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CONTRIBUTIONS OF ASIAN IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: HEALTH AND SPORTS

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First of all I would like to thank the Inter American Development Bank (IDB) and the organizers of this event for the opportunity to take part and the kind invitation to speak to you today.

Let me begin with a short introduction. At the end of the twentieth century, just as it had in the late nineteenth century, the West again began placing a very high value on the traditions of the East. Orientalism is a persistent trend associated with the positive idea that everything that comes from the East is good. It is from this perspective that I intend to address the issue of the contributions and impact of Asian immigrants and their descendants to health and sports in Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the Brazilian experience.

HEALTH

Asian immigrants and descendants, with their thousands of years of culture, have contributed significantly to the area of health in Latin America and the Caribbean. In countries such as Mexico, Argentina, Peru and especially Brazil, widespread use is made of Chinese traditional medicine and pharmacology, including acupuncture and various techniques of massage, such as Tui Na and Chi Kung. But the most commonly used treatments are acupuncture and Shiatsu therapy (mistakenly known in Brazil as massage).

The first Chinese immigrants came to Latin America and the Caribbean in the nineteenth century, bringing the practice of Chinese traditional medicine. The first Chinese immigrants to Brazil arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1812. Immigration to Brazil from China intensified after the 1949 Chinese Revolution. After 1908, when the first Japanese immigrants to Brazil, acupuncture was reintroduced to my country. However, for decades the practice was confined to the settlements founded in Brazil by Japanese immigrants because they had difficulty communicating in the Portuguese language and tended to form inward-looking groups as a result.

Acupuncture did not begin to become well-known in Brazil outside the Japanese community until after 1950. Acupuncture was pioneered in Brazil by a physiotherapist called Friedrich J. Spaeth, himself an immigrant but from Europe. Professor Spaeth began training health workers in acupuncture in 1958. Even in the early nineteen seventies, however, acupuncturists were still widely thought to be charlatans, and many physicians who practiced acupuncture were subjected to public reprimand and even persecution by the Federal Council of Medicine.

In the closing decades of the twentieth century it was discovered that acupuncture is not a fad or fashion but is practiced by thousands of people. According to *Veja*, one of Brazil's most prestigious weekly news magazines, four million Brazilians are estimated to use some form of alternative medicine. The Brazilian Association of Complementary Medicine calculates that there are about fifty thousand practitioners of alternative medicine and therapy in the country. However, the Federal Council of Medicine recognizes only homeopathy and acupuncture as medical specialties.

Recognition of this form of treatment by the medical profession culminated in the implementation of medical residencies in teaching hospitals attached to universities. In addition, many courses have been set up by medical societies and medical schools, as well as associations or leagues, all with the purpose of bringing future doctors into contact with acupuncture.

Students at the University of São Paulo Medical School, for example, have the opportunity of learning about acupuncture from the Pain League and Acupuncture League of the Neurology Clinic at Hospital das Clínicas, Latin America's largest public hospital. An optional course in acupuncture was introduced in 2002 for fourth-year medical students.

Acupuncture in the national health service

The use of Ryodoraku acupuncture, developed in Japan by Dr Yoshio Nakatani, was introduced in 1973 by Dr Satiko Tomikawa Imamura at the Department of Physical Medicine of the Orthopedics and Traumatology Institute of Hospital das Clínicas.

On March 3, 1988, the Brazilian Government officially authorized the practice of acupuncture at public hospitals and clinics, guaranteeing universal access to this ancient therapeutic method and establishing standards and routines to govern its use. The Interministerial Resolution also established that only qualified physicians could practice acupuncture.

From then on a number of physicians took initiatives to set up acupuncture services in the public healthcare network. Today there are an estimated ninety local services linked to SUS, the Unified Health System, where this technique is available to citizens. Most teaching hospitals in São Paulo State use acupuncture today.

Acupuncture for the middle class and the wealthy

Dr. Jou Eel Jia, a Chinese doctor who was born in Zhuangzu Province and is a naturalized Brazilian, owns the trendiest acupuncture clinic in São Paulo. He has become a leading practitioner, treating Geraldo Alckmin, Governor of São Paulo and himself a physician, among other famous patients. Dr. Jou claims to have treated more than thirty thousand people in his twenty-year career, including artists, politicians and business leaders.

His parents were themselves politicians and left China after Mao Tse Dong launched the Cultural Revolution in the late nineteen sixties. He started his practice in the early nineteen eighties,

when he was one of the first acupuncturists in São Paulo with a medical diploma. His prescriptions include tea, herbal remedies, fruit juice, therapies such as Lien Chi and Lain Gong, massage, and meditation.

Three approaches to acupuncture in Brazil: physicians, specialists and technicians

For more than thirty years many Brazilian professionals have been working to help improve the health of the population using acupuncture. There are three main groups of practitioners: physicians, specialists including professionals with a university degree, and technical personnel.

— Physicians

The Brazilian Medical Society of Acupuncture (SMBA) was set up in 1984 to develop the specialty and win acupuncture its rightful place in the medical community. The SMBA was founded by qualified physicians who practiced acupuncture, of whom there were two thousand three hundred in 2003 according to the Society's records. That is also the number of specialists certified by the Medical College of Acupuncture, although at least six thousand physicians have taken courses in specialization at the College.

Hong Jin Pay was born in Taiwan in 1954 and emigrated to Brazil in 1969. After graduating from the University of São Paulo Medical School and completing his residency, he went to China, where he specialized in acupuncture for use in orthopedics, neurology, gynecology and general practice. In 1989 he began using Chinese acupuncture at the Pain Center of Hospital das Clínicas. In 1995 he became supervising physician for the Course of Specialization in Acupuncture at that hospital's Orthopedics and Traumatology Institute.

As well as acupuncture, many physicians use Chinese phototherapy as complementary medicine, available on the Brazilian market in the form of pills. It is also worth mentioning that Amerindians throughout Latin America have long used herbal remedies for treating all kinds of sickness and the European colonists soon acquired the habit. Brazil's enormously diverse plant life is now being studied scientifically, and many herbal remedies have been developed.

The Federal Council of Medicine recognized acupuncture as a medical specialty in 1995 and the Brazilian Medical Association followed suit in 1998.

— Specialists and technicians

Another important group of acupuncturists comprises professionals who are not licensed medical doctors but exercise other professions in the area of health — nurses, biomedical professionals, pharmacists, physical therapists, psychologists, athletic trainers etc. Their professional associations have also lobbied a range of governmental agencies to win recognition for these practitioners as acupuncturists.

The third group consists of professionals who mostly have technical qualifications or practice natural therapy. In 1998 a number of associations representing these professions joined the São Paulo State Union of Acupuncturists & Oriental Therapists, set up to defend the interests of the group. According to some of these associations the number of acupuncturists in Brazil has already reached between twenty-five and thirty thousand.

One of the leading organizations that train these professionals in Brazil is the Sohaku-In Foundation, founded by Sohaku Raimundo César Bastos. Born in the state of Bahia, in the northeast of Brazil, Raimundo is an athlete and teacher of Karate and Ju-Jitsu. He is also a monk. He discovered acupuncture when he was treated for an injury by a Japanese immigrant in Liberdade, the Oriental district of São Paulo City. When he had the chance to study in Japan to become a monk, he took up residence there and took a degree in medicine at the Tokyo Imperial University. He later returned to Brazil and began teaching physicians and other health workers.

Dr. Liu Chih Ming, currently Chair of the Brazilian Association of Chinese Medicine & Acupuncture, believes that some 500 Chinese immigrants or descendants and 20,000 professionals altogether are practicing Chinese medicine in Brazil, including acupuncture, massage and moxa [pronounced 'mongsa']. He himself is one of the leading acupuncturists in Brazil. Born in 1948, he graduated in medicine from China Medical College in Taiwan and emigrated to Brazil in 1979. He says he learned a great deal from his father, Taoist Master Liu Pai Lin, and was initiated by him into a lineage of Taoist masters with knowledge of the healing arts. Dr. Liu likes to point out that much of what he knows cannot be learned from books or even from China's schools of acupuncture: it is still an oral tradition passed on from master to disciple.

To conclude my comments on health, it is undoubtedly a fact that people today are seeking to improve the quality of their daily lives and mitigate the stresses and strains of modern civilization. In this context, Oriental therapies are certainly helping Brazilians, as well as other peoples around the world, to lead healthier and more productive lives.

SPORTS

Asian immigrants and descendants — Japanese, Chinese and Korean — have made significant contributions to sports throughout the Americas. This diffusion has largely been achieved through the introduction of martial arts. However, it should be noted that before them the English brought soccer to many Latin American and Caribbean countries at the end of the nineteenth century. Soccer has become the most popular sport in the world and of course I do not have to tell you how talented Brazilian soccer players and coaches are: they are one of our major exports, not least to Japan.

The most important martial arts practiced in Brazil are Judo, Tae Kwon Do, Kung Fu (including Tai Chi), Karate, Aikido, Kendo, Sumo, and Ju-Jitsu. But there are also practitioners of Naginata and Kali in Brazil and of Sipalki in Argentina, among others. As I mentioned, some of these martial arts have migrated to the world of sports, especially Judo and Tae Kwon Do, now both included in the Olympic Games. The introduction of martial arts to Latin America owes much to Asian immigrants, although the influence of the North American media in the region in the early nineteen seventies also played a part, especially in connection with Kung Fu.

Brazil stands out in the practice and dissemination of martial arts from Asia. Transformed into sports, they have become an important instrument for integrating the Asian descendant community with the Brazilian population, which is made up of more than 70 original nationalities and ethnic groups.

According to the International Stress Management Association (ISMA), seventy per cent of the inhabitants of São Paulo City suffer from stress due mainly to violent crime, fear of unemployment, lack of time, overwork and the difficulty of maintaining interpersonal relationships. Thousands of people seek relief from stress in alternative therapies such as Yoga, meditation, Tai Chi, and Lian Gong [pronounced “kung”].

According to some masters of martial arts, the number of people practicing them in Brazil has doubled since the nineteen nineties. Participating in martial arts has enabled patients to reduce the amount of pharmaceutical drugs they take for depression, anxiety, asthma, diabetes and high blood pressure, says Dr Dirce Perissinotti, a psychiatrist at Hospital das Clínicas in São Paulo.

Tai chi chuan

One of the best-known Chinese immigrants to Brazil is Liu Pai Lin, a Taoist master who arrived in Brazil in 1975 to disseminate Chinese culture and traditional medicine. He settled in São Paulo and began teaching at the Chinese Catholic Church in the city. His work was soon recognized for helping students and patients, and he became a popular, much-loved figure in Brazil. He treated his patients with Tui Na massage and herbs, and taught and encouraged the practice of Tai Chi Chuan, which he had learned with the Yang Family school in China. Liu Pai Lin undoubtedly contributed a great deal to Brazilians’ familiarity with Tai Chi.

But the person who pioneered the introduction of Tai Chi to Brazil was Moy Gia Ying, known to his students as Professor Wong. Born in Canton in southern China in 1933, he spent several years in Hong Kong, where he was a dedicated student of Tai Chi, studying with the Wu Family, one of the three most important Chinese styles of Tai Chi in the twentieth century.

The Wong Academy of Tai Chi Chuan in Brazil was founded in 1960. Its first students were members of the Chinese community. The first class of Brazilians was formed in 1964. Today Master Wong runs his school in Pinheiros, a neighborhood of São Paulo, where he teaches Tai Chi to

Brazilians and Chinese descendants, some of whom have been his followers for more than two decades. With more than fifty years of experience as a teacher, he has perfected his mastery of Tai Chi and developed his own style.

Kung Fu

The Northern style of Shaolin Kung Fu, also known as Bak Siu Lum, was introduced to South America by Grand Master Chan Kwok Wai, recognized in Brazil as the greatest exponent of Kung Fu. He was born in 1936 in Canton, mainland China, and between the ages of four and fourteen he learned the Choy Li Fat style of Master Chan Cheok Sing. In 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party founded the People's Republic, he moved with his family to Hong Kong, where he maintained contact with Master Ma Kim Fong, who taught him the Luo Han style, also derived from Northern Shaolin.

Chan's family took in as a house guest Master Yang Sheung Mo, who taught Kung Fu in their home. This is how Chan Kwok Wai was initiated into Northern Shaolin. Thanks to his intense dedication, he became a leading exponent of the style although he was also familiar with many others. In 1960 Chan emigrated to Brazil, where he was one of the founders of the Chinese Social Center. He taught Kung Fu at the Center for twelve years. In 1973 he set up the Chinese-Brazilian Academy of Kung Fu, where he has trained many teachers now working all over Brazil and other countries, such as Spain, the United States, Argentina and Chile. He has even taught Kung Fu to agents of the Brazilian Federal Police and to law enforcement officers of São Paulo State.

The São Paulo Federation of Kung Fu, founded in 1989, was the first entity set up to organize practitioners of this martial art in Brazil. Others followed in various regions of the country and on May 9, 1992, all the federations came together to found the Brazilian Confederation of Kung Fu. Today there are federations in twenty-three of Brazil's twenty-seven states.

We do not have reliable estimates of the number of Kung Fu practitioners in Brazil, but it is certainly very large, especially if we include not just traditionalists but so-called unorthodox or pirate styles — which do not have a clear Chinese lineage and are often invented. There are Kung Fu schools even in the Amazon region. In Acre, for example, Amerindians and their descendants practice Kung Fu. It is really very popular in Brazil and has been increasingly so since the early nineteen seventies, partly thanks to the movies of Bruce Lee.

Judo

Another sport that is very popular in Latin America and the Caribbean is Judo, which today has Central American and South American championships and international tournaments. There is an International Judo Federation, a Pan-American Union and South American Confederation, a Brazilian Confederation, and an Argentinian Judo Confederation. There are Judo Federations in Guatemala, Cuba, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

Judo came to Brazil with the first Japanese immigrants who disembarked at the port of Santos from the SS Kasato Maru in June 18, 1908. The first Judo schools in São Paulo State were set up in towns where there were the largest groups of Japanese immigrants, such as Suzano, Mogi das Cruzes, Bastos, Araraquara, Avaré, Lins, and of course São Paulo City itself.

Mitsuyo Maeda, known as Conde Koma, the “Count of Combat”, is considered one of the pioneers of Judo in Brazil. Maeda settled in northern Brazil in 1915. Before that he had been sent by Japan’s Kodokan school to the United States to demonstrate the arts of Judo and Ju-Jitsu. He went with an instructor, Tsunejiro Tomita, and they actually demonstrated their skills at the West Point military academy. Later he went to New York and began a career as a challenge fighter and wrestler. In Belém, capital of Pará State at the mouth of the Amazon, Conde Koma set up a school among whose students was Carlos Gracie, a descendant of Scottish immigrants to Brazil. The Gracie family later founded nine schools of martial arts in various parts of Brazil and is now a world-famous dynasty of Judo champions.

Brazil won its first gold medal for Judo at the Seoul Olympics in 1988. The winner was half-heavyweight Aurélio Miguel. At the Barcelona Games in 1992, half-lightweight Rogério Sampaio Cardoso won a gold medal. Half-lightweight Henrique Guimarães won a bronze medal at the 1996 Atlanta Games, as did half-heavyweight Aurélio Miguel.

Tae Kwon Do

Venezuela has outstanding contestants in Tae Kwon Do thanks to government support and a strong local association. Cuba and Argentina are internationally respected in the sport. Tae Kwon Do is highly popular in Mexico and Peru. It was introduced to Peru by Ki Hyung Lee, the first world champion in 1973 and Asian champion in 1974.

The introduction and diffusion of Tae Kwon Do is an important contribution by Koreans to the field of sports in Brazil. The pioneer in this case was Grand Master Sang Min Cho, who came to Brazil in 1970. In the last three decades Tae Kwon Do has become one of the most popular martial arts in Brazil.

Sang Min Cho founded a school in Liberdade, a district of São Paulo City where many Asian descendants live. The school is now run by his disciple, Master Yeo Jun Kim, seventh dan black belt, and is the largest and most important Tae Kwon Do school as well as being the headquarters of the Brazilian Confederation (Confederação Brasileira de Tae Kwon Do Interestilos). The school currently has two hundred and fifty students, although in the past it has had as many as a thousand. Ninety per cent are Brazilian; ten per cent are Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Throughout Brazil there are more than five hundred Tae Kwon Do schools registered with the Confederation. Four hundred of them are in São Paulo State. There are a hundred Brazilian and Korean masters and more than thirty thousand practitioners. Of course there are also countless other

unofficial venues where Tae Kwon Do is taught and practiced, including clubs, condos and martial arts schools.

Brazilian athletes have successfully competed in international championships. Brazil has two silver medalists. Milton Iwama was runner-up featherweight at the world championship in the United States in 1993 and U.S. Open Champion in 1993. He has won the Brazilian championship eight times. Alyson Yamaguchi was runner-up in Men's Under Fifty-Eight Kilos at the 1993 world championship. Featherweight Leonides dos Santos won a silver medal at the 1995 world championship in Manila, Philippines. Carmem Silva fought her way through to the 2000 Sydney Olympics, where Tae Kwon Do was finally accepted as an official Olympic sport. All law enforcement officers take classes in Tae Kwon Do while studying at the police academy.

Aikido

Aikido is most practiced in Argentina, Peru and Brazil. It came to Brazil in 1963, when Master Reishin Kawai opened the first school in São Paulo. In the mid nineteen seventies it was run by Master Ono because Kawai had opened his own school. Aikido is practiced mainly in the states of Paraná, Rio de Janeiro, and Minas Gerais and the Federal District, but has expanded only since 1993.

Kendo

About two hundred people in São Paulo practice Kendo, the art of Samurai swordsmanship or simply Japanese fencing. The number is probably five hundred throughout Brazil, according to Instituto Niten, which runs courses around the country. The number of students increased after Brazilian movie theaters began showing *The Last Samurai* with Tom Cruise. However, Kendo has of course been adapted to modern times: its practitioners still use swords (shinai), albeit made of fiberglass or bamboo, and they wear traditional clothes such as pleated pantaloons (hakama) and armor (bogu).

Sumo

On April 25, 2004, the Sixth Brazilian Sumo Championship took place in the Oriental district of Liberdade in São Paulo City, with more than three hundred athletes taking part. This was the occasion for selecting contestants for the Brazilian Women's Championship organized by the Brazilian Confederation and São Paulo Federation. It was also the occasion for selecting four athletes who will represent Brazil at the Sixth World Junior Championship on July 11, 2004, in Osaka, Japan.

Sumo came to Brazil with the first Japanese immigrants and is now practiced as a sport by Brazilians of various ethnic origins. The first tournament was held in 1912 in the town of Guatapar, So Paulo State, and the first national championship in 1962 in Mogi das Cruzes, also in

São Paulo State. The first South American championship took place in Atibaia, São Paulo, in 1996, with Paraguay and Argentina participating as well as Brazil. Brazil hosted the Ninth World Sumo Championships in São Paulo on December 2 and 3, 2000.

Ju-Jitsu

Ju-Jitsu is currently more in evidence in Brazil than other martial arts and is considered one of the most skilful and effective. In São Paulo State alone, fifty-six schools are registered with the Federation. That gives you some idea of the huge numbers who practice the sport. Only nine teachers at all these schools are not black belts — and only three have family names of Asian origin.

Ju-Jitsu also came to Brazil with the first Japanese immigrants in 1908 but it really took off in 1915 with the arrival of Conde Koma. Brazilian Ju-Jitsu, considered the best in the world, is faithful to the original meaning of the “gentle art”, since its practitioners give far more importance to technique than brute strength.

Hélio Gracie, who studied with Conde Koma, told a leading daily newspaper (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 1997) that he developed Brazilian Ju-Jitsu although Koma was the first master to teach the art in Brazil. That is why we now have the style known as Gracie Ju-Jitsu. The Gracie Family began developing their style in 1925. They enhanced the technique so much that it is now widely known as Gracie Ju-Jitsu, Brazilian Ju-Jitsu and even Vale Tudo or No Holds Barred Fighting. The Gracie clan, with seventy years of dedication to the martial arts, now has more than 50 members directly involved in these activities. They have several schools in Brazil and elsewhere, especially the United States.

Vale Tudo was originally an offshoot of Ju-Jitsu and Judo, but specific rules were soon developed and Vale Tudo federations founded throughout Brazil. Now the styles have blended. Curiously enough, many athletes are going back to Vale Tudo owing to lack of sponsorship and the money they can make in No Holds Barred Fighting.

