



TANG SU DO

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Traditional Korean Karate

Interview with the leader, Master Roberto Daniel Villalba



HAK WON

Arts from Korea



Roberto Daniel Villalba

Martial Arts hide within them extraordinary people, amazing biographies, dreamers of all sorts and conditions. Master Villalba is a part of that group of people out of the ordinary.

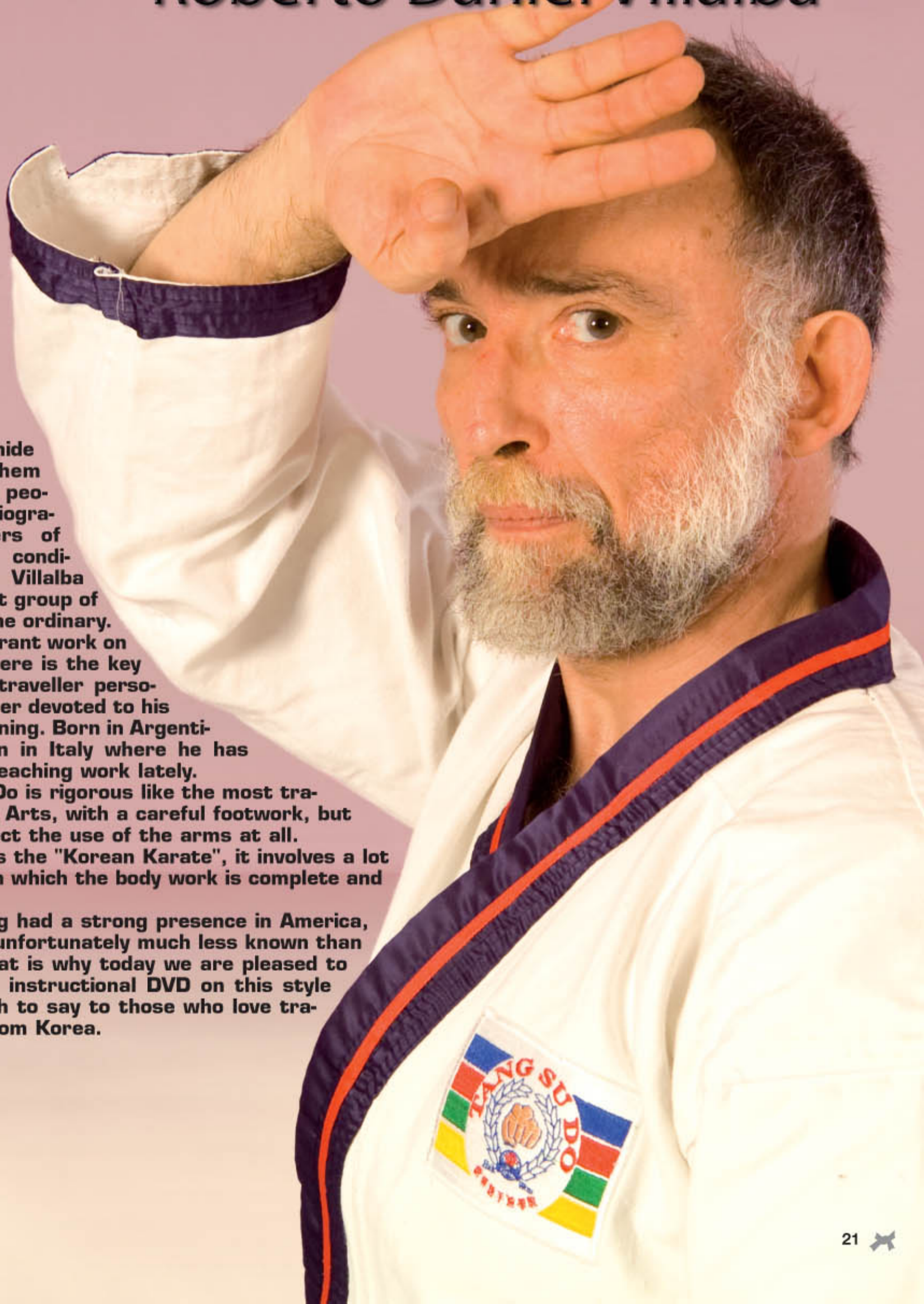
In his perseverant work on Tang Su Do, there is the key of a vivid and traveller personality, a searcher devoted to his intense questioning. Born in Argentina, it has been in Italy where he has developed his teaching work lately.

The Tang Su Do is rigorous like the most traditional Korean Arts, with a careful footwork, but it doesn't neglect the use of the arms at all.

Also known as the "Korean Karate", it involves a lot of techniques in which the body work is complete and balanced.

Despite having had a strong presence in America, in Europe it is unfortunately much less known than it deserves. That is why today we are pleased to present a first instructional DVD on this style which has much to say to those who love traditional Arts from Korea.

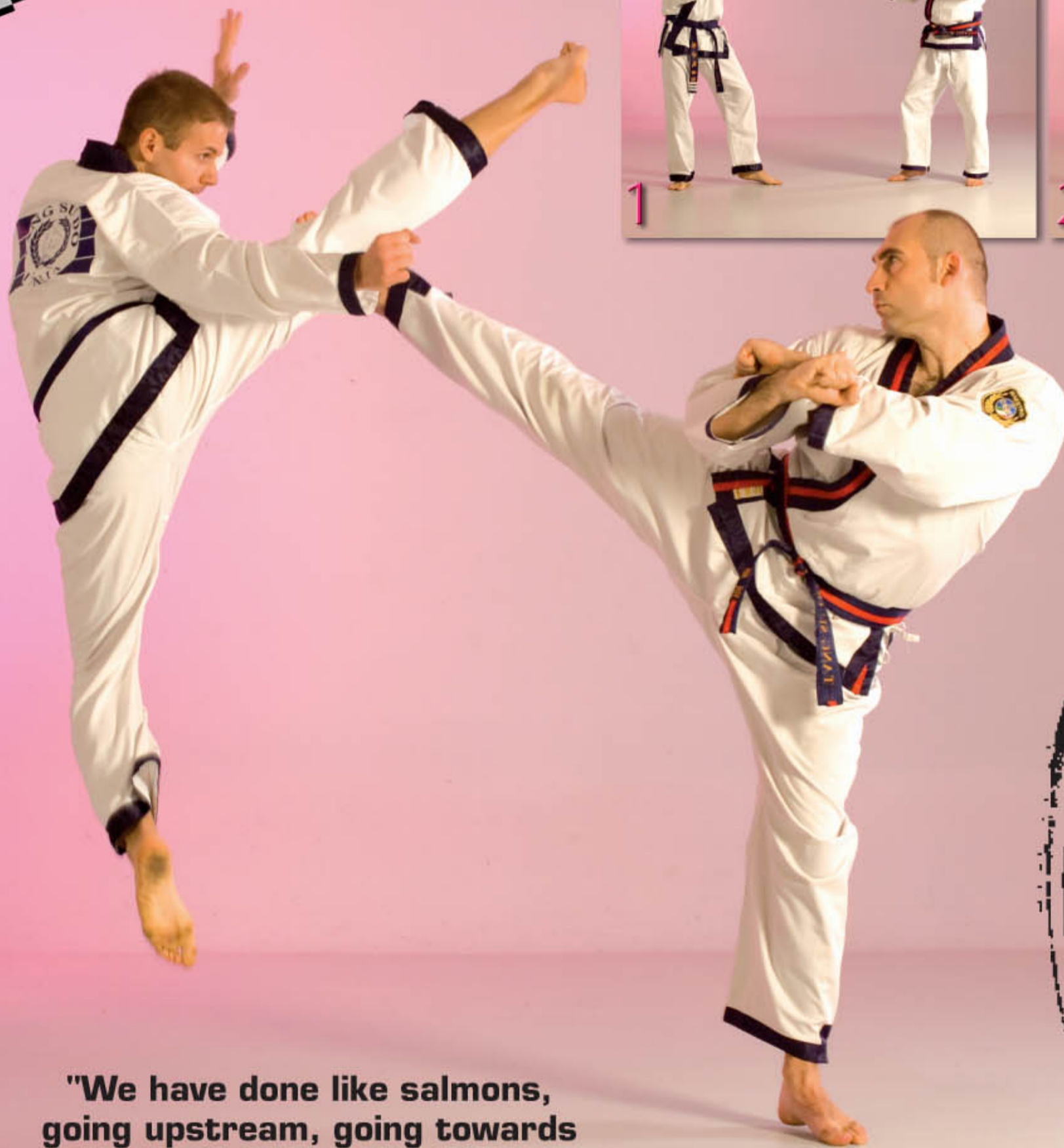
Alfredo Tucci





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**"We have done like salmons,
going upstream, going towards
the sources of the river where
the water is purer"**

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Budo International: You are the head of the International Tang Su Do Academy; could you tell us about your career in Martial Arts?

Villalba: I started in 1965 in Judo and Yoga, in 1966 I started doing Karate, but if you want to know more you can visit our website: www.tangsudo.com, so now we can talk just about important things, about essential topics.

B.I: Well, then talk about Tang Su Do and Hak Won style.

V.: That is also a long story, a life. Tang Su Do is the martial art, the Korean Karate, "Hak won" means "academy", that is, a high school of arts or science (Plato called his philosophy school like that). Our style was born in 1994, but the idea emerged much earlier, when I started teaching.

B.I: ... And when did you start teaching?

V.: In March 1970, in Mar del Plata, Argentina. It happened that the master of Judo at the Instituto Vecchio - Israel Jasinsky - suffered a heart attack and called me to replace him. I was 1st dan in Judo and 2nd kup of Chung Do Kwan Taekwondo. So my Korean master in Buenos Aires told me to take advantage of the chance and also open a course of TKD, in addition to Judo. So I did. Master Han Chang Kim used to travel two or three times a year to Mar del Plata and I went once a month to Buenos Aires, to continue my learning of Chung Do Kwan and visit my family. I have been the first Argentinian Instructor working on my own. Alejandro Balza (first black belt in TKD in Argentina) and Enrique Eiriz, my "sun bè" ("seniors") were already instructors, but they helped Master Kim at the Dojang at the corner of Pasteur street and Cordoba Avenue, in Buenos Aires.

B.I: So... why do you talk of a philosophic or Platonic "idea"? What does

it have to do with the principles of your teaching...?

V.: Because just before the opening of the course at the Instituto Vecchio, I asked my Master why we, in Chung Do Kwan, did not have a "Dojo kun" as Japanese karate practitioners, and he replied that there was indeed a "Dojang Oath", but it was outdated, since all the different Korean "kwan"(styles) were being unified under the I.T.F. But I insisted and he translated from Hanguk to Spanish the Chung Do Kwan Oath, so in my first class as an Instructor I took with me the South Korean flag and the Oath and I made my pupils recite it that first time. Herein it is the whole "philosophy" of our art.

B.I: Do you still recite it at the beginning of each class?

V.: Yes, we do. Rigorously. But I must be honest. With the arrival of TKD (ITF before, then WTF) I was the only one to do it, so in 1972 I changed the old name of the Oath for "Nonviolence Oath", and I replaced the Third principle, which said before: "We will respect the Dojang rules and obey the orders of the instructor" - something which really was not necessary to say - for something more important that urges us to find peace in ourselves, then give it as a gift to others. (The DVD shows the full oath).

B.I: You said that the Hak Won "style" was born in 1994...

V.: In fact, in July 1994, at the end of an eight-day spiritual retreat near the Tibet House in Votigno (Reggio Emilia region), where we had worked hard both in meditation and in training, in private I asked the lamas Norbu and Dashi about the fate of our Tang Su Do. The talk was harsh, I would say that the traditional ritual became unexpectedly martial, sacred... They made me sit on the Vajra seat, where I felt like I was stuck in the machine of truth; I had the fear of not being sincere enough. I could only ask three questions,

which followed three straight answers. It is not the time now to talk about the first two, but the third one was: "Your TSD students are not ready for the spiritual goals that require more effort, because they are harder. A more rigid selection and a more intense inner work will help to find suitable people. Your school will grow in efficiency and knowledge if you manage to improve the quality of human material, starting with you".

B.I: So, Buddhist monks exhorted you to have a more "spiritual" martial discipline...

V.: Well... I would say that they simply advised us to regain the true meaning of our Budo, to seriously follow the "Do" of Tang Su Do, that is, the "Tao of the Chinese hand". As Master Carlo Borghi says: "We have done like salmons, going upstream, going towards the sources of the river where the water is purer". We have gone back to the origins, to take "spiritual" food and then evolve. It seems a Path for a few... because it is about self-improvement, then about "Nei kong"... That is an inner, psychic work, for those who fight against themselves according to ethical rules, which must be understood and not only "observed"; understanding through the practice of right, good, useful actions for everybody, leads to the "Shim Kong", the specifically spiritual work, but one must deserve it: it is a prize.

B.I: Is the Hak Won style attached to any official organization?

V.: The "International Tang Su Do Academy" is affiliated to the CSEN, "Promotion Entity" recognized by the CONI (CIO) and the Department of the Interior, whose president is Master Francesco Proietti.

B.I: Are there any international federations of Tang Su Do?

V.: Yes, there are... and of all types. Maybe too many... Some are good, less good, small and big.



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Unfortunately, they all have to do with the laws of the market: if they want to have high numbers - more people - they can't be too demanding, at risk of disappearing. They have to commit, spreading the tradition of TSD a bit, but not too much, while giving people what they want. The public wants many things: some practice TSD to feel safer, others do it to establish relationships in a healthier environment, others for fun in the tournaments regularly organized by federations, others to dream of what is different... to dream of the Eastern world. On the other hand, the average person does not want to strive too much, he has neither the strength nor the time: the consumer system in which they live and on which they live, don't give them the choice. The federations have to come to terms with the collective expectations and if this "sport" function of the TSD helps preserve social health to some extent, much better! However, he who has been through all that and seeks to go beyond doesn't look for "sport" rackets; maybe he is associated with other pedestrians in the Do (the Path) and spreads the art on his way... while waiting for a better world.

B.I: You say that many people practice martial arts because they need to dream, to escape the oppressive reality, but... Aren't you dreamers?

V.: The Do follows a trip similar to natural, physical life. When we are newborn babies

we sleep most of the time; when we grow up we mainly live in a world of dreams, made of instinctual and environmental stimuli. Then comes the period of fantasies, always induced from outside. Then we move towards maturity, we live more in reality and less on the fantastic dream world, that is: we woke up gradually. The Path of the martial art is similar. Suddenly, in the Path, the traveller wakes up, the dreams give way to ideas, which, when have matured, may become ideals. Ideals that will have to be translated into action, into concrete actions, if you want to be fully a "man" or a "woman", as taught by Kipling in his "If". This is what I tried to tell the Tibetan lama Votigno. That's our intent.

Chung Nye Nim Roberto Daniel Villalba

o 1950 - Born in Buenos Aires, where he studied Yoga and Judo since 1965; he achieves his first Dan in 1969, having started in Okinawan Karate in 1966.

o 1968 - Begins to learn Chung Do Kwan (Korean Karate style) with Master Han Chang Kim (officially become ITF in December 1969).

o 1970 - Starts to teach Judo and TKD in the "Istituto Vecchio" in Mar del Plata (first Argentinian authorized to teach TKD).

o 1971 - He reaches his First Dan, ITF Dan Certificate No 819 (Black Belt No. 5 in Argentina).

o 1974 - As Second Dan he travels to the United States and begins to study Tang Su Do Moo Duk Kwan in California, under the direction of Senior Master Theodore Mason, who introduced him to Grand Master Hwang Kee.

o 1975 - Appointed representative of the Tang Su Do Moo Duk Kwan in Argentina by Grand Master Kee.

o 1977 - Moves to Italy to teach Moo Duk Kwan, officially appointed by Kwan Chang Nim.

o 1984 - Awarded Cho Dan in Kendo.

o 1988 - Selected by Grand Master Jae Joon Kim as European Technical Representative in his International Federation

o 1994 - Founds the International Academy of Tang Su Do (Athens).

o 2009 - Receives the "Oscar of Budo" as a reward for his career and 8th Dan in the Congress of CONI (Rome).

Over the years, Sensei Master Villalba and his organizations have trained a large number of black belts and Masters in different parts of the world such as Europe, South America and North America.

Master Villalba studied Anthropology and has a Master's Degree in Philosophy, specializing in Hinduism and Buddhism. He has also written two books on Tang Su Do, published in Italy in 1991 and 1994.

