to casual students.

Skills: Acrobatics; Boxing or Karate; Jumping.

Techniques: Breakfall; Elbow Strike (Karate); Evade; Feint; Head Butt (Karate); Jump Kick (Karate); Spinning Punch (Karate).

Cinematic Skills: Breaking Blow; Flying Leap; Power Blow.

Cinematic Techniques: Flying Jump Kick (Karate); Springing Attack.

Perks: Acrobatic Feints; Acrobatic Kicks; Armor Familiarity (Karate); Combat Jumping* (p. 12); Iron Hands; Rapid Retraction (Punches); Suit Familiarity (NBC Suit or Vacc Suit); Technique Mastery (Evade); Unusual Training (Breaking Blow, Only vs. well-braced objects out of combat).

Optional Traits

Advantages: Andraste and combat biomods; Combat Reflexes; Cultural Familiarity (Asian/Chinese); Extra Attack (Single Skill, Boxing or Karate); Language (Cantonese or Mandarin); Resistant to Chi Abilities (in very cinematic campaigns).

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Xia); Enemies (Rust China cops, Rival schools, Racketeers, Rival Triads, etc.); Intolerance (Earth “authorities” of any sort); Overconfidence.

Skills: Whichever of Boxing or Karate wasn’t taken as required; Breath Control; Judo; Karate Sport; Savoir-Faire (Dojo).

* This is the signature move of Zhua, so it can be purchased as soon as the student has Style Familiarity – 10 points in the style’s skills are not necessary. The requirement for both Acrobatics and Jumping at DX or better still applies, however.

Style Trainer

This software is more than a Teaching skill set, although it functions similarly. Actually a general-purpose, VR-oriented training system, it can provide instruction in any martial-arts style for which adequate data exists. Complexity ranges from 5 to 7.

Input data may come from a Style Analysis program (see p. 36), or be prepared “by hand” by a team of experts. The latter option is better but much more expensive. (The experts can and often do start with computer-generated output, though.) Like an ordinary skill set, an AI must operate a Style Trainer program. In turn, this AI must be capable of interfacing with a skill set of the same Complexity (that is, Complexity 5 is equivalent to an 8-point skill set, 6 to 16 points, or 7 to 32 points). Treat the program as giving the AI Teaching-12 for purposes of instruction in this style only, along with every required skill in the style and every DX-based optional skill, all at attribute level for a Complexity 5 Style Trainer, attribute+1 for Complexity 6, or attribute+2 for Complexity 7. These effective skill levels assume “hand-prepared” input data. If using the raw output from a Style Analysis program, all skills take a penalty unless the analysis roll was a critical success; the penalty is -1 if the roll was made by 5 or more, -2 if it was made by 1 to 4, or -3 if it was made exactly. If the AI already knows any of the skills at a

higher level, use that level rather than the one granted by the software for training purposes.

A Style Trainer program can be used for either standard education or intensive training (p. B293), if it meets the requirements for a teacher (work out how many points the operating AI would require to have the skills involved at its effective level if necessary for intensive training purposes). It can train students in the style’s techniques, but only up to its own effective level. If it doesn’t have high enough effective skill to function as a teacher, it may still assist someone in self-teaching – treat it as providing the equivalent of a set of textbooks for this purpose.

The AI only really gains these skills for the purposes of *teaching* that one style. In theory, it can attempt to use skills derived from the database in combat (while running a humanoid cybershell, say, or in a VR environment). When doing so, the -3 (from Limited Integration) for using a skill set in high-stress situations is *doubled* to -6 – the system just isn’t designed to work that way! However, it can use the software to train *itself* in the style; treat this as standard education, *not* self-teaching. As AIs don’t have to sleep, they can acquire styles very fast this way! \$500 for Complexity 5, \$1,000 for Complexity 6, or \$2,000 for Complexity 7. Input data for any style typically costs \$500 plus \$200 per point of the base cost of the style if it’s hand-prepared, or \$200 plus \$50 per point if it’s just unedited output from a Style Analysis program. LC4.

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