



# Pa Kua Chang

## Newsletter

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### Liu Hsing-Han: Inheritor of Ch'eng T'ing-Hua Pa Kua Chang in Beijing

*The information in this article was obtained during a phone interview with Liu Hsing-Han in August 1990.*

For nearly a century Pa Kua Chang has been studied and practiced in the Temple of Heaven Park located in the southern part of old Beijing. In several locations in the park you can kick aside the top layer of dirt and find a circle of bricks layed down generations ago by some Pa Kua Chang instructor to provide a reference for his student's circle walk practice.

Eighty-one year old Liu Hsing-Han has studied Pa Kua Chang in this park since he was a small boy and has been a member of the "inner family" of Ch'eng T'ing-Hua Pa Kua Chang practitioners who practice in the park. This family includes Ch'eng's eldest son Ch'eng Yu-Lung, and other third generation practitioners such as Sun Lu-Tang, Liu Pin, Liu Hsin-Tzung, Chi Feng-Hsiang, Li Hao-T'ing, Kuo

Feng-Te, and Wang Tan-Lin.

Liu Hsing-Han began his study of Pa Kua Chang in 1917 at the age of 8. His father, Liu Hsin-Tzung, a Pa Kua Chang student of Ch'eng T'ing-Hua, was his primary teacher until the 2nd of February 1924 (Chinese new year). By this time Liu had become skilled in the fundamentals of the art and his father felt he was ready to proceed to higher levels of study. The older Liu asked his Pa Kua Chang "older brother" Liu Pin if he would accept Liu Hsing-Han as his student. Liu Pin (no blood relation) accepted the boy as his student and thus Liu Hsing-Han officially joined the "inner family" of Ch'eng T'ing-Hua's students who practiced in the Temple of Heaven Park in Beijing.

Liu Pin was Ch'eng T'ing-Hua's favorite student. Because he was the system's top disciple, others supported him so that he could dedicate all his attention to the study of Pa Kua Chang. Liu Pin spent his entire life learning, practicing, and teaching the



Third and fourth generation Pa Kua Chang practitioners from the Cheng T'ing-Hua "family."  
This picture was taken in 1917 in front of the Tien Shou Tang Hotel in Beijing.



## Pa Kua Chang

Newsletter

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### Purpose and Policy Statement

In order to keep the Pa Kua Chang Newsletter an un-biased forum for Pa Kua Chang instructors and practitioners to exchange their thoughts and ideas about the art of Pa Kua Chang, this newsletter is totally subscriber-supported and does not affiliate itself with, or receive support from, any particular Pa Kua Chang instructor or martial arts school. In order to help maintain integrity and impartiality, the newsletter will not accept paid advertisement.

The newsletter is published six times a year. Each issue features an interview with one or more Pa Kua Chang instructors from mainland China, Taiwan, the United States, 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.

We will refrain from using titles, such as Master or Sifu, in this newsletter. Every school has their own separate definition of these terms and criteria for using these titles. In order to remain impartial and show equal respect to all instructors being interviewed, we felt that omitting the titles from everyone's name was the best policy. We mean no disrespect to any of our contributors or their great teachers.

Chinese names and terms will be romanized using the Thomas Wade system of romanization except when the pinyin romanization is more familiar (in cases such as "Beijing") or when an instructor prefers his name romanized differently. Whenever possible, Chinese characters will be listed at the end of each article for the Chinese terms and names that appear in the article.

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

We solicit comments and/or suggestions.  
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art of Pa Kua Chang in Beijing. He did not become as famous as some of Ch'eng's other students because he never left Beijing, never competed, and never taught anyone outside of the "inner family." Unlike his teacher Ch'eng, who taught all who were interested in Pa Kua Chang regardless of their background, experience, family, or social standing, Liu Pin was very selective when it came to accepting students.

Liu Hsing-Han also studied Pa Kua Chang with one of Ch'eng's more famous students, Sun Lu-Tang, when Sun came to Beijing. For a period of time, Sun was employed by a warlord and each time he came to Beijing with the warlord he would go to the Temple of Heaven Park and practice Pa Kua Chang with Liu Pin, Chi Feng-Hsiang, and Wang Tan-Lin. Sun's advice to Liu Hsing-Han was to study hard and learn as much as he could from his teacher Liu Pin. Sun said that Liu Pin knew more about Pa Kua Chang than any other practitioner of his generation because Liu Pin had studied with Ch'eng Ting-Hua longer and harder than any of his other students and because Liu Pin did nothing but practice Pa Kua Chang all day.

Sun Lu-Tang had studied Pa Kua Chang with Ch'eng Ting-Hua for three years. Before coming to study Pa Kua Chang with Ch'eng, Sun had been a Hsing-I Ch'uan student of Kuo Yun-Shen. Ch'eng Ting-Hua and Kuo Yun-Shen had become friends when Kuo had once come to challenge Tung Hai-Ch'uan. Kuo Yun-Shen was famous throughout China for his Hsing-I. Since Kuo was much younger than Tung, Tung asked Ch'eng to check out this Hsing-I master.

When Kuo visited Beijing he stayed with the Ch'eng family. Kuo asked Ch'eng what he thought of his plan to challenge Tung. Ch'eng knew of Kuo's great Hsing-I skill, but advised him against this as no one had ever beaten Tung. Kuo faced Ch'eng and asked, "Brother, how about if you suffer my Peng Ch'uan?" That was all the notification Ch'eng got that the punch was coming. Ch'eng dodged the punch and Kuo's incoming fist struck the door frame knocking a piece of it off. Kuo was startled at Ch'eng's speed and agility and knew that Tung was much better than Ch'eng, so he dropped the idea of a challenge with Tung Hai-Ch'uan. Kuo and Ch'eng held mutual respect for each other's art and agreed that top students from each system should study the other.

Later, Kuo asked his friend Ch'eng if he would teach his student Sun Lu-Tang and Ch'eng agreed. After studying with Ch'eng for three years, Sun Lu-Tang entered many of the platform boxing competitions that were popular at that time in China and never lost a match. After studying Pa Kua Chang, Sun studied Tai Chi-Ch'uan and in his later years synthesized the three arts, Hsing-I, Pa Kua, and Tai Chi, and created Sun style Tai Chi Ch'uan. Sun Lu-Tang also wrote five books that became very popular: *A Study of Pa Kua Chang*, *A Study of Hsing-I Ch'uan*, *A Study of Tai Chi Ch'uan*, *A Study of Pa Kua Sword*, and *The Real*

*Meaning of Boxing.* Liu Hsing-Han noted that these books have recently been republished in mainland China and are generating new interest in the internal martial styles.

Liu Hsing-Han studied Pa Kua Chang with two of Ch'eng's other students, Chi Feng-Hsiang and Wang Tan-Lin. Chi was a handsome man from Shandong Province. He was also a scholar and developed a deep knowledge of Traditional Chinese Medicine. One of his areas of special expertise was the I-Ching (Book of Changes).

Chi meticulously wrote down all of Ch'eng Ting-Hua's teachings and integrated this knowledge with his expertise in Chinese Medicine, the *I-Ching*, and Chinese Cosmology. These notes were never published, however, Liu Hsing-Han was designated the "inner family" fourth generation system inheritor and was given Chi's notes. Chi also wrote many papers on the relationships between the theory and the practical world and was considered an expert in this area.

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***Characteristics of Ch'eng style Pa Kua Chang are: continuous twisting, rotating, and turning movements, quick changes, close-in fighting maneuvers, middle basin stance, and Dragon-Claw Palm.***

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Liu Hsing-Han has spent his life learning, practicing, and teaching Ch'eng Ting-Hua's Nine Palace Pa Kua Chang (see page 5). Characteristics of Ch'eng style Pa Kua Chang are: continuous twisting, rotating, and turning movements, quick changes, close-in fighting maneuvers, middle basin stance, and Dragon-Claw Palm. Because the practitioner of Ch'eng style Pa Kua Chang demonstrates great continuity, agility and flexibility when performing the changes, this style is also commonly known as "Swimming Body Pa Kua."

In 1983 Liu wrote a book titled *Yu Shen Pa Kua Lien Huan Chang*, which loosely translates to "Swimming Body Eight Trigram Continuous Circling Palm," outlining the fundamentals of this style. The book was published in 1986 and is currently in its 3rd edition - approximately 100,000 copies have been sold (available in Chinese only). The book has three main parts, the first introduces the reader to the history of Pa Kua Chang, the second outlines the principles for health, and the third introduces the form and the school. Liu is planning to write three more books which will include information from the notes of Chi Feng-Hsiang.

Liu Hsing-Han notes a significant difference in the way Pa Kua Chang is taught now and the way it was taught in the "old days." In the old days



**Liu Hsing-Han practicing Pa Kua Chang in the Temple of Heaven Park, Beijing, in 1988.**

a practitioner could make a very good living as a body guard and/or an escort. People from southern Beijing, historically the poor side of town, who did not have much of an education would study Pa Kua Chang in hopes of obtaining enough knowledge of application to obtain a body guard position. The first several years of practice was very direct and very simple, but the function was very good. A student could practice for several years and be good enough to get a job as a body guard, so people would become proficient at the basic practical applications and then leave.

Typically practitioners would start by practicing nothing but walking the circle until this skill was strong. Liu stated that it was not uncommon for a practitioner to practice walking the circle for as long as three years before he was taught anything else. He explains that without the proper skill level in walking the circle, open hand and weapons forms will never be right.

Next the student would learn 24 fundamental movements and work on those fundamentals until he reached a high level of proficiency. Once this groundwork was accomplished, the student would learn what Liu refers to as the "five elements and three harmonies." These movements are variations of what are commonly know as Single and Double Palm Change. Each element (Fire, Water, Wood, Earth, and Metal) and each harmony (Heaven, Earth,



**Liu Hsing-Han (far left) poses with four of his "Kung Fu brothers" in 1933. From left to Right: Liu Hsing-Han (sword), Li Chen-To (Five Element weapon), Chang Kuo Hsiang, Yang Jung-San (Fan), and Ch'ang Tzung-Ying (Hook swords).**

and Man) is expressed in one of the variations.

The next step would be perfecting eight tactical palm changes. These changes would be practiced until the student had a thorough understanding of Pa Kua Chang fundamentals and a high level of skill in applying these tactics in fighting. The practitioner would be taught a limited amount and the instructor would demand that his student become very good at what he was given.

After learning the eight tactical changes, the practitioner had a high level of fighting skill and could easily obtain a body guard position. Thus many of these practitioners would abandon their study to pursue a career utilizing what they had learned.

Those that continued their study would be introduced to the theoretical and philosophical levels of practice and be taught 64 changes. The complete Nine Palace Pa Kua Chang form consists of 8 kuas, each containing 8 changes. The advanced student would work to express the reality of the philosophy in the physical movements of the body and in walking the circle. The advanced student would also learn subsets of the Pa Kua form such as 8 elbows, 8 fists, 8 palms and weapons sets. He would also be taught a variation of his form called "moving steps."

Poor and less educated people found it difficult to obtain the deep philosophical and theoretical principles of the practice and thus did not pay attention to it. Because of this, these practitioners were missing

what Liu calls the "essence" of the art. Liu believes that learning the essence is better than learning one thousand movements. However, the essence and theory is very difficult to comprehend and therefore the total understanding is less available to those who trained only to be practical fighters.

Liu notes that today's practitioners in Beijing are better educated and their essential requirements are different. Not only do they have access to books on theory and philosophy, but the typical practitioner is an educated professional. Because they are better educated, they study and understand the *I-Ching*, Chinese culture, and Taoist philosophy and therefore have a deeper understanding of Pa Kua Chang.

The teaching approach today places more emphasis on the cultural and philosophical aspects of the art because the practitioners have a more thorough educational and intellectual background. Liu states that the practitioner cannot simply practice the shape (form) - he needs to explore the theory and philosophy in depth.

This physical integration of the philosophy includes representing the language and symbols of the *I-Ching* in movement. The stability of the whole body in Pa Kua Chang relies on the expression of yin and yang in contradiction.

One of Liu's top students in Beijing, Chang Chieh, adds that the body is a small universe and Heaven

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# An Introduction to Nine Palace Pa Kua Chang

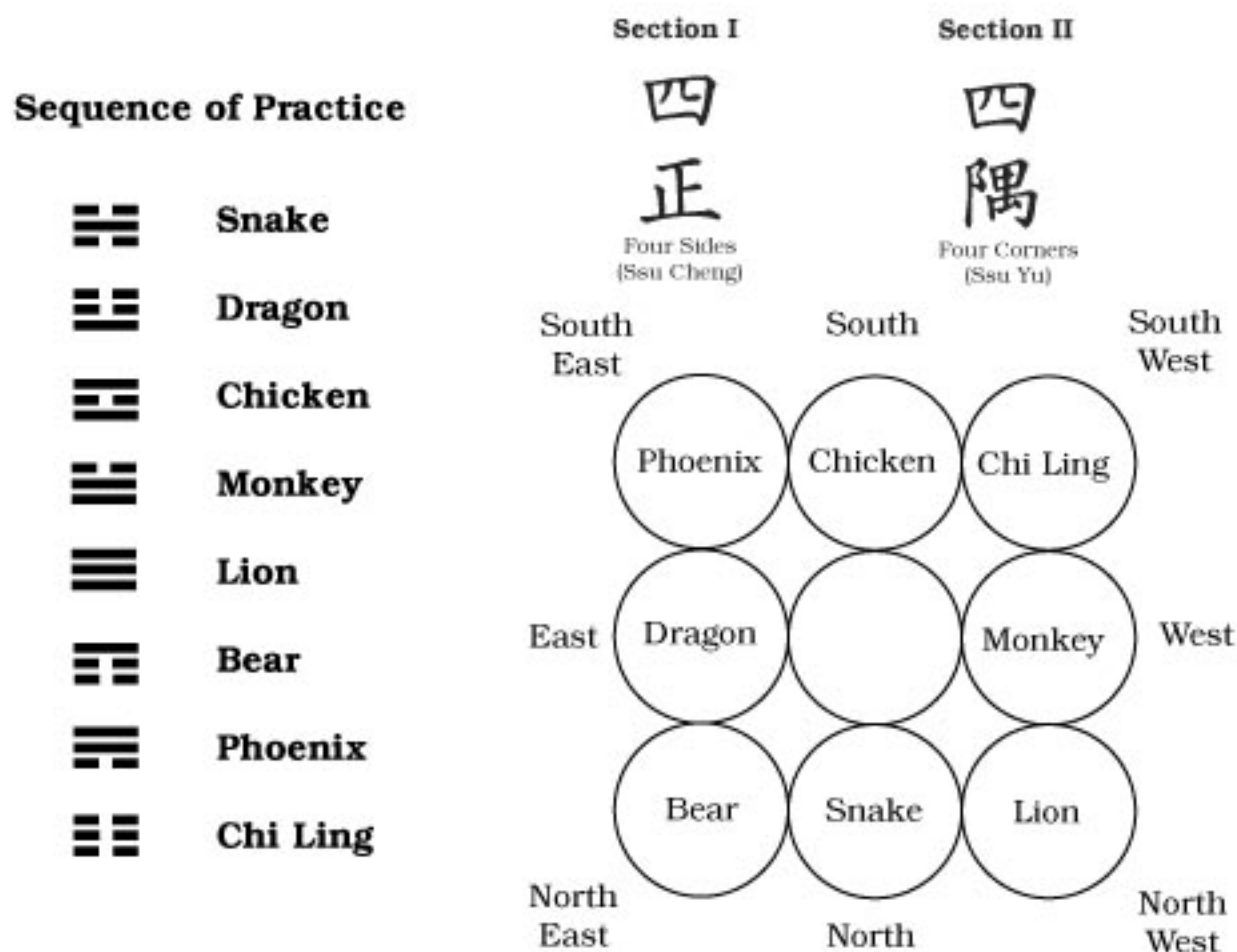
"Nine Palace" Pa Kua Chang is a form of "Swimming Body Pa Kua" that was originated by Ch'eng T'ing-Hua and one of his senior students Chi Feng-Hsiang. Within the form there are eight kuas which relate to eight different animals and the eight trigrams of the *I-Ching* as shown below. Each kua contains eight changes and thus the entire form contains 64 changes, which relate to the 64 hexagrams of the *I-Ching*.

Chi Feng-Hsiang was an intellectual who had a deep knowledge of the *I-Ching*, Chinese cosmology and the art of the Feng-Shui (geomancy). He was known for his ability to link the theoretical and the practical and used his talent when helping Ch'eng T'ing-Hua create the Nine Palace form.

The practitioner begins the form standing on the center circle, facing the center of the center circle and looking South. He performs an introductory sequence around the center circle before moving to the North circle to perform the 1st (Snake) kua. After performing the movements of the Snake kua, the practitioner moves on to the East circle and performs the Dragon kua. The third kua is Chicken, performed on the South circle. Fourth is the Monkey kua performed on the West circle. Completion of the Monkey kua marks the first section of the form known as the "four sides." The practitioner then moves to the second section of the form known as the "four corners." He performs Lion in the North-West circle, Bear in the North-East circle, Phoenix in the South-East circle and finally Chi Ling (a mythical animal) to the South-West. The sequence of practice and the related circles are shown below.

# 九宮八卦掌

Nine Palace Eight Trigram Palm (Chiu Kung Pa Kua Chang) is based on Nine Circles as shown below:





Liu Hsing-Han's primary teachers in front of the Tien Shou Tang Hotel (1917): Middle row, from Left to Right: Liu Hsin-Tzung (Liu Hsing-Han's father), Liu Pin, Li Hau-Ting, Chi Feng-Chiang, and Kuo Feng-Te.

and Earth comprise a large universe. Through the practice of Pa Kua Chang one can connect the body with Heaven and Earth so that Heaven, Earth, and Man are one. When the spirit of man connects with the spirit of the universe, the man can know the universe and experience the energy of the *I-Ching*. Chang believes that Tung Hai-Ch'uan attained this level in his practice.

Today Liu teaches the physical movements and forms in the same sequence as he learned them in the old days, but he places a great deal of emphasis on the philosophical principles from the onset of training. Before any movement is taught Liu teaches the student martial arts virtue; the foundation of martial arts practice. He then introduces them to the *I-Ching* and Pa Kua theory, and philosophy. When physical movement is taught (beginning with the circle walk) he demands that his students integrate the theoretical and the physical. He encourages them to do further research into the philosophical principles to broaden their practice and deepen their experience. The education system is step-by-step into deeper levels, paying attention to the theory so that you can catch the essence of the practice.

The Nine Palace Pa Kua system is being taught in the United States in Tustin, California, by Liu's student John Bracy (see interview on page 7).

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劉斌	Liu Pin
劉煥宗	Liu Hsin-Tzung
姬鳳翔	Chi Feng-Hsiang
李豪庭	Li Hao-T'ing
郭鳳德	Kuo Feng-Te
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游身八卦連環掌	
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# **Liu Hsing-Han's American student, John Bracy, is carrying on the tradition of Nine Palace Pa Kua Chang in the United States**

*John Bracy has been practicing Chinese martial arts for over 23 years and has been teaching traditional Kung Fu at the Hsing Chen School of Chinese Martial Arts in Tustin, CA since 1976. He holds a B.A. in psychology and in 1981-82 did graduate research in Taipei, Taiwan into the psycho-therapeutic applications of acupuncture.*

*The following interview was conducted in August of 1990.*

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## **When and with whom did you start training in the martial arts?**

I began training in 1967 when I was twelve years old. For a short time I studied under a teacher of an American karate style (kenpo). Later I changed to kung fu. My kung fu teacher was Jay Rebrazen. The style that he taught was a mixture of southern Chinese boxing and Hsing-I. It was extremely rare to find any kind of Chinese boxing school in the United States at the time.

## **What do you recall about your early kung fu training?**

In the sixties and early seventies Chinese martial arts had not yet come to into their own in this country. The program that I first studied in was geared toward training in ways that were to be competitive with other martial art schools. As in many early U.S. kung fu schools we wore karate style "gi's" and were issued belt ranks.

Often, the kung fu students participated in "karate-like" training, either with the teacher's sanction or secretly. We broke bricks and boards like the karate students did, often participated in their tournaments, and sparred in similar manner as they did.

This is not to say that there weren't critical differences in our training or style compared to the karate methods. There were. Only we, or at least I, did not appreciate the differences at that time. For example, the Chinese kung fu had a great deal more depth, subtlety and internal energy training, but many of the younger martial artists like myself tried to do the internal kung fu forms in a way so they looked flashy like karate or kenpo. It wasn't until years later that I realized the significance of the internal training that I had received.

## **Who else did you study with?**

I was very fortunate to have studied with some great teachers. In Taiwan I learned from Ho Shun-Ting (Hsing-I, and T'ai Chi, Pa Kua), Chang Shih-Jung (Hsing-I), Yi Tien-Wen, and Yi Te-Kuen (family style). In Beijing I learned from Liu Hsing-Han and Liang K'e-Ch'uan.

## **When and where were you first exposed to Pa Kua Chang?**

My "first knowledge" of Pa Kua was probably from reading Robert Smith's books on Chinese martial arts in Taiwan, around 1974.

The first time that I actually saw Pa Kua, I remember very clearly. It was at one of my early morning practices with a group of students who studied with Chang Shih-Jung at the old Tainan Confucian Temple in Central Taiwan. One morning there was an old man at practice who I had not previously seen. He was either a friend or kung fu "relative" of Chang. He performed Pa Kua for me. At that time it was the most beautiful and graceful of any martial art demonstration that I had ever seen.

## **Did this spark your interest in studying Pa Kua?**

I was more interested in Hsing-I than in Pa Kua Chang at the time. I began to study Pa Kua because I thought that I should learn it due to its relationship to the other martial arts in the "internal art family."

## **Tell us about the Pa Kua Chang that you studied.**

I learned the foundation of my Pa Kua training from Ho Shun-Ting when I lived in Taiwan in 1981 and 1982. A few years later I traveled to Beijing and studied a rare form of "Swimming body" Pa Kua called "Nine Palace" from Liu Hsing-Han.

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## **Can you tell me something about Ho Shun-Ting? Who did he learn Pa Kua from?**

Ho is a retired general in the Nationalist Chinese Air Force. He began his training while a young officer in the 1930s before the Nationalists fled the mainland. Ho studied from Cheng Huai-Hsien. Cheng was a student of Sun Lu-T'ang. He became famous as a member of the martial art troop who was sent from China to demonstrate at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

When I studied with Ho first in 1981 he was an official in the (Taiwan) Chinese National Martial Art Association. He had a policy of accepting only one student at a time; during the time that he taught me I saw him refuse several prospective students. Later

he accepted a position at Taiwan Cultural University as a professor of martial arts. He continues to teach there to this day.

I've returned to Taiwan several times to study from him and he also has come to my school for several extended periods to teach my students here.

### **What is unusual about the Nine Palace Form you learned in Beijing?**

First, it is the most complex Pa Kua form that I have ever seen. It is also unusual in its practice. Instead of the single circle used in most Pa Kua forms it involves nine (see page 5). In the basic form there are eight circles surrounding a central circle. The outside circles involve movements based on eight animal forms. The central circle of this form is used for separate core training movements as well as the linking circle between the other eight circles.

The nine palace Pa Kua also has a complex series of subsets. For example there are "the eight fists," "the eight palms," the eight elbows," and a rare form called "Wu Hsing Shang ke Shen ke" which adapts the movements of the Hsing-I five elements and three additional movements in a circular walking method - it is sort of the Pa Kua answer to Hsing-I.

### **How did you meet Liu Hsing-Han?**

I met Liu Hsin-Han through my good friend and Kung Fu brother, Chang Chieh. Because of my connection to him I was given more attention than any other student during training sessions. It was truly a great experience working with Liu Hsing-Han at the founding place of the Pa Kua art.

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***I believe there to be many highly qualified and well intentioned masters in China. But the prudent student should not suspend all normal reasoning abilities just because he meets someone that looks like a "master" in a Hollywood movie.***

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### **Do you see a difference between the Pa Kua you were exposed to in Taiwan and Beijing Pa Kua?**

A higher degree of knowledge in Beijing. This can be accounted for by several reasons. First, it is the founding place of Pa Kua. More people were taught there by the original masters; one would expect more development and depth to be present. Second, when the nationalists fled the Mainland in 1949 they had to prioritize what and whom they would move to Taiwan. I suspect that martial arts masters were not high on their list of those relocating with a hastily retreating military force. The "masters" that ended up in Taiwan,

although possibly very skilled, were government and military personnel, not professional martial artists. They were martial art hobbyists. Consequently, they generally would not possess the advanced theory of a person who was raised and remained a martial art master.

There is one important exception to the above guideline. I don't generally trust a Mainland master under 65 years of age. This is due to the devastating effects of the cultural revolution. Between 1967 and 1975 the entire social order of China was dissolved. No longer could most traditional martial arts be practiced or taught. Most masters (other than Tai Chi Ch'uan) were forced to do menial labor. It wasn't until the 1970s that martial arts could be once again taught publicly. If a person started serious practice in 1976 until now it would only have been fourteen years that he had studied, not enough time to gain real depth. For these reasons I feel that a person should have reached a high enough skill level previous to the onset of the cultural revolution if his skill was to be maintainable alone and without the correction of a master.

### **When did you first start teaching Pa Kua?**

I started teaching some about 1986. At that time I taught it to only one or two students. I never expected it to gain any popularity. I started the full program in Pa Kua in late 1988 after my return from Beijing and that program was recently expanded.

### **If a new student comes to your school and wants to learn Pa Kua, what do you start him with, and what can he expect to learn?**

New students learn fundamental postures, how to walk the circle, and begin a detailed breakdown of the complete animal forms. Students with less than a year of training will hardly ever begin application and martial practice. I want the students to learn to channel the ch'i, and to move without tension before they begin application practice.

### **What are your current plans for developing your programs?**

I have found over the last several years that there are many students who would like to study with me but are unable to do so because of geographical constraints. To deal with this need I am expanding my program to include an "extension school." The extension program offers special weekend study at my school as well as some programs in special facilities high in the Southern California mountains. I am optimistic that potentially serious students will be able to come study with our school for a short condensed program one or more times a year.

I am also interested in developing an exchange service with teachers who visit at my school from Taiwan and Beijing. Interested teachers can write to me and I will give them details about who is coming and when. Also, I have sent groups of students to



**John Bracy with Liu Hsing-Han in Beijing's Temple of Heaven Park in 1988.**

study in Taiwan. In Fall of 1991 I will send a group of students over to study with my associated martial arts "family" in Beijing. Interested persons should write to me and request that information (see address and phone number at the end of this article).

**If a student wants to get involved in your extension program, what can he expect to learn?**

The extension program is designed for students who want to study the methods of my school in California but who live too far to commute. Students attend seminars, get corrections of their forms and are given the highest possible level and amount of material that they can handle. The material will be largely personalized for that particular student. The student should then go home and perfect that material until the next program that he can attend or he can arrange for a short visit to the home school in Southern California.

**How important is the student-teacher relationship?**

Many teachers today are "buddies" with their students. I disagree with this. Although affection can be mutually felt and association with one another outside of the instructional setting, there should be a clear separation between student and teacher at all times. Furthermore, a Shifu/master level teacher should never be on a first name basis with a student inside or outside of the school/instructional setting.

**Do you screen students before you accept them into your school? If so, what are you looking for in a potential student?**

Yes. I want to be sure that the potential student has the right program and the right school for his interest, intelligence, and physical aptitude. I feel that I have an obligation not to "sell" every student who walks in the door. I often refer to other arts and sometimes I have declined to teach students who do not have the appropriate motivation or mindset.

**Other than learning some form movements and fighting techniques, what do you hope your students go away with after studying at your school?**

A deeper sense of who they are. In true practice of the internal arts a student learns more than physical movements. For the ch'i to develop emotions must surface and be dealt with, and lifestyle issues ("shallowness" vs. "depth") addressed. Ideally, graduates of my program possess stronger clarity, purpose, and awareness of who they are. Through practice they become more at peace with themselves and each other.

**What do you feel is the current state of Pa Kua Chang in China?**

The young people in mainland China, as in Taiwan, are not as interested in studying the martial arts as they once were. The martial arts must not only compete for students among each other, but with

modern sports and leisure activities as well. This is especially problematic for the Chinese masters who will not change from the "old way" of teaching. Many teachers still want to require students to train their legs in basic stances for 6 months or more before other material is taught. Consequently they lose students. This is a serious problem which we as martial artists in the West must address. How can we teach in new and exciting ways while keeping the quality high at the same time?

**Do you have any advice for students who plan to go to Mainland China to study?**

Yes: beware of fake masters. My personal feeling is to be very careful about trusting any master under the age of 65. I had a bad experience in this regard. When I first traveled to Beijing it was arranged for me to study with a Hsing-I teacher. This person came highly recommended by a friend of mine who is associated with a ch'i kung research group at Beijing University. Apparently this man had written several books on Hsing-I.

At the appointed time and meeting place I and several other Americans (who had come to learn Tai Chi) met with him. We heard the standard lecture about how great this teacher was. Eventually he asked me to show some of the Hsing-I that I had previously studied. After I demonstrated I could see a noticeable change in the way he treated me. Another funny thing was that he declined to demonstrate anything to the group. In the next week and a half when I tried to work with this man he refused to show anything.

He would have me stand in basic Hsing-I postures for long periods and would give nothing more. I started to become suspicious when I noticed a few subtle corrections he made actually very wrong for Hsing-I. My suspicion increased when I saw the way he was teaching "Tai Chi" to the other Americans. The material, supposedly a "rare" form of Tai Chi, was inconsistent with Tai Chi principles.

I approached my contact who had arranged the study sessions and informed him of my doubts. At first he assured me of the man's high ability and thought that I must be mistaken, then said that he would arrange a demonstration of the teacher's ability. Later I found out that the "master" still refused to demonstrate in front of me, and I told my contacts that this further reinforced my doubts about the instructor's credibility. At that point my contact and another administrator from Beijing University said that they would confront the "master" and insist that he demonstrate at least in front of them.

The "Hsing-I teacher" refused to do this and was discharged. However, this is not the end of the story. Later this instructor located where I was studying. He found me leaving class one morning in another part of the city, and begged to be able to teach me. I told him that I had another teacher, but he insisted. On the spot, he tried to impress me by performing several Hsing-I forms. It was quite pathetic, because not

only did it seem that he had just learned them some place, but the nature of his begging seemed to me to be a loss of face as well. I felt sorry and was embarrassed for him.

Please don't misunderstand me, I would like to clarify that I believe there to be many highly qualified and well intentioned masters in China. But the prudent student should not suspend all normal reasoning abilities just because he meets someone that looks like a "master" in a Hollywood movie.

**What forms of Chinese culture and tradition have you had to become familiar with and practice in order to gain the respect of your Chinese teachers?**

Traditional Chinese courtesy called "Li Mao" is very important. Many times the teacher observes the student's conduct before deciding to accept him or to allow the student to become fully initiated into the teaching. I require all my students beyond beginning level to study manners which includes the proper way to serve tea, paying of a restaurant bill, and formal courtesy.

**I know that you speak Chinese and that you studied Chinese medicine in Taiwan. What are the benefits of studying Chinese language, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Chinese Philosophy along with Pa Kua Chang?**

Access to material, teachers, and their true meanings that would otherwise be denied or limited. Also, knowledge of the language will aid knowledge of the underlying concepts. Many concepts in martial arts are shared with Chinese medicine. This is because many of the roots are the same. Having a foundation in Chinese medicine will be of great value in the study of internal kung fu. I require all my students, as they advance, to study Chinese medicine, either acupuncture or herbology.

**What is the importance of the Pa Kua Chang student learning the martial applications and tactics of the art?**

Not as important as we think in the West. I think few understand that application should come secondarily to energy study and alignment. But of course this takes a long time to become aware of, and I think few teachers understand it even to the most basic level. Consequently, martial application becomes taught very early. I feel this is a serious error because the student will most likely never learn the "inner form," only the "outer form." Without knowing the inner form there is no kung fu.

**Have you had any contact with any other older masters in Mainland China?**

One of the most impressive masters I've ever met is my "kung fu Uncle," Liang Ke-Ch'uan. He is over seventy years old and an official advisor to the China Hsing-I Association. I was able to study a little from

him and he changed my Hsing-I completely. He taught me to train my ch'i differently, primarily by using a "soft" method. Liang K'e Ch'uan, although very soft, can step from a foot away, strike his shoulder to a very large tree, and cause the entire tree to shake.

**How does your Hsing-I compare to others that you have seen?**

As I mentioned before, my Hsing-I appears very soft compared to most Hsing-I practitioners. Ironically, I have heard that several instructors here in the United States have said that my Hsing-I is "too soft." Liang taught me that an observer without special training should not be able to see the power and strength in true internal skill. If power is observable, or technique "stiff" or "tight" it is evident of the lack of true internal power.

**What general similarities and differences do you see between Pa Kua, Hsing-I, and T'ai Chi?**

Belonging to the internal family, they all share qualities of softness. The power of all three should be hidden. The spirit should be trained and integrated into the physical movement. This is the real secret of the internal martial arts and why so few attain real mastery.

The power in Pa Kua feels to me to be one of two things, first, like a connection in the way that a tree connects with the ground and its branches, second,

the internal force feels like it is squeezed through the body in a similar manner as toothpaste is squeezed through a tube.

The power in Hsing-I feel like a rush in the manner of water being turned on and moving through the body at full force. The power of T'ai chi feels the softest and based on the permeance of ch'i to every part of the body in the way a slow flowing water over the ground will trickle into the earth.

Students wishing to learn more about programs offered by John Bracy can contact him at the following address:

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**Chinese Character Index**

賈 順 定	Ho Shun-Ting
梁 克 權	Liang K'e-Ch'uan
鄭 懷 賢	Cheng Huai-Hsien
張 杰	Chang Chieh
氣	Ch'i

***In the next issue of Pa Kua Chang Newsletter: Interviews with Atlanta based Pa Kua Chang instructor Allen Pittman and Wang Hung-Tao (Alex Wang) of Vancouver, B.C., also a 1991 Pa Kua Chang seminar schedule.***

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