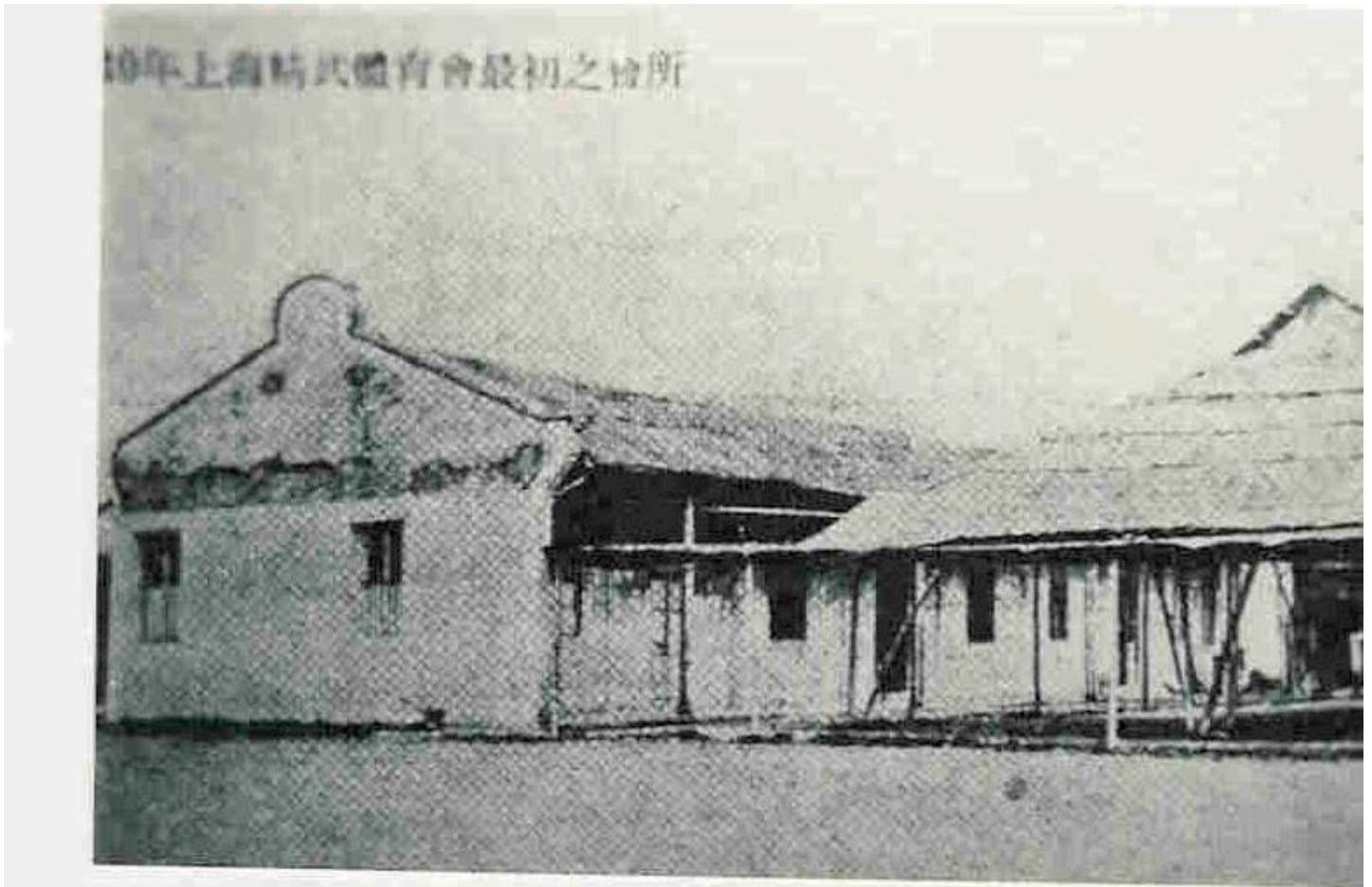


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Shanghai's Ching Mo School 1909 - 1915

The original Jing Mo (Chin Woo or Ching Wu) Schools in Shanghai, China. 1909 and 1915.

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Grandmaster Wong Jack Man Sifu



Grandmaster Wong Jack Man

Northern Shao lin, the 32nd Anniversary of Kuo Yu Chang's Death

By Chen Hsin Mon

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Note: Chen Hsin Mon was a disciple of Kuo Yu Chang and was rated as one of the top ten disciples. This article is very important because it contains some insight about the style and about Kuo Yu Chang from someone who directly learned from him. It also gives us some idea of what the status of Northern Shao lin is in China today.

Shao lin kung fu took root and grew in Southern China and Ku Yu Chang played a major role in this. Kuo Yu Chang was from Huning Chiang Su. He was born in 1894 to a poor peasant family. At that time the country was in terrible shape. When he was 8 years old, Kuo Yu Chang started to learn kung fu from a Shangtung master, Yim Chi Wen. Yim Chi Wen was a man who lived during both the Ching dynasty and the beginning of the Republic. He was well verse in the Shao lin arts. People called him "Great Spear Yim". Kuo Yu Chang became well known for his Shao lin kung fu in several provinces such as Su Chiang, Che Chiang, Hunan, Hupei, etc.

In 1928, Nanking Central National Arts Institute held a national arts competition. Kuo Yu Chang came out with very high praise. When Kuo Yu Chang was in his twenties, he no longer feared hardship. He traveled all over Chiang nan province, and spread the Shao lin arts. In the late 1920's, he and four other men, Wan Li Sheng, Li Hsien Wu, and Fu Chen Sheng, who were all famous northern style masters, went to Kwangtung province. This was noted in the book of Wu Lin Chen Ku:, "Five Tigers heading south of Chiang nan." In 1928,

Kuo Yu Chang was appointed instructor for both of the Kungtung and Kwangsi National Arts schools. In 1929, Kuo Yu Chang formed the Kuang Chou National Arts Society with himself as the chief instructor. It was from here that Shao lin Kung fu began to spread into Southern China.

Kuo Yu Chang's kung fu was at a very high level. Anyone who saw him perform were really amazed. His kung fu was lively and people felt involved in the kung fu when they watched him perform. Because his iron palm was so good, he was nicknamed "Iron Palm Kuo Yu Chang". His hands were soft as cotton which was not unusual. But when he used his hands, it smashed rocks into many pieces and could bend raw iron. His palm strength reached a high level of development and it always amazed people when he demonstrated. When he used his Iron Palm, he could use different levels of force, that is, he had the ability to control the amount of force coming from his palms. Many Kwangchou people have seen him take ten tiles, one on top of another, strike the first tile, and the tiles between the top and the bottom tiles broke into pieces, but both the top and bottom tiles remained intact.

In 1931, a strong man from Russia came to Kwangchou at west Mellon Garden (now located at the People's Southern Road Kwangchou's Daily News Neighborhood), to demonstrate strength feats. We accompanied Kuo Yu Chang to see the strong man. When he came on stage, he pulled along a wild horse which no one could get near. If anyone could withstand a kick from the horse and not get killed, he would receive \$200.00. Then someone in the audience shouted, "Russian, don't be so smug. Iron Palm Kuo is here to cut the strong man down to size and to show how proud Chinese are." Kuo Yu Chang went up on the stage.

The strong man observed that Kuo Yu Chang appeared to be an uncommon man. Since the Russian did not know Kuo Yu Chang's background, he demanded Kuo Yu Chang have an examination by a medical doctor to insure that he was a normal human. Finally Kuo Yu Chang went to confront the wild horse. He got near the horse and using his palm lightly slapped it on the back. Immediately the horse did not move. On the second day, the horse did not eat and died. The doctor autopsied the horse and found severe internal injuries. The Russian quietly packed and left. This event of the 1930's is still much talked about among the old Kwangchou people today.

In Kwangchou, Kuo Yu Chang taught the 10 Shao lin sets, 10 rows of Tan T'ui, Plum Blossom Double Sabres (This is not to be confused with Ti Tung Double Sabres...Editor), Raise Blocking Spear, Twenty-four Spear, Dragon Shape Sword, Ta Mor Sword (This sets was also taught at Ching Wu.School..Ed.), Five Tiger Catching the Sheep Staff (This set was also taught at Ching Wu.School..Ed.), Internal Hsiao

Chin Chung Sixteen parts (Golden Bell Techniques..Ed) and some other styles.

Of all the above, the ten Shao lin sets are the most famous, and the mostly exemplifies the characteristics of Shao lin. The ten sets are arranged in ascending order. Their names are: Open Door, Leading Road, Sitting on the Horse, Piercing Heart, Martial Skills, Short Strikes, Plum Flower, Eight Steps and Three Palms, Connecting Leg and Heart of Fist set. The Shao lin system is preserved in these ten sets. The sets are strong in attack forms, and are not flowery. Each move and form demonstrates attacks and defence. When doing the exercise, the legs and fists exhibit power. Shao lin Wu Shu is:

***Steady as a nail,
Cocked like a bow,
Turns like a wheel,
Fast as the wind
Light as a leaf,
Heavy as metal iron
Moves like a wave
Quiet as a mountain.***

The ten Shao lin sets are arranged and structured with deep meaning and the different parts are each specified. At the present time, these ten sets are the most popular and practiced northern style kung fu among the Southern Chinese. Kuo Yu Chang was a great teacher. He greatly emphasized the basic training of Shaolin and developed a complete training in the basics. His training program was extremely tough.

Kuo Yu Chang created a group of basic exercises, and based on his personal experiences, trained the southern people properly. This was important because southerner people were shorter than northern people, and needed extra exercises to adapt to shao lin. We are all old now, but we still teach the way Kuo Yu Chang taught us, which is emphasizing strenuous training in basics.

Kuo Yu Chang was famous in the kung fu world, but he didn't show off. In demonstrations, he would ask other people and students to demonstrate. He loved watching his students perform and even hoped that they would some day become better than him. When I (Chen Hsin Mon) was 16 years old, Kuo Yu Chang asked me to teach kung fu. Kuo Yu Chang taught me how to teach correctly. Because of Kuo Yu Chang's teaching back then, the current kung fu teaching is good. Kuo Yu Chang was very polite and never look down on anyone. Kuo Yu Chang lived in Kwangchou for six to seven years. Kuo Yu Chang even had a very good friend, a Southern style teacher. Kuo Yu Chang studied some southern styles and selected the good points to keep. In Kuo Yu Chang's time there was a Choy Li Fut teacher named Tam San. Kuo Yu Chang sent some of his students to learn from him. Tam San had a student who wanted to learn northern style and Kuo Yu Chang was happy to teach him. Kuo Yu Chang had many kung fu books and he let any of his students study them, unlike most teachers who keep books hidden away. Kuo Yu Chang was an honest man and helped anyone in need of help. In Kwangchou many kung fu people were given favors or helped by Kuo Yu Chang. In 1952, Kuo Yu Chang died a poor man with no possessions. But he left a great legacy in his kung fu students in the south. This is the 32nd anniversary of Kuo Yu Chang's death and many people are still learning Northern Shao lin. Kuo Yu Chang could never have imagined that so many people have learned Shao lin now. The seed Kuo Yu Chang planted in the south has now grown into a gigantic tree. Now in Hong Kong, Macao, and overseas, (many people are) all learning Shao lin and are Kuo Yu Chang's descendants.

Kuo Yu Chang's (Gu Ruzhang's) Early Life

Gu Ruzhang's Early Life

Gu Ruzhang was born in 1893 in Huning County in Jiangsu Province to a poor peasant family. His father, Gu Lizhi, was a famous master of Tan T'ui style, and Hidden Weapon Arts such as flying darts. Many people wondered how Gu Ruzhang learned the mysteries of iron palm. It was told that Gu Lizhi and a monk was discussing their skills in martial arts. During the discussion, Gu Lizhi attacked and injured the monk. The monk said, "I will pay you my respects in ten years." Later Gu Lizhi, who was counting the years as they passed, sent out spies to find out what the monk had been practicing. He found out the monk had completely learned the unconquerable iron palm. He knew he was no match for the monk so he devised a plan. On the day the monk came to Gu Lizhi's place of business, The Lizhi Protection Agency, the workers stated, "Unfortunately two days ago, the chief had passed away. His coffin is in the hall." The monk went to the coffin, made a gesture with his hand by sweeping the coffin and then left the scene. Later, Gu Lizhi's men opened the coffin and they could not help but ease at what they saw. The coffin itself was undamaged, but the rocks

Later, Gu Lizhi's men opened the coffin and they could not help but gasp at what they saw. The coffin itself was undamaged, but the rocks which were inside the coffin, were pulverized into dust. Gu Lizhi sent some men to fetch his son, Gu Ruzhang, who would change his name and go learn the mysteries of Iron Palm. However, the above story is false.

The Northern Shaolin Style survived the destruction of the monastery. The style was saved by Monk Zhi Yuan who fled from Henan Province to Hebei Province. He taught many villagers and the Shaolin Style was passed on to Feng Shaochen. Later, Feng Shaochen passed the style to Xu Weisan. It was Xu Weisan who went to Kiangsu Province and taught the Northern Shaolin style to the Yan Family. The Yan Family kept the Northern Shaolin Style as their official protecting style for their escort business. They would teach their techniques to their hired hand in Shandong Province. They operated an escort business that operated in Shandong Province. Yan Bo was the head of the business. In his autumn years, he left the business to his son and returned to Kiangsu Province. Yan Bo taught the Northern Shaolin Style to his grandson, Yan Jiwen. Later, Yan Jiwen replaced his father as the chief of the escort in Shandong Province and ran the company with much success.

Trouble in Guling

Once, Yan Jiwen had to protect a shipment of silk that was going from Northern China to Canton in Guangdong Province. The route was long and dangerous and there was a particular area where bandits robbed and killed any traveler on their land. Instead of going around the area, Yan Jiwen elected to go through the area to save time. He was not afraid of the bandits. As Yan Jiwen and his men were walking through the area, Yan Jiwen noticed that it was the most beautiful place he ever seen. There were lots of birds, trees and flowers. Soon Yan Jiwen and his men came to a large hill with a fort on top of it. Yan Jiwen and his men continued to walk until they were stopped by the

sight of one hundred men standing on the hill, looking down at them. Suddenly a man riding a big white horse came forward. Yan Jiwen assumed that this man was the leader of the bandits. The man on the horse pointed his big staff at Yan Jiwen and demanded to know who he was. Yan Jiwen replied that his business was escorting valuables and he was on his way to Canton to deliver some cargo of silk. Yan Jiwen asked the man of what concern this information was to him and requested that he step aside so he could pass.

The man on the horse introduced himself as Gu Hu, and that he was the owner of all the area. Gu Hu stated his rule was that the leader of any convoy, which comes through his land, must fight him. If Gu Hu wins, he takes everything. If Gu Hu loses, the convoy can pass freely.

Yan Jiwen knew that he and his men were out numbered and did not stand a chance against Gu Hu's men. Therefore Yan Jiwen accepted the challenge. Gu Hu was an expert in the Northern Shaolin Liu He style and his specialty was the staff. Yan Jiwen was an expert in the Shaolin Twenty-four Spear techniques, which is from the Shaolin Monastery in Henan. Both men knew the same style, Northern Shaolin, but each learned from different masters.

As the two men started to fight, Yan Jiwen was surprised that Gu Hu used his iron staff as if he knew Shaolin Liu He Style. Soon Gu Hu realized that Yan Jiwen's skills in the spear were superior to his staff techniques. Gu Hu found himself only defending against Yan Jiwen's spear techniques and could not launch an offensive attack on his own. Gu Hu became afraid and ran away. Yan Jiwen let Gu Hu get away and felt it would serve no purpose to kill him. However, Yan Jiwen kept wondering about Gu Hu's techniques.

Later, Yan Jiwen was feeling better and was glad that he took this route. Winning the fight against Gu Hu made him feel like he was on top of the world. They came to a dense forest. Yan Jiwen warned his men to beware of Gu Hu's men as they made their way across the forest. Unknown to Yan Jiwen, the forest was full of traps. Yan Jiwen could not ride his horse because the ground had many deep holes, which would cause a horse to slip and fall. As Yan Jiwen was walking, he stepped into a trap which sprung up and tied him up in ropes. When Wan Guowu and Liu Tanfan tried to rescue him, they were beaten back by Gu Hu's men. Both Wan Guowu and Liu Tanfan retreated to the city of Kiu Kiang. They discussed how they could try to rescue Yan Jiwen but were at a loss on how to approach it. They just sat and drank liquor. Sitting near by was the Jin Lin Li Convoy Chief of Nanjing, Gu Lizhi, who overheard their conversation. Gu Lizhi was also going south on a convoy. As Gu Lizhi listened, he discovered Yan Jiwen was the hero who destroyed the Jin Ji Chui in Shandong Province and killed the famous bandit, Jia Yanbiao. Gu Lizhi walked over to the two men and asked if he could assist them in anyway. The two men looked at Gu Lizhi and they knew right away that Gu Lizhi was a fighter because of his physical build. The two men told Gu Lizhi of their problem and asked for a solution. Gu Lizhi was an intelligent man and devised a plan. He realized that a direct approached plan would not work because Gu Hu had too many men. The plan involved a trick, which would get Gu Hu out of his fort and separate him from his men. Gu Lizhi needed only a split second alone with Gu Hu and he would be able to kill him.

The next morning, several men rode out to Guling and hid in the forest while Wan Guowu and Lin Tanfan went ahead to Gu Hu's fortress. There were a few guards outside the fortress. When Wan Guowu and Lin Tanfan saw the guards, it only made them angry and they furiously killed three guards. The rest of the guards scrambled into the fortress to tell Gu Hu, who became enraged. He called out his men, mounted his magnificent horse and brandished his iron staff. He led his men out of the fort. Outside, Gu Hu saw Wan Guowu, Lin Tanfan and his dead grandson laying on the ground. Gu Hu swore to kill Wan Guowu and Lin Tanfan with his iron staff. He chased Wan Guowu and Lin Tanfan who ran back to where the others were hiding as planned. As Gu Hu rode into the forest which he knew inside and out, he was surprised to see the hidden men confront him. Fearful, Gu Hu tried to retreat to where his men were. Instead, Gu Hu turned and was confronted by Gu Lizhi.

The two men sprung at each other. Gu Lizhi was surprised that Gu Hu's staff techniques were of Shaolin. As they fought, Gu Lizhi could not stop thinking of Gu Hu's staff techniques. Since all Shaolin disciples were brothers, he could not understand why Gu Hu was a bandit. As Gu Hu used his iron staff, he realized that Gu Lizhi's ability was great and he became fearful. Gu Hu turned away and started to run. Before Gu Lizhi realized what happened, Gu Hu was fleeing on his horse. Gu Lizhi ran after Gu Hu but realized that he could not catch him. Gu Lizhi picked up a bow and arrow from a near by corpse and shot the arrow into the side of the horse. Gu Lizhi wanted Gu Hu alive. But to Gu Lizhi's disappointment, the horse and its rider, fell over a steep hill. Gu Hu was pinned under the dead horse. Gu Lizhi ran

over to the dead horse and saw that Gu Hu was crushed. Gu Lizhi held Gu Hu's head in his arms as Gu Hu died. Gu Lizhi cried because he had killed his Shaolin brother. In the meantime Yan Jiwen's six men fought Gu Hu's men. They fought hard and nearly killed all of Gu Hu's men.

When Gu Lizhi returned to the fort, Yan Jiwen was already freed by his men. Yan Jiwen was grateful to Gu Lizhi for saving his life. They became very good friends and Yan Jiwen said that someday he would return the favor.

The Favor is Returned

At the end of the Qing Dynasty, in Nanjing, Gu Lizhi opened a security bureau, The Lizhi Escort Service, which was to protect merchants on the road. Gu Lizhi was a native of Founing County in Jiangsi Province. His name spread far and wide because he defeated countless bandits and swordsmen. Such men like the Heroes of Greenwood Forest would shudder whenever Gu Lizhi's name was mention. So when the Lizhi Escort House's banner fluttered, all the bandits stayed away. Gu Lizhi's escort business prospered and engaged in more than two hundred escorts a year. Because Gu Lizhi was illiterate, he had to rely on others to read the accounts of receipts and payments. He decided that his children, Gu Yumen, the eldest son, Gu Ruzhang the second son, and his daughter should be educated.

When Gu Ruzhang was seven, he was sent to private school. At the age of twelve, Gu Lizhi taught his youngest son, Gu Ruzhang, Ten rows of Tan T'ui which was to establish a good basis for the martial arts. Gu Ruzhang had an early interest in the martial arts. He was also very clever and diligent. Gu Lizhi was proud of his sons, Gu Yumen, who reflected the glory of his ancestors and Gu Ruzhang, who would carry on his work. Gu Lizhi believed in the old saying: "A tiger - like father will not have a dog - like son." Two years later (1904), Gu Lizhi was taken ill and was confined to bed. The doctor could not cure his illness. With overwhelming tears in his eyes, Gu Lizhi called for his sons. He told them that none of his medications had worked and that he did not have much longer to live. His only regret to his sons was that he was unable to teach all of his martial arts to them. He told them of a friend, Yan Jiwen, in Feicheng, Shandong, and that they should become his disciples if they wanted to be martial artist. A few days later, Gu Lizhi succumbed to his illness and died.

Beyond words, the family grieved, and Gu Ruzhang, who was only fourteen years old, went on his knees and wailed. Their mother decided to close the Escort House and dismiss all the escorts. They then carried the spiritual tablets of Gu Lizhi back to their native villages to mourn for the dead. For the next two years, Gu Ruzhang learned martial arts from his mother which proved to be inadequate for him. He then left for middle school in Nanjing.

In Nanjing, Gu Ruzhang became close to a classmate, Ba Jingxiang. Ba Jingxiang's father had a business in Nanking and both Gu Ruzhang and Ba Jingxiang liked to be a permanent guests in the shop. After two years in middle school, Gu Ruzhang was tired of schoolwork and felt he was wasting his time. He remembered the words his father said on his deathbed and decided to locate Yan Jiwen in Feicheng, Shandong. Gu Ruzhang knew that Ba Jingxiang would be broken up if he left so he told him about his secret desire to leave school and go north to Shandong. Ba Jingxiang expressed his desire to follow and his parents granted his wish. Gu Ruzhang returned home for a short family reunion. After a few days, he left a note for his mother stating his intentions.

Together, Gu Ruzhang and Ba Jingxiang went north to Shandong Province. When they arrived in Tsinang, they were told that Feicheng was in the southwestern part of Taian County. After a days travel, they reached Feicheng. They had to travel another thirty miles to the north to reach the Yan family village. The next day, they reached the Yan family village. When they inquired about Master Yan Jiwen, a small boy replied, "You must be asking for 'Big Spear' Yan," and led them to a house which had a porch and three courtyards. Weapons of all sorts could be seen mixed with wooden human figures, pounding sticks, stone mortars and pestles, etc, lined the walls of the court yards. A colorful old man, who was in high spirits, was teaching martial arts to some of his disciples. Upon closer inspection, they saw it was 'Big Spear' Yan Jiwen. Gu Ruzhang and Ba Jingxiang went up to the old man and bowed with their hands raised above their heads. They told Yan Jiwen that they came to learn and that they heard of his great fame. Yan Jiwen could not figure out where their native area was but knew that they came from afar. When Yan Jiwen inquired who they were, Gu Ruzhang stated he was the second son of Gu Lizhi, head of the Lizhi Escort Service. He continued by saying that his father died two years ago and had mentioned the grandmaster of today was Yan Jiwen. Since his father's death, he had stopped practicing but the love for the art had brought him from a distance place to Feicheng, Shandong, to learn again. Yan Jiwen realized Gu Ruzhang was like a nephew. He remembered Gu Lizhi and recollected how Gu Lizhi saved his life from the bandit chief, Gu Hu. A very strong friendship developed between Gu Lizhi and himself though Nanjing and Feicheng are far apart. Yan Jiwen recalled when he went south to Kiangsi Province to visit Gu Lizhi, he saw Gu Ruzhang when he was a very small boy. Yan Jiwen was saddened that his friend past away but was glad to see the small boy grown to be a man. He wanted to return the kindness of Gu Lizhi for saving his life and decided to express his gratitude in accepting Gu Ruzhang and Ba Jingxiang as his disciples.

During the first six months, Gu Ruzhang and Ba Jingxiang learned ten rows of Tan T'ui Shaolin. This was the basic training for leg movements for Northern Shaolin. They practiced hard and with diligence. After six months, Yan Jiwen saw that both of them had their hearts in martial arts. He decided to instruct both of them on the Northern Style of Shaolin from Henan Province. Gu Ruzhang was quick to pick up techniques and was never embarrassed to asked his elders questions. Because of this, his development and his achievements advanced quickly.

Nine years passed by in a wink of an eye. Time had flown like an arrow. Ba Jingxiang received a letter from home that stated that his father was ill. He informed Yan Jiwen that he had to return home to help with the family business and could not continue with his lessons. In the tenth year of the founding of the Republic of China (1921), Gu Ruzhang was twenty seven years old and had been practicing for eleven years under Yan Jiwen. Gu Ruzhang was well verse in his skills of Northern Shaolin, flying knives, flying darts, flying spears, iron sand palm, breathing techniques of Qigong (Golden Bell), eighteen weapons, etc. Gu Ruzhang received a letter from home and was told

that his mother had passed away and both his brother and sister were married. The news from home made Gu Ruzhang home sick.

Before Gu Ruzhang left for home, Yan Jiwen gave some words of wisdom to him. Yan Jiwen told him that his skills had reached an adequate level and that he could stand on his own feet. He cautioned Gu Ruzhang that the world is a large place and that beyond this mountain, there would be another mountain. He should always act with care because great skills and cracked hands were everywhere. Gu Ruzhang assured Yan Jiwen that he would follow these words and said goodbye to his master.

Gu Ruzhang returned to Nanjing and stayed with his friend, Ba Jingxiang. Everyday, they would practice together. Ba Jingxiang, who had a bigger build, preferred to practice with the heavier weapons such as Guandao, Flying fork, etc. Gu Ruzhang, on the other hand, preferred the lighter weapons such as the spear, staff, saber, sword, tiger hooks, etc. The spear became Gu Ruzhang's favorite weapon and soon he earned the title - 'God of Spear', Gu Ruzhang. The Raise Blocking Spear set, which is similar to the Liu He Spear set, became closely associated with Gu Ruzhang. Many scholars believe since Gu Ruzhang was the God of Spears, he had the ability to compose and develop the Raise Blocking Spear set. According to Wong Chia Man, who is an expert on Northern Shaolin, the southern martial artists were not exposed to the many varied Northern Shaolin sets. It was not until Gu Ruzhang demonstrated the Raise Blocking Spear in southern China that they realized such a set existed. Today, martial artists still confuse the Lui He Spear set with the Raise Blocking Spear set.

Many people wondered why Gu Ruzhang loved the spear. According to Wong Chia Man, "The spear is the King of all the weapons. It must attack in like a thread line and go out and disappear like a ghost. Besides Liu He Spear, Raise Blocking Spear is the only spear set that contains all twenty-four techniques of the original Pear Blossom Spear. The original Pear Blossom Spear set is lost to posterity."

The King of Weapons - The Spear

According to legend, Liu He Spear was created by Yue Fei. It was told that he used the Liu He Spear techniques against the Jin Tribe. When Yue Fei killed the Jin Tribe leader, Black Wind Prince, with the Liu He Spear, it became famous. However, the spear techniques Yue Fei used were not Liu He Spear but were his own which became known as Yue Fei's Spear.

The Liu He Spear is a combination of six families, Yang, Gao, Sha, Ma, Luo, and Liu. Together, these families of spear techniques form the Liu He Spear or Six Combination Spear. Out of the six families, Yang was the most popular. The Yang's Spear had two spear sets, Pear Blossom Spear, which used a long spear of over seventeen feet and Flower Spear, which used a spear less than seventeen feet long and contained circular techniques.

The Yang's Spear had a steel head and a wooden handle. It weight about four pounds and was nine Chinese feet long (five and one half to six feet long). The handle was two feet long and not tapered while the shank from the handle to the spear head was tapered. This allowed a tighter grip and increased the power. Its total weight was not heavy so as not to effect its flexibility. According to Wan Laisheng, "The main theme of Yang's spear was to emphasize the middle section of the body. The body has to be quick like a ghost sticking its head out. The force is like rolling beans. In a standing position, three points have to be in correct alignment. A square is formed with the nose, the tip of the toe and the tip of the spear. Observe the three weak points in the middle balance spear which are 1.) the body alignment is not right, 2.) holding the spear not right, 3.) the nose, the tip of the spear and the tip of the toe are not in the correct position. When the spear moves, the circles should be six to seven inches in diameter. As one begins to learn the spear, the circles are large. As one advances to the next level, the circles are smaller. This is related to the speed of counter attack and the blocking technique." Wan Laisheng offered his advice on spear fighting. "When your opponent spears, block it. When he does not move, spear him. If the spear moves fast and hard, but is not fluid and continues, it will not be able to recover from an attack. As a result, there will be an opening. Therefore, block and attack together. Always spear at the middle level. The spear is the king. It can go high or low and can be used close and far. Always obey two principles: First, if the opponent spears low, hold (Grab = Na) it. Secondly, if the opponent spears high, do not block it. My middle attack was hard for my opponents to defend. Always follow three steps: 1.) the spear should move in like an arrow. It should move out like a thread at face level. High or low, your opponent should not be able to see it. 2.) Use the waist as a brace. 3.) Hands are locked and the feet are moving together as one unit. Move the hands then the feet. If the hands just move, the spear will be too slow. Set the hands and the feet quickly."

Both Gu Ruzhang and Wan Laisheng instructed their students on an ancient saying:

*"Spears hitting but the spears never met
They start like the wind and retreat like nails.
When the spears meet, they stick.
One does not see the other.
It goes like the wind when you start to move."*

Both Sha and Ma families had their own advantages in their spear techniques. However, they were still no match when compared to the Yang family because the Yang's Spear can be used in long and short range fighting. In fighting, both Wan Laisheng and Gu Ruzhang used the Nine Methods of Yang's Spear.

The Nine Methods of Yang's Spear

1. When the opponent Cha (pierces) me, I Na (grab) his spear.
2. When he Cha at my foot, I reverse my spear.
3. When he Cha me, I Lan (block) his spear.
4. When he Cha at my upper body, I Cho (lift) his spear.
5. When he Cha at my lower body, I sweep like I'm rowing a boat.
6. When he Cha high, I Cho (lift) his spear.

6. When he Cha high, I Cho (hit) his spear.
7. When he Cha low, I reverse my spear.
8. When he raises his spear, I wrap it.
9. When he Cha me, I Lan (block) it.

The Nine Methods of the Yang's Spear are tactics used when using the Flower Spear whose length is only as long as the height of the body and the length of a raised arm over the head. These Nine Methods are tactics used in straight line attacks and are stressed in the Liu Ho spear and the Raise Blocking Spear. As comparison, the Eight Mother Spear Methods of Yang are used by the longer spears that are over seventeen feet long. The techniques involved were circular because of the length of the weapon. These methods were used during the 1500's in the Ming Dynasty. Monk Zhang Chozhong (1522 - 1597) wrote about the Eight Mother Spear Methods in his book, The Shaolin Staff, Spear and Saber. These tactics are closely related to another method called the Thirteen Taiji Spears which contains circular attacks and counter attacks. The Eight Mother Spear Methods were part of the Pear Blossom Spear set.

The Eight Mother Spear Methods

1. When the opponent attacks with inside circles, I Lang (grab) his spear.
2. When he attacks with outside circles, I Na (block) his spear.
3. When he attacks with a inside circle (clockwise) to hook my foot, I Cho (lift) his spear.
4. When he Ch'a me, I Lang (grab) down his spear.
5. When he attacks with a circle outside (counter clockwise) to my foot, I sweep down.
6. When he seizes my spear, I block down.
7. I follow attack and hook his inside circle (clockwise), he counters by Lang (grab) my spear.
8. He returns his spear, I Lang (grab) his spear.

Some of the techniques can be found in both charts. However, because of the difference in size of the two spears, different techniques were developed for the shorter spear, the Flower Spear. According to Wong Chia Man, during the Ming Dynasty, the long spear was shortened from seventeen to seven feet for the foot soldiers. When this occurred, many of the Pear Blossom Spear techniques were lost or modified. Today, the complete Pear Blossom Spear set is lost. A twenty-one character poem, written during the Song Dynasty, gives a description of the Pear Blossom Spear set.

Pear Blossom Spear

*First it goes through the fingers and through the sleeves,
Then it has Pear Blossom moves over the head.
Some moves are strange and some are logical.
Double fake, double real attacks,
Double strange moves, double logical moves.
If it is sharp forward movements, it has fast retreats.
Dangerous moves, short subdivision.
When I do not want to move, I'm like a mountain before you.
When I want to move, it is like thunder and an earthquake.*

Some of the Pear Blossom Spear techniques can be found in the Shaolin Plum Blossom Spear set. It is said that there are no spear sets that surpass the Shaolin Plum Blossom Spear set except the Thirteen Taiji Spear. However, the Liu He Spear and the Raise Blocking Spear are important sets because these sets are the only spear sets to contain all twenty four moves and the nine methods of Yang's (Long) spear.

The Twenty-Four Moves

1. Night Demon Searches the Sea
2. Conquest of the Four Barbarians Tribes
3. Compass Needle Points South
4. Ambush From All Sides
5. Green Dragon offers its Claws
6. Side Block
7. Flip Over the Iron Shaft
8. Jump Over the Sword
9. Fine Cloth Covers the Floor
10. Face the Heaven
11. Iron Ox Plows the Ground
12. Dip into the Water
13. Sitting astride on a Dragon
14. White Monkey Drags the Blade
15. Guitar Shape
16. Swift Cat Catches the Rodent
17. Novice Challenges the Master and is Crushed
18. Beautiful Lady Acknowledges Needles
19. Green Dragon Wags its Tail
20. Crouching Tiger

20. Crouching Tiger
21. Pushing Aside the Mountain and Fill the Sea
22. Falcon Strikes the Quail
23. Old Man Hooks a Fish
24. Dash Through the Swan Gate

According to Hsuang Hon Shang, who learned Shaolin Lohan from Sun Yufung and Northern Shaolin from Zhao Lianhe in the Jing Wu Physical Cultural Association, he states, "There exist two kinds of spears today: the Big Spear and the Flower Spear. The Big Spear was used by mounted soldiers and was seventeen feet long. The Flower Spear was used by the foot soldiers. During the last three hundred years, many styles developed the Flower Spear. For example, Eagle Claw Style has developed a set called Pear Blossom Spear and Northern Shaolin developed a set called Five Tigers Spear. In 1920, Master Zhou Lianhe analyzed various spear techniques at the Jing Wu Physical Cultural Association. He determined that there are only eight basic moves. Four moves: Pin (blocking), Liao (throw), Bie (Splitting), and Kua (Attach) are defensive. The other four moves: Cha (Piercing), Na (Thrusting), Tiao (Jabbing Up), and Ta (Striking) are offensive.

Gu Ruzhang - Hero of San Shiang

Gu Ruzhang reputation grew and he became well known for his Northern Shaolin skills in seven provinces such as Sichuan, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Jjiang, Hunan, and Hubei. One legend states that Gu Ruzhang was able to knock fruit off of a tree without any direct or indirect physical contact with the fruit tree by using the tremendous force of his Iron Sand Palm, from a distance of several feet! This is only a legend. However, Gu Ruzhang's iron sand palm was very powerful.

In early 1925, Gu Ruzhang went south to Canton and got a job as a clerk. It was here in Canton that Gu Ruzhang revealed his deadly secret Iron Sand Palm and breathing techniques of Tun Qi.

According to Yu Baizhuang, a direct line disciple of Gu Ruzhang, he actively sought eye witnesses of Gu Ruzhang's iron palm abilities. He interviewed a bone doctor, Mr. Huang, who witnessed several events. In 1925, when Mr. Huang was thirteen years old, a Russian circus posted an ad, for a challenge on Feng Ning Road at Western Melon Park in Guizhou. The challenge was to anyone who could survive three kicks from a horse. The one who could would receive one thousand dollars in gold. No one dared to accept the challenge except Gu Ruzhang. Gu Ruzhang made a deal with the Russians. Instead of accepting the money, he would be allowed to strike the horse once with his palm and the Russians agreed. On the day of the contest, Mr. Huang bought a three dollar ticket. This was a large amount of money to spend in 1925.

He stated, "There was a sea of people with soldiers and police everywhere. The crowd quieted down as the contest began. Gu Ruzhang went into a horse stance and performed his Shallow Breathing Techniques called Tun Qi. After Gu Ruzhang finished preparing for the horse's kick, the horse was brought in to the area. The horse weighed one thousand two hundred and eighty pounds. The horse raised its back legs and kicked Gu Ruzhang in the chest. Gu Ruzhang staggered back three steps. The crowd was amazed at what they had witnessed. Gu Ruzhang retired to the side for ten minutes to prepare for the second kick. On the horse's second kick, Gu Ruzhang staggered back six steps. The crowd roared aloud. Gu Ruzhang retired to the side again to prepare himself for the final third round. This time the breathing techniques took Gu Ruzhang twenty minutes. On the third and final kick, the horse kicked Gu Ruzhang very hard and it knocked him down onto his back. The rules that both the Russians and Gu Ruzhang agreed upon stated that Gu Ruzhang had to get up before the count of three or he lost. The crowd was very quiet as the count echoed in the air. On the count of two, Gu Ruzhang sprang up from the ground and into the air like a carp jumping out of the water. The crowd made a thundering cheer. Gu Ruzhang retired to the side again. This time it took Gu Ruzhang forty minutes to recover from the last horse's kick. When Gu Ruzhang returned, he approached the horse and walked around to the rear of the horse. Without a word, Gu Ruzhang struck the horse in the buttocks. The horse screamed once and fell dead. The audience broke out into a thundering noise, cheering Gu Ruzhang's magnificent feat."

Lau Fat Meng, Master of Shaolin Eagle Claw, witnessed the same event and was curious as to how the horse died. He stated that the horse showed no signs of external injuries. When a postmortem examination was performed on the horse, a large bruise was found near the backbone and the internal organs of the horse were split with massive hemorrhaging.

This became the most talked about martial art event and Gu Ruzhang became the Hero of San Shiang. Many martial artists wondered why Gu Ruzhang struck the horse on the back and not on its head or upper torsal. They theorized that he wanted to demonstrate how powerful his ability was. It was this event that Gu Ruzhang earned the nickname 'Iron Sand Palm, Gu Ruzhang.'

Russian Strongman Challenges Gu Ruzhang

According to Mr. Huang, in 1928, a Russian strongman from the northwest came south to Guangzhou to challenge Gu Ruzhang. During this time Russia was bullying on smaller and weaker nations. Russia had taken some of China's land near the Russian borders. Gu Ruzhang accepted the challenge. Gu Ruzhang wanted to use both hand and feet but the Russian only wanted to use fist with boxing gloves. He was aware of Gu Ruzhang's reputation on his iron palm and his fancy leg work for kicking. Finally an agreement was made to fight the Russian's way. The Russian was good and was not afraid of Gu Ruzhang. The fight was to be an open public location and free to the public in Guangzhou. Before the fight, Mr. Huang, who was sixteen, performed Hung Style on the stage. Next to perform was a man who sang a song. The third event was the Russian strongman, who lifted stone weights. The fourth event was Gu Ruzhang who bent a iron rod around his arm then unbent the same iron rod and made it straight. The final event was the fight. The Russian was fierce and strong. He attacked a lot and Gu Ruzhang dodged a lot. Not a single punch delivered by the Russian scored. As the Russian moved faster, Gu Ruzhang moved away. The faster the Russian punched, the faster Gu Ruzhang would move his head. After ten minutes, the Russian gave a left hook that grazed Gu Ruzhang's nose. At the same time, Gu Ruzhang's right fist struck the Russian in the face and

knocked him out. The judges realized that although Gu Ruzhang wore gloves, the force from his blow was mighty. At once the referee stopped the fight. Everyone saw that the Russian had been knocked out with one punch and realized that the Russian boxer could have been easily killed by Gu Ruzhang's Iron Palm. Gu Ruzhang was declared the winner. When the Russian woke up, he requested Gu Ruzhang to be his teacher in Chinese boxing.

The First National Tournament - Nanjing, 1928

It was October, 1928 and the Chinese government decided to unite together the Chinese people by using Martial Arts. The goal of the National Arts Center (Guo Ming Dong) was to promote the exchange of knowledge and to tear down the curtain of prejudice that had existed between the styles and to encourage the slogan, "A Strong Mind and a Strong Body builds a Strong Country." Since the Boxer Rebellion, there had not been a national tournament and naturally the people took an interest. Invitations were sent out and all the different styles were to be represented. Many masters turned down the invitation and instead sent their top disciples. Rules of the tournament were simple.

Rule One: No poking or gouging of the eyes.

Rule Two: No poking or grabbing of the throat.

Rule Three: No groin strikes.

The contest was divided into two divisions, combat and non-combat. The non-combat division was competition in the performance of hand and weapon sets on stage. The winner for weapons division was Master Keng Te Hai, of Tai Sheng Shaolin Monkey Style. One of the most embarrassing moments was when a famous Bagua Master, Fu Zhensong, performed his Bagua style. As he was so involved in his Bagua movements, he did not observe the condition of the floor on the stage. The stage was uneven and was not built very well. Proper tools for building and good solid wood were scarce in those times. The builders used any wood that they could find and fitted the stage the best they could. As a result, Fu Zhensong, tripped over a wooden plank as he walked the Bagua circle. He was moving so fast that when he stumbled, he could not regain his balance and fell off the stage. Except for a bruised ego, Fu Zhensong was not injured. Still, government officials were impressed and later appointed Fu Zhensong as one of the "Five Tigers of the North".

In the combat division, the contests were fierce. Many styles left sorrowful impression on the audience because the representatives of particular styles did not measure up to their competition. Gu Ruzhang fought two fighters. In the first fight, he won easily. In the second fight, Gu Ruzhang was matched with a Bagua Fighter with Cinnabar Sand Palms or Zhu Sha Zhang. He too was a master of Iron Sand Palm and whose palms were red. Hence the name, Cinnabar Iron Sand Palm. Gu Ruzhang's Iron Sand Palm was called Black Sand Palm or Hei Sha Zhang. Naturally, Gu Ruzhang's palms were black. Both Iron Sand Palms are known as Poison Sand Palm or Tu Sha Chang. The training methods for both Cinnabar and Black Iron Sand Palms are similar.

The first stage - Strengthen the palm by striking green peas. This is to numb the nerve endings in the palm. Later, the peas are replaced by iron chips or iron ball bearing. These iron pellets become imbedded into the flesh.

The second stage - The palms are thrust into hot sand to further strengthen them.

The third stage - Diluted poison is added to the iron pellets. With time, the poison dose is increased slowly in concentration while the body builds immunity towards the poison.

After drilling in each stage, herbs are prepared to nurse the hands to prevent injury. Special herbal liquids are used to reduce swelling and alleviate pain. Sometimes the pain was so great that practitioners would turn to western drugs such as opium and heroin to kill the pain. Herbs also play an important role in the last stage, since herbs prevent the body from absorbing too much of the toxic poison. The difference between the Cinnabar Iron Sand Palm and Black Iron Sand Palm is the type of poison used in the training. As the fighter strikes his opponent, the poison is transferred from the palm into the opponent. The opponent usually dies because of the poison. Many times blisters and welts would develop and would give the appearance of a snakebite. Hence the name, Poison Hand.

When the audience saw that Gu Ruzhang was matched against the Cinnabar Master, the fight was titled, Black Iron Sand Palm Master versus Red Iron Sand Palm Master. The Red Cinnabar Iron Sand Palm Master used his Bagua techniques to circle Gu Ruzhang and looked for an opening. When the Red Cinnabar Iron Sand Palm Master attacked, Gu Ruzhang avoided the deadly red palm and counter-attacked. Within three moves Gu Ruzhang struck his opponent with his Black Iron Sand Palm and knocked his opponent down. On his opponent's chest, was Gu Ruzhang's black palm imprint. Gu Ruzhang's opponent was quickly escorted off the stage and was treated for the poison.

As the tournament got neared its end, the fights became even more violent and bloody. When there were only thirteen contestants left, the government officials stopped the tournament. Death would result if the tournament was allowed to continue and that would not have served the country's needs. The government declared the last thirteen fighters as China's Best and were called 'The Thirteen Champions of All China'. The thirteen champions voted among themselves and agreed that Gu Ruzhang was the tournament's best fighter. Many of the champions felt that Gu Ruzhang's skills were equal to the last famous Black Iron Sand Palm master, Zhao Yijian, who exceeded Gu Ruzhang by one generation.

The Five Tigers from the North

As a result of the First National Tournament in Nanjing, 1928, General Zhang Zhiqiang appointed the five top masters from the tournament to serve as instructors for the government province schools. Li Lichen, a top government official for Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces

to serve as instructors for the government province schools. Li Jishen, a top government official for Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, wanted to strengthen the army and establish a National Arts program for morning exercises. He asked General Zhang Zhiqiang if he could return to Canton with the top five masters. General Zhang approved the request. The five masters were Gu Ruzhang of Northern Shaolin and Cha Styles, Wan Laisheng of Northern Shaolin and Spontaneous Boxing Styles, Fu Zhensong of Bagua Style, Wang Shaozhou of Northern Shaolin and Cha Styles, and Li Xianwu of Northern Shaolin and Spontaneous boxing Styles. These men are recorded in the text, Wu Lin Chang Ku, as the 'Five Tigers heading South of the River'. Many scholars simply refer to them as 'The Five Tigers from the North who went South'. When the announcement was made officially, Gu Ruzhang was traveling all over Chiangnan and spreading the Northern Shaolin style. He was instructed to go south and represent the government as an instructor in the Guangdong Central National Arts Province School in Canton. The chief army official was Li Jishen. During this time, Guangdong and Guangzhou Provinces' martial arts schools were ninety percent southern styles. It was very difficult for a northern stylist to make a living unless he was exceptionally good. With the encouragement from Zhang Zhiqiang, Li Jishen appointed Wan Laisheng, who was a graduate from Beijing University, to be the head of both Central National Arts Provinces Schools and Gu Ruzhang to be in charge of the Central National Arts Department in Guangdong Province.

Wan Laisheng ordered Wang Shaozhou to be head of the Guangxi Provincial School. Since this was the first school to be set up, Wan Laisheng requested that all five champions assist Wang Shaozhou in setting up a standard martial arts program. At the Guangxi Provincial School, the masters there agreed that the basic standard sets would be Lin Bo from Master Wu Zhiqing, who was a master of Cha and Short Strike Style and Ten row Tan Tui which was already a standard set for Jing Wu Physical Association. While Gu Ruzhang stayed at the Guangxi Provincial School, he learned Cha Style from Qian Zhansheng. Gu Ruzhang became very interested in the history of Cha Style since it was originally taught at the Shaolin Monastery and then disappeared after the destruction of the monastery in 1732.