

Kung Fu Dream

A Kung Fu action adventure role-playing game for next generation consoles.

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Part I: General Information

As a young martial artist attending your first Kung Fu tournament, you are excited about the prospects of one day becoming a national champion yourself. Little do you know that the results of this day would set off a chain of events that would change your life forever. It's *Kings Quest* meets *Parappa the Rapper* meets *Virtua Fighter* in this action-adventure role-playing game.

How does one combine action, choose your own adventure, role-playing, fighting, and pattern matching into one cohesive and successful game? To answer this, let me first give you an overview of this title. I will then expand upon this, giving details in **Part II**.

This game has two major aspects. The first of these is the **adventure** aspect. The adventure can be characterized as the story that unfolds as you travel throughout 19th century China in search of teachers, quest items, and your purpose in life. This story is **non-linear** in that there are many points throughout the game in which your actions or decisions determine the direction that the story will take.

Learning from certain masters might open up the opportunity to learn from their friends but limit the possibility to be accepted as a student by one of their enemies. Other situations will develop your character's moral disposition. For instance: the player is propositioned by a dubious character to attend a secret meeting about the country's future. If you refuse to attend then you will continue with your life without knowing the content of that meeting. If you choose to attend the meeting you will be faced with the decision of whether or not to go along with their plan to stage a revolt against the government. If you refuse to co-operate, you will either have to try using stealth to escape or your Kung Fu to fight your way out.

Not only is the story unique, based on each player's actions, his or her character is also unique. When a player starts a new game, the first order of business is to set up their character much the same way that is done in many other RPGs. Not only are your attributes (speed, strength, agility, etc) customizable but so is your appearance. After picking a base model, the player will be able to adjust variables such as initial body fat, muscles, height, and skin tone. Many of these physical features would have a correlation with actual attributes so as your character achieves better physical fitness, their fat to muscle ratio would change. The amount of influence that the player has on their character's story, attributes, and appearance, will allow for the player to form a strong identity with their character as the game progresses.

The second major aspect to this game is **training**. Training is where you will learn your Kung Fu, adventuring is where you will use it. This is the part of this game that I am the most excited about because it is what sets this game apart from any other game ever made. To see how this Kung Fu game is different than any other fighting game we need to ask the question: What is Kung Fu? Kung Fu, which literally means "hard work", is a collection of martial art systems designed to promote self-defense, a healthy mind and body, and a path to enlightenment. Practically every Kung Fu videogame to date has focused on fighting alone and has omitted these other wonderful aspects... they have taken the word BushiDo (way of the warrior) and removed the "Do" (spiritual path) leaving us with only "warriors" to play with.

In dealing with this deficiency, I have split the training aspect into several parts that can be dealt with very nicely with current gaming interfaces. Of course individual teachers will have their own style of instruction but the basic formula for training will be as follows:

First and foremost you must gain **acceptance** from a teacher. This will often be done through adventures such as questing for an item that they might have lost or had stolen from them. Other times

this is simply a matter of demonstrating your eagerness and dedication to learn Kung Fu. Once accepted the training begins!

While at the teacher's school you will have access to several modes of game play and several kinds of training. The player will be able to learn and perfect the following material at most schools: **basic skills, forms, combat applications, and advanced techniques**. In many cases there will be prerequisites for learning. For instance, you must reach a certain proficiency rating or gain enough experience points in a *level 1 form* before learning a *level 2 form*. Likewise you are unable to learn the combat applications to a form until you have demonstrated proficiency in the form itself. *A form, also known as a kata in Japanese, is a sequence of stylized movements representative of attacks, defense, and counter attacks against one or more adversaries.*

Forms, combat application, and all fighting in the game use an interface similar to that of the *Virtua Fighter* franchise. In order to learn a **form**, however, a cueing system such as that used in *Parappa the Rapper* is used. The teacher will demonstrate a section of the form for the player. It is the onus of the player to repeat the pattern or sequence of movements until they are able to do it with enough proficiency to satisfy the teacher. Once an entire form has been memorized and performed satisfactorily, the player will then be allowed to learn some of the combat applications of the various key moves contained within the form.

The **combat application** section is where a player learns how those stylized movements in the form relate to real world situations. The player will have an opportunity to practice using these techniques against a sparring partner. This is a good way for players to familiarize themselves with timing and to develop a good fighting strategy that will become invaluable on the street or in the ring.

Basic Skills and **Advanced techniques** differ from combat applications in that they are not necessarily a sequence of movements in response to somewhat specific situations but rather more general tools to be used for a broad range of application. Basic skills for instance would include stance training and various exercises for improving agility, strength, and speed. Advanced techniques on the other hand would include internal arts such as chi kung, zazen, and body tempering like iron palm for improving attributes such as chi recovery speed, mind clarity, and resilience.

The final aspect of this game will be a **versus mode** in which the player can use the character that they have raised to spar or fight against their friends' characters.

Part II: Detailed Game Description

1. Basic Concept:

Unlike other martial art video games, *Kung Fu Dream* explores not only the violent aspect of martial arts but also the *path* that can enrich one's life. As in all good stories, you, as the main character, will go through a transformation as you improve your skills, learn about your world, and makes decisions and actions that affect your life and the lives of those around you. Combining the character evolution aspects of a role-playing game with the discovery of an adventure game and the excitement of an action game; this title will keep the user satisfied on many levels and by the end it will have been more about the journey than the destination.

2. Background Story:

This game takes place in a fictitious (alternate reality) China around the mid to late 1800's against the backdrop of the opium trade and civil unrest. At the beginning of the game you attend the National Kung Fu Tournament with your grandfather. Held only once every 10 years, this is an "anything goes" competition between the very best Kung Fu masters... even to be accepted as a contestant is a great honor. After only the first bout, the seeds of inspiration have been planted, making you determined to become a champion yourself when you grow up. Clad only in very basic attire you must make a decision to train under your reluctant grandfather or to accept the offer from a renowned teacher and acquaintance of your grandfather. The results of your actions this day will shape your life and possibly the life of a nation.

3. Objective:

Keeping with our general theme, there is no "set in stone" objective. You will of course have specific tasks that you will need to complete in order to progress in your training. This is a chose your own adventure-style game, so at several points throughout you will be faced with opportunities to direct the flow of the story. As your character grows, your character will not only change in skill and disposition, but also physically. External manifestations such as musculature, new clothing, and accessories such as school emblems will help to further create a sense of investment and ownership in the player about their character.

Each player will likely have his or her own motives for playing through the game. At the beginning it might be because they are interested to see what it is like to explore being a bad guy, or perhaps the motive is ego driven and they wish to create an unbeatable character to compete against their friends in the versus mode. Another player might like the idea of perfecting one style of Kung Fu and another player might just want to explore as much of the world as possible. The only universal question that players might have is whether or not they will fulfill their childhood dream of competing in the national tournament. To answer that question I have provided several provisional endings that the player might encounter:

- a. They spoil a plot to assassinate the provincial governor, thus securing themselves a position of prestige within the current government.
- b. They assassinate the provincial governor, thus providing the spark for a revolution against the current government.
- c. They do not qualify to enter the tournament and dedicate themselves to redoubling their efforts in order to compete the next time around.
- d. They do not qualify and decide to go back to your village to become a farmer.
- e. They become a hermit with little care about tournaments and instead devote their time to deepening their training... and ultimately entering into Nirvana.

4. Game Play:

When a player turns on their console, the first thing they see is the console logo, then the company logo and then after a brief transition a motion menu appears. This menu has stylized animations of Kung Fu battles; it is as if the illustrations in a Kung Fu training manual have been brought to life. They will be presented with several options: *new game*, *load game*, *versus*, and *options*.

If the player chooses *new game*, they will first have to create their new character. They will have 2 base body types to choose between: a man and a woman. The player will then go on to adjust body proportions (within a limitation), hairstyle, skin tone, and facial features. Next the player will have to allocate 20 affinity units to strength, speed, agility/balance, stamina, and mind with a minimum of 3 units for each category. These points help to define the character's natural talents. A character with a high

affinity (5) for agility will find it easier to progress in proficiency or experience points during agility based activities.

Everyone has to start with the same basic clothes (one for guy, one for girl, 2 colors available for each outfit) but will have the opportunity to buy, win, or be awarded more garments and accessories throughout the game to come up with their own custom look. By having a fairly generic yet highly customizable character I hope to allow the player a greater opportunity to form a stronger identity with their character than they are able to in most games.

There are 4 ways that the player learns about their world: eavesdropping, having conversations, reading, and from the cut scenes. I would prefer to use the game engine for the cut scenes rather than pre-rendered animations in the interests of keeping the game play and style seamless. This initial animation introduces us to the tournament and our grandfather. After the tournament there is a lot of commotion and in trying to navigate the crowd you bump into a man who happens to be an acquaintance of your grandfather. The control is now in the hands of the player. They must pick between several pieces of dialogue and responses to the inquiries of this old man. The outcome of this day will determine whether you will start your Kung Fu journey in the comfort of your home village or under the tutelage of this master.

Aside from the cut scenes, the game play in *Kung Fu Dream* is for the most part continuous. There are no chapters or levels in this world that *must* be completed; but there will be hardships and challenges along the way. The player might go on a side-adventure, but that too is part of their story and, in actuality, the only *levels* that the player will deal with are the levels within their own character that must be reached and transcended.

At each stage in the character's development there will be tasks that they are unable to complete or moves that they are unable to do. Through exploration and diligent practice; that which was once impossible will eventually become easy as new challenges arise for our player and their character.

Basic information about your character's condition will be onscreen as mentioned in *Part III: 4*, but full access to the player's stats, inventory, forms, map, and move list customization can be accessed by pressing the start button. The player always sees their character from a third person perspective.

5. Combining Combat with RPG stats:

Unlike in a traditional fighting game, a player's character is not "locked in" to certain abilities but rather in possession of vast amounts of untapped potential. If they train hard under their master's guidance and deal with altercations on the street or combat in the ring successfully they will improve.

Unlike in a traditional role-playing game, the altercations are not turn-based. They are in real time and they do not depend on a roll of the dice to see if they hit.

What I envision for *Kung Fu Dream* is a combination of the best aspects of RPG and Fighting to create a new system of dealing damage in combat.

A character's abilities are defined by the levels that they have attained in their respective skills and attributes. If they have perfected a block, then it will work flawlessly, assuming that the player has used the correct block with the correct timing. If their block is only trained to 50% effectiveness then they will receive some amount of damage against a strong attack, even if their timing is right on.

Part III: Other Aspects of the Product Design

1. Characters:

The main character is the character that the player creates. Other than the player's character, there are many other characters that can potentially play fairly significant roles. The main antagonist who the player must confront will also more than likely be the final person who they have to compete against in the tournament. Depending on their actions in the game that antagonist could be a "bad guy" or a "good guy".

The next main characters would be the Masters who the player might come into contact with or even train under. I would like to see at least 7 masters in the game. Styles of Kung Fu that should be represented are Shuai-Chiao, Shaolin Long Fist, Tai Chi, White Crane, Seven Star Mantis Boxing, Wing Chun, and Hsing I or Ba Gua. Each master will have a unique personality and training method.

Other characters in our world include the provincial governor who will be officiating over the tournament, a possible love interest, fellow students training under various masters, the competitors at the tournament, shopkeepers, soldiers, town's people, country folk, and revolutionaries.

2. World:

Once again, the world is an alternate reality mid to late 1800's China. As an adventurer in this world you will have access to several cities, villages, temples, and schools. You will also have access to the main roads, railroads, and some of the countryside, mountains, and rivers. For long distance travel you will have to find a group to travel with or purchase a train ticket. You can make the journey on foot too but it will take a lot longer and the chance of getting waylaid by bandits becomes quite high.

3. Controls:

During fighting, tournaments, forms, and combat application, the interface will be similar to those used in *Virtua Fighter* with the addition of a toggle button (instead of 2 punch buttons). The user will be able to go into their list of forms and moves to make custom configurations. These configurations will be toggle-able.

How long and how hard a user holds a button will have an effect on its speed, strength, and external manifestation. (If left foot is forward and punch is pressed lightly and quickly it will be a left jab, if it is pressed hard it will be a stronger right hand strike, etc)

During skills training the controls will depend on the kind of skill. If the user is just practicing on a punching bag the controls will be the same as the fighting. If the user is doing push ups or trying to meditate, however, the controls will be quite different. I envision using the analogue controls for these types of training. A user can train their mind in Zazen by focusing a cursor on a moving object or circulate energy (chi) by moving the analogue pads in the appropriate directions.

4. Graphics:

I would describe the graphics of this game to be more impressionistic than photo realistic. The distant backgrounds and the landscapes should be reminiscent of Chinese landscape paintings and Sumi-e brush paintings. Rather than focusing on creating an exact replica of real life, we should follow the example of traditional Chinese and Japanese brush artists by capturing the essence of the moment. The most important thing is for all of the graphics to support a cohesive and distinctive style.

The upper left-hand corner of the screen will display some basic information pertaining to the character's condition such as their current Health (HP) and Energy (Chi). During versus or tournaments the opponent's vitals will be shown in the upper right hand corner. If facing multiple enemies, the three to five closest enemies' vitals will be shown in a vertical list in the upper right hand-corner, in order of proximity. The vitals for the opponent being interacted with most immediately will be more opaque than the others.

5. Sounds and Music:

I envision adaptive music and sound design for this game. It will of course include ambient sounds such as city bustle, crickets, and breeze as well as some ambient music with Chinese themes that occasionally come in and out. Dynamic sound should also be implemented so that important sounds or closer sounds become louder while less important sounds or distant sounds become softer. If an explosion is about to happen, for instance, all other sounds should become very low in volume to accentuate the relative loudness of the explosion.