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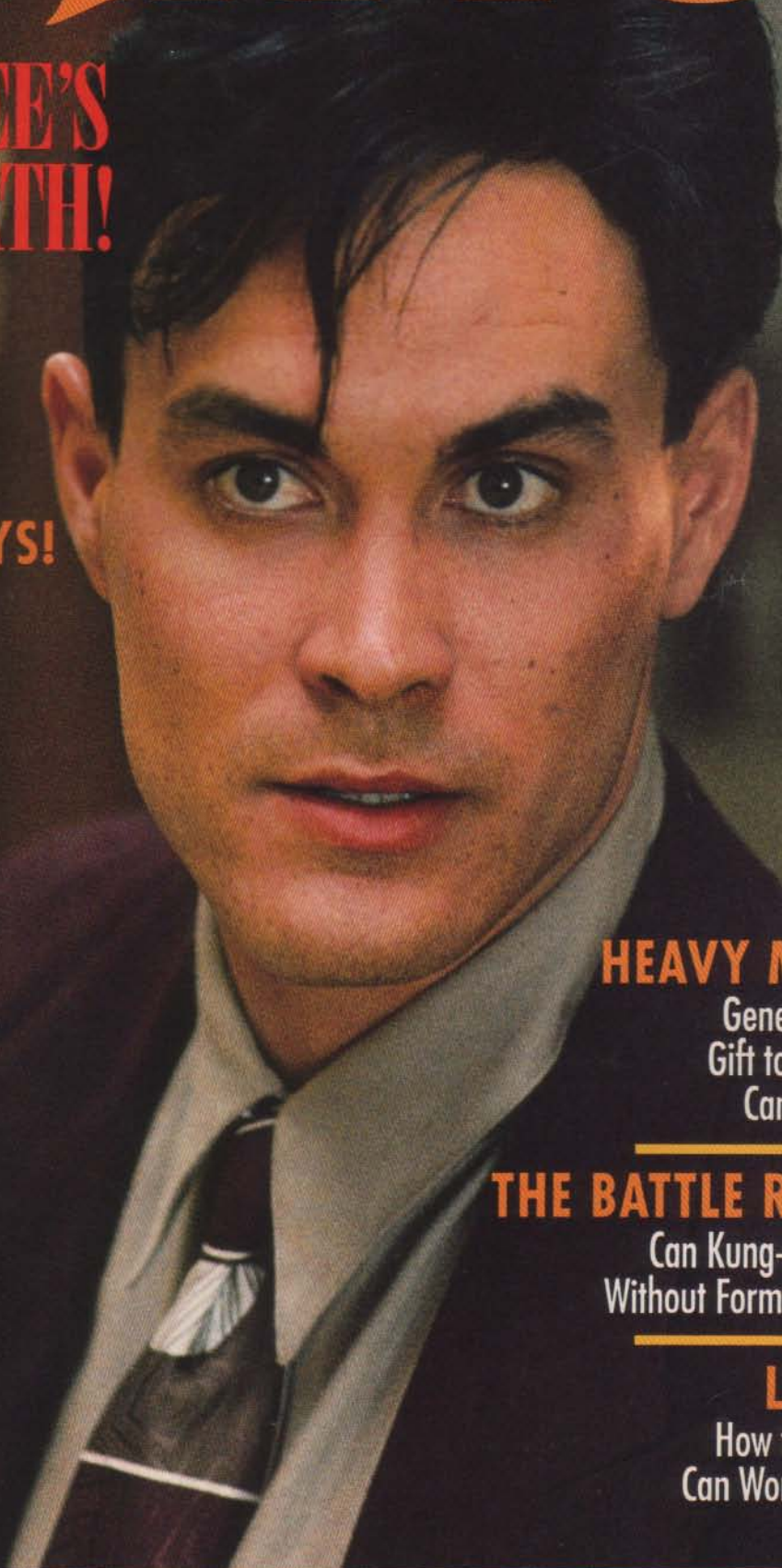
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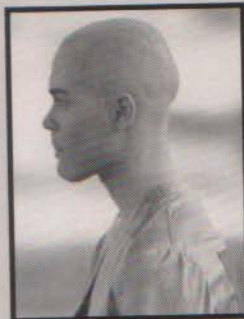


JULY 1993/VOL. 20, NO. 7

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1973-1993

34



52



COVER STORIES

Special Brandon Lee Bonus Section!

- 34** His Own Man to the End *By Caroline Vie*
- 36** Readers React with Shock, Sympathy
- 37** Carradine: It Didn't Have to Happen *By Dave Cater*
- 38** A Gravesite Vigil: One Final Farewell *By Jeff Schimmel*

FEATURES

- 40** Kali's Steel Fang
For Ben Largusa and other kali men, the steel fang remains the true weapon of choice.
By Joseph T. Arriola
- 44** Changing the Face of Jow Ga
Thanks to Hoy Lee's involvement in NACMAF, the spirit and harmony in American kung-fu have spread far and wide. *By Herb Borkland*
- 50** The *I Ching* Breakthrough
With transitional reading, the entire situation is brought into view, reminding the inquirer of everything around him. *By Alan Sims*
- 52** Enter the Wing Chun Time Machine
Who really invented wing chun? Exactly which martial arts did its originator draw upon when formulating wing chun? In this detailed two-part series, the author tackles these intriguing questions and provides some startling answers. *By Michael Nedderman*
- 58** General Kwan—The Legend Lives
General Kwan Gong, creator of the Kwan dao, is part of a Chinese legacy that reaches every traditional training hall in the world. *By Glenn Wilson*
- 62** The Legacy of Wu Chian Chuan
Wu Chian Chuan followed in his famous father's footsteps and created what we now know as Wu style tai chi. *By Wen-Mei Yu and Gerald A. Sharp*
- 66** To Form or Not to Form?
When Bruce Lee maintained that forms were a waste of time, he kicked up a storm of controversy which continues today. *By Mark Wasson*

DEPARTMENTS

- 6** Letters • **15** Insiders • **20** Training for Life • **21** Coming in August!
- 22** The Kung-Fu Mind • **24** Burt Offerings • **26** Martial Arts in Movies
- 28** Main Events • **82** Directory

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Pan Nam gives instruction to Eddie Chong.

ENTER THE WING CHUN TIME MACHINE

Who really originated and developed wing chun? Exactly which martial arts did its originator draw upon when formulating wing chun? Since it is supposed to have originated in the Shaolin Temple, did any internal arts influence its development? The following information addresses these intriguing questions, and is derived from a small book commissioned by master Pan Nam from information told to sifu Eddie Chong by Pan Nam, and from the observations and opinions of the author.

FIRST OF TWO PARTS • BY MICHAEL NEDDERMAN

PHOTOS BY PETER V. SERRACINO

(Editor's note: The following is presented in the interest of preserving and promoting the history and practice of wing chun kung-fu. The information contained in this article was obtained from a recognized master of the art and is in no way intended to offend anyone or to disparage any organization or in

any way to demean the history and practice of wing chun as it is taught by the disciples of Yip Man. It is recommended that, before conclusions are drawn, both parts 1 and 2 should be read.)

Wing chun's unusual approach to empty-hand fighting has generated much speculation regarding its origin and practice. Some have tried to draw parallels with the techniques of other fighting arts, hinting that in the past there may have been some cross-influence. Because of the lack of information, these and other questions have remained unanswered. The fact that the history and practice of wing chun has literally come down to us from one individual, Yip Man, has in itself caused specu-

lation, debate, animosity, and on occasion, even violence.

Anyone who has been fascinated with wing chun, studied its "family tree" and read or heard its history, knows about the legendary figures who developed and refined this amazingly effective fighting art. As the accompanying chart ("A") indicates, some of the notables are the Buddhist nun Ng Mui, Ng's student Yim Wing Chun who taught her husband, Leung Bok Chau, who taught Leung Lan Kwai, who taught both Wong Wah Bo and Leung Yee Tei, each of whom

taught the great Dr. Leung Jan, who became known as "King of the Boxers" because he defeated all challengers. Leung Jan taught, among others, his son Leung Bik and Chan Wah Shun, who each taught the world-renown Yip Man, the undisputed grandmaster of the wing chun system generally known outside of China today (often referred to as "Hong Kong Style").

While training for the past half-dozen years, this author has often contemplated what those individuals must have been like both as people

and martial artists. Unfortunately, except for just a handful of stories, there are few details regarding the lives of the early practitioners or the development of this unusual fighting art.

One cannot look at the chart hanging in the Sacramento Wing Chun school for very long (reproduced in part as "Chart A") without wondering what it would be like to

About the Author: Michael Nedderman has been a student of Eddie Chong's for six years, and currently assists at the Sacramento school.

travel to China and find the descendants of the "others" referenced as having been students of Leung Jan or to find students descending from other unrecorded "branches" of the wing chun family tree. How fascinating it would be to see how their wing chun compares to that known to us here in the West and to hear the history they have preserved.

Sacramento-based wing chun instructor Eddie Chong has done just that. Chong (who taught in San Francisco from 1972-to-1990, has had a school in Sacramento since 1981, and currently has affiliated schools in Stockton, Palm Springs, Salt Lake City, Canton, Ohio, Michigan, and Singapore) has recently returned from a lengthy trip to Fatshan, China, where he traced the "roots" of his martial art to wing chun master Pan Nam. Master Pan is well-known in the regions around Fatshan by the nickname "Blackface Nam" because of a large birth mark on his right cheek. (Author's note: Fatshan or "Fat Shan" is Cantonese. On many maps, the City, about 20 miles southwest of Canton, is referenced by its Mandarin spelling, "Foshan".)

From the age of 13 until he was about 30, Pan Nam was a practitioner of sil lum kung-fu. He then changed to the wing chun system, which he has been practicing and teaching now for over 50 years.

Pan Nam had three wing chun instructors: the first was Chiu Chau (招就) who learned from Chan Wah Shun's son and Yip Man's classmate, Chan Yu Mint (陳汝綿). Pan Nam's second teacher was Lai Yip Chi (黎叶池), who was another of Yip Man's classmates under instructor Chan Wah Shun (in fact, Lai was Chan's live-in apprentice). When Chan became an invalid as the result of a stroke, Lai Yip Chi continued

training for a time under senior classmate Lui Yu Chai (雷汝濟), while Yip Man followed Ng Chun So (吳仲素).

Subsequently, Lai Yip Chi apprenticed to teachers whose lineage dates to the founder of wing chun on a branch of the family tree about which most practitioners are totally

classmate of Leung Jan's teachers, Wong Wah Bo and Leung Yee Tei. "Dai Fa Min" is a nickname meaning "painted face" and refers to the make-up he wore as an actor. "Kam" (of Kum) is all of his true name that has survived.

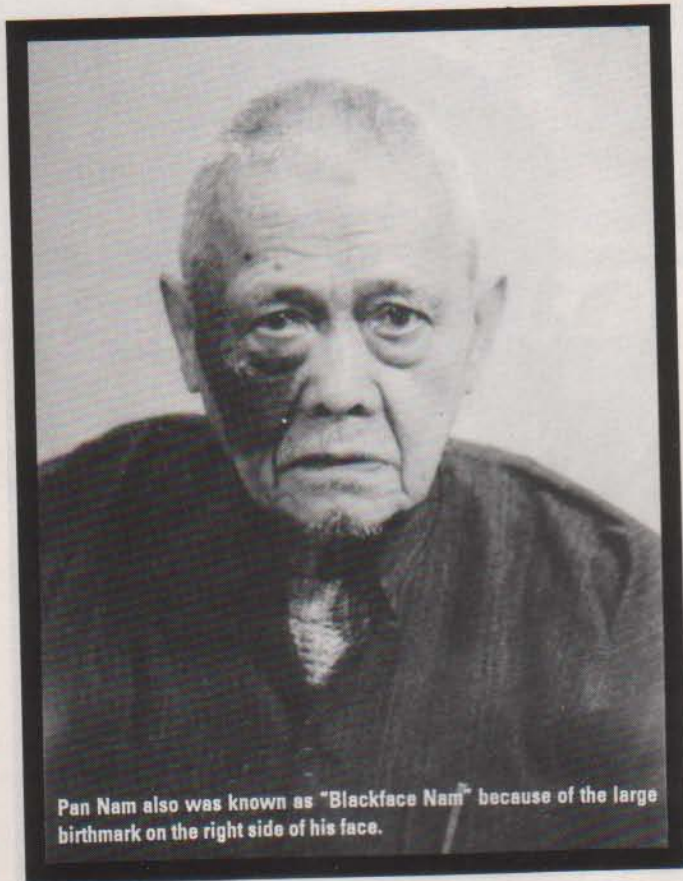
Although quite old when Lai Yip Chi and Pan Nam trained together

Face Kam makes him a third-generation practitioner from the style's founder, Yi Chum (more about this newly discovered history later). When Chong learned that there still lived a third-generation wing chun practitioner, he jumped at the opportunity to meet and become his student.

Prior to meeting master Pan, Chong's dedication to his art brought him to the realization that something was lacking. While it is obvious that, at the highest levels, the proper execution of wing chun involves characteristics that fit the definitions used by internal stylists to describe that which makes their systems "internal," there existed a missing "connection" regarding history, theory, and, to a large degree, technique.

In the West, Chong observed that the fighting art taught at many wing chun schools varied, sometimes dramatically. Although a highly effective martial art, he recognized the system had been modified, so he resolved to trace back and find as original a form of wing chun as possible. Obviously, the closer he could get to the system's founder, the more pure the art would be. Chong realized the possibility existed that a practitioner might still be living who had been trained by one of the early masters. With China now open to travel, Chong thought it was worth a try.

On a trip to his Singapore school, Chong took an excursion to Fatshan, the traditional home of wing chun. While in Fatshan, he inquires regarding local wing chun instructors brought information about 81-year-old master Pan Nam, the last known third-generation disciple from the founder. Chong learned that Pan Nam had ceased teaching in 1990 and had, in fact, "closed the door" to his gymnasium. Unknown to Chong, master Pan had delayed

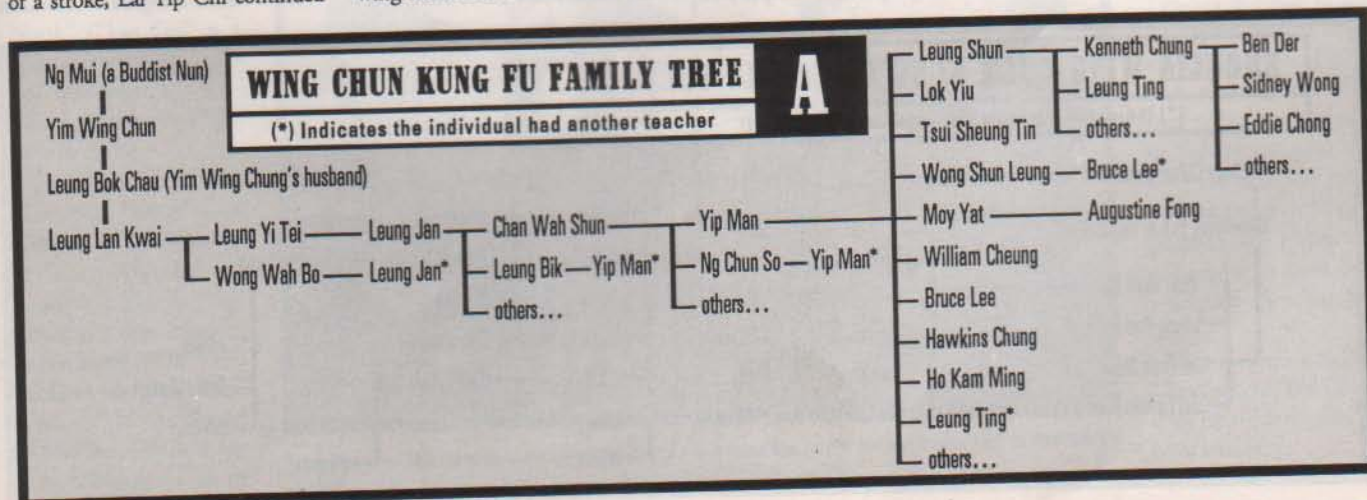


Pan Nam also was known as "Blackface Nam" because of the large birthmark on the right side of his face.

unfamiliar (see chart "B"). After achieving a high level of skill under Lai Yip Chi, Lai introduced Pan Nam to Dai Fa Min Kam (大花面錦), his third instructor, a second-generation practitioner from the Shaolin Temple nun Yi Chum (一塵), said by Pan Nam to be the true founder of wing chun. Dai Fa Min Kam was a

under him, Painted Face Kam was in excellent health because of a strict attention to his diet and martial arts training. That training included the chi gung exercises that master Pan says have been a part of the wing chun system from its inception.

Master Pan's association with second-generation instructor Painted



officially retiring (involving certain formal rituals) because he had a premonition that someone, his final student, was coming.

There are great changes occurring in China today; everyone is busy trying to make money, and sadly, interest in the martial arts has declined. Because of this, Pan Nam had nobody outside Fatshan he felt could or would perpetuate the art entrusted to him by his teachers, an art which, while a young man, he had gone to great lengths to trace back to second-generation practitioner Painted Face Kam, and which he has spent 50 years perfecting. And so Pan Nam waited for the last student to whom he intended to give his knowledge.

When they finally met, master Pan recognized Chong's desire and sincerity, and accepted him as his final student and, eventually, as the heir (outside China) to the original sil lum (Shaolin) wing chun system of his teachers. Chong told master Pan that, to promote a better understanding of this very popular fighting system, he wanted to let the people in the United States see the difference between the wing chun they had been practicing and the original sil lum wing chun system preserved by master Pan.

Chong went through the traditional Chinese ceremony of kneeling and giving a cup of tea to the old master, asking to be accepted as his disciple. This was followed by a special meal. Afterward, master Pan took out his family tree and entered Chong's name as his closed-door student, the last he would accept.

Having fulfilled his desire to train a successor, master Pan Nam officially hung out the scrolls that proclaimed his retirement when

Eddie Chong left Fatshan in late spring, 1992. Chong returned to visit Pan Nam in early 1993.

This and the following article(s) will discuss the fighting art of wing chun as it has been preserved by the last living third-generation practitioner, master Pan Nam, and now by his designated heir, Eddie Chong.



Lai Yip Chi (above) was Pan Nam's second wing chun instructor, was Yip Man's classmate under Chan Wah Shun, and introduced Pan to the sil lum system of wing chun and to "Painted Face" Kam.

Motive is everything

For those who may be wondering, Pan Nam has not been in hiding. Many well-known wing chun instructors came from Hong Kong and the West to see master Pan in Fatshan but, apparently, none were prepared to "empty their

cup." They saw the art in its original form, listened to the story of wing chun as told to Pan Nam by Lai Yip Chi and Painted Face Kam and, for one reason or another, decided not to accept this knowledge (some of these visitors borrowed and never returned irreplaceable books depicting the historical

and technical aspects of wing chun). It is unknown whether they were merely comfortable with their own system or too proud to acknowledge the possibility that, just as there are different systems of tai chi or white crane, there existed another system of wing chun which had preserved a somewhat differ-

ent practice and history.

Being comfortable with one's martial art is understandable and will not cause malicious contention. However, the unfortunate nature of ego is often to favor the protection of vested interests, and to reject anything that does not conform by attacking dissenters and by "playing politics."

Chong sincerely hopes his efforts to preserve this significant part of wing chun history and practice does not meet with such animosity. He hopes the information presented here will be met, if not with acceptance, at least with the open mindness and tolerance befitting mature martial artists. After all, this isn't a religious discussion. The conflict between the stories of the origins of wing chun and between the theories and techniques of the various wing chun systems is not really a problem when understood and considered objectively. Though at first glance some of the differences are dramatic, each system, in fact, complements the other, and knowledge of the theories and techniques of the wing chun taught by master Pan can only improve one's martial skills.

Understanding the differences and the reasons for any changes that have occurred gives us our only glimpse into the martial minds of the early masters, a type of "martial arts time machine," if you will.

Certainly, the history Pan Nam has preserved fills in many gaps and explains much. Even the renown grandmaster Dr. Leung Ting expresses doubts about the traditional story of a female originator of wing chun's origin (sometimes spelled "wing tsun" or "ving tsun") in his recent book, *Wing Tsun Kuen*, on

SHOULIN WING CHUN KUNG FU FAMILY TREE

B

(*) Indicates the individual had another teacher

Yi Chum (22nd-generation Shoulin temple monk)

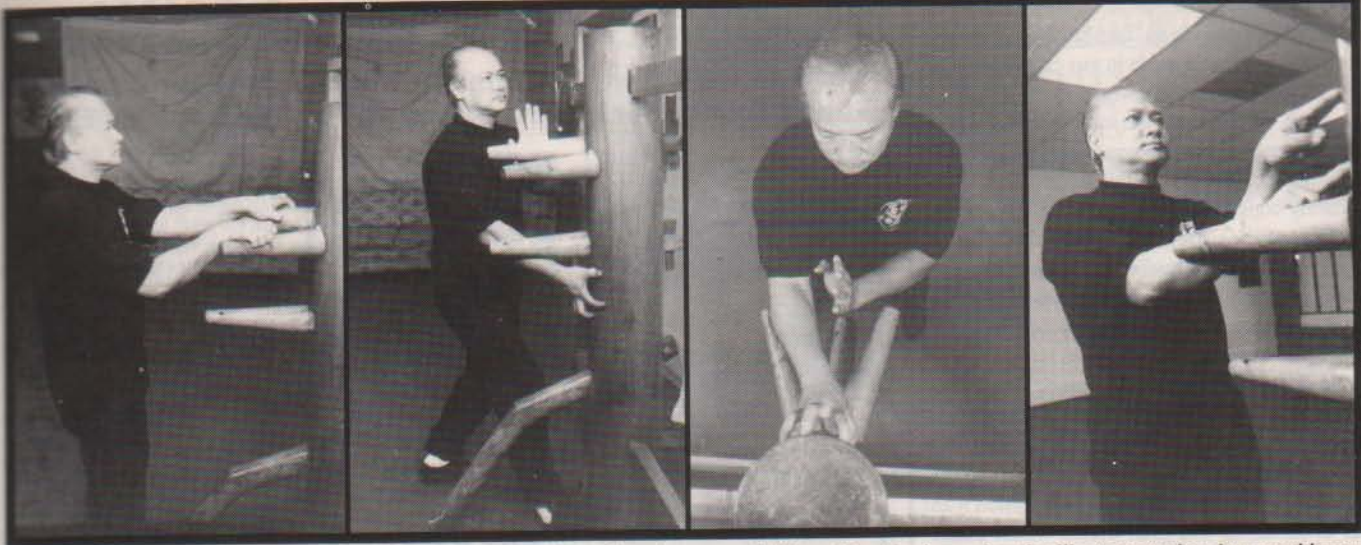
Cheung Ng (a.k.a. Tan-Sau Ng)

Won Wah Bo
Leung Yee Tei
Lai Fook Shun
Dai Fa Min Kam (Painted Face Kam)

Leung Jan
Lai Yip Chi*
Pan Nam*
Lok Lan Koon (Lok's nephew)

Chan Wah Shun
Leung Bik
others...
others...

others...
Yip Man
Ng Chun So
Chan Yu Mint
Lui Yu Chai
Lai Yip Chi
others...
others...
Leung Sheong
Yip Man*
Chiu Chou
Lia Yip Chi*
others...
Kenneth Chung
others...
Eddie Chong
Pan Nam
others...



The photos above illustrate techniques from Pan Nam's wooden dummy form that are much different than the dummy form familiar to most wing chun practitioners. These involved techniques from the eagle claw system.

the system.

"I have some doubt about the authenticity of Buddhist Mistress Ng Mui's creating the Wing Tsun System after seeing a fight between a fox and a crane, of Miss Yim Wing Tsun's encountering the local bully, of the fire at the Siu Lam Monastery or even of the existence of Ng Mui herself! Of course, the final decision on their authenticity still rests with the reader."

Similar opinions regarding the story of Ng Mui and Yim Wing are expressed in an article entitled, "Researching the Origins of Ving Tsun, by Yip Man's son, Ip (Yip) Chun that appeared in the recently published *Genealogy of the Ving Tsun Family*, which was edited by Leung Ting, and published by the Hong Kong Ving Tsun Athletic Association Ltd. Ip (Yip) Chun reports having visited Pan Nam in Fatshan, and that master Pan credits Tan-Sau Ng (排手王) as bringing wing chun to Fatshan "from the North" ("Tan Sau" is a nickname meaning "palm up," and refers to a particular technique unique to wing chun).

Ip (Yip) Chun also notes that Painted Face Kam was a contemporary of Wong Wah Bo and Leung Yee Tei. Ip (Yip) Chun adds that independent substantiation in two books of the historical existence of Tan Sau Ng and of his martial skills. First, from *A Study on the History*



Eddie Chong gives the ceremonial cup of tea to master Pan Nam, asking to be accepted as his student.

of *Cantonese Operas*, by Mak Siu Har: "In the years of Yung Cheng (Manchu emperor, 1723-1736), Cheung Ng of Wu Pak, also known as Tan-Sau Ng, brought his skills to Fat Shan and organized the Hung Fa

Wui Koon (now the Chinese Artist Association)"; (author's note: Hung Fa Wui Koon is literally, "The Eight Harmony Union"). And from the same book:

"Besides being very accom-

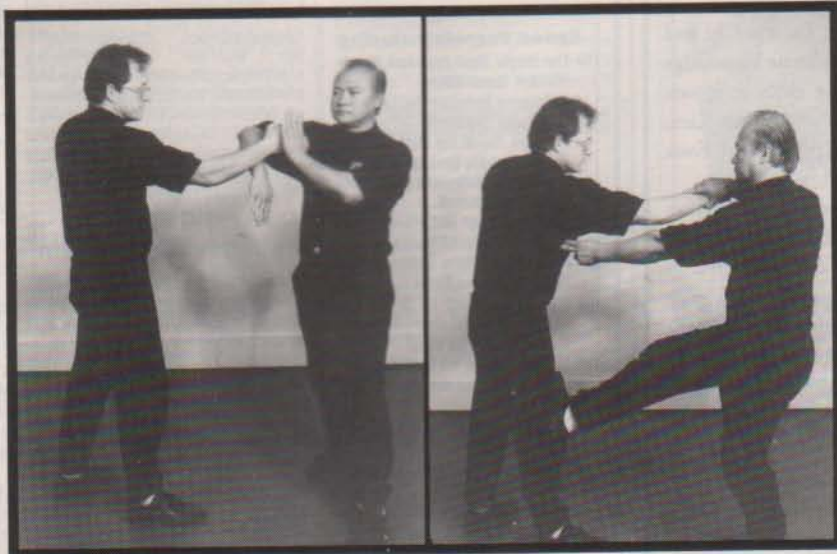
plished in Chinese opera, Cheung Ng was especially proficient in martial arts. His one Tan-Sau was peerless throughout the martial arts world."

And, secondly, from *A History of Chinese Opera*, by Mang Yiu: "For some reason, Cheung Ng could not stay on in the capitol, so he fled and took refuge in Fat Shan. This was during the reign of Yung Cheng. This man, nicknamed Tan-Sau Ng, was a character "unsurpassed in literary and military skills, and excellent in music and drama." He was especially proficient in the techniques of Siu Lam. After settling down in Fat Shan, he passed on his knowledge in traditional opera and martial arts to the Hung Suen (Red Boat) followers, and established the Hung Fa Wui Koon in Fat Shan.

Today, Cantonese opera groups revere him as Jo-Si; (Founding Master), and refer to him as master Cheung."

It's highly probable that Tan-Sau Ng had to flee the capitol because of his revolutionary activities. Also, note that the reference to "siu lam" (sil lum or Shaolin kung-fu) and not to wing chun is probably because, as will be explained, the system did not receive its name until sometime after Tan-Sau Ng.

What conclusion did Yip Man's son, Ip (Yip) Chun, draw from this astounding information?



From the wooden dummy form, this technique illustrates the nerve strikes contained in Pan Nam's system.

"Comparing the legend of Yim Ving Tsun with the information on Tan-Sau Ng, I consider the latter more acceptable in our examination of Ving Tsun's origins," he wrote.

Even though there are some differences and inconsistencies (especially regarding dates), if Eddie Chong's introduction of this information is objectively considered by each of the contending factions of the wing chun community, perhaps the individuals involved will reconsider any animosity felt and be drawn closer in the realization that each system's history and practice is a legitimate part of wing chun tradition.

As for the story of exactly who originated wing chun, the monk Yi Chum the nun and her disciple, Tan-Sau Ng, or Ng Mui, the nun, and her disciple, Yim Wing Chun, Dr. Ting's advice is sound: let the reader consider each version with an open mind, and then decide which makes more sense. Actually, no decision is really necessary. Whatever its origin, both histories are a part of the art's tradition, and both tell us important things about the old masters and the forces that shaped wing chun.

Personally, this author likes the story of Ng Mui and of her first student, Miss Yim Wing Chun. However, intellectual honesty demands open-mindedness, and an objective review of the details of the history Pan Nam has preserved and of the independent corroboration of that history discovered by Ip (Yip) Chun cannot permit an out-of-hand dismissal of this information. Perhaps the examples set by Ip (Yip) Chun and Eddie Chong will be followed by others, and further efforts can be made to trace this fascinating history so that the wing chun community can better know its illustrious founders and the fighting art to which they were dedicated. Critical to the following discussion of the two systems are these facts:

- Pan Nam's associations with instructors Lai Yip Chi and Chiu Chau give him intimate knowledge of the system of wing chun taught to Yip Man by Chan Wah Shun (master Pan refers to this as "fast hands" wing chun).
- Pan's associations with both Lai Yip Chi and Painted Face Kam give him intimate knowledge of the earlier version of wing chun as it was practiced by the opera actors (Painted Face Kam, Wong Wah Bo, Leung Yi Tei, and Lai Fook Shun) of the Eight Harmony Union.

Therefore, Pan Nam has the rare qualification to authoritatively comment on the wing chun practiced by both branches of the family tree. In Pan Nam, and now Eddie Chong, this knowledge is perpetuated, and a better understanding of the differences between the two histories and between the fighting theories and techniques of these two great systems of wing chun is now possible for the first time outside China.

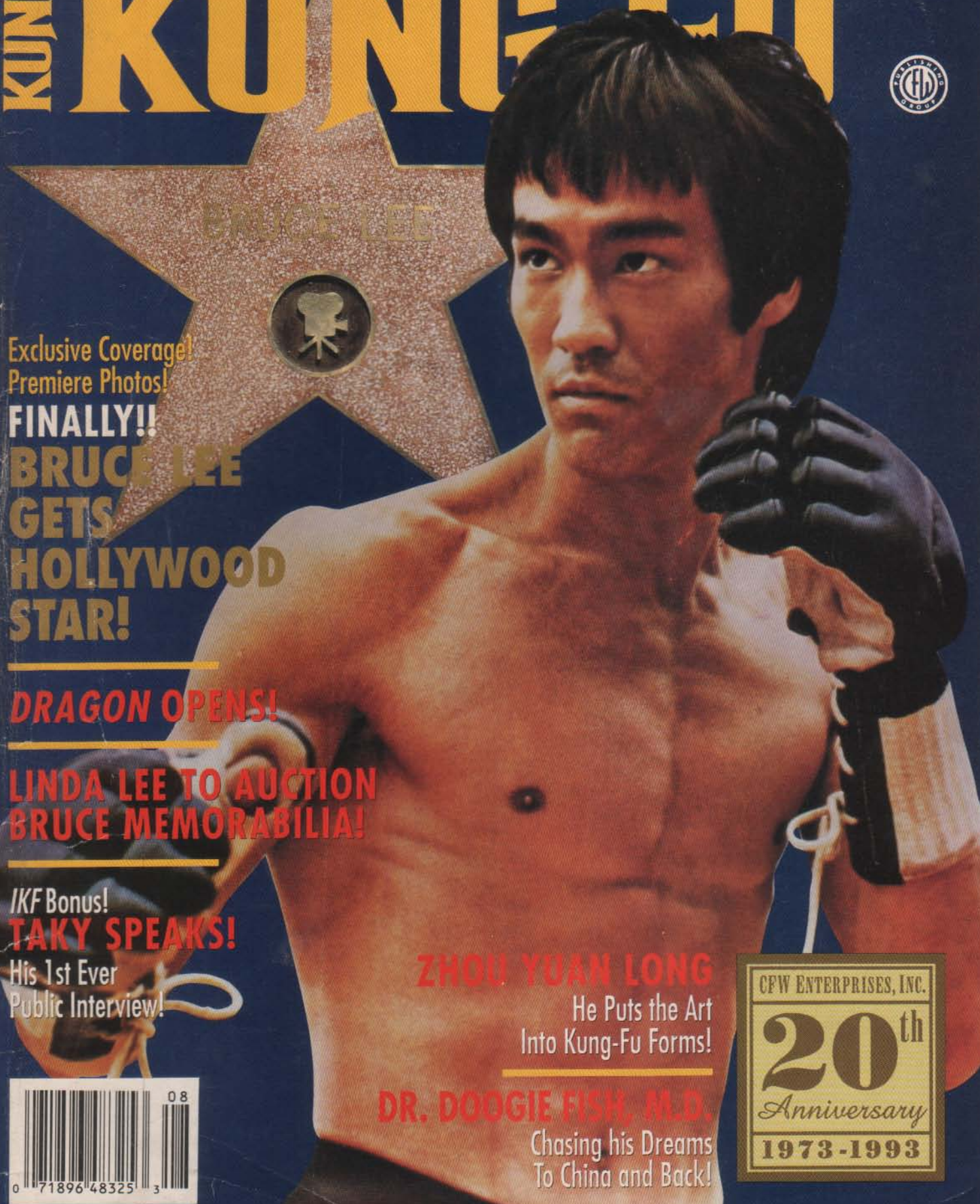
(Next month: In part 2, "Enter the Wing Chun Time Machine" will discuss more history and provide an overview of Pan Nam's sil lum wing chun system.

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AUGUST 1993/VOL. 20, NO. 8

CFW ENTERPRISES, INC.

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1973-1993



34

52

COVER STORY

Special Star Section!

34 It Was Worth the Wait

Emotions ran strong when Bruce Lee finally received his Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. *By Dave Cater*

36 Linda Accepts the Award

The complete text of Linda Lee Cadwell's speech.

38 Dragon Premieres!

Exclusive photo coverage from one of Hollywood's most-anticipated openings!

FEATURES

40 Taky Kimura Speaks!

For the first time in 20 years, Taky Kimura talks about experiencing the phenomenon known as Bruce Lee. *Interview conducted by Paul Bax*

44 The Art of Kung-Fu

You may not know Zhou Yuan Long's name, but you'll certainly recognize his work. *By Wen-Mei Yu and Gerald A. Sharp*

50 Tale of Two Chengs

How is it that Ben Lo and William C.C. Chen, two of Cheng Man-Ching's most-prized students, are offering different views of the same system? *By Craig Vorhees*

52 Coconut Breaking: Discover a Hidden Art

If you want to end a fight with a one-kill strike, the skull is the place to start. But before that, begin with coconut breaking. *By James Patrick Lacy*

56 Enter the Wing Chun Time Machine—Part 2

Pan Nam's history of the creation and expansion of wing chun may surprise you. *By Michael Nedderman*

62 T'am T'ui "Springy Legs"

T'am t'ui, or the art of the springy legs, weaves both short- and long-range strikes and kicks into a process of total harmony and effectiveness. *By Dr. Larry Sanders*

66 Dr. Doogie Fish, M.D.

After graduating from high school at 14, Ken Fish left home to chase his Chinese dream. Today, the scene may be different, but the chase remains the same. *By Dave Cater*

DEPARTMENTS

6 Letters • 16 Insiders • 21 Coming in September!

22 Training for Life • 24 Burt Offerings • 26 Martial Arts in Movies

28 Main Events • 84 Directory

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BY MICHAEL NEDDERMAN
PHOTOS BY PETER V. SERRACINO

ENTER THE WING CHUN TIME MACHINE

PART
2

Part I contained a narrative of sifu Eddie Chong's quest to find the roots of wing chun, his discovery of Pan Nam, and some independent corroboration of the history master Pan preserved.

(Author's note: The following is presented in the interest of preserving and promoting the history and practice of wing chun kung-fu. The information contained in this article was obtained from a recognized master of the art and is in no way intended to offend anyone or to disparage any organization or in any way to demean the history and practice of wing chun as it is taught by the disciples of Yip Man. It is recommended that, before conclusions are drawn, both part I and part II should be read.)

Who really invented wing chun? From master Pan, Eddie Chong learned that wing chun was actually developed by a 22nd-generation nun from the founding of the Shaolin Temple, Yi Chum, who left the Temple and built a monastery in Hunan province on Heng Shan (or Heng Mountain, approximately 300 miles north of the city of Canton).

Master Pan tells us that wing chun is an internal fighting style of the sil lum (Shaolin) system. Chi gung development was and still is an integral part of the original wing chun system of Yi Chum. Many have observed and commented on how the wing

chun system taught by Yip Man's disciples seems to have a mixture of internal and external attributes. The new information brought back by sifu Chong dispels this mystery. Now for the first time outside China, the unique chi gung exercises and the chi developing aspect of the forms of Yi Chum's original wing chun system have been reintroduced into the wing chun known in the West.

Wing chun combined the best attributes of several traditional martial arts, and adapted them to the unique fighting theories developed to meet the combat requirements of the early practitioners, all of whom were revolutionaries. The martial arts we

know of are: sil lum, tai chi push hands (most probably Chen style), eagle claw, golden palm, chin na, and praying mantis (possibly Southern style). The result was a fighting art that stripped away all unnecessary movement and kept only the strategies, tactics, and techniques that were most practical. It was simple, direct, and sudden, while simultaneously being flexible in terms of quickly adapting to changing circumstances. Many of its techniques and theories contained the combined concept of yin and yang—they were strong yet supple.

Wing chun was an effective and practical blending of the best of hard

and soft fighting styles. It employed precise timing from a highly developed sense of touch (sensitivity), and "borrowed" the energy of the opponent to strike directly at his most vital points. These attributes help the smaller, weaker individual magnify power and combat effectiveness far beyond what seems possible.

Additionally, because an accomplished practitioner could quickly annihilate a single opponent, wing chun was, and still is, effective against multiple opponents—just the thing for a revolutionary who was literally a "spy" in his own country, or for a citizen of modern society out for a stroll in his own neighborhood.

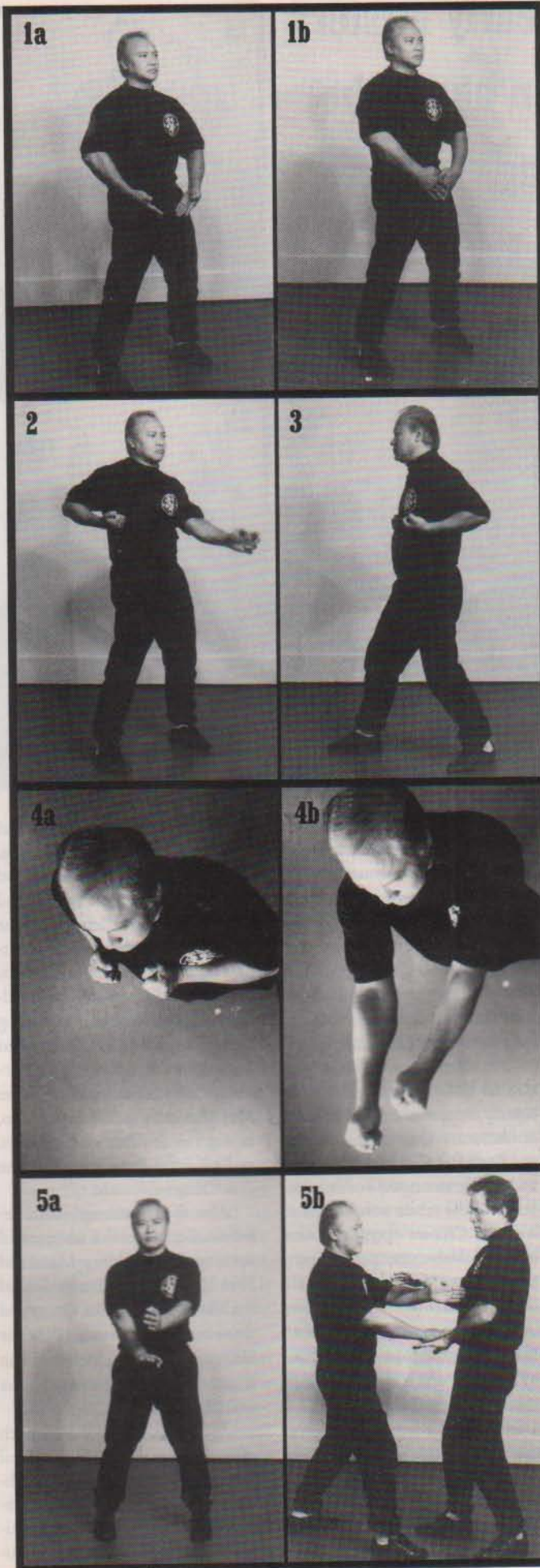
Yi Chum and her disciple, Tan Sau Ng, were involved in the revolt against the Ching dynasty (Manchurians) that ruled China from 1644 until overthrown by the Nationalist forces in 1911. They intended this new fighting art to give their fellow revolutionaries an advantage against the oppressors. Wing chun was the result—a fighting system that favored close-range effectiveness and which, because of improved teaching methods, could be learned in a much shorter time than any of the others from which it derived.

The combat needs of a revolutionary were much different than that of a tournament competitor, even a "no-holds-barred" tournament fighter. The latter's fights usually occur at an arranged time and in a place sparsely adequate for both the fighters and spectators. The tournament or challenge fighter can take a moment to size-up his opponent—he can circle, retreat, feint and set-up the opponent. He may even be able to conduct research and practice against that system's techniques and tactics days, weeks or months in advance.

However, the revolutionary will most likely find himself set upon suddenly by multiple opponents whose skills and fighting styles are probably unknown. He will have to do the "sizing up" as contact is made, contact most probably initiated by the adversaries at a time and place to their advantage. He must defeat each opponent immediately and convincingly upon first contact or, for him, the revolution will be over. These were realities that necessitated both the development of wing chun's very direct and devastating theories and techniques and of its emphasis on developing the sense of touch into what has become known as wing chun "sensitivity".

In the late 18th or early 19th century (earlier according to Ip (Yip) Chun's research), Yi Chum taught Tan Sau Ng, who was the manager in charge of costumes and props for an Hunanese opera company. Tan Sau Ng taught several actors in his opera troupe: Lai Fook Shun, Painted Face Kam (Pan Nam's third and final wing chun instructor), Wong Wah Bo and Leung Yi Tei (Leung Jan's instructors). During the reign of emperor

About the Author: Michael Nedderman has been a student of Eddie Chong's for six years, and currently assists at the Sacramento school.



These are the opening moves (1a-1b) of the sil lum tao form and represent a revolutionary slogan, "overthrow the Ching dynasty, bring back the Ming dynasty." This grabbing technique (2) is executed between most of the major techniques of all three forms. This is the "chasing" horse (3) of Pan Nam's sil lum wing chun system. Note the 50/50 weight distribution. The side-by-side comparisons (4a-4b) of the Hong Kong Style's "centerline" punch and the sil lum wing chun system's "off-center" punch. It is interesting to note that the elimination of the angle created by following the centerline makes the sil lum system's punch several inches longer. This is an example from the bil gee form (5a), and is an effective offensive counter to one of the basic traps of wing chun (5b) that is usually countered with a defensive escape.

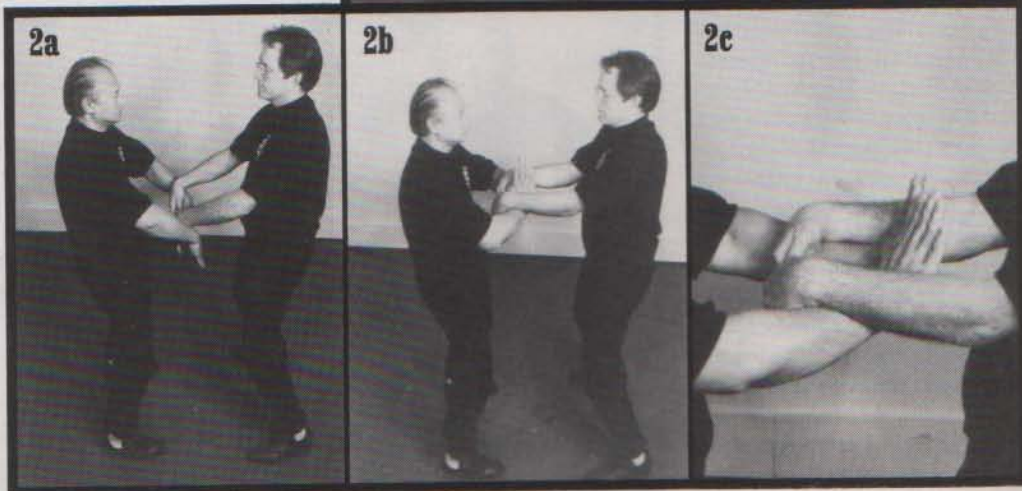
Tung-Chi (about 1867-to-1870), Painted Face Kam was hired by Lok Lan Koon to teach his offspring wing chun. During this same time, Wong Wah Bo and Leung Yee Tei also began teaching in Fatshan where their student, Leung Jan, later became known as "King of the Boxers".

To emphasize the reality of the political climate that shaped wing chun martial philosophy, Leung Jan's training under Wong Wah Bo was interrupted when Wong had to flee, possibly because the Ching authorities wanted him for his revolutionary activities.

It was during the reign of Shen-fung (about 1850-to-1861) that the Heaven and Earth Rebellion was very active and had to work "underground," necessitating secrecy and subterfuge. However, it was not without the rhetoric typical of revolutionary movements. For example, from Pan Nam we learn that wing chun derives its name from two sources: First, from one of the founders of the organization that supported the Heaven and Earth Rebellion, "Wing" from Mr. Chan Wing Wah; and then "Chun" was derived from three small

“Much of the early mystery and confusion about the origins of wing chun can be attributed to the need for secrecy.”

Photos (1a-1b) illustrate the centerline-splitting drills. The author on the right is trying to keep Eddie Chong's hands apart (1a) and down (1b). While (2a) is not part of the drill, it shows the next logical move to (1a-1b). From the bill gee form (2b), this is another grabbing technique from the eagle claw system. And from the wooden dummy form (2c), this kick can either be directed to the knee or groin. The hands are held in an on-guard or in a position of respect.



words, “Tai”= great, “Tin”=Heaven, and “yat”=sun. “Great” referred to the Chinese Ming dynasty (which preceded the Manchurian Ching dynasty); “heaven” referred to the Heaven and Earth Rebellion; and “sun” referred to light. Together these symbols meant that the Ching dynasty had to be totally overthrown to have freedom, to have sunlight.

The opening moves to each of original sil lum wing chun's forms actually are representative of that same revolutionary slogan. The Heaven and Earth Rebellion was widespread and popular among the working class. Some of the rebels were associated with the Chinese opera, and were indispensable because opera company personnel could travel freely, an all-important activity for those involved in spreading the anti-Ching rebellion. A common means of travel was by riverboat, which is where the wing chun fighting staff was borrowed. It is a seven-to-nine-foot pole that formerly was used to propel riverboats. Members of the Chinese opera were known as “the followers of the Red Boat” because their means of transportation was a red riverboat.

The General of Quongdong and Quangxi provinces, Yip Man Sun, was sent to subjugate Chan Hoi and Lee Man Mao and their Tai Ping and Heaven and Earth Rebellions. The General abolished the opera performances and burned the theaters, which caused the rebellions to collapse. Later, Sun Wah and Kwong Dean Hing applied for and reopened the opera and formed the Eight Harmony Opera Union which, with Lee Man Mao and actors Wong Wah Bo, Leung Yee Tei, Painted Face Kam, and Lai Fook Shun, continued the anti-Ching movement.

After the Heaven and Earth Rebellion, there were other unsuccessful uprisings (i.e., the Hung Moon and Shan Hap, etc.) until Sun Yat Sen led the Nationalist forces to victory and threw out the foreigners in 1911. The history and development of wing chun is interwoven with the history of these anti-Ching rebellions.

As the above history shows, much of the mystery and confusion about the origins of wing chun can be attributed to the need of the early practitioners for secrecy to protect the identities of themselves and other revolu-

tionaries, namely their instructors and classmates. What better way to protect them than by changing the names of the originator and other practitioners? After all, it was probably unlikely that the students of Wong Wah Bo and Leung Yee Tei would ever meet Wong's and Leung's sifu or sigung. Therefore, it would have been unwise to needlessly risk their safety by naming them in the family history as long as those instructors were alive and the Ching dynasty was in power. This explains why wing chun has been, until recently, a secretive art, taught only to a few disciples, with several stories regarding its origin.

Many inconsistencies

We can only speculate how the story originated. It may have been a “cover story” to deceive those trying to discover the membership of Heaven and Earth Rebellion; or it could have been a tribute to another early female practitioner who may have actually made some of the innovations we have come to perceive today as the complete wing chun system. Ng Jiu and Yim Wing Chun may even have been the true names of those in-

so renown that books about the Chinese opera make special note of his martial excellence.

Regardless of who or why wing chun was modified, some of the changes at least can only be described as ingenious for the purpose for which they were intended. The innovation of chi sau or "sticky hands" (known as "rolling hands" to Pan Nam because his sil lum system of wing chun has a different "sticky hands" exercise), coupled with Yip Man's teaching skills, have made wing chun the effective and popular fighting art it is today. Because of Yip Man, wing chun is a world-renown martial art at which practically anyone can become proficient.

However, the decision to omit some things and restructure others has, until now, deprived the truly dedicated wing chun practitioner of the "final level" intended by wing chun's true inventor, a genius who combined the best features of several already effective martial arts, to develop the highest quality of martial excellence in its adherents. This final level, of course, includes the benefits of chi gung training.

The forms preserved by Pan Nam are exciting to watch for anyone who has completed the "Hong Kong style" wing chun system because, although clearly recognizable, many techniques are presented in a different order (sometimes in one of the other forms), and are quite often executed in ways that are at the same time both surprising and intriguing. It is clear that the same primary concepts Western wing chun adherents understand are present in Pan Nam's forms, again with some amazing variations and differences in emphasis. However, it would be safe to say that master Pan's sil lum wing chun has more differences than similarities with regard to application of those concepts.

A noticeable difference between the two systems is that, in Pan's sil lum system, chi energy is not released by "loosely" executing the various techniques in the forms. Rather a certain tension (not dynamic tension) is maintained causing a dramatically different feeling and, therefore, a dramatically different effect.

The present-day palm techniques of both systems have their root in the ancient art known as "golden palm." At the highest levels of wing chun, mastery of this technique helps the practitioner inflict fatal internal inju-

COMPARATIVE CHART		
	Pan Nam's sil lum wing chun	"Hong Kong style" wing chun
Rolling hands (called "sticky hands" by Hong Kong-style practitioners)	no	yes
Sticky hands of the sil lum system (does not have a single-hand drill)	yes	no
Three empty-hand forms (that differ greatly but have the same names)	yes	yes
Wooden dummy form (that differs greatly)	yes	yes
Staff form (that differs greatly)	yes	yes
Butterfly knife form (that differs greatly)	yes	yes
Basic forms stance	wide, toes straight	narrow, pigeon-toed
Chi development	yes	no
Basic punch	from side of chest	from center of chest
Sandbag training	no	yes
Lop sau	yes	yes
Pak sau	no	yes

ries. This connection is more apparent in Pan Nam's sil lum system of wing chun because power is allowed to develop more naturally. For example, his system doesn't even use a sand bag for practicing the punch, chop or palm strike. With our increased awareness of the fragility of the wrist, and of the prevalence of "carpal tunnel syndrome," this difference in emphasis makes a lot of sense.

Many movements in each of the forms are clearly influenced by tai chi, eagle claw, chin na, and praying mantis, and are too numerous to detail here but some are demonstrated in the accompanying photos.

Aside from the obvious technical and organizational differences in the forms discussed above, the major differences between the two systems are: the basic stance of each; the wing chun of Pan Nam has its own chi

gung exercise with a chi gung dimension in each of the forms, but especially in the first or sil lum tao form; and that Pan Nam's "sticky hands" drill is much different.

"Sticky hands vs. Rolling hands"

The sticky hands exercise of Pan Nam's system has its roots in the push hands exercise of tai chi. Overall body position and rooting the horse are the primary emphasis with sensitivity and the theories of the sil lum wing chun system guiding all movements.

The "rolling hands" or sticky hands drill taught by Yip Man's disciples can be performed either as a prelude to an attack that becomes a free-sparing contest or, because of its recycling form, it can be performed for extended periods of time as a neuromuscular conditioning drill. In

contrast, Pan Nam's sticky hands drill is purely a contest to achieve and maintain the stronger, more technically correct position from which strikes are made or countered. However, the theory and techniques of Pan Nam's sticky hands drill can be employed during the "rolling hands" drill.

In Master Pan's sil lum wing chun system, neuromuscular conditioning is left to other drills that emphasize a strongly rooted horse and instill more of an overall body sensitivity. Both the conditioning drills and Pan Nam's sticky hands exercise condition the arms and the supporting body structure, teach the connection between them, and how to maximize power through the proper coordination of each.

The "new" old wing chun stance

The wing chun stance, as practiced by master Pan and his teachers Lai Yip Chi and Painted Face Kam, is the same as the traditional horse stance of sil lum kung-fu with an important difference related to chi development. It is slightly wider than the "pigeon-toed" stance of Yip Man's "Hong Kong style," and the toes are pointed straight ahead. When advancing, this stance is, again, wider, has more of a 50/50 weight distribution, and the feet lift slightly rather than shuffle when moving. Naturally, the weight will shift to the back leg if the front one is attacked, and the stance will shift from front facing to side facing if the groin is attacked.

The pigeon-toed stance and its front facing variation, have certain defensive advantages such as: offering maximum protection to the front leg from being swept, and quick, powerful stance shifting at close quarters. However, it has some serious disadvantages such as, knee problems experienced by many practitioners (including this author), weak lateral stability, and diminished mobility outside a certain range. Also, the pigeon-toed stance counteracts the intended chi aspect of the wing chun system of Yi Chum and Tan Sau Ng, a critical element of the original sil lum tao form.

Some of the advantages to the original stance taught by master Pan are elimination of knee problems, more powerful hand techniques (because the foundation is stronger), and

Continued on page 73

Wing Chun Time Machine

Continued from page 60

increased mobility (the lack of which has been one of the most frequent criticisms of wing chun). Once one becomes adjusted to Pan Nam's stance and method of advancing, the defensive advantages of the pigeoned-toed stance over the more offensive-oriented sil lum stance become minimal. As noted, the original stance of sil lum wing chun allows cultivation of the chi aspect of the art to be an integral part of the system from a beginners first day in class as intended by its founder.

After such an exciting adventure, one can't help but wonder if somehow it might be possible to find descendants of Lai Fook Shun, or other students descended from Tan Sall Ng, Painted Face Kam, Leung Yee Tei or from Wong Wah Bo after he was forced to flee Fatshan. Wouldn't it be fascinating to see how they have preserved the history and practice of their art?

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INSIDE KUNG-FU contents



August 2000/Vol. 27, No. 8
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Cover Story

54 It's Shanghai Noon for Jackie Chan

For Jackie Chan, his new movie is not just his second U.S. action comedy, it's the culmination of a career-long dream. *By Ric Meyers*

Features

30 Choy Lee Fut's Steel Fan

Called the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of kung-fu weapons, choy lee fut's steel fan is as innocent as it is deadly. *By Howard Choy*

38 Tai Chi's 5 States Of Flux

Yin/yang theory not only includes opposites, but transitions between the opposites called states of flux. *By Joseph Plante*

42 Futshan Bak Mei — Mysterious and Deadly

Bak mei kung-fu is one of the few martial arts systems that combines both Shaolin and Daoist practices into a single fighting art. *By Robert Chu*

60 Finding The Value In Your Practice

A martial art that looks good but has no depth will provide little lasting value no matter how many years you practice. *By Bok-Nam Park, with Francis Hriadil*

70 Mande Muda — The JKD of Pencak Silat

Up to the day he died pendekar Herman Suwanda tried to make this unique Indonesian offshoot part of the American martial arts landscape. *By Mike Young*



Departments

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 7 K-1 Column | 18 Grace Under Fire |
| 8 Letters | 22 Piece of the Dragon |
| 10 Kung-Fu Mind | 24 Main Events |
| 13 Martial Arts In Movies | 29 Directory |
| 14 Burt Offerings | 103 Marketplace |
| 16 Insiders | 111 Coming Next Month |
| | 112 Shamrock 'n Roll |

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FUTSHAN E

Mysterious a



Bak mei kung-fu is one of the few **martial arts systems** that combine both **Shaolin and Daoist** practices into a **single fighting art**

The bak mei (pronounced balk mei) pai or white eyebrow system of martial arts is shrouded in secrecy and legend. According to common gung-fu lore, the martial art is attributed to the Daoist monk Bak Mei (who was noted for his white eyebrows, hence the name) during the Qing dynasty in China during the time of Qing emperor Jia Qing (1796-1820).

Bak mei allegedly trained at the Fukien Shaolin Temple at Jiu Lian Mountain in Fukien province and was one of the five elders who survived the legendary destruction of the Southern Shaolin temple, according to the fictional work, "Wan Nian Qin" (1,000 Years Green).

Some have depicted the Daoist Bak Mei as a traitor to the Shaolin who worked on the side of the Manchus. Others say he was a spy or double agent who sided for the Qing, but had loyalties to the Ming loyalists and rebels. While doing research on my previous work, *Complete Wing Chun*, I came across legends of the related southern fist systems that were depicted as being descended from the Venerable Five (Jee Shim Sim Si, Ng Mui Si Tai, Fung Dao Duk, ak Mei Dao Yan and Mui Hin) that survived the ravaging of the Fukien Shaolin. As to whom Bak Mei really was or if he really

BAK MEI

is and Deadly

By Robert Chu

existed remains in question. It is quite possible that Bak Mei Dao Yan (Daoist) is really a metaphor for a rebel or group of rebels that developed this system to fight the Qing. The salutation of a left fist and right open palm still signifies that, "From 5 lakes and 4 seas, all men are brothers" — a sign of loyalty to the Ming and the secret Hung Mun society that was created to overthrow the Qing dynasty.

The legends state that the Daoist Bak Mei traveled to Ngor Mei (Emei) Mountain where he refined his art to include the internal aspects of qi cultivation and improved body mechanics after the destruction of the Shaolin Temple. His art was a combination of both Shaolin Buddhist fighting techniques and the Daoist arts of internal cultivation (noi gung). Bak Mei's martial art was passed on to monk Gwong Wai, the heir to the system, who named the system "bak mei pai."

The system was then passed to monk, Jok Fat Wan, who traveled with his disciple Lin Sang from Sichuan Emei Shan to the Gwong How Temple in Guang Dong province. Jok Fat Wan, during a trip to Guangzhou, eventually accepted a layman disciple named Cheung Lei Chuen. Cheung Lei Chuen, a long-time martial arts enthusiast, mastered several martial arts, including lee gar under Lee Mung sifu, wanderer's style under Lam Shek Sifu, and lung ying mor kiu (dragon form scraping bridge) under Lam Ah Hap, a third-generation disciple of the dragon form school. Grandmaster Cheung Lei Chuen began training in bak mei kung-fu in the Gwong How Temple at the age of 24 after being introduced to Jok Fat Wan by Lin Sang.

After undergoing his training in bak mei martial arts under Jok Fat Wan, he spread this system to the martial arts world. Cheung Lai Chuen was undefeated throughout his martial arts career, became famous as one of the "Three Tigers of the East River Region," and earned the title of "Seven Southern States Champion". In 1949, grandmaster Cheung Lei Chuen moved to Hong Kong and spread bak mei there. In the fall of 1964, he died at the age of 84 in Hong Kong.

In contrast, the Futshan bak mei system traces its origin to Fung Fou

"Bak mei is a highly sophisticated, fast and aggressive system that is rarely seen in today's Chinese martial arts."



Opponent grabs sifu Chong on the wrist (1). Chong nullifies the attack (2) and uses a reverse elbowlock (3). Chong finishes with a hammerfist strike to the opponent's kidney (4).



Dao Yan (Wind Fire Daoist). Since we do not know Fung Fou Dao Yan's real name or who he was in his layman life, we do not know the complete connection to Cheung Lei Chuen — if there is any — or if Fung Fou Dao Yan was connected to any of Cheung Lei Chuen's 18 schools in Southern China prior to the Communist takeover. We do know the system was handed down to his disciple Lau Siu Leung in Futshan. Lau Siu Leung was a selective teacher and only passed down his bak mei art to people of good moral character. One of his selected disciples was Li Yong Jian (Lee Yung Kien) in Futshan. Li Yong Jian has selected to pass on the art to Eddie Chong of Sacramento, Calif.

Several Versions

There are several versions of the bak mei martial arts, each with varying background and curriculums based on what Cheung Lei Chuen taught in his 18 schools. The author had previously seen many bak mei schools in New York City, including that of Kwong Man Fong, Chan Tai Shan and Chan Jor, as well as yau gung mun (an offshoot of bak mei), and a branch of bak mei that has descended from Vietnam. It was at the urging of my good friend and brother in wing chun kuen, Eddie Chong, that I finally write about his particular bak mei art and focus on his unique school from Futshan.

Chong on nullifies the reverse finishes



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The Futshan bak mei system has many forms. I believe the differences in curriculum are a matter of personal interpretation among the schools, newer forms being added to the curriculum, and the fact that master Fung Fou Dao Yan may have taught a previous curriculum consisting of sets from various Southern Shaolin fist arts. (This is only personal speculation of the author.)

About Eddie Chong

Eddie Chong has been involved in the martial arts for a lifetime. He is known for his wing chun and is the student of Ken Chung, a student of Leung Sheung, who was the first disciple of Yip Man. Wanting to do more research in wing chun, Eddie traveled to Futshan and became a disciple of the late master Pan Nam. While training with master Pan Nam, he was introduced to a fellow training brother, Lee Yung

Gien, and discussed the latter's expertise in the bak mei pai system. After numerous years of dedicated study, the Futshan system of bak mei is being introduced in the United States by Chong, who has a complete endorsement to teach by his sifu and training brother, Li Yong Jian.

Bak Mei Skills

Bak mei kung-fu is one of the few martial arts systems that combines both Shaolin and Daoist practices into a single fighting art. It is classified as both an internal and external system that emphasizes the combination of the science of combat along with the Daoist principles of using qi (breath) to maximize the generation of power from within the body and to maintain health. In bak mei, qi gong is incorporated into every aspect of the art to maximize the flow of energy to every move.

Beginners are taught individual exercises that include waist twisting, loosening and stretching exercises, stepping with advancing, retreating, and left and right stepping. Punching and stepping drills with the basic tools bui gim (back carried sword), bin chui (whipping punch), pao chui (uppercut), cup chui (downward blow) and chung chui (thrusting punch) are also drilled.

The Futshan bak mei system has a unique stance with a 50-50 weight distribution. The stance is called the "but ding but baat bo" (literally, "not 8, and not T-step"), because it looks like a cross between the Chinese character for 8 and the Chinese character "ding" which resembles a "T". Footwork is practiced in eight directions but the heel never touches the ground. The contact point with the foot is the kidney one acupuncture point known as "yong quan" (bubbling well). It is this footwork which leads to speed and mobility.

Bak mei is a highly sophisticated, fast and aggressive system that is rarely seen in today's Chinese martial arts. Bak mei practitioners use geng ging (scared power), a type of explosive power that helps a technique change quickly from a soft and relaxed movement into a powerful strike upon impact. To the untrained observer this can resemble external or brute force. The motto of bak mei is to chain movements of heavy strikes, use the straight to go out and receive with the horizontal, and combine offense and defense as one. The six powers of bak mei include straight, pulling, raising, sinking, whirling and splattering. Practitioners are advised to use spirit, intention, breath and power. High-

level stylists use this concentration, overcome challenges faced during practice, stick to the principles and develop spontaneous movement in the advanced and deep stages of this art.

Bak mei techniques are executed between short- and mid-range distances; hand movements are fast and powerful. Bak mei also has a large repertoire of kicks, including side thrusting, front heart piercing, jumping, and ground rolling maneuvers. Bak mei emphasizes tiger form motions, concentrating on the structure of the body and stepping to make it practical. The movements are small and precise, yet have the qualities of light, sharp, circular and alive. Body motions including floating, sinking, swallowing

Continued on page 67



Opponent attacks sifu Chong with a punch (1). Chong nullifies the attack (2) and smashes down on the opponent's bridge arm (3). Chong maintains control by locking the opponent's elbow (4).

Futshan Bak Mei

Continued from page 45

and spitting are evident in this art. The four body motions emphasize power and are executed in upward, sinking, pushing outward and drawing inward directions. When combined with one another and varied in direction, duration and intent, the different powers are manifested and the practitioner can "faat ging" (fa jing—issue force) in many ways.

Bak mei emphasizes the six harmonies of the three internal harmonies of visual acuity, listening skills and concentration with the external three harmonies of waist, bridge and horse. At the highest levels of bak mei, the spirit radiates from the eyes and one can go from fixed methods to flexible methods, utilize softness to dissolve, and hardness to push out. The advanced practitioner shows spirit and intent arriving, intention and breath arriving, and breath and power expressed throughout the system.

Fundamentals

According to an old adage, "Before learning the forms, one must practice the stance." Without a firm foundation in stance training, there is no solid foundation and root. Typically, advanced practitioners display excellent basic skills in rooting and will be able to differentiate methods of issuing power and adapting to different circumstances. It will take at least three years to lay down a good foundation.

Chong sifu teaches a core group of sets that include, sup ji kuen, fa pao, chut dim mui fa, gou bo tui, sup ba mor kiu, and fu bo kuen. For the beginner, sup ji kuen is the basis. An old adage states that, "Sup ji kuen is the foundation and can be used as defending the name of bak mei. If one does not know sup ji kuen, how could one claim to know bak mei?" Sup ji kuen consists of 72 important points performed in a cross-shaped pattern. The set consists of the basic offensive and defensive, open and closed motions of the art, combined with body movement, footwork and proper hand positions.

Chut dim mui fa is another fist routine that emphasizes a small circle and is useful in close-range combat and quick-attack training. Beginners must learn this set to develop variations in the use of the triangular horse steps and chained motions.

Continued on page 68

Futshan Bak Mei

Continued from page 67

Fa pao is a set that emphasizes kicking and strikes using geung ji chui (ginger fist) and maneuvering. It is a short, but vitally important intermediate set.

Gou bo tui is the first of the advanced bak mei sets. Gou bo tui trains pressing horse and actions that emphasize the floating, sinking, swallowing and spitting powers. The importance of gou bo tui is to change from one tactic to another. Bak mei practitioners reserve this set as it teaches surprise tactics in emergency situations. It is rarely shown to outsiders. The core of this set is guarding the centerline and attacking your opponent with close power generated from the four body motions. Close power or inch power (chuen ging) can only be reached through dedicated hard training.


Sup ba mor kiu is a set that emphasizes the touch and feeling aspect of bak mei and is often used in mor sao (touching hands), a form of sensitivity arm practice. This routine places emphasis on the use of the waist guiding the bridges. The "hands do not come back empty" is a core principle of this set, meaning when a bridge is touched, one rubs or scrapes the bridge and traps the opponent's arms, pressing inward to your opponent to control the centerline. Movements to attack the head, chest and abdomen are both linear and circular in this set. The key points lie in the touching, locking (aka trapping), straight issuing of the connected motions of swallowing (defending), and spitting (attacking). In sup ba mor kiu, emphasized are the tactics of subduing and issuing, springing and receiving, entering and jumping, rolling and slapping, dragging and locking, touching and trapping, and inside and outside bridges. When he combines the six powers, the practitioner reaching this level of training will be a formidable foe.

Combat Methods

From the sets, san sao (separate hands) is used during two-man prearranged sparring, mor kiu (sticking hands), and free-fighting practice. Practice is often done at a quick pace with combat speed; it helps a practitioner develop the timing, positioning and reflexes needed in combat situations. Chong sifu has added in a dimension of training from his many years of experience in wing chun kuen and teaches many of the bak mei applications through the platform of his style's luk sao (rolling hands) and chi sao (sticking hands) practice.

Bak mei practitioners believe one must attack the outer gate of the opponent. They call this principle "boon bien lien" (half-face attacking), which is to attack the opponent's flank where he is weakest and unable to defend. Since the system is a close-quarters combat art, there is a strong emphasis on bridge crossing. A bak mei adage states, "If there is a bridge, cross over; if there is no bridge, touch and feel." The stance is used to trap and control the opponent's leg in case of leg attacks.

Conclusion

Futshan bak mei pai is an art that stresses mo duk (martial arts chivalry). The bak mei creed states, "Respect the Founder, respect the teachers, and respect the martial arts. Learn to be kind, righteous, and practice martial arts. Once accomplished in martial arts, use it only for self-defense and not to bully others. If someone is not loyal, devoted or honest, don't bother to teach a person even if ten thousand taels of gold are offered to you. Those who disrespect relatives or are dishonest with friends should never be taught." 

Robert Chu is a Southern California-based author and martial artist.