

VOVINAM VIỆT VO DAO – tradition and history

Gheorghe Pricop¹

¹*Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania*

Thierry Long²

²*Universite de Nice Sophia-Antipolis, France*

Key word: The VOVINAM Việt Vo Dao, logo, history, principles

Summary: Vovinam is a type of Vietnamese martial arts. Vovinam is practiced with and without weapons. It is based on the principle of harmony between hard and soft. It includes training of the body as well as the mind. It uses force and reaction of the opponent. The name is a portmanteau of Vo (Võ): meaning "Martial Arts" and Vinam standing for "Vietnam".

The VOVINAM Việt Vo Dao is a martial discipline which must be understood as one of the fundamental components of the human culture. The VOVINAM Việt Vo Dao proclaims indeed, the physical and mental training of the individual who symbolizes ideal, perfection, kindness and progress, having the welfare of the society for an object.

Introduction:

Vovinam is a type of Vietnamese martial arts. Vovinam is practiced with and without weapons. It is based on the *principle of harmony between hard and soft*. It includes training of the body as well as the mind. It uses force and reaction of the opponent. The name is a portmanteau of Vo (Võ): meaning "Martial Arts" and *Vinam* standing for "Vietnam". It includes hand "đòn tay", elbow "chỏ", kicks "đá", throws, escape- and levering techniques. Both attack and defense techniques are trained, just as foot techniques, forms (Quyền, Song Luyện & Đa Luyện), combat and traditional wrestling ("Vật").

The wide range of techniques include punching, kicking etc. as well as Quyens ("Katas", "Forms"), wrestling, sword, Con staff (not the Chinese "Gun" staff), axe, (folding-)fan and others.

Self defense techniques cover defense against weaponless attacks like choking from behind or grabbing and against attacks with knife or sword.

Material-method:

The Yin & Yang-Theory (Vietnamese: "Âm-Dương") states that everything in the universe and on earth is initiated through the

interrelation of Yin (negative) and Yang (positive). As to this theory there are martial arts that prefer the hard over the soft and others that prefer the soft over the hard. Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo does not prefer any over the other. Hard and Soft are used equally to adapt to every situation, to every problem.

Based on Võ-Thuật the student aims to develop the ability to combine hard and soft at the right relation, in combat and in daily life. This aiming to develop both physical abilities as well as the student's spirit. Not only the principle of the harmony of hard & soft but also many other things resulting from the training contribute to internalizing the martial art philosophy, e.g. fighting spirit, courage, tenacity, fairness, modesty and tolerance. Above all the training morality and the way of applying the techniques shape the students' character.

The greatest difficulty is to see through ones own ego and then to overcome it. On success in doing so the Vovinam student will gain generosity and tolerance with other people. With the awareness that the most important thing in life of a human are other humans the final goal is to be able to not only help oneself but also to help others to live in peace and harmony with ones surrounding.

Results:

With the salutation, "*Hand of steel on a benevolent heart*" the student is reminded about the main principle and about the goal of Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo with every training. It is also about using the opponent's force and reaction, hence reach maximum effect with little force/effort.

Logo

The form of the yellow Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo logo is composed from a rectangle and a circle, angular at the top, round at the bottom. This form symbolizes the perfection of the true, the good and the beautiful.

The logo is framed in a marine blue color. The red text "Vovinam" is written above the marine blue "Việt Võ Đạo". Its pointing letters show the way to the destination. Underneath lie the two poles Yin (red) and Yang (marine blue).

In the middle of the two poles the yellow map of Vietnam can be found. The symbol of Yin and Yang is framed by a thick, white circle, symbolizing the being of the Dao, with the mission to mediate in between Yin and Yang, to subdue the two, to enable life of all beings.

History

Founder of Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo is Nguyen Loc.

In his younger years he was training traditional, Vietnamese martial arts. At that time Vietnam had to endure almost 100 years of French colonialization. To his belief a strong nation could only arise if its youth was trained - a strong body, a clear mind, and a "pure" soul. He was determined to make changes.

He began studying various martial arts. He read books about history, arts, health, philosophy and religion. He *united* all his experiences in a new martial art and philosophy. It was so far patriotically influenced as it was made *by* a Vietnamese *for* Vietnamese people. The variety of the sources is reflected in the variety of the techniques.

Vovinam spread the world by Vietnamese emigrating from Vietnam mostly over France.

After Nguyen Loc's death Le Sang took worldwide responsible for the further development and the worldwide distribution of Vovinam.

The 10 principles of Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo

1. Vovinam's disciples promise to attain higher level of martial art in order to serve the people and humanity.
2. Promise to be faithful with Vovinam and develop the young generation of Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo
3. Be unanimous in spirit and heart, respect the elder, love fellow peers.
4. Respect discipline absolutely, maintains the higher honour of a martial art disciple.
5. Have respect for other martial art schools, only use martial art skills for self defense and protect justice.
6. Be studious, strengthen the mind, enrich the thought & behavior.
7. Live simple, with chaste, loyalty and high mind.
8. Build up a spirit of steely determination and vigor, overcome powers of violence.
9. Make intelligent judgments, carry out struggles with perseverance and act with alertness.
10. Be self-confident, self-controlled, modest and generous.

The belt system, the uniforms and the colors

Uniforms

From 1938-1964, there was no official uniforms. In 1964, the first Council of Masters was gathered to codify Vovinam. The color Blue was adopted as the official color for Vovinam uniforms.

A separate development of the "Việt Võ Đạo Federation" in 1973 until 1990 the uniforms' color was black.

Summer 1990 the Vovinam Masters met. This meeting had the goal to create a structured organization for Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo outside Vietnam. One of the decisions was that the suit in Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo are now to be blue worldwide.

Belts

The adult begins with a light blue belt - the same color as his/her suit.

He then is a "Võ Sinh", a student aspirant. The old school Vovinam had two navy blue stripes before getting the Navy Blue Belt. But recently, some Vovinam schools have changed under the direction of Le Sang and do not have a Light Blue Belt 1 stripe, or two.

Following the light blue is the dark blue belt. Then he/she is a "Mon Sinh", a student.

Blue stands for the factor of the sea, and the hope - the hope in being successful in learning Vovinam. With the following 3 exams yellow stripes are added to the blue belt. The 3rd yellow stripe is followed by the yellow belt. The student has reached the instructor's level.

Yellow is the Asians' skin color. It symbolically stands for the skin color of all people. It symbolizes the "skin deep" internalization of the martial art and the philosophy.

In other martial arts this belt is black. Therefore a Vovinam student who carries a yellow belt is allowed to carry a black belt. This makes a comparison to other martial arts easier, eg. in public performances. A person who wears a yellow belt with one or more stripes is considered an instructor. Following in a longer period of time, respectively 3 red stripes are added to the yellow belt. This corresponds to the 1st, 2nd, respectively 3rd Dang (Dan). The exam following the 3rd red stripe is the master's exam. Passing the exam successfully assigns the right to wear a red belt with a circulating yellow border.

Red stands for the blood and the intensive flame. The student has internalized Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo even further. The 5th to 10th Dang are shown as a completed red belt with 1 to 6 white stripes.

White stands for the infiniteness, the bones; is the symbol of the depth of the spirit. The white belt assigns the master the absolute mastery of Vovinam Việt Võ Đạo.

Discussions

The VOVINAM Việt Vo Dao is a martial discipline which must be understood as one of the fundamental components of the human culture.

The VOVINAM Việt Vo Dao proclaims indeed, the physical and mental training of the individual who symbolizes ideal, perfection, kindness and progress, having the welfare of the society for an object.

Moreover, the VOVINAM Việt Vo Dao does not lock itself in immutable rules. On the contrary, it has always been very adaptable to time and space in search of harmony in the daily life. It moves with the modernisation of the society and can thus remain eternal.

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Titre: VOVINAM VIỆT VO DAO – la tradition et l'histoire

Mot clé : le VOVINAM Việt Vo Dao, le logo, l'histoire, les principes

Résumé : Vovinam est un type d'arts martiaux du Viêt Nam. Vovinam est pratiqué avec et sans armes. Il est fondé sur le principe d'harmonie entre dur et mou. Il inclut l'entraînement du corps aussi bien que l'esprit. Il recourt à la force et la réaction de l'adversaire. Le nom est une malle de Vo (V õ) : le sens "les Arts Martiaux" et le représentant de Vinam "du Viêt Nam".

Le VOVINAM Việt Vo Dao est une discipline martiale qui doit être comprise comme une des composantes fondamentales de la culture humaine. Le VOVINAM Việt Vo Dao proclame effectivement, l'entraînement physique et mental de l'individu qui symbolise l'idéal, la perfection, la gentillesse et le progrès, en ayant les intérêts de la société pour un objet.

Titlu: Vovinam Viet Vo dao - tradiție și istorie

Cuvinte cheie: Vovinam Viet Vo dao, logo-ul, istoria, principiile

Rezumat: Vovinam este un tip de arte marțiale vietnameze. Vovinam este practică cu și fără arme. Aceasta se bazează pe principiul de armonie între tare și slab. El include elemente de formare a corpului și a minții. Se folosește forța de reacție și față de adversar. Numele este un complex de Vo (VO): sensul "Arte Marțiale" și Vinam permanente pentru "Vietnam". VOVINAM de Viet Vo dao marțiale este o disciplină care trebuie să fie înțeleasă ca fiind una din componentele fundamentale ale omului de cultură. VOVINAM Viet Vo dao proclamă într-adevăr, pregătirea fizică și psihică a individului, care simbolizează ideal, perfecțiune, bunătate și progresul, având bunăstarea societății pentru un obiect.