



# Pa Kua Chang

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## Ba Gua Zhang in the Cheng Family Village

# 程家村 八卦掌

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by Tim Cartmell*



## **Pa Kua Chang**

JOURNAL

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### **About the Pa Kua Chang Journal**

The *Pa Kua Chang Journal* is published six times a year. Each issue features an interview with, or article by, one or more Ba Gua Zhang instructor(s) from mainland China, Taiwan, the United States, and/or Canada. The interviews will report on each instructor's background, current program, training methods and teaching philosophy. By utilizing this format, the intention is to give students an opportunity to get to know prospective teachers and to let teachers possibly gain insights and ideas from learning about the activities of their colleagues.

Chinese names and terms will be romanized using the pinyin system of romanization except when an instructor prefers his name romanized differently. The title of the Journal appears in the Wade Giles system of romanization as it was the system we started with and we kept the original title. Whenever possible, Chinese characters will be listed in parentheses following the first appearance of Chinese terms and names in each article.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this journal are those of the instructors being interviewed and not necessarily the views of the publisher or editor.

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## **Editor's Corner**

### **Where We Are Headed**

Because the Pa Kua Chang Journal is only thirty-two pages in length and is published only six times per year, it is impossible to fit articles about every aspect of Ba Gua Zhang into every issue. With limited space it is difficult to be very thorough in addressing a topic in one, or even a series, of articles. Consequently it has been my goal to try and present material in stages over longer periods of time.

During the first two years our focus was to bring readers information about instructors who teach in the United States. Although we have continued to present this information during our third and four years of publication, our focus shifted to a coverage of Ba Gua Zhang history and biographies of the first few generations of masters so that readers could better understand the roots of the system.

We are now reaching an end to the history cycle and we will be entering into a more technically oriented focus during our fifth year of publication. I felt that it was important to build a historical perspective prior to focusing on the technical aspects of Ba Gua as it will help readers understand why technical differences arise between styles in the practice of Ba Gua. In the future, I intend to present special issues which focus on different technical aspects of Ba Gua. Next year we will have separate journal issues dedicated to various aspects of Ba Gua such as: Ba Gua weapons, Ba Gua Qi Gong, Ba Gua footwork, Ba Gua power development, Ba Gua locking and throwing, etc. In each issue we will present how a variety of instructors from different Ba Gua styles and lineages approach these aspects of the art.

Having laid the historical and biographical foundation during the first four years of publication, I feel it will be easier to present the various technical aspects of Ba Gua. When we write about how Xie Pei Qi or Sun Zhi Jun or Li Zi Ming teaches Ba Gua stepping or Qi Gong, readers will already be familiar with these instructors names, lineages and stylistic characteristics. Therefore, in the future, we can concentrate more on the technical aspects and less on biography and history.

### **On the Cover**

**Cheng Ting Hua's youngest son, Cheng You Xin**

# Ba Gua Zhang in the Cheng Family Village

*In the Pa Kua Chang Journal, Volume 3, Number 2, we explored Cheng Ting Hua's background, talked about a few of his senior students and discussed some of the characteristics of his style. In this article we will examine what may be the "purest" branch of the Cheng Ting Hua style of Ba Gua, that which was taught in his home village in Shen County, Hebei Province.*

Although Dong Hai Chuan (董海川) was the man who founded the art of Ba Gua Zhang (八卦掌), the one who was responsible for spreading Dong's art to the greatest number of students was Dong's student Cheng Ting Hua (程庭華). Even when Dong Hai Chuan was still alive, Cheng was the one teaching Ba Gua for his teacher in Dong's later years. While the majority of Dong Hai Chuan's students did not accept many students of their own and were conservative in their teaching, Cheng Ting Hua taught less conservatively, accepted many students, and associated with many other martial artists in Beijing, Tianjin, Bao Ding, and other areas of Hebei Province. In addition to teaching Ba Gua in Beijing, Cheng Ting Hua also taught his art in his home village in Shen County (深縣), Hebei Province (河北省).

Shen County is located approximately 200km south of Beijing and is famous for martial arts. Up until the end of the Qing dynasty almost every village in Shen County had a martial arts training program. Many of the famous Xing Yi Quan (形意拳) masters at the turn of the century were from Shen County (see Pa Kua Chang Journal, Vol 4, No. 3).

Cheng Ting Hua grew up in Cheng family village in Shen County, however, he moved to Beijing when he was in his twenties and began apprenticing with a gentleman who made eyeglasses. Later, Cheng opened up his own spectacles shop in Beijing. A martial arts enthusiast, Cheng also began studying the Chinese art of wrestling (摔角 - shuai jiao) when he arrived in Beijing. After studying shuai jiao for a number of years, Cheng became a Ba Gua student of Dong Hai Chuan when he was 28 years old (1876). While living in Beijing, Cheng frequently returned home to visit his family in Shen County. It is said that Cheng's father had died young and Cheng Ting Hua, the third of four sons in the Cheng family, returned home as frequently as once a month to look in on his mother. During his visits he taught Ba Gua to the villagers. Two of Cheng's first Ba Gua students in the Cheng family village were his younger brother, Cheng Dian Hua (程殿華), and his nephew, Cheng You Gong (程有功). Prior to studying Ba Gua with his brother, Cheng Dian Hua had studied a Shaolin (少林) based system which was taught in the village and a little Xing Yi Quan with the famous Xing Yi instructor Liu Qi Lan (劉奇蘭).

After Cheng Ting Hua started studying with Dong Hai Chuan he returned to visit his home village and told his brother about Ba Gua Zhang. Cheng Dian Hua was proud of his own progress in the martial arts and so he asked his elder brother if they might have a contest. Cheng Ting Hua knew that his brother was no match for him and that if they competed Cheng Dian Hua might be hurt. However, his brother had boasted so loudly about wanting a contest that he could not refuse. In order to avoid hurting his brother Cheng Ting Hua told him, "I will let you attack me with ten fists. If none of your attacks reach me, it will mean that I win. If even one of your attacks touch me, I lose."

People in the village heard that the Cheng brothers would compete and they all went to watch. Cheng Dian Hua was very proud to see so many people standing



**A sketch drawing of Cheng Ting Hua's younger brother, Cheng Dian Hua**



**Cheng Ting Hua's eldest son, Cheng You Long  
(also known as Cheng Hai Ting)**

around. He sank his waist and stood in a horse stance, ready to fight. He quickly stepped forward flashing his left hand as a distraction and thrusting a powerful right fist at Cheng Ting Hua's underbelly. Cheng Ting Hua calmly evaded his brother's first attack. Those watching said that Cheng Ting Hua was so calm it was as if "he was enjoying a flower or gazing at the moon." Cheng Dian Hua attacked again to his brother's head with his left. Before this strike reached him, Cheng Ting Hua turned quickly and dodged the second fist. After several minutes Cheng Dian Hua had spent his ten attacks and failed on each try. Sweating and exhausted he said, "I am convinced. I lost."

After the match, the villagers praise Cheng Ting Hua's skill. Cheng Dian Hua was ashamed and depressed. Cheng Ting Hua told his brother, "What you have practiced is showy. You are far from real gong fu (功夫). Why don't you come with me to Beijing and learn real martial arts." By this time Cheng Ting Hua had opened his own eyeglass shop in Beijing and so he offered his brother a job. Cheng Dian Hua agreed to follow his brother to the capital, work in the store, and study Ba Gua Zhang.

Once in Beijing, Cheng Dian Hua kept the books at the eyeglass shop and studied Ba Gua from both his elder brother and Dong Hai Chuan. Eventually, Cheng Dian Hua also helped his brother teach Ba Gua and became a great fighter. After the Cheng's began

teaching Ba Gua in Beijing, many martial artist came to compete with the two brothers. Because Cheng Ting Hua was the most famous of the two brothers, he was challenged more frequently. However, when his brother was not at home Cheng Dian Hua was happy to accept challenges for him.

A martial artist named Li Kui (李逵) had heard of Cheng Ting Hua's reputation and was not convinced that Cheng was so good. One day he showed up at Cheng's shop and arrogantly shouted from outside the door, "Cheng San! (程三 - Cheng San means the third child of the Cheng family). Dare you have a competition with me!?" Cheng Ting Hua was not in the shop on that day. Cheng Dian Hua heard the shouting and went out to see what was going on. He said, "My brother Cheng San is not at home. Is there anything that I, Cheng Si (程四 - fourth child in the Cheng family) can do for you?" Enraged that Cheng Ting Hua was not there and wanting to show off his strength to intimidate Cheng Dian Hua, Li Kui walked over to a water vat that was half buried in the ground. The vat was half filled with water and probably weighed several hundred pounds. Li lifted the vat out of the ground and then put it back. He looked at Cheng Dian Hua proudly as if to say, "What do you think about that!" Cheng Dian Hua said, "You are strong, but I will bet that you cannot lift me off the ground." Li put his arms around Cheng and tried three times to lift him, but he could not. After the third try Li acted like he was going to give up, but then in a last effort he suddenly grabbed Cheng's belt with both hands and tried to quickly jerk him off balance when Cheng was not ready. Just as Li's hands grabbed around Cheng's belt, Cheng expanded his abdomen in all directions as if there had been an explosion inside his belly. Li shouted in pain. When he pulled his hands out of Cheng's belt he noticed that the skin had been rubbed off where he had been holding the belt and his hands were bleeding. He quickly ran away to tend to his wounds and never bothered the Cheng brothers again.

After Cheng Ting Hua's death in 1900 at the hands of foreign soldiers during the Boxer Rebellion, Cheng Dian Hua closed up the spectacles shop and returned to the Cheng family village in Shen County, bringing Cheng Ting Hua's youngest son, Cheng You Xin (程有信), with him. Cheng You Xin was not yet twenty when his father died and so he learned the majority of his Ba Gua from Cheng Dian Hua. Two of Cheng Dian Hua's other most famous students in the Cheng village were Liu Zi Yang (劉子揚) and his fourth son Cheng You Sheng (程有生).

### **The Cheng Family Village (程家村)**

In April of 1993, Xing Yi and Ba Gua instructor Liang Ke Chuan (梁克權 - see article on page 13) of Beijing took Vince Black, Bill Tucker, and I to visit the Cheng family village in Shen County. After a three-hour train ride from Beijing to Hebei's capital city, Shi Jia Zhuang, we hired a taxi to drive us to the Cheng Village. After

leaving Shi Jia Zhuang, the view out of the car windows for the next two hours was of nothing but farms. In China today the farming is very similar to what I would image it was like several hundred, if not thousand, years ago. Observing the farmers working in their fields as our taxi passed by, we never saw any mechanized farm equipment and we rarely saw farm animals. All of the work in the fields is done purely by manual labor. If you see a man plowing his field, he will not be doing it with a tractor, nor will an animal be pulling his plow. The plow is pulled by 3 to 5 other men straining against the ropes that are attached to the plow.

The last few miles of our journey to the Cheng village were over roadways that had seldom been traversed by a motor vehicle. The wagon ruts in the dirt roads made the going slow. As we were approaching the group of small buildings that was the "village" it was easy to imagine that the scene was probably not much different one hundred years ago when Cheng Ting Hua returned home to teach Ba Gua to the members of this small community. When we arrived Liang Ke Chuan took us directly to the home of Cheng Dian Hua's grandson, Cheng Zeng Yue (程增月). Cheng Zeng Yue's father, Cheng You Sheng, who was also known in the village as Cheng Zhong Fa (程中發), was Cheng Dian Hua's fourth son and one of the most famous Ba Gua fighters from the Cheng village.

By the time we sat down in Cheng's home and the tea was poured, word had spread through the village that foreigners were there. During the interview with Cheng there was a continuous stream of people popping their heads inside the door to get a quick look at us.

The first questions I asked Cheng Zeng Yue were brought to mind during our ride to the village. Because the village was so remote and because the men in the village worked in the fields all day, I first wondered if Cheng Dian Hua had taught anyone outside of the village and secondly I wondered how the villagers found time to practice. Cheng Zeng Yue said that his grandfather taught Ba Gua to many people who lived within a 100 mile radius of the village. People who did not live in the village would come to the village to study when the work load in their own village would lighten up during certain times of the year. They would travel to the village and practice for a week or two and then return to their home village to practice what they were taught until the next time they had the opportunity to travel to visit their teacher. Cheng Dian Hua would also periodically travel to other nearby villages and teach. On the fifth day of the new year it was the tradition for all of the students to come and visit their teacher. On that day there would be many students in the village from all over the surrounding area.



**Cheng style Ba Gua Zhang instructor Liang Ke Quan (second from left) stands with Cheng Dian Hua's grandson, Cheng Zeng Yue (third from left), and two of Cheng's Ba Gua students in the Cheng family village, April 1993. Cheng Zeng Yue's father, Cheng You Sheng, was one of the most famous Ba Gua practitioners from the Cheng Village.**



### **Cheng style Ba Gua Zhang instructor Sun Zhi Jun grew up in the Cheng Family Village**

Cheng Zeng You said that the majority of the Ba Gua training in the village occurred in the evenings after everyone had finished their daily work in the fields. He said that there was no one in the village who "specialized" in martial arts, everyone worked in the fields or had some other job in the village. There was no one who practiced Ba Gua full time. Even those that lived in the village did not always have time to practice Ba Gua everyday. It always depended on the work load. Those whom did practice Ba Gua in the evenings did not pay any tuition, the instruction was always free. However, the students would help take care of any injustices which may have occurred in or around the village. Because the village was far outside of the range of the police, the Ba Gua instructor and his students filled the role of sheriff and his deputies.

Before we had traveled to the Cheng Village, Cheng style practitioners in Beijing, Wang Rong Tang (王榮堂) and Liang Ke Quan, had told me of a large plaque that the Emperor had given to Cheng Ting Hua when he had asked Cheng to be one of his bodyguards. Cheng had not accepted the job but he took the plaque to his home and gave it to his mother. Wang and Liang told me that this plaque was still in the Cheng Village in the home of Cheng Zeng Yue. After Cheng Zeng Yue had answered some of my questions about Ba Gua in the village and told some stories about Cheng Ting Hua and Cheng Dian Hua, I mentioned the plaque and

asked him if I could see the it. Wang and Liang had built the plaque up to be a very special thing and told me that I would be lucky if the Cheng's let me get a look at it. Cheng Zeng Yue told me that the plaque was in another room and promised to show it to me a little later.

After we went outside and demonstrated Ba Gua forms for each other, I again asked about the plaque. The way this thing had been built up I had imagined that it was very elaborate and had its own special room. Finally Cheng Zeng Yue agreed to show us the plaque. We walked into a bedroom in the back of Cheng's home. I looked around the room but saw no shinning plaque anywhere. Cheng's two students walked over to a bed which was simply a mattress laying on a large board which lay across two stacks of bricks. They lifted the board and revealed the plaque. The plaque was not under the bed, it was the bed! This was rural China, everything put to good use.

### **Martial Arts in Rural China**

I have had the opportunity to visit remote villages which are famous for martial arts on two occasions. The first was the Chen family village in Henan Province which is famous for Chen style Tai Ji (陳式太極拳), and the second was the Cheng family village in Shen County, Hebei Province, which is famous for Ba Gua. Although the Chen family village is a bit more commercial now because the government build a training hall there, it is still predominantly a farming village. Visiting these remote farming areas in China gives one a unique perspective concerning the individuals who studied martial arts in rural China.

When observing the workers in the fields and around the villages in rural China, the first thing that one observes is that these people are very strong. Obviously, performing hard physical labor all day will make a body strong. The fact that the individuals who were from these villages developed physical strength, as a result of manual labor, prior to or during study of the martial arts can tell us something about our modern-day study of these arts.

Looking back in history, it can be seen that the large majority of famous masters of Ba Gua Zhang and Xing Yi Quan come from very similar backgrounds. The typical pattern was for individuals to be from a rural farming community, start martial arts training when they were very young with one or another of the Shaolin based systems, and then later learn Ba Gua, Xing Yi or both. The process appears to be one of developing physical strength through manual labor and/or Shaolin based fundamental training, learning basic martial arts skills in the study of a Shaolin based art, and then refining that strength and skill in the practice of internal arts such as Ba Gua or Xing Yi. Typically practitioners in the United States today grow up in the cities where they have relatively little physical activity, get a job where they sit at a desk all day, practice a Ba Gua form routine three nights a week at a

local school, and then wonder why they have a difficult time developing "internal power" or fighting skill.

Many times in China I have heard teachers say that the "internal power" comes from a refinement of trained strength, or gong li (功力). One of the main problems today in the United States is that practitioners are trying to jump straight into the performance of forms which are specifically designed to refine martial arts skills and polish "trained strength" without having any strength or skill to begin with. They are trying to build a house on a shaky foundation. Does this mean that in order to develop skill we all need to work on a farm and study Shaolin? No it doesn't, however, we can gain some insights from the pattern of study exhibited by our predecessors in China. That pattern calls for obtaining basic strengths and skills in the performance of exercises which are designed specifically for development of gong li and gong fu as a foundation for the study of forms and exercises which work to refine those basic skills.

Another interesting aspect of martial arts training in rural China is that many students did not live in the same village as their teacher. It was typical for a student to travel to his teacher's home village and stay there for several weeks to learn new material and then go back home for several months to practice that material before returning to the teacher to learn more. Training in this manner the student was forced to practice one thing for months at a time. This style of training allowed for the student to practice each new aspect of training with sufficient repetition. Today we find students coming to class three nights a week and wanting to learn something new each time they come to class. This style of training does not give the student sufficient time with any one aspect of the art to develop real skill.

Traveling to the Cheng family village, watching the people work hard in the fields and realizing that only after a full day of work in the fields did they have time to practice their Ba Gua, gives one a new perspective on the physical conditioning and toughness of the rural Chinese martial artists. While it is easy to imagine China's great martial artists such as Sun Lu Tang (孫祿堂), Li Cun Yi (李存義), Zhang Zhao Dong (張兆東), and Cheng Ting Hua growing up under such conditions, the fact is that some of today's best Ba Gua and Xing Yi men in China were raised in the exact same conditions.

### **Sun Zhi Jun (孫志君)**

Today one of the most well known products of the Cheng family village who is still actively teaching is Sun Zhi Jun of Beijing. Sun, who was born and raised in the Cheng family village, began studying Ba Gua Zhang in 1945 at the age of 14. When he was very young Sun watched others in the village practicing Ba Gua and tried to imitate what he saw. Sun's parents were poor and were worried that his fondness for martial arts would take him away from an interest in

learning a trade. They discouraged him from practicing martial arts. When Sun found his first teacher, he studied secretly so that his parents would not find out. His first Ba Gua teacher was a villager named Qi Meng (啓蒙), however he only studied with Qi for a short period of time. After gaining a Ba Gua foundation from Qi, Sun began studying with one of the village's most prominent Ba Gua instructors, Liu Zi Yang. Liu had studied Ba Gua with both Cheng Ting Hua and Cheng Dian Hua in the Cheng family village. Sun said that when he was very young Cheng Dian Hua was still alive, however, by the time he started studying Ba Gua, Cheng Dian Hua had passed away (Cheng Dian Hua died around 1935).

When Sun was young he would go to school during the day and practice Ba Gua every evening with his teacher. Walking the circle while holding the "eight mother palms" (八大母掌 - ba da mu zhang) was the emphasis of his practice for the first three years. Other developmental exercises were also practiced during these early years of training in order to help build strength. These exercises included tossing a padlock-shaped stone dumbbell to strengthen the arms, throwing and catching a sandbag to help strengthen the grip, kicking large stones to help harden the feet, and slapping trees to develop strong palms. They would also hit hanging sandbags of different shapes and sizes with all parts of the body. The instructor would swing a bag and the student would try to hit it with the shoulder, back, palms, elbows, or hips, whichever was most appropriate. Once they struck the first bag, the instructor would swing another bag and they would have to move in quickly and hit that bag,



**Sun Zhi Jun at home in Beijing, September 1993**

then they would move on to another bag, etc. There would be many bags of different sizes hanging at various heights. The students would dodge in and out of the swinging bags hitting them with different parts of the body to learn how to hit with power while remaining in constant motion.

Sun said that Liu Zi Yang was a very strict teacher. Sometimes Liu would make him practice walking the circle so long that when he finished, his legs and feet were swollen. He says that there were many people practicing Ba Gua in the village at that time. He enjoyed practicing with the others, but he also liked to go off on his own to concentrate and practice on his own.

One night when the moon was full, Sun Zhi Jun was practicing Ba Gua by himself in a grove of trees near the village. He ran through some of his old practice sets and then began to work on the new material he had learned from his teacher during the day. As he practiced, he darted in between trees and executed strikes on the trees as if he were fighting multiple opponents. During one sequence he moved in on a pine tree and executed "splitting palm" directly into the one foot diameter tree, shaking the entire tree from root to tip. Just after Sun struck the tree he heard someone shout, "Well done!" He turned and saw a large man standing next to a tree several meters away. Sun recognized the man as Cheng You Sheng, Cheng

Dian Hua's fourth son. Cheng You Sheng was famous for his Ba Gua in the Cheng Village, however, since he was in the furniture trade, he had moved to Beijing and did not spend much time in the village. Cheng You Sheng was skilled himself, however, he was very conservative and reluctant to teach his skill to others.

On the night Cheng You Sheng had spotted Sun Zhi Jun practicing Ba Gua, he had been out practicing himself. He heard Sun's splitting palms hitting the trees and went to have a look. He saw that Sun practiced very hard, his palm strikes were powerful and his footwork was swift. Cheng was impressed that such a young man had these skills and he asked Sun to become his student. Sun was pleasantly surprised and kowtowed to thank Cheng.

In 1953, at the age of 20, Sun Zhi Jun moved to Beijing to study Ba Gua with Cheng You Sheng. Sun and Cheng practiced together every evening for six years. From Cheng, Sun learned the skills of leaping, dodging, rolling, and changing. Through hard practice he began to understand the strength, accuracy, quickness and grace of Ba Gua movement and achieved mastery through combining the physical movements with qi gong (氣功). After Cheng You Sheng died in 1959, Sun Zhi Jun began studying with Cheng Ting Hua's son, Cheng You Xin.

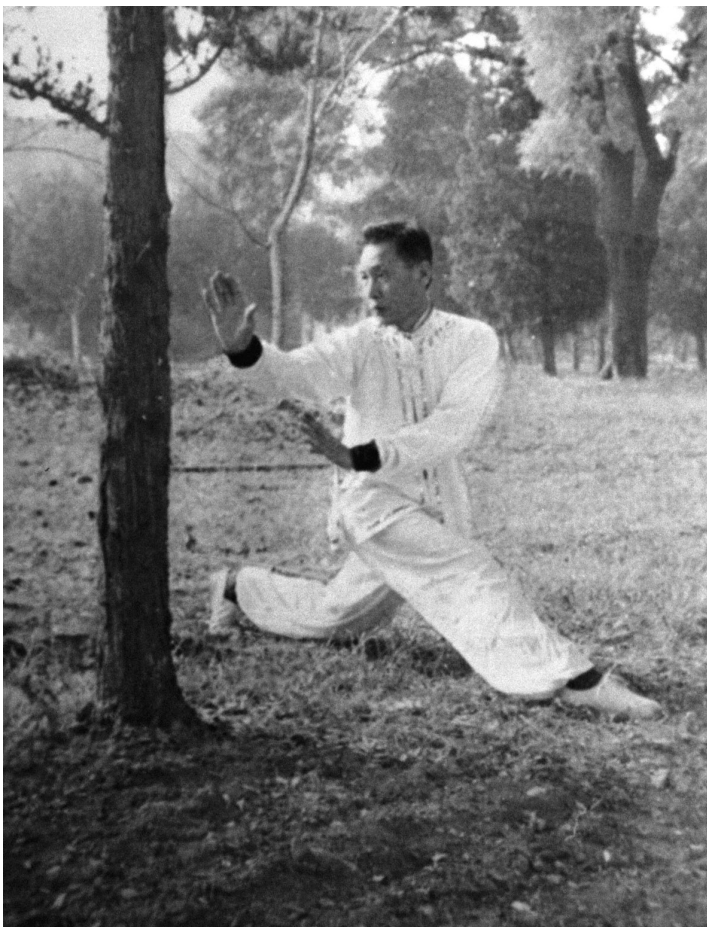
### Studying with Cheng You Xin

Cheng Ting Hua had two sons, Cheng You Long (程有龍), also known as Cheng Hai Ting (程海亭), and Cheng You Xin. When Cheng Ting Hua died in 1900, Cheng You Long was in his twenties and Cheng You Xin was a young teenager. Since both of his sons were relatively young when he died, Cheng's students looked after them. Cheng You Xin was taken back to the Cheng family village by Cheng Dian Hua. Before he left Beijing, Cheng Dian Hua asked Yang Ming Shan (楊明山) to look after Cheng You Long. Yang, who was Cheng Ting Hua's student and nephew, took Cheng You Long to live in Xing Zhuang which was located in the eastern district of Beijing.

While living in the Cheng family village Cheng You Xin completed his Ba Gua training with his uncle, Cheng Dian Hua. He stayed in the village for 7 or 8 years and then began to travel around Beijing and Tianjin teaching Ba Gua and working as a bodyguard. He also spent 5 or 6 years studying Xing Yi Quan with Li Cun Yi.

Around 1935 Cheng You Xin obtained a job as a bodyguard for an official in Zhuo Zhou, a city about 40 miles south of Beijing, and served in that position for three years during the Japanese occupation. When the official lost his position and left Zhuo Zhou, Cheng You Xin was out of a job and fell on hard times. A local martial artist named Liang Ke Quan found Cheng and, since his family was wealthy, Liang offered to take care of Cheng and help him financially. Cheng stayed in Zhuo Zhou for three years teaching Liang and a small group of students.

In 1942, the well known Xing Yi and Ba Gua practitioner Lo Xing Wu (駱興武) came to Zhuo Zhou



**Sun Zhi Jun walking the circle. Notice the very low and extended steps.**



and offered Cheng a teaching job in Beijing and so Cheng went to Beijing to teach. Lo Xing Wu had been a Ba Gua student of one of Cheng Ting Hua's top disciples, Li Wen Biao (李文彪). He had also studied Xing Yi from Li Cun Yi's student, Hao En Guang (郝恩光). Cheng You Xin was still teaching in Beijing in 1959 when Sun Zhi Jun began studying with him. Sun studied both Ba Gua and Xing Yi from Cheng You Xin.

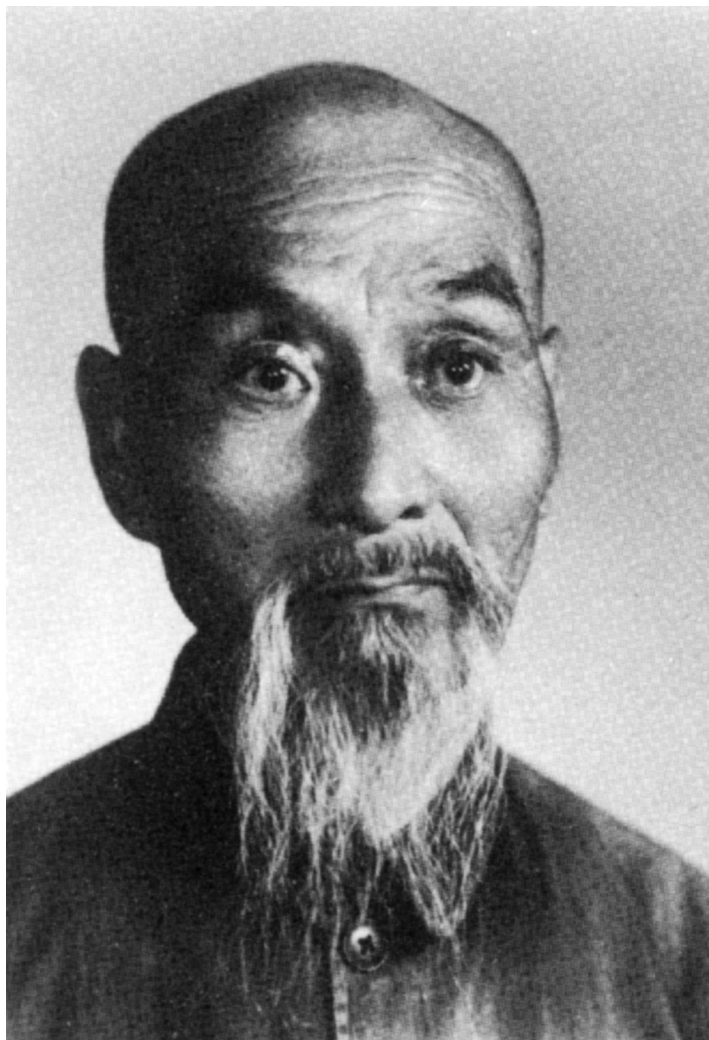
Sun Zhi Jun refined his skills with Cheng, receiving advanced training sets which he had not been shown by his other two teachers. Just before Cheng You Xin died in 1967 he appointed Sun Zhi Jun as the successor to his family's system of Ba Gua Zhang. Sun, a retired natural gas and coal engineer, still lives and teaches in Beijing. He teaches a handful of "inner door" students in Beijing and has also traveled to Japan and Singapore to teach. For a number of years Sun also served as a wushu Ba Gua coach in Beijing.

#### Sun Comments on Contemporary Wushu Ba Gua

In 1982, Sun Zhi Jun was appointed as a coach at the East District Wu Shu Sports School in Beijing and was also appointed the international Ba Gua Zhang wushu coach. Although he has trained many of the country's top contemporary wushu Ba Gua Zhang performers, Sun says that the contemporary wushu Ba Gua and the traditional Ba Gua are two entirely different things. Although the wushu performers like to call their Ba Gua a "traditional style," their practice and execution of the art is far cry from real traditional Ba Gua. Sun says that in the interest of "looking good" the contemporary wushu schools have created something that is totally separate from traditional martial arts. He said that they do not study within the traditional framework and thus they have lost the traditional skills. His bottom line comment was, "By traditional standards, the contemporary wushu performers are not very good at Ba Gua. They cannot compete with those who really study traditional Ba Gua."

Sun Zhi Jun said that he has tried to teach the wushu competitors how to practice traditional Ba Gua, but he always becomes frustrated because "looking good" is the most important thing on their minds. He says that if something does not look fancy, they do not study it very hard. Since the government promotes this thinking, he is fighting an uphill battle in trying to teach his traditional Ba Gua to the wushu performers. To earn his paycheck as a wushu coach, Sun watered down the training and teaches the wushu performers what they want to know, however, he also teaches a small group of non-wushu performers in the traditional way so that his art will not be lost.

I have had the opportunity to see a few of Sun's traditional Ba Gua students train and I have seen some of the wushu performers demonstrate his forms. The difference in quality of execution is obvious. Sun believes that if the student does not practice usage, they will not understand the art and will not execute



#### **Ba Gua and Xing Yi man Lo Xing Wu sponsored Cheng You Xin to teach in Beijing**

the movements correctly. Since the wushu performers concentrate on looking good above all else, he says that they will never get it.

#### **Basic Ba Gua Training**

In practicing Ba Gua, Sun believes that there are three important steps in training. The first step involves developing good gong fu, in other words, a solid foundation. This means that the body is trained to be strong, fast, flexible, coordinated, and fluid in movement. After this training is accomplished, he feels that the student should extensively study how to use the art in fighting. Lastly, the practitioner must study how to vary the art in order to respond to different situations.

Sun says that the basic gong fu of Ba Gua is in the walking. When his students train they learn to walk with a very low, extended step. Sun's walking posture is so long that he almost executes the splits with each step. He explained that this walking step is good for training the legs, but is not the step that it used in fighting. Sun says that while his students start out by practicing the tang ni bu (趟泥步), or "mud walking" step in order to develop the legs, they will later be taught a variety of stepping techniques which are



**Sun Zhi Jun demonstrates his Ba Gua, October 1991. The famous wushu Ba Gua performer Ge Chun Yan, who was one of Sun's students, is in the background.**

more applicable to fighting. Beginning students start walking with the upper basin posture, however, Sun encourages them to build their leg strength so that they can eventually walk in the lower basin posture.

When learning the basic circle walk, Sun's students will first practice walking while executing the eight mother palms (八母掌 - ba mu zhang). These eight postures, the last of which is the classical Ba Gua guard stance, are designed to develop basic energetic and structural strengths in the body in conjunction with the circle walking. The first of the eight mother palms is designed to help bring qi (氣) to the dan tian (丹田) when walking. In this posture the hands are held down in front of the body at hip level with the palms facing downward and the fingertips of each hand pointing in towards each other. The student will hold this posture while walking until the walking becomes smooth and comfortable, the body is balanced and centered, and the qi sinks to the dan tian. Once these criteria are met, the student can move to the second posture.

The second walking posture, is executed with the arms spread out to the sides and the palms facing

upward. Sun states that after the qi is collected in the dan tian, the steps become smooth and fluid, and the student develops moving root during execution of the first posture, the second posture helps the qi fill the chest up to the top of the head and strengthens the shoulders and arms out to the tips of the fingers. With the first and second postures providing a strong whole body structural and energetic base, the practitioner can then execute the remaining six postures to develop strengths, alignments, and connections in a variety of ways.

Once the student has had sufficient development and experience with the eight mother palms, Sun will teach them the first of several circle walking forms, called the "old eight palms" (老八掌 - lao ba zhang), which is designed to develop strength, flexibility, and coordination. After the student becomes proficient at the "old eight palms," he or she will then be taught the "linking palms" (八卦連環掌 - ba gua lian huan zhang) form. At this level the student is still working to build basic gong fu skills. In addition to these forms, Sun also teaches his students specific arm and leg training drills to develop power and speed.

### **Learning to Fight with Ba Gua Zhang**

One of the toughest, no-nonsense, "tell it like it is" martial artist that I have met in mainland China is Liang Ke Quan (see article on page 13). Because I knew Liang to be mainly interested in the combat aspects of martial arts and because he has traveled widely in Northern China meeting other martial artists, I asked him who were the absolute best Ba Gua and Xing Yi practitioners he had ever seen. For Xing Yi he said that it was Hu Yao Zhen (胡耀貞), a Xing Yi man from Shanxi who had died during the Cultural Revolution, for Ba Gua he said that the best was Sun Zhi Jun. I said, "Sun Zhi Jun is the best fighter?" He immediately replied, "Yes."

I was surprised at Liang's answer because I had expected the best Ba Gua man to be an older generation practitioner who had long been dead. Yet, he was telling me that the best Ba Gua practitioner he had seen was a man more than 10 years his junior. Also, I had met Sun a year before and seen him perform his Ba Gua. While I was very impressed with Sun's strength and flexibility, I had trouble seeing the combat practicality of the extremely difficult body articulations in Sun's forms.

The next time I saw Sun Zhi Jun I asked him about the use of his forms in fighting and he explained that the "eight mother palms," "the old eight palms," and the "linking palms" forms are not fighting forms but are primarily used to develop basic gong fu skills such as strength, flexibility, balance, and fluidity in motion. He said that many of the movements in these forms are not very practical fighting movements because they were not designed to be used in fighting training - these forms are developmental. He said that Ba Gua fighting training and Ba Gua fighting forms are different from the developmental forms such as the "eight

mother palms," "the old eight palms," and the "linking palms," however, these forms provide an important foundation for the fighting training.

Sun explained further by saying that although the developmental forms are primarily used to give the student a foundation in terms of coordination, balance and flexibility, he does not allow the students to overlook the practical aspects of the movements in these forms and thus their martial training starts from day one. While there are moves in these forms that are only there to help open up the students joints, stretch the muscles, and challenge the student's balance and coordination, many of the moves are also very practical and he makes sure that the students have a knowledge of their usage when they are learning the movements.

After the students have developed basic gong fu skills by practicing the above mentioned forms, Sun will then teach them two-person drills and other fighting forms and exercises which are designed specifically for combat training. Sun said that the movements of these forms are all very practical and are performed much shorter and faster than the movements of the developmental forms.

In training students how to fight with Ba Gua, Sun said that it is important for them to not only understand the usage of various movements and how the power is applied, but they also need to understand how to create opportunities and adapt to changing situations. Every attack or defense has a beginning, middle, and end. The beginning involves gaining a reaction from the opponent to see how he moves and where he is open, the middle involves opening up the opponent's defense or bridging the gap, the end is the finishing strike, lock, or throw. Sun explained that in all applications the amount of power, direction of power, and timing has to be perfect. Additionally, the practitioner must be ready to change at any instant in accordance with the opponent's reactions. He said this kind of thing cannot be learned by performing form routines, it has to be developed during two-person drills and free sparring.

Several years ago the Peking University produced a video tape of Sun Zhi Jun's Ba Gua and Sun has recently had a book published in Singapore. We are currently making arrangements to sell Sun's book and tape in the United States and we will be bringing Pa Kua Chang Journal readers more technical information about Sun's Ba Gua in future issues.

### **Cheng Family Ba Gua Zhang**

After Cheng Ting Hua died, his top students went on to develop their own branches of Cheng's style of Ba Gua Zhang. Although most of Cheng's students retained the general characteristics and flavor of the Cheng style and most practiced some recognizable variation of the eight mother palms, the old eight



**Beijing Ba Gua Zhang instructor Wang Rong Tang was a student of Cheng Ting Hua's nephew Yang Ming Shan**

palms, and the linking palms, many of his students also added their own flavor to Cheng's Ba Gua. Below I will discuss several of the main branches of the Cheng style.

The first branch, from which comes the majority of the Ba Gua taught in the United States today, I will call the "Xing Yi" branch. As we discussed in the last issue of the journal, Cheng Ting Hua taught Ba Gua Zhang to many of his contemporaries who were already very skilled Xing Yi practitioners. Additionally, the majority of these practitioners had a strong background in one or more Shaolin-based arts before they started Xing Yi. Therefore, when these practitioners came to Cheng to learn Ba Gua, they were already extremely good martial artists and had developed their own fighting characteristics. These characteristics naturally carried over into their Ba Gua and thus each taught a different version of Cheng style Ba Gua Zhang. We could probably consider each of these practitioners as having their own sub-branch of the "Xing Yi" branch. These practitioners would be individuals such as Li Cun Yi, Zhang Zhao Dong, Geng Ji Shan (耿繼善), Sun Lu Tang, and Liu De Kuan (劉德寬). Others whose training in Shaolin and Xing Yi possibly influenced their style of Cheng's Ba Gua were Li Wen Biao (李文彪), Zhou Yu Xiang (周玉祥), and Gao Yi Sheng (高義盛).

The next branch of Cheng's Ba Gua, which is still taught today in Beijing, and has begun to spread to the United States, is the style taught by Cheng's students Liu Bin (劉斌), Ji Feng Xiang (姬鳳祥), Wang Dan Lin (王丹林), Guo Feng De (郭鳳德), Li Hao Ting (李豪庭), and Liu Zhen Zong (劉振宗). This system, which I will refer to as "Nine Palace Ba Gua" because this is the name of their core form, is carried on today in Beijing by Liu Xing Han (劉興漢 - see Pa Kua Chang Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1 and Pa Kua Chang Journal,

Vol. 3, No. 2). Ji Feng Xiang was primarily responsible for this style's diversion from the other branches of Cheng's Ba Gua. Ji was an astrologer and Yi Jing (易經) scholar. He used his knowledge of astrology and the Yi Jing in his formation of this branch of Cheng's Ba Gua. In this system all of their forms have very specific relationships to the eight trigrams and the eight directions.

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***During practice, if no one is in front of you, you imagine you are fighting someone. In the actual fight, when there is an enemy in front of you, you act as if no one is there.***

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Another branch of Cheng style Ba Gua descends from Cheng Ting Hua's nephew Yang Ming Shan. This branch would also include the Ba Gua which was taught by Cheng Ting Hua's son, Cheng You Long. After Cheng Ting Hua died, Yang Ming Shan and Cheng You Long moved to the same village in Beijing's eastern district. Cheng continued to practice and study Ba Gua with Yang Ming Shan and thus their styles are similar.

Yang Ming Shan did not like to teach and did not have many students. Two of his most well known

students were Ma De Shan (馬德山) and Wang Rong Tang. Yang Ming Shan died around 1941. Ma De Shan, who studied with both Cheng You Long and Yang Ming Shan, died around 1960 at the age of 70. Wang Rong Tang is still alive at 83 years of age and living in Beijing.

Yang Ming Shan and all of his descendants are known to be great fighters. In an interview in Beijing conducted in April 1993, Wang Rong Tang said that his teacher strongly emphasized the single palm change. He said that "if the student does not fully understand the single palm change, he will not make much progress. If the student does develop skill in the single palm change, then he can beat almost anyone using that one palm."

Wang also emphasized the six harmonies, the use of the mind in practice, and the use and positioning of the palms and elbows in fighting. He said that during practice, if no one is in front of you, you imagine you are fighting someone. In the actual fight, when there is an enemy in front of you, you act as if no one is there.

The last major branch of Cheng style Ba Gua is that which was taught in the Cheng village. This branch would include the Ba Gua taught by Cheng Dian Hua, Cheng You Xin, Cheng You Sheng, Cheng You Gong, Liu Zi Yang or any of the others who taught or learned Ba Gua in the village. Because the village is very isolated it is probably safe to say that the Ba Gua that came from the village is the closest to what Cheng Ting Hua actually taught.



**A Group of Cheng Style Ba Gua Zhang practitioners from the "Nine Palace" branch pose for a group photo on Sept. 2nd, 1942. Liu Xing Han is in the second row, third from the right. His father, Liu Xin Zong, is seated, third from the right.**

# Beijing's Indestructible Ba Gua and Xing Yi Instructor Liang Ke Quan

The information in this article was obtained during interviews with Liang Ke Quan in October 1992, April 1993, and September 1993. Special thanks to my translators Tim Cartmell, Bill Tucker, and Xu Yu Hong. The information about Liu Feng Chun was from an article in *Martial Spirit* magazine translated by Bill Tucker.

"Go ahead, you can hit me anywhere. Hit me here as hard as you can, right in the throat. You can try and strangle me if you'd like. Do you have a rope? I'll hang by my neck for you. I've had special training, you can't choke me. Go ahead and try," Liang Ke Quan (梁克權) said during our first meeting in a voice as rough as snow tires on a gravel road. After watching him bang his body into a 3 foot diameter, 40 foot tall tree a dozen times and seeing the leaves rattle with every thud of his shoulder, I didn't doubt that he could actually do what he was saying. But what the heck, I wanted to see it done, so we gave it a try. However, try as we might; punching, poking, and strangling did not phase the man. But I suppose that after living a life as a dedicated Ba Gua and Xing Yi practitioner, fighting the Japanese during World War II, fighting against the Communist as a Guo Min Dang (國民黨 - Kuo Min Tang) Army officer and then subsequently spending fifteen years in a Communist prison, it would take more than a punch in the throat to hurt this man.

Liang Ke Chuan, a native of Zhuo Zhou City in Hebei Province, started his martial arts training in the 1920's when he was only six years old. His first Xing Yi Quan and Ba Gua Zhang teacher was Zhou Lu Quan (周魯泉). Zhou studied Ba Gua Zhang and Xing Yi Quan with Liu Feng Chun (劉鳳春).

## Liu Feng Chun (劉鳳春)

Liu Feng Chun was born in Zhuo County, Hebei Province in 1855 and died in Beijing in 1922. As a child his family was poor and Liu was sent to apprentice in a factory in Beijing that manufactured "auspicious jade flowers." Being a quick learner and hard worker Liu soon had a high level of skill in the art of jade flower making.

Just beside the factory where Liu worked was an eyeglass shop run by Cheng Ting Hua (程庭華). Cheng, a student of Ba Gua's originator Dong Hai Chuan (董海川), was known throughout the capital for his expertise in martial arts. Early one morning Liu happened to see Cheng practicing Ba Gua. Fascinated by what he saw, Liu became interested in learning martial arts. Liu repeatedly asked Cheng Ting Hua to teach him, but seeing Liu's thin, reedy body Cheng



**Liang Ke Quan performs his Cheng style Ba Gua Zhang in a park near his home in Beijing, April 1993**

assumed that Liu could not take the hardship of training and so was not willing to teach him. Later Cheng noticed Liu practicing on his own and came to know Liu's honest, straight forward, hard working nature and agreed to teach him.

From the very first day of practice with Cheng Ting Hua, Liu Feng Chun was unstinting in his dedication, and his hard work brought him great progress within one year. Cheng was happy to see Liu's fast progress and thought, "Although Liu is young, he has a lot of talent and practices hard. In the future he will go far



**Liang Ke Quan (right) with fellow Cheng style Ba Gua practitioner Wang Rong Tang in Beijing.**

with this art. I should introduce him to Master Dong to receive further instruction." Dong Hai Chuan was advanced in years by this time and was not accepting many new students, however, after Cheng told him about the young Liu Feng Chun, Dong considered accepting Liu as a disciple. After Cheng's repeated requests, Dong agreed to meet Liu. The next day at dusk Cheng Ting Hua took Liu to visit Dong Hai Chuan and Dong ordered Liu to demonstrate what he had learned in one year with Cheng. When Liu finished his demonstration, everyone watching praised him and Dong nodded his head and smiled. Dong stood up, walked over to Liu and in a serious manner said, "There is a lot of hardship in practicing martial arts!" Liu answered, "I am not afraid of hardship." Dong happily patted Liu on the shoulder and said, "Right, right." Then he turned around and said to Cheng Ting Hua, "Fine jade can become a good vessel. Choose a day for him to pay his respects. I will take him as a disciple."

Soon after Dong met Liu he held a disciple admittance ceremony at the Auspicious Temple in Beijing at which Liu bowed to Dong and became a student. His name is the 46th of 68 students listed on Dong Hai Chuan's original tombstone. After the disciple ceremony Liu practiced with even greater determination and after two years was becoming strong of build and full of energy. Dong Hai Chuan took a special interest in Liu's progress and taught Liu the best of his Ba Gua knowledge acquired over a lifetime. In order to do justice to the generous teaching he was fortunate enough to have, he practiced "diligently and unceasingly without regard for rain, snow, frost, or wind."

When Dong Hai Chuan died in 1882 Liu had not yet begun teaching, but continued to practice with his first teacher Cheng Ting Hua. Later Liu studied Xing Yi with the famous Xing Yi teacher Liu Qi Lan (劉奇蘭). It is said that through hard work with the Xing Yi he "got a deep understanding of the secrets of Xing Yi." By his middle age, Liu Feng Chun was known throughout the capital as a martial artist of the first order. His movements were quick like that of a cat and he earned

the nickname Liu Feng Chun "the Racing Cat."

Liu Feng Chun's *gong fu* (功夫) was of a very high level, but he was not arrogant. He took martial arts ethics seriously and did not speak badly of people. In a lifetime of comparing skills with others he seldom lost and he never seriously injured any of his opponents. Once a Hebei boxer named Ma Mou (馬某) paid a visit to Liu and asked to compare skills. Ma was very skillful and was especially good with "tiger head" double swords. Liu Feng Chun used a long staff against Ma, however after two attempts at attack with the staff, Liu was unable to penetrate Ma's defenses. This spurred Liu into action. He put down his staff and attacked Ma empty handed. Stepping forward with his right foot, his right palm shot out toward Ma's face. Ma quickly brought up the hooks to block, but Liu had already stepped to the side and struck Ma in the waist area. Once inside Ma's defenses Liu utilized his agile Ba Gua movements to follow Ma's retreat and continue striking. Ma finally dropped his weapons, held his hands together, bowed and said, "Admirable, admirable."

After friends repeatedly persuaded Liu, he gave up the work at the jade factory and finally began teaching Ba Gua and Xing Yi in Beijing and he was hired as an instructor at the Beijing Martial Arts Academy in the Northwest area of Beijing City. His well known



**Liang performs one of his favorite Xing Yi techniques, "Tiger Embraces its Head"**



**Liang Ke Quan practicing Calligraphy (Sept 92)**

students were Xu Wan Sheng (許萬生), Li Jian Hua (李劍華), Zhang Guang Ju (張廣居) and Zhou Lu Quan (周魯泉).

### **Liang's Ba Gua and Xing Yi Training**

Zhou Lu Quan started teaching Liang Ke Quan Xing Yi first because he felt it was easier to use and learn how to apply. Zhou started Liang's training with Xing Yi's *San Ti* (三體式) standing practice. Liang said that his teacher would make him stand in this posture for hours and would not let him take a break even when his legs would start shaking uncontrollably. Liang studied with Zhou from the time he was six until he was thirteen and learned Xing Yi's five elements, the Tiger and Snake forms of the twelve animals, and Ba Gua Zhang's single and double palm changes. When Liang was thirteen, Zhou died (1934) and Liang's family sent him to Beijing to go to school. While in Beijing, Liang continued to practice on his own. However, he states that his training with his first teacher was not very exact. His teacher would show him something and then go sit and drink tea and let Liang practice on his own without paying much attention to what Liang was doing. Liang said that naturally he made mistakes. He states that when training internal martial arts the four things one must guard against are as follows:

- 1) The breath must not be held or forced.
- 2) The shoulders must not be hunched up or held tightly.
- 3) The stomach should not be sucked in.
- 4) The chest should not be stuck out.

Liang says that because his first teacher did not teach him in great detail, he made some mistakes when practicing on his own and thus he did not make much progress. When Liang finished his school studies in 1939, he returned home to Zhuo Zhou and found his second martial arts teacher.

In 1939, Liang started studying Ba Gua Zhang and Xing Yi Quan from Cheng Ting Hua's youngest son, Cheng You Xin (程有信). Cheng was a bodyguard for an official in Zhuo Zhou for three years during the Japanese occupation. When the official lost his position and left Zhuo Zhou, Cheng You Xin was out of

a job and fell on hard times. Since Liang Ke Chuan's family was wealthy, Liang offered to take care of Cheng and help him financially. Cheng stayed in Zhuo Zhou for three years teaching Liang and a small group of students.

Liang says that Cheng was a very skilled martial artist and his understanding of theory was deep. Much of Liang's extensive knowledge in martial arts theory came from Cheng. Since Liang's foundational training was in Xing Yi, Liang spent most of his time studying Xing Yi from Cheng, however, he also learned much of Cheng's Ba Gua. Liang states that Cheng first cleaned up the Xing Yi forms Liang had learned from his first teacher and then taught him the Xing Yi forms that Liang did not know. Cheng then taught him Ba Gua's basic eight palms and sixty-four changes. Cheng You Xin had studied Xing Yi from Li Cun Yi (李存義) and most of his Ba Gua from his uncle, Cheng Dian Hua (程殿華). Cheng You Xin was very young when his father died and so he only studied Ba Gua a short time with his father.

In 1942, the well known Xing Yi and Ba Gua practitioner Lo Xin Wu (駱興武) came to Zhuo Zhou and offered Cheng a teaching job in Beijing and so Cheng went to Beijing to teach. Even though Cheng moved to Beijing, Liang continued to study with him until the Japanese surrender in 1946. Liang's hometown, Zhuo Zhou, is only about 40 miles from Beijing City.

After the Japanese surrender, Liang joined the Guo Min Dang (Kuo Min Tang) Army and started studying with his third teacher, Zhang Yin Wu (張蔭梧). Zhang Yin Wu, who was also known as Zhang Tong Xuan (張桐軒), was a General in the Guo Min Dang Army and had been a Xing Yi Quan and Ba Gua Zhang student of Li Cun Yi. Liang was introduced to Zhang by a friend who was Zhang's aide-de-camp. When Liang demonstrated his Xing Yi, Zhang recognized that Liang was already very good and offered to teach him. Liang said that Zhang taught him how to be a good soldier, explained deep principles of martial arts tactics and



**A few of the dozens of handwritten Ba Gua and Xing Yi books Liang has collected**



**Liang Ke Quan discusses Xing Yi fighting theory with Henan style Xing Yi practitioner Li Xing Gong in Beijing, April 93**

strategy, and helped him refine his skills.

In 1952 Liang Ke Quan was arrested by the Communist government for his involvement with the Guo Min Dang during the war and put in jail for fifteen years. While he was in jail he had nothing to do but practice his martial arts. He says that he practiced every day from early morning until noon. Liang says that while many of the prisoners in jail were in very poor health, he remained healthy because of his practice. In 1967 Liang was released from prison, however, because of his background he could not find work. The only job he could find was the same job he performed while in the prison, so he stayed at the prison of another 15 years working there as a laborer and a "free" man. Liang left the prison, which was near Tianjin, and moved to Beijing in 1982.

After refining his Ba Gua and Xing Yi skills on his own for 30 years at the prison, Liang began traveling to areas of Hebei, Shanxi, and Hunan which were known for their boxing. He met with as many of the older generation instructors that he could find and discussed Xing Yi and Ba Gua practice, training, and theory. Liang is a virtual catalog of Xing Yi Quan methods. He can demonstrate nine or ten different ways that each of the five elements are practiced by various Xing Yi branches and styles and tell you why they were practiced that way and what unique aspect each different method trained.

### **Liang Ke Quan's Xing Yi and Ba Gua Book Collection**

Almost every generation of Xing Yi Quan and Ba Gua Zhang practitioners has left behind written material which recorded their experiences for future generations. The majority of this material was never published publicly and was only shown to the most

dedicated students. These students were allowed to hand copy the material to use for their own reference and to hand down to their descendants. Liang Ke Quan, who is an incredibly skilled calligrapher, has spent his whole life hand copying such manuals, recording the instruction he received from his teachers, and recording his own experiences. The amount of material he has recorded is astounding. His library includes hand copied manuscripts by such notables as Liu Qi Lan and Han Mu Xia (韓慕俠) and an original version of Sun Lu Tang's (孫祿堂) Xing Yi book, which was published in 1915. He collected and copied anything he could get his hands on.

### **Liang Ke Quan's Teaching Methods**

When teaching students, Liang emphasizes the basics. He starts most of his students practicing Xing Yi first and his Xing Yi students practice nothing but *San Ti Shi* (Trinity standing posture) and *pi quan* (splitting fist) for the first six to eight months of practice. Liang has a rule which states that when practicing his students have to sweat three times. He says, "They have to practice *San Ti Shi* until they sweat, then they practice *pi quan* (劈拳 - splitting fist) until they sweat again, and then they practice two-person sets until they sweat again."

Although Liang knows various styles of Xing Yi Quan, he says that all styles of Xing Yi adhere to certain basic principles. When teaching his students the san ti standing posture he emphasizes the following points:

- 1) The length of the stance is such that if the practitioner were to assume the standing posture and then kneel down on the back leg keeping the toes of back foot in place, the knee of the back leg would touch just behind the heel of the front leg. In other words, the stance length is approximately the length of ones shin from knee to ankle.
- 2) The hands press forward and the elbows seek the centerline.
- 3) The body has five bows: the two arms are bows, the two legs are bows and the spine is a bow.
- 4) *Han Xiong Ba Bei* (含胸拔背) or "hold the chest and lift the back" and *Chen Jian Zhui Zhou* (沉肩墜肘) or "sink the shoulder and drop the elbows." These two principles are very common to all internal martial arts. Liang says that when one adheres to these principles correctly, it helps to open up the *Ren Meridian* (任脈) in the front of the body.
- 5) The head presses up and the buttocks are relaxed downward. Liang says that this alignment helps to open up the *Du Meridian* (督脈) which runs from the crown of the head to the perineum down the back. He emphasizes that the buttocks do not "tuck under" they simply relaxes downward.
- 6) The back hand is held against the body just under the navel and the front hand is at the height of the shoulders.
- 7) The front hand, front toes, and the nose are along the same line.





**Liang Ke Quan demonstrates his Ba Gua for the students at the school which he founded in his hometown, Zhuo Zhou**

8) The Three Upliftings - the head presses up, the tongue touches the roof of the mouth, and the fingers point upward.

9) The Three Roundings - the arms, legs, and back are rounded. The legs are rounded such that the groin area has a feeling of being round while at the same time the knees have a feeling of closing in.

10) The Three Hollows - the soles of the feet are hollow, the chest is hollow, and the palms are hollow.

11) The Three Quicknesses - the eyes, heart, and hands are always prepared to move quickly.

Liang says that he views Ba Gua's basic standing posture as having similar requirements to the san ti posture in Xing Yi except that the Ba Gua posture has the "three links:" the finger of the bottom hand is just under the elbow of the top hand; the elbow of the bottom hand is next to the ribs; and the eyes are watching the index finger of the upper hand. When Liang teaches Ba Gua, he first teaches his students to walk the circle while holding this basic posture. When walking, Liang says that the body should never waiver and he teaches his students to walk slowly before they learn to walk fast. Liang emphasizes that when practicing Xing Yi or Ba Gua the whole body must be connected so that the *jing* (勁) is fully expressed at the "tips."

After students have familiarity with the basic walking, he has them practice the walking at all three levels or

"basins." After building this solid foundation he then has the students practice the changing postures. The changing postures are practiced at two levels. They are first practiced in a "fixed step" manner whereby the student does not continue walking the circle while executing the change and the movements of the change are executed very distinctly. The next level is called *you shen* (游身) or "swimming body." At this level the student continually walks the circle while executing the changing postures. Liang says that eventually the correct way to practice Ba Gua is to move fast while maintaining balance, coordination and a smooth, continuous flow in the execution of every movement.

### **Liang's Fighting Experience**

When I asked Liang if he had ever used his martial arts skill in a real fight, he quickly replied, "Fight? I love to fight. I'll fight anybody!" and then proceeded to tell me several stories about fights that he has had. He even produced several newspaper and magazine accounts of fights that he had been in. Several accounts are retold below.

When Liang was young his family was wealthy and they owned several homes in Beijing which they rented to others. Unbeknownst to the Liangs, one of the tenants was a spy for the Japanese and had sublet



**Liang Ke Quan practicing his Xing Yi Quan**

his home to a Japanese translator who was living in Beijing. The Japanese man would then rent the house out to others at a very high price. He was making money renting the house, however, he was always late paying rent to the Liang family. One day Liang's mother went to ask the Japanese man for back rent. The man refused to pay and threatened Liang's mother. When his mother returned home she was sad and silent. Liang asked her the reason and she would not answer. He then understood what had happened.

Liang went straight to the residence of the Japanese man to try and get the money, however, the Japanese man became angry and threw a teapot at Liang. Liang dodged the teapot and it broke on the wall. Liang then jumped at the Japanese man and beat him to the ground with Xing Yi's splitting fist. As this event occurred during the "anti-Japanese" war, the Japanese man had Liang arrested. However, Liang's family bargained with the police and he was let free.

Later Liang had some more trouble with the Japanese. On the eve of the Spring Festival in 1940, a celebration was scheduled at an experimental farm training school which was sponsored by the Japanese. On the playground the Japanese gave a judo performance on a large wooden platform. A Chinese student was used for the demonstration and was thrown off of the platform during the execution of one of the techniques. When he landed his head hit the

ground and he was knocked out. The Japanese coach, a short, strong man, proudly stood in the middle of the platform. When Liang saw his countryman thrown off the platform in such a manner he became furious and jumped onto the platform. The Japanese coach immediately sprang forward to attack Liang. Instead of backing up or side stepping the attack, Liang stepped forward and executed a throw from Xing Yi's snake style. The Japanese coach picked himself up and attacked again. Liang again used a technique from the snake style and threw the coach on the ground. When the coach stood up this time he said, "What technique is this?" Liang replied, "This is Xing Yi Quan. A Chinese style!" The Japanese coach let out a laugh to hide his embarrassment, but he did not try to attack Liang again.

Another coach of the Japanese judo team approached Liang and wanted to use the "twisting skill" from judo to hold Liang's neck. The Chinese in attendance were worried that Liang would not be able to escape from this hold, however Liang was calm. Just before the challenger was about to apply the hold, Liang used a technique from Xing Yi's tiger form to escape and then threw the man to the ground. The Chinese spectators burst into applause.

More recently Liang had some problems with a few martial artists in his hometown. Eight years ago Liang Ke Quan started a martial arts school in his hometown, Zhuo Zhou. One of his students had the idea and Liang helped him make the arrangements.



**Liang Ke Quan (far right) with famous Ba Gua instructor Li Zi Ming (seated right) and Xing Yi instructor Li Gui Chang (seated left)**

The school is located on the site of an old truck repair facility. There is a large dirt lot (football field size) surrounded on all sides by long one-story buildings. The buildings are used for dormitories, the school office, guest rooms, kitchen, and classrooms. There are approximately 50 students, ranging in age from 6 to 16, who live at the school and practice full time.

When he started the school, the school gave the district mayor some furniture as a gift in order to insure good relations with the local government. Liang gave his student the job of managing and running the school on a day to day basis. Although Liang lives in Beijing, he serves as the chief advisor to the school and visits frequently. The school is administered by Liang's student, however, all tuition which is paid by the students' parents must first go through the local government. The government keeps a share and then is supposed to give the rest to the school to pay the instructors and feed the students. Evidently the mayor was taking more than his share of the money and Liang found out about it. Liang confronted him and the mayor made it worse by trying to cut a deal. He told Liang that he would split the profits with him and fire the school administrator. Evidently the mayor did not know that the school administrator was Liang's student. Liang became even more upset and told the mayor he was going to do something about this situation.

A few days later, 20 August 1991 to be exact, the mayor sent a famous Shaolin practitioner and two of the Shaolin teacher's students to the school. One of the students was a local thug who frequently did the mayor's dirty work. When the men showed up at the school Liang was practicing calligraphy in his office and heard a commotion outside. When he went out he saw the men beating up the school administrator and two of the school's students. When Liang came out, one of the men asked him what he wanted. Before Liang could confront the man, another grabbed him by the shoulder from behind. Liang spun around quickly and hit the man who had grabbed him in the nose with Xing Yi's drilling fist, followed by a smashing fist to the throat and an elbow to the solar plexus. The man fell to the ground unconscious. The Shaolin instructor then came at Liang. Liang avoided the attack and hit the man in the ear with a chopping palm from Ba Gua and then came back with the same hand and struck his opponent in the jaw. He too was knocked out cold and lay on the ground next to his student. Seeing this, the third man ran away. The first two men were put in the hospital and it took one of them 24 hours to regain consciousness.

A local official who had a higher position than the mayor heard of the incident and told the mayor to make amends with the school. The mayor would not admit to sending the thugs to the school, however, he returned all of the gifts that the school had given him and asked that they call it even.

## Two Americans Admitted as 6th Generation Inheritors of Ba Gua Zhang



**Fourth Generation Ba Gua instructor Liu Xing Han addresses the group at the ceremony. Fellow Cheng style practitioners Wang Rong Tang and Liang Ke Quan co-officiated the ceremony.**

On August 20, 1994, Eric Gulbrandson, 22, and Don Quach, 26, were admitted as 6th generation disciples and "inner door" students of Ba Gua Zhang under John D. Bracy in a special ceremony that took place in Beijing. Bracy's instructor, Liu Xing Han, officiated the ceremony. Liang Ke Quan, Wang Rong Tang and other internal martial arts instructors co-officiated the formal ceremony.

Gulbrandson and Quach have been students of Ba Gua under instructor John Bracy for several years. The "inner door" ceremony marked an end to nearly a month of intense study of special Ba Gua Zhang subjects in Beijing. Their study included long staff, quarter moon knife, and long saber.

John Bracy teaches Xing Yi Quan, Ba Gua Zhang, and Tai Ji Quan in Costa Mesa, California (see *Pa Kua Chang Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 1)



**Three generations of Ba Gua: Jerry Lin, John Bracy, Liu Xing Han, Eric Gulbrandson, and Don Quach at Dong Hai Chuan's tomb**

# Martial Arts Taught in the Old Tradition (Part 1): It Still Exists in Mainland China, But It is Not Easy to Find

Right or wrong, the majority of Ba Gua practitioners I have talked to in the United States today think that the "contemporary wushu" performance style Ba Gua which is coming out of mainland China is a terrible excuse for martial arts. They feel that it lacks any real martial content and is nothing more than an empty, flowery dance routine; a external health exercise at best. Most serious Ba Gua practitioners have absolutely no interest in performance Ba Gua. Furthermore, they feel that contemporary wushu Ba Gua performers give Ba Gua a bad name among serious martial artists from other styles.

In my job as the *Pa Kua Chang Journal* editor I have visited dozens of schools all over the country, attended almost every major tournament held in the last three years, and talked with literally hundreds of martial arts practitioners in person, over the phone, or through written correspondence. Through investigation, I know that while a few practitioners really enjoy the contemporary wu shu style Ba Gua, the fact is that most practitioners don't want anything to do with it. Over 1,000 practitioners subscribe to the *Pa Kua Chang Journal* and about 1,500 additional copies of each issue are sold at bookstores and news stands. I suspect that there are probably twice that many who practice Ba Gua in this country. Yet, attend any tournament in the U.S. and you will only find five or six competitors in the Ba Gua Zhang event. Why? Ba Gua Zhang practitioners in this country simply are not interested in performance Ba Gua. They want more.

Most martial artists interested in the study of Ba Gua Zhang are interested in quality internal martial arts training which extends beyond gymnastic form routines. They are interested in a well rounded program which includes the combat, health, meditation, *qi gong*, qi development and other internal strength development components taught in a complete, systematic manner and thus when they see "performance" Ba Gua the majority instantly know that something is missing. Furthermore, because most of Ba Gua that we have seen coming out of mainland China over the past ten years has been of the contemporary wushu variety, the popular opinion is that the communist government in mainland China has stripped martial arts of all its real value and thus the "dance" Ba Gua is the only Ba Gua mainland China has to offer today. Because of this, many practitioners have no interest in going to mainland China to study.

When I first announced our plans to take a group to mainland China to study Ba Gua in the July/August 1993 issue of the *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, I stated that "this will not be contemporary wushu 'put on the silk pajamas and dance' style Ba Gua Zhang. We guarantee the real thing." Naturally journal readers who study

contemporary wushu were upset with my statement. My reason for using these words when talking about our trip to mainland China was to let people know that there still is something other than the "silk pajama dance routines" left in mainland China and this is what we are going to study.

Many Ba Gua Zhang practitioners feel like going to mainland China to study would be a big waste of time because they are interested in learning more than choreographed form movements. Our group is going there to study with individuals who do not teach form routines which are designed to win tournament events. I wanted the readers to know this. I felt I needed to make that distinction so that people would know what to expect if they go on this trip. Perhaps my words were too strong, and I am sorry if people were offended. For people who want to learn that type of "Ba Gua," I think that it is great if that is what they are looking for in Ba Gua. Good luck at the tournament, I hope you bring home a nice trophy. My announcement in the journal was addressed to those who are looking to learn more than the flashy form, someone going to China on a Chinese government-sponsored wushu training trip would get.

Fortunately for those of us who are interested in trying to preserve the martial arts as they were practiced and taught in the days when these arts were trained for use in combat, there are a number of individuals still around in China who are willing to teach combat oriented Ba Gua. However, if one was to travel to mainland China today in search of such individuals, chances are they will not be found. They do exist, however, they are somewhat "underground." They do not associate with the government "wushu" people and they are not happy about what the mainland government has done to the Chinese martial arts in their "contemporary wushu" programs.

## Contemporary Wushu

When I was in China in the fall of 1991 I attended a "contemporary wushu" event and I also visited a couple of "contemporary wushu" schools. The event was held in a very large coliseum with many government officials in attendance. The news media covered the event and it was evident that the Chinese government had spent a lot of money putting together this event. It was very much a carnival atmosphere. There was a parade before the event began and Chinese acrobats provided pre-tournament entertainment. While all of the performers in this event were very skilled at what they did and had obviously worked very hard to perfect their skills, in my opinion, none of the performer's routines had any real martial content. They were just dancers. I had seen many of these disappointing performances in the U.S., but this was China! I had hoped for better.

While watching these performers it was obvious to me that they could not take their routines and defend themselves with the art they were mimicking if their lives depended on it. When the "full contact" event occurred, this became blatantly obvious. Without exception, all of the contestants in the full contact event used western kickboxing techniques. Not only that, but their level of skill was so bad that any decent western kickboxer or good western boxer could have cleaned house easily. What happened to all of the great techniques that they performed in their solo routines? Those techniques that they worked so hard to perfect and made look so beautiful in their brightly colored silk outfits were thrown out the window because they were not properly trained in how to use them.

At the government sponsored wushu schools in China the students train very hard, however, they do not train how to fight, they train how to perform. They don't train in one style, they train in many styles. They learn dozens of compulsory forms from various martial arts styles. My question is, how can they be expected to really develop any deep level of skill in any one of these arts? Additionally, they train every style in an identical fashion. They train Ba Gua and Xing Yi in the same manner they train the compulsory Long Fist routines. To them a form is a form is a form.

Most of the really good Ba Gua and Xing Yi instructors I've encountered in China have spent their entire lives studying nothing but Ba Gua and/or Xing Yi and they still feel as though they have not had enough time to go as deep as they could have. How can one expect a wushu performer who has studied nothing but form routines for 10 or 15 years, trained in 6 or 7 different internal and external styles from a half dozen different "coaches" to have a deep understanding or skill in arts like Ba Gua or Xing Yi, much less apply these arts in a real fight? It is not happening over there in the "contemporary wushu" schools, but it is happening in the traditional schools.

### **Traditional Martial Arts**

The traditional "schools" in China consist of a handful of students studying one art with one teacher in the teacher's home or in a local park. They start with the fundamentals of the style and they build slowly and steadily, studying every aspect of the art with a true "master." By studying the art in this manner these students gain much more than the sterile environment of a government sponsored wushu school could ever offer. Arts like Ba Gua and Xing Yi cannot be mass produced in a large school setting and the training cannot be mixed with a dozen other styles. To develop a deep understanding requires study of every aspect of one art, with one teacher, and a lot of time and hard work on that one thing every day.

In April of 1992 Liang Ke Quan took me to a "traditional wushu" tournament in Beijing. The circumstances were much different than the year before at the "contemporary wushu" tournament. The tournament received no government support, it was held in a dimly lit warehouse with broken glass in the

windows, most of the lights did not work, and the floor was cement. The practitioners did not have fancy colorful sequined outfits. There were no government officials on hand, there was no media, no parade, no cameras, no cover charge, very few spectators, and no carnival atmosphere. The practitioners did not jump from one ring to another performing a variety of compulsory wushu routines. It was plain and simple. Students demonstrated the one art that they had been studying from their one teacher.

There was a huge difference in the quality of performance here as compared to the contemporary wushu event I had attended the year before. I watched the Ba Gua and Xing Yi events and got a much different feeling from these practitioners. They had strength, power, connection, intention, and refined skill. It was evident from their movement, power, and intention that they had been trained in how to apply what they were doing. After seeing these practitioners I felt very sad that the government is hyping the "dance" Ba Gua and trying to erase what I would consider to be the "real thing" out of existence.

### **Contemporary Wushu versus Traditional Martial Arts**

In my opinion, in mainland China today the government is promoting performers and dancers, not martial artists. There is no doubt that these contemporary wushu people work very hard to perfect what they do. I also think that wushu basic training is valuable for any beginning martial artist. Their basic skills training is great for the development of flexibility, strength, coordination, balance and stamina. However, after basic skills training their progress rarely reaches beyond performance oriented form routines. While I have a great deal of respect for their work, dedication, and ability, in the end, they are still only performers, not martial artists. They have taken one very small aspect of the martial arts, namely forms practice, standardized it and made that the sum and total of what they do. These performers have great flexibility, body control, and strength, however, so do gymnasts, acrobats, and dancers and we do not call what they do "war arts."

The contemporary wushu practitioners have taken traditional forms and filled them full of head whipping, nose flaring flash and pizzazz so that they will be more visually exciting. In the process they have stripped them of much of the real content. By real content, I am not only talking only about fighting skills, but additionally I am referring to correct health promoting, and internal strength promoting, structural and energetic alignments and connections which make arts like Ba Gua such great health maintenance vehicles. Internal martial arts performed correctly should be a combination of efficient body alignments, natural movements and focused martial intention. The body alignments, internal connections and natural movements allow the internal energetic strengths to reach full potential and the correct martial intention moves that power and energy. The contemporary wushu people have taken the "naturalness" out of arts which are ideally performed naturally and efficiently. They

have tried to make something visual which should be hidden. Many of the internal masters have said that if the power can be seen by an observer, it is not internal. Furthermore, in Ba Gua they have standardized an art form which is based on the principles of variation and change. The wushu people focus on the flower and ignore the roots, trunk, and branches.

During my trips to China I have traced the origins of a number of the popular Ba Gua "contemporary wushu" routines and in the process I have been fortunate enough to witness some of the older generation masters demonstrate these same forms. The differences are very obvious when the two are compared; in the contemporary wushu routines there is no doubt that the body articulations have been greatly modified to emphasize "flash" and in the process structural integrity, natural, efficient movement, and basic internal alignments are sacrificed. Many Ba Gua instructors in China fully agree with this assessment and in China today there is a very great distinction made by the traditional stylists between what is referred to as "contemporary wushu" and what is called "traditional wushu."

While some of the contemporary wushu stylists would argue that their arts are traditional, seeing someone from a traditional school demonstrate their skill next to a contemporary wushu artist is like watching Muhammed Ali shadow box next to a ballet dancer. Both have a high degree of athletic ability and grace, but there is no doubt who you would want on your side in a bar fight. While winning bar fights is not the only reason, or even the main reason to study martial arts, strip them of this quality and intention and they are no longer martial arts. You might as well call it "martial dance."

Because the government in China is promoting something, this does not necessarily mean that it is popular with the elder generation martial artists. Since the purpose of my trips to mainland China has been to meet elder generation martial artists who still teach in a traditional manner, most of the martial artists in mainland China whom I have met feel that the "contemporary wushu" is not martial arts at all. They feel that it is worthless, silly, and not deserving of the name "wushu." Of course you never hear about these people in the media because the communist government will not allow it. They are trying to put "contemporary wushu" in the Olympic games and so naturally anyone who is not "with the program" is harassed into silence. Most practitioners that I have met in China who are over the age of 70 think contemporary wushu is fine for health, or performance, but they don't consider it to be anywhere close to what they would call real martial arts.

In my view, the "real thing" is something that is complete. If someone takes an art and removes a segment of the training process, it is no longer complete, it is a fragment. In 1992 I visited the home of Li Tian Ji (李天驥). Li Tian Ji had studied Ba Gua Zhang with his father, Li Yu Lin (李玉琳), and with Sun

Lu Tang (孫祿堂). His father had been a student of Sun Lu Tang and also a student of Li Cun Yi's (李存義) student Hao En Guang (郝恩光). Li Tian Ji is known to have taught a particular form of Ba Gua to many of the early contemporary wushu students. When I met with Li, I asked him where that form originated. He told me that he himself had made up that form back in the 1950's when the government was attempting to standardize martial arts training. He said that in compiling this form, he took pieces of the Ba Gua that he had learned from his father and simplified it so that it would be more accessible to the general public. Consequently it became one of the standard contemporary Ba Gua wushu forms in the wushu schools in China. At the wushu schools, study of this one form was the entire Ba Gua "program." Is this drastic simplification of Ba Gua still the "real thing?" In my opinion it is not. There is no system of training, no Ba Gua specific supplementary exercises, no internal development method, no step-by-step training process, no fighting method, and no lineage associated with studying this simplified form alone. In my opinion, it is too watered down to be what I would consider "real Ba Gua." Ba Gua Zhang has a very complete, Ba Gua specific, system of training, it is not just a form.

Contemporary wushu Ba Gua is great exercise and I would recommend it to anyone who wants to improve their external health, flexibility, coordination, and body strength. However, I would not consider it real Ba Gua and I do not consider wushu Ba Gua to be an internal martial art. They have removed the qualities which make the art internal. I become concerned when I see that only a small fragment of this deep and wonderful art is being passed along to students in the United States who study with these modern day wushu stylists. I feel that if a teacher leaves out the *qi gong*, the meditation, the breathing exercises, the footwork drills, the basic hand sets, the body development exercises, the power development exercises, the many various straight-line and circle-walking forms, the sparring aspects, the many two-person sets, the fighting philosophy, the fighting applications, fighting theories and methods, the internal strength development training, etc., which is all Ba Gua Zhang specific, his or her teaching is not "balanced" and not complete.

In China, it is my experience that the traditional teachers have much more to offer than the wushu coaches in terms of martial arts, health, character development, and balanced practice and I want to help promote them because their government will not. This is why we are taking groups of people to train in mainland China and why we will continue to sponsor some of these instructors to teach here in the United States.

In the next issue of the *Pa Kua Chang Journal* we will print part two of this article. Part two will discuss the history of Ba Gua Zhang instruction in mainland China, what a complete system of Ba Gua Zhang contains and why there are so many fragmented Ba Gua systems being taught today both in and outside of China.

# An Introduction to Ba Gua Throws

by Tim Cartmell

The following article introduces some basic throwing techniques from the Gao Yi Sheng (高義盛) system of Ba Gua Zhang (八卦掌). This particular system is a branch of the Cheng Ting Hua (程庭華) school. Before studying Ba Gua Zhang with the art's founder, Dong Hai Chuan (董海川), Cheng Ting Hua was already an accomplished master of *Shuai Jiao* (摔角 - Chinese wrestling). Cheng combined the circular movements and spins of Ba Gua Zhang with his wrestling techniques, resulting in a method of throwing which relies on angles, momentum, and rapid changes rather than brute strength. The Cheng Ting Hua style Ba Gua Zhang practitioners have become famous for their skill at executing throwing techniques.

The throws in the Gao Yi Sheng system follow the characteristics of the Cheng style. In addition, in Gao style, much attention is paid to the set-up of the technique. As even the best throw is useless unless the opponent can be set up appropriately, the method, angle, and timing of the preliminary set-up is vital and these skills must be mastered before throws can be practically applied. As a set-up to any throwing technique, one of the first requirements is to upset the opponent's balance. This can be accomplished in a variety of different ways.

In Ba Gua there are three main principles used in



**Tim Cartmell's Ba Gua Zhang teacher Luo De Xiu executes a throwing technique on Tim**

offsetting the opponent's balance, they are: moving with the opponent, joining centers, and leading momentum. Moving with the opponent involves the internal martial arts principles of "adhering" either physically (touching or grabbing) or by coordinating your movement with his. Once you are moving with the opponent and have a connection, you join centers of gravity and cause him to become an "appendage" which is easily controlled by your center. Now you can lead the opponent where you will, redirecting his own momentum into the throw. The above method allows one to throw an opponent without clashing directly with his force or momentum and the control it affords makes it possible to change as the situation demands.

In this article we will examine a throwing application taught by my teacher Luo De Xiu (羅德修) which comes from the first section of the Gao Yi Sheng pre-heaven Ba Gua Zhang. Luo will first show the movements of the form and then demonstrate how these movements are used in applying a throwing technique. However, before examining this throwing technique in detail I would like to discuss and demonstrate a few basic throws and their underlying principles.

## **Spiral Throw (旋勁 - Xuan Jing)**

During this throw the opponent's body will literally spiral from head to foot as he is being thrown to the ground. The center of the spiral is typically your own center. The majority of these techniques involve offsetting the opponent's balance and then spinning rapidly around your own center while leading the opponent's head to the ground in a downward spiral. Most spiral throwing techniques involve the principles of "moving with the opponent," "joining centers" (in which one attaches to the opponent so he becomes an "appendage" connected to your own center), and "leading momentum." The momentum is continuous from the moment of connection until the opponent is on the ground. The basic principle here is to connect with the opponent, moving with his momentum to join centers, then lead him around and down in a smooth spiral. The opponent should feel as if he threw a punch into a void and fell off a cliff. Many of the spinning and rapid turning movements of Ba Gua are designed to be used when employing the spiral throw. Below is an example (the photographs are on the following page).

**Photograph #1** - Tim Cartmell and Paul Haffey square off.



**Photograph #1**



**Photograph #2**



**Photograph #3**



**Photograph #4**

**Photograph #2** - Paul attacks with a left punch to Tim's face, Tim slips the punch by stepping up and out with his right foot in a *kou bu* (扣步 - toe-in step) and connects with the punch deflecting it downward and to the right. At the same time, Tim prepares to chop and hook the back of Paul's neck with his left hand.

Stepping up and out with a *kou bu* allows you to avoid the punch while aiming at the opponent's center. As you check his punch with your right hand, allow the momentum to continue as you lead the opponent's arm out. Ideally you will want to lead the arm with a quick, fluid motion to a position such that the shoulder opens up and you are easily able to begin to turn the opponent to his left. Your waist will begin to turn left, allowing you to move with the opponent and joining your centers of gravity through your arms.

**Photograph #3** - Continuing the momentum, Tim pivots on his right foot, turning left with a backcross step, and pulls Paul's head down and around with a left back-hand grab, leading the opponent's head into a downward spiral. The right hand hooks under the Paul's chin to prevent him from pulling his head out.

As stated above, you want to lead the opponent's punching hand down and back to unbalance him toward his front left. As he loses his balance, grab behind his neck and pull his head down in a spiral by turning around your own center with the backcross step. Your right hand grabs under his chin. You are leading the opponent's body in a spiral around your center by controlling his head.

**Photograph #4** - The downward spiral continues and the opponent is thrown over onto his back.

Turn your body around its center and guide the opponent's momentum to the ground.

In Ba Gua, the spiral throw is executed in many different ways. What is shown above is one simple example. In executing a spiral throw you want to offset the opponent's balance and join centers, controlling his upper body or head, join with his center and then turn around your own center to lead his momentum in a downward spiral.

### **Zhuang (撞) - To Crash**

This throw involves leading the momentum of the opponent's upper body while simultaneously stopping the movement of the opponent's feet. This causes the opponent to trip and fall (like tripping on a curb).

The example below illustrates the principle of creating forward momentum in the opponent's upper body then stopping the lower half of his body causing his upper body to project forward. The opponent is pulled forward then the leg he would use to catch his balance is trapped and he is unable to stop the forward momentum. This causes the opponent to flip over his lower half. Ba Gua practitioners make frequent use of hooking, trapping, and sweeping the opponent's legs while leading the momentum of his upper body in order to execute this type of throw. This example is one application from the 5th line of Gao Yi Sheng's





**Photograph #5**



**Photograph #6**



**Photograph #7**



**Photograph #8**

later-heaven Ba Gua. It is called *zhuang* - to crash.

**Photograph #5** - Tim and Paul face off.

Photograph #6 - Tim initiates the attack, grabbing and pulling Paul's right hand while striking with his left toward's Paul's face. Paul subsequently blocks the attack with his left hand.

This striking combination is used to draw a reaction from the opponent, setting him up for the throw. The technique of quickly grabbing the opponent's lead hand with your lead and striking to the face in rapid succession with the other hand is used to try and make the opponent commit his free hand to block the strike to the face. If the opponent reacts in this manner, he has set himself up for this throw.

**Photograph #7** - When Paul attempts to block the strike with his left hand, Tim grabs Paul's wrist and pulls him forward while simultaneously trapping his legs with a left kick to the shin.

As the opponent moves to block the strike to his face he is quickly pulled into forward motion and his balance is offset. Before he attempts to step to regain his balance, his legs are checked and held back with a swift cross kick motion. The pull is continued, causing the opponent to sprawl forward over his base. The pulling motion must be executed swiftly, smoothly, and continuously so that once the opponent's balance is offset, he has no opportunity to regain his balance.

**Photograph #8** - Unable to step forward, Paul flips over his feet as if tripping on a curb.

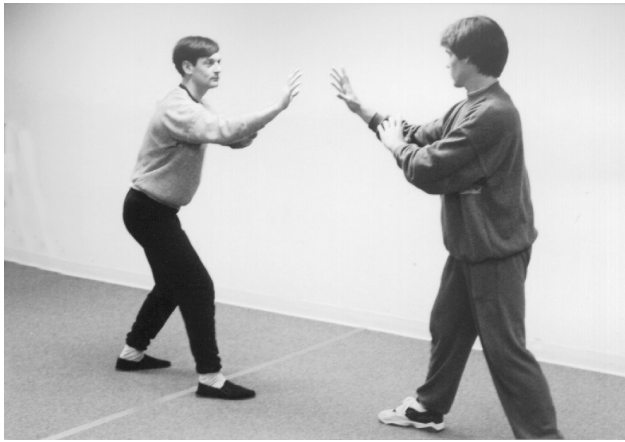
As the forward pull continues, the opponent completely loses control of his balance and flips over his center in an arcing motion (Paul's head traces an arc while his foot remains stationary). The cross kick to the shins must maintain its backward pressure against the opponent's leg until he is airborne.

### **Yao (搖) - To Swing**

This throw is similar to the judo "hip throw." In this technique the opponent will literally go "head over heels" and his feet will travel the arc of a full circle. The center of the circle in this instance is the opponent's hips. This throw is similar in principle to the previous one in that the opponent's forward momentum is stopped at one point (in this case at the hips) causing him to flip over around the still point as in the previous throw. However, in this throw there is a momentary joining of centers as the opponent is guided over your back around the common axis of your hips (like a spinning wheel). This example is one application from the 8th line of Gao Yi Sheng's later-heaven Ba Gua. It is called yao - to swing.

**Photograph #9** - Tim and Paul square off.

**Photograph #10** - Paul attacks with a right punch to the face. Tim responds by blocking inside the wrist with his



**Photograph #9**

right hand, then subsequently checking the opponent's wrist with his left (see the "wrapping in and opening out" technique shown on page 29 in Vol 4, No. 2 of the *Pa Kua Chang Journal*).

The punch is guided past the target to the outside, opening up the opponent's centerline to attack.

**Photograph #11** - Continuing, Tim attacks with a high back chop to the head, Paul blocks with his left hand on Tim's elbow. As Paul blocks, Tim reaches underneath his own right arm and grabs Paul's left wrist.

Your block, check and back-chop are executed in one continuous motion. The chop to the head is executed to draw a reaction from the opponent. As soon as you feel the opponent block the chopping right hand, quickly reach underneath and grab his wrist.



**Photograph #10**



**Photograph #11**

**Photograph #12** - Reaching under his right arm, Tim grabs Paul's left wrist and pulls Paul off balance to his front right while turning in preparation for the throw.

When the opponent blocks your chopping hand, you quickly grab that hand and pull it in the direction his force is being applied. Because you are leading the opponent's momentum, he is pulled off balance and set up for the throw.



**Photograph #12**



**Photograph #13**

**Photograph #13** - As Tim pulls Paul's left hand, he pivots on his right foot, swinging his left leg back in a back cross-step motion. As he does this, he reaches around Paul's back with his right arm and slides his body into the opponent.

When you execute the back-cross step and slide your body into the opponent, your centers are joined and the opponent is in position to be led over into the throw. It is always important to first offset the opponent's balance before you join with his center. This type of hip throw, with the opponent's left arm pulled across in front of you, is much safer than the more common variation in which the opponent's arm is left behind your neck.



**Photograph #14**



**Photograph #15**

**Photograph #14** - Tim continues to turn to the left, pulling Paul's upper body forward and around over his hip.

Your center is joined with the opponent's. As you pull him forward and turn, your hip acts as the pivot (axis) of the throw which prevents the opponent's lower body from moving forward. As in the previous technique, the opponent has no choice but to flip over and land on his back.

**Photograph #15** - Paul flips over in a full circle and lands on his back.

The throw is executed by leading the opponent's momentum around your center. When properly executed the opponent should feel almost weightless.

## Tang (趟) - To Sweep

In this throw two arcing motions are created (the foot forward and the head backward) and the opponent is quickly thrown onto his back. Below I will present an example of a leg scoop and push which is an application taken from the 5th line of Gao Yi Sheng's later-heaven Ba Gua Zhang. This technique is called *tang* - to sweep.

This technique involves a complex arc in which the opponent's upper body arcs backward while his lower body (leg) arcs up forward. This creates a "coupling" motion which spins the opponent around the axis located at his hips.

**Photograph #16** - Tim and Paul square off.

**Photograph #17** - Paul throws a right punch to the face. Tim checks his arm with his right while simultaneously stepping in with the lead leg and hooking around Paul's ankle.

The strike is deflected to the outside and the blocking palm adheres outside the opponent's right upper arm applying pressure from his shoulder through his center. This pressure is applied to force the opponent to shift his weight to the back leg and to hold him in position as your lead leg hooks around his front ankle.

**Photograph #18** - Tim scoops Paul's foot up into his rear hand as he begins pushing Paul back and off balance.

The opponent's weight is pushed onto his rear leg leaving his front foot weightless so it is easily lifted by your scooping foot. Start pushing the opponent back as soon as you have a hold of his foot.

**Photograph #18** - Tim steps forward and continues pushing Paul back and down as he lifts the leg for the throw.

Continue pushing the opponent back as you lift his leg. He will rotate around his own center (at his hips) and will fall on his back.

Above I have outlined some of the general types of throws and given some very simple examples of the underlying principles. Ba Gua Zhang throws favor leading the opponent's momentum into a state of imbalance, followed by a projection, or a joining of centers which guides his momentum into the throw. As we have seen, another common method is to propel the opponent into motion and then suddenly stop the lower half of his body, causing the upper body to project forward. Very often some type of joint leverage (*chin na* technique) will be used in conjunction with a Ba Gua throw, either as a set up for the throw itself, or with the throw serving as a follow up to a leverage technique. The application shown and described below by Luo De Xiu is a technique which employs the use of *chin na* in the execution of the throw.



**Photograph #16**



**Photograph #17**



**Photograph #18**

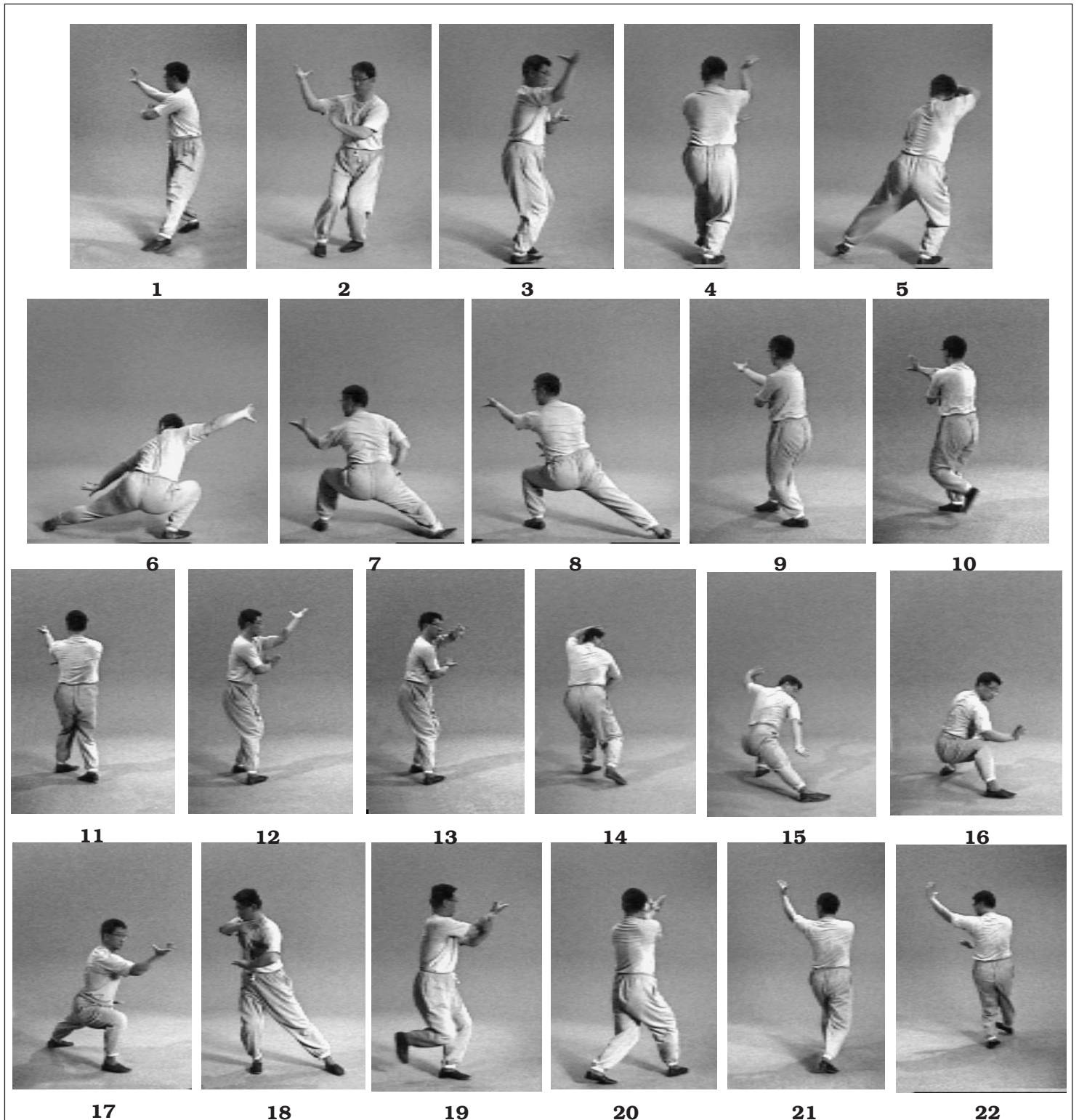


**Photograph #19**

Most of the more complex Ba Gua Zhang throws, as is true of their *shuai jiao* counterparts, are meant to be "final," in the sense that the person thrown should not be able to roll or "slap out" of the throw. These types of throws force the opponent to take the full force of the fall, absorbing the shock directly into the body. The opponent should not be able to get up after a properly executed Ba Gua throw.

### The Snake Throw

Following is an example of a basic throw from Gao Yi Sheng's system of Ba Gua. This is referred to as the "snake" throw because it is derived from the first section of the pre-heaven form which is called "Snake Form Smooth Body Palm." This is a basic throwing technique which clearly illustrates the principles of setting up the opponent, creating momentum, the joining of centers, and simultaneous use of a joint locking technique in the execution of the throw. The form movement from which this throw is derived is shown below.





**Photograph #1**



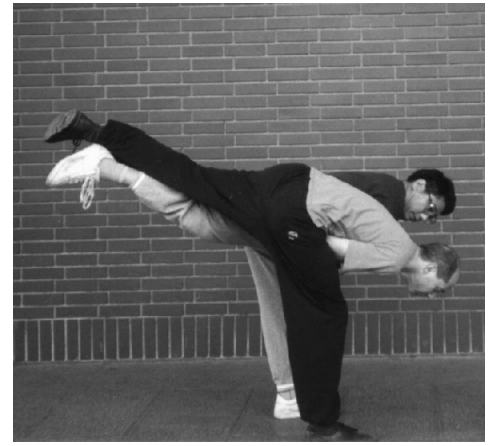
**Photograph #2**



**Photograph #3**



**Photograph #4**



**Photograph #5**

**Photograph #1** - Luo De Xiu and his student Bill Tucker face off.

**Photograph #2** - Luo initiates the attack by moving forward and controlling Tucker's lead hand with his own lead hand while attacking the face with his rear hand. Tucker responds by extending his left arm in an attempt to block the strike.

The strike towards the opponent's face is designed to draw a reaction. When executing this technique, you must not overcommit. If the opponent does not react as anticipated, or retreats, you will then be in a safe position to follow up or change.

**Photograph #3** - Luo grabs Tucker's left wrist and pulls his arm back while simultaneously striking to the solar plexus.

It is very important to pull the opponent's left arm straight and slightly to his right. The right hand strike to the opponent's solar plexus passes just underneath his left arm, the opponent's left arm is pulled at a downward angle so that the bottom of his arm rests on the top of your right arm. As you pull the opponent's left arm down and punch the solar plexus, turn your body slightly to the left. After the right punch, keep the right arm extended and pushing forward while the left hand continues pulling the opponent's left arm out.

This sets up the *chin na* technique.

**Photograph #4** - Continuing, Luo swings his left leg around behind his right in a circular back cross-step motion and pulls back on Tucker's left wrist while beginning to twist his right arm, the right palm pushing back in to the opponent's lower abdomen. This movement creates pressure on the back of Tucker's left elbow.

As you back cross-step, turn your body to the left, keeping the back of the opponent's left arm close to your chest. While turning, pull his left wrist down toward your left hip and roll your right arm over (counterclockwise) so that your right palm presses into the opponent's lower abdomen (thumb down). Lean your body slightly forward against the back of the opponent's left arm (your upper arm will press behind the opponent's left elbow). This effects an arm bar and pulls the opponent forward and off balance. The weight is on your right foot throughout this phase of the technique.

**Photograph #5** - Luo continues turning his body and pressing behind Tucker's elbow. As Tucker loses his balance forward, Luo sweeps back and up with his right leg inside the left leg of the opponent accelerating

the momentum of the throw and Tucker flips over and lands on his back.

In this final phase of the throw, shift your weight to your left foot and continue turning your body to the left. As you turn and bend over, putting pressure behind the opponent's elbow, press down at a 45 degree angle. Just as the opponent has lost his balance and begins to fall forward and down toward his left front in a downward spiral, let your right leg "spring" up behind you, lifting inside the opponent's left leg with a snap. This increases the speed of the throw and causes the opponent to flip over in a full circle, landing on his back.

It is important to understand that the actual throw is executed by offsetting the opponent's balance with the arm bar, stepping in with the back-cross step and joining with his center and then spinning around your own center to execute the throw. By the time the leg sweep is executed, the opponent is already off balance and falling towards the ground. The leg sweep is executed in order to accelerate the opponent's fall so that he cannot roll out of it. See the continuous motion photo sequence below.

The principles described above are common to most Ba Gua throws. It is important to remember that the principles are what make the throws effective. It is also absolutely necessary to properly set up the throw before execution. The basic body alignments, balance and use of momentum are developed through practice of basic movements and forms. Throwing is an advanced skill which is built upon basic connecting and striking abilities and requires a considerable amount of training to master. Expertise at throwing, however, is an extremely valuable skill as one properly executed throw

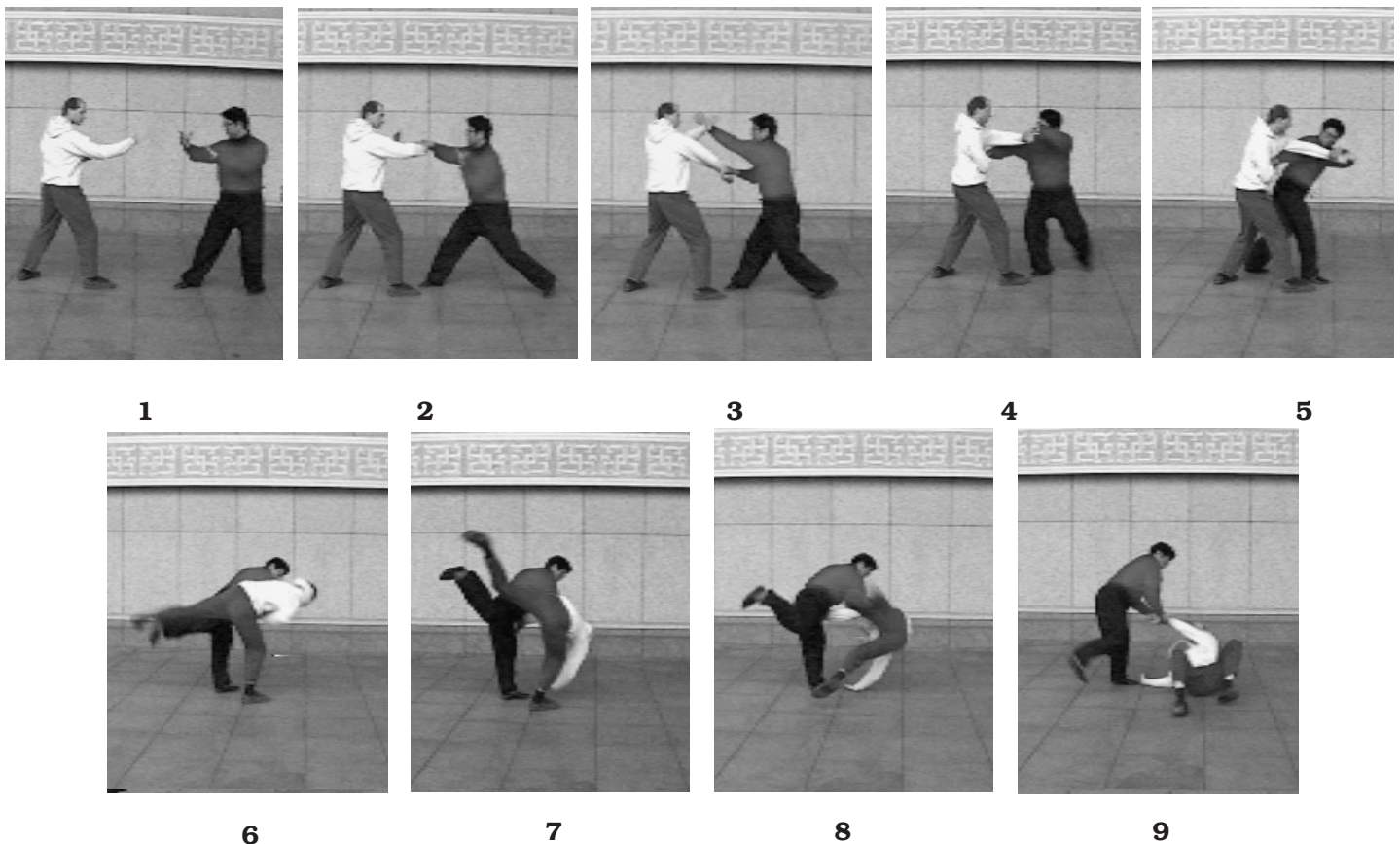
may immediately end the fight.

Those who are interested in studying Ba Gua with Luo De Xiu will have the opportunity in June-July 1994 as Luo will be in the United States conducting a series of seminars at different locations around the country. For more information contact High View Publications at the address listed on page 2, or North American Tang Shou Tao, P.O. Box 36235, Tucson, AZ 85740. This will be Luo's second visit to the U.S. He conducted a very successful series of seminars in Oct-Nov 1993 (for more information on Luo De Xiu see *Pa Kua Chang Journal* Vol. 3, No. 5 and Vol. 4, No. 2).

#### About the Author:

*Tim Cartmell began his martial arts training in Kung Fu San Soo in 1972 at the age of eleven. He received his black belt in the art in 1984. After graduation from college in 1984 Tim moved to Taiwan to begin his training in the internal martial arts. Originally studying with Hsu Hong Chi, Tim earned his black belt in Tang Shou Tao Xing Yi in 1987.*

*In 1986, Tim won the middleweight division of the All Taiwan Invitational Full Contact Tournament and again won that division of the Chung Cheng International Full Contact Tournament later that same year. Tim has studied Ba Gua Zhang, Xing Yi Quan, Chen and Yang style Tai Ji Quan, Yi Quan, the White Crane system, and various other methods of Qi Gong and internal boxing since moving to Taiwan. He is presently a senior student of Ba Gua Zhang instructor Luo De Xiu. Tim Cartmell still lives in the Republic of China where he practices and teaches martial arts, writes, and works as a translator.*



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